

VILLAGE CONCERNS

Minutes of the 3rd Annual General Meeting

Venue and time: East Hoathly Village Hall 7.30.pm 29th of October 2019

Those present: Kathryn Richardson (KR) Gill Kennedy (GK), Mike Hill (MH), Katherine Gutkind (KG), Jonathan Walker (JW), Fred Carter (FC) Andy Burns (AB) David Dobbs (DD) Fiona Dobbs (FD) Tania Freezer (TF)

22 visitors attended.

Apologise: Julian Oakley, Jean and Dennis Drinan, Anne and Jeremy Courtney, Marion Salmon & Jan and Alan Burdon

Introduction

The Village Concerns Chairperson (KR) welcomed all to the AGM and explained the Village Concerns

“Mission Statement”.

Agenda

1. Minutes of previous AGM
2. Chair's report.
3. Current Applications
4. Treasurers Report
5. Legal Advice
6. Neighbourhood Plan
7. Community Land Trust
8. Election of Chairperson
9. Questions
10. Appeal for Help
11. Finally.

1) Minutes of the previous AGM October 18th 2018

It was confirmed that these were read and approved.

2) Chair's Report

KR stated that it has been a very busy year with the progress of the Wealden Local Plan and the numerous applications for planning approval being submitted within the parish.

Local Plan

KR recapped the position for East Hoathly and Halland in the Plan.

The MSOA 13S allocation has been virtually used up with recent Planning application approvals. Village Concerns are checking these figures with Wealden.

KR confirmed the current status of the Local Plan which was submitted in January this year and an inspector appointed (Louise Nurser). The Local Plan has progressed through the first Hearing stage which addresses the Legal Compliance and Soundness of the Plan rather than specific sites.

The hearing for the first stage of the Local Plan took place in May and July this year at the East Sussex National. This took the form of a public hearing and some Village Concern members attended all the sessions. JW officially represented Village Concerns. AS part of the Local Plan Process Wealden District Council have a duty to cooperate with neighbouring Local Authorities. The expressed their opinion that WDC had not done this. WDC have disputed this. The plan could fail if Duty to Cooperate has not been met

The protection of Ashdown Forest and the air quality were major issues to be considered with developers arguing that air quality will improve in time as a result of more electrically powered vehicles being used. The debate was regarding the Level of improvement with Wealden taking the Precautionary approach,

Following the completion of Stage 1 the Inspector said that her report would follow soon after the end of August this year however it is still awaited.

The Inspector may wish to make changes to the Local Plan and she has the power to dismiss it completely however the general consensus of opinion is that Modifications are more likely than the Plan being dismissed. Wealden would have to agree to the modifications.

A question was asked: "What happens if the Local Plan is rejected" JW replied stating that WDC previous policies would then apply thereby opening up the possibility for planning applications for developments in our area to stand a much better chance of success.

3) CURRENT APPLICATIONS

KR confirmed that Hesmonds Stud application for 205 homes is still live however the Ailies Lane development which formed part of that application has been removed.

There is an application and an appeal under consideration for 74 dwellings in South Street. The appeal is for non-determination of the planning application and the subsequent planning application which has been submitted is virtually identical to the original application. The reasoning behind this is not understood by WDC Planning.

The appeal against WDC Planning for non-determination of the application lodged by Hesmonds for the two dwellings at the top of Buttsfield Lane has been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate. One of the reasons for the rejection of this appeal being that the site is outside the development boundary as shown on the emerging Local Plan and is not in compliance with the existing Adopted Plan

The application for the development of Bramblebank in Halland is still awaiting a decision.

An appeal was lodged on grounds of Non Determination for 21 houses at Hop Garden in Halland . This Appeal was dismissed. Again, one of the reasons being that the site is outside the development boundary identified in the emerging Local Plan.

There are two applications for development at Old Hartfield in Halland and neither has yet been determined.

The application for the development at Halland Forge was rejected by the planning committee and the agents have submitted an appeal against the decision.

The application for the development on the site of the circle of oaks in South Street is awaiting a decision.

There is also an application for a small development in Graywood Lane which is not controversial and Village Concerns are not putting forward any objections to that application.

Geoffrey Draper our District Councillor and Wealden South Planning Committee member stated that Hesmonds are aware that the emerging Local Plan carries some weight. He also stated that, whilst some of the objections submitted to WDC Planning against these applications may not be particularly strong, the number of objections is very important and show to the Planning Officer and Planning Committee members the strength of local feelings against these proposals.

4) TREASURERS REPORT

David Dobbs presented his report on the VC bank account which currently stands at £5,382.34.

5) LEGAL ADVICE

KR confirmed that VC is investigating costs relating to legal advice that we may require relating to stage 2 of the Local Plan and appeals against refusal of the aforementioned undetermined planning applications. Legal advice is very expensive and VC have been obtaining estimates from various professionals.

JW represented VC extremely well in stage 1 of the Local Plan however, as stage 2 is "site specific" it may be necessary to consult planning solicitors during stage 2.

It is possible that the larger planning applications which are currently undecided may go forward to appeal and result in Public Enquiries which will necessitate VC seeking legal advice. Therefore, it will be extremely important to raise additional funds. VC have been requesting monetary pledges from supporters and these pledges will greatly assist the costs of legal advice however more pledges are desperately needed.

Geoffrey Draper said that WDC should be able to offer advice on legal matters and he will seek their assistance on our behalf.

6) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

JW confirmed that the East Hoathly and Halland neighbourhood plan is modestly progressing.

A consultation event was held in September this year and 67 persons attended. The purpose of the meeting was to seek approval of vision and objectives. The feedback from this meeting will be incorporated into the next stage.

There have been discussions regarding the raising of the level of the football pitch to improve drainage and the possibility of building a new sports pavilion.

The next stage of the formation of the plan will be to discuss general policy and decide what is to be done and the committee will hold a referendum to determine what is acceptable.

7) COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Please see Appendix 1

8) ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

JW asked for nominations for the chairperson

Kate Richardson was proposed, seconded and elected as chair for 2019-2020

9) QUESTIONS

The first question from the audience asked who the person was who attended last year's Neighbourhood Plan meeting and produced the report to the NP steering group. Whoever it was seemed totally out of touch with the area and paid no regard to WDC Planning Policy. JW said that the person referred to was probably from a consultancy firm called Ferrier.

The next question from the audience asked if the Local Plan is abandoned will the Neighbourhood Plan be affected. JW said that this is a possibility.

The next question asked for an explanation of the planning appeal process and KR explained this.

The next question stated that it appears that the CLT would seek to build houses on greenfield sites and GK explained that any CLT development would be on "rural exception" sites. Broomy Lodge is one of these and owned by WDC. Any development would be for affordable housing. The current proposals which are the subject of planning applications awaiting determination are not for affordable housing. Discussions relating to CLT are at a very early stage.

Another audience member asked if anyone knows if Lydfords Nursing Home is to close. GK said that no one knows the answer to this question, Lydfords is owned by a trust in Jersey.

10) APPEAL FOR HELP

KR asked everyone to help whenever possible, take a note of when power cuts occur, disruptions with travel, water supplies, drainage etc. Help will be appreciated with surveys, wildlife studies, new VC website and Facebook and VC is also keen to have more members on its steering committee.

11) FINALLY

KR paid a tribute to Bill Walker who we sadly lost this year.

Appendix 1

Community Land Trust Update, *for Village Concerns AGM 2019, October 29th, Village Hall*

Since last Autumn, 2018, the Community Land Trust has come on leaps and bounds.

- We have finally a few new residents on our Committee for which we are very grateful
- We are finally incorporated as a Community Benefit Society
- We have secured some funding from Wealden District Council and as a result have enough that we commissioned Action for Rural Sussex to do our Housing Needs Survey – this has to be done in order to establish whether there is in fact a need for genuinely affordable housing in the Villages of East Hoathly and Halland. We had a very good return and have indeed established the need for 21 affordable homes. Without this need, there would have been no reason to go forward with the Community Land Trust
- We now have to apply for funding from other sources, such as Homes England, so we have the funds to commission pre planning information from Architects and Planners and Specialists of all sorts
- We are in discussion with Wealden District Council for this project to acquire Broomy Lodge which is the field between the end of the playing fields and the allotments in East Hoathly. This is a piece of land that the Council has had since 1947 and has not used. They have to officially dispose of it and of course we have to purchase it
- This will be costly to build but we hope to be able to provide 10 affordable homes, with some work space, for the community to begin with. These are held in perpetuity for the Parish
- We have a CLT website and a Facebook site, both of which you can check for information and regular updates
- We are looking for members of the Parish to buy £1 shares in the Community Benefit Society as well as more active members to join the team
- Let me know if you are interested at the end of this meeting