

BURSTOW PARISH COUNCIL

Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting of Burstow Parish Council Planning Committee held at 6.15pm on Tuesday 9th January 2024, at the Centenary Hall, Smallfield

Open Forum – 50 – 60 members of the public attended the meeting. Council took note of all comments made.

Present –Cllrs Debbie Hale, Bob Locke, Ashleigh Bolton, Cat Dodman, Linda Herwig, Nick Bush and Eddie Lord. Cllr Morris attended via Zoom.

- 1 Apologies received from Cllrs Lewis and Morris for reasons accepted by Committee
2. No declarations of interest and no dispensations required.
- 3 The minutes of 12th December 2023 were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.
4. Matters arising – Item 6, 2023/1159 – 14 Park Road: No decision has been made as yet.
5. Planning application for consideration

2023/1307 – Laburnum Court, Redehall Road, Smallfield

Siting of 5 park homes at Laburnum Court

This site is located within the Green Belt and any potential increase in the number of park homes must be considered against the harm an increase would cause to the Green Belt. The applicant proposes redeveloping a small area to the right, as you enter the site, to accommodate these caravans. Access is tight and there are concerns it would be difficult to gain entry whilst the hedgerow and trees remain in place. However, any plan to remove the vegetation would open up the site to views from the nearby homes of Geary Close and Redehall Road. This would create a more urban area over what is currently green space. Therefore, any development would cause permanent harm to the Green Belt and should not be permitted.

In addition, the caravans would be overlooking the rear of Pond Cottage on Redehall Road and be damaging to their privacy both at the back of the house and while using their rear garden.

There is insufficient parking on the site and any increase in number would cause further parking problems. We believe that a permit system is already in use and that residents struggle to obtain permits due to the limited number of parking spaces.

Residents report that they feel the site is not properly maintained now and an increase in the number of caravans would exacerbate this.

There is a planning condition in place that restricts the number of homes allowed at the site. This condition was put in place when a previous application to increase the number of homes was approved. The condition is intended to protect the remaining green space, neighbouring privacy and to prevent further harm to the Green Belt.

Recommend: Refuse

2023/1448 – 1 Woodside Cottages, 12 Redehall Road, Smallfield

Erection of single storey rear extension together with new roof over existing.

No objection: **Recommend Approve**

2023/1436 – 3 The Parade, 7 Redehall Road, Smallfield

Replace timber canopy infill with single storey rear extension.

Recommend: Approve

2023/1452 – Long Acre, 118 Redehall Road, Smallfield

Demolition of chimney, conservatory and garage. Erection of side extensions, with hip to gable loft conversions on either side and the addition of 6 rooflights (CLOPD)

Recommend: N/A

2023/1458 – 1 Kings Mead, Smallfield

Erection of two storey side and rear extensions

2023/1459 – 1 Kings Mead, Smallfield

Erection of garden building. (CLOPD)

2023/1464 – Land West of Chapel Road, Smallfield

Outline planning application for residential development (Use Class C3) comprising up to 270 dwellings; private parking; landscaping and public open spaces; SUDs; and flood alleviation measures and land reserved for education use. (Outline application with all matters reserved save for access).

The Parish Council requests that this application is referred to the Tandridge Planning Committee for determination.

We note, that while this application states it relates to the Chapel Road site, all information regarding proposed development at the Burstow School main site in the centre of the village and the playing field on Redehall Road remain included in the documents provided. The Parish Council currently holds a 30-year lease for a portion of the Playing Field site along the eastern boundary for use as free community parking. The car park is scheduled to open in February 2024.

Outline planning permission is sought (access only to be determined) for the provision of up to 270 residential dwellings. The site is within the Green Belt, and as such, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would also cause permanent harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In Council's opinion, there are no Very Special Circumstances that exist which would outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. Council is also of the opinion that other suggested benefits, such as affordable housing, flood alleviation proposals, economic and employment benefits do not outweigh the harm that would be caused by this development.

The historic use for this site is agricultural, for both grazing and the production of crops. The current tenant has been informed he can no longer rent the land. Anecdotally the site is known to be very wet during rainy periods and is one of the first parcels of land at the bottom of Rookery Hill. Surface water run-off from Outwood pools in the field.

Green Belt

The site is located within the Green Belt and a key issue is whether the proposal would constitute appropriate development within the Green Belt and if not, whether there are any special circumstances to outweigh the harm by inappropriateness and any other identified harm, including harm to openness. It would also have to consider any harm to the character or appearance not only of the site, but also to the wider locality. Furthermore, the proposal would have to demonstrate that these very special circumstances are unique to this site and could not be replicated elsewhere, thus rendering them no longer 'very special'. In addition, the proposal would give rise to great harm to the Green Belt's openness by reason of its built form, its density, layout and domestic curtilage. The developer has outlined an area to be set aside for 'Education'. We note that the area allocated is substantially smaller than the area proposed during the public consultation and as part of the 2022/738 EIA application. At present Burstow School has made it very clear that they are not planning to relocate to a new site. Without the 'carrot' of a new school, the Parish Council believes the proposal fails to demonstrate any evidence that Very Special Circumstances apply in this case that would outweigh the substantial harm caused.

The Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), attached great importance to Green Belts and states the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The NPPF regards any development in the Green Belt as inappropriate and p147 states '*Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*'

There are five purposes to Green Belt policy.

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The Government reiterated their intention to protect the Green Belt in December 2023. They also stated that their intention is to offer greater weight to local opinion regarding potential development. The residents of Burstow, in both this consultation and the consultation relating to 2022/738/EIA have been very vocal in their opposition.

Affordable Housing

The scheme would propose up to 270 residential dwellings (61 x 1/2bed flats, 62 x 2-bed houses, 96 x 3-bed houses and 51 x 4-bed houses). It will provide 40% of the new dwellings as affordable in line with current policy. The affordable housing breakdown would be as follows:

- 1 and 2 bed flats – 49.2%
- 2-bed houses – 64.5%
- 3-bed houses - 23.9%
- 4-bed houses – 0%

In the D&A Statement Part 3, Rydon state the affordable provision would be split as 75% affordable rent and 25% immediate housing in the form of First Homes.

Following on from the Grenfell tragedy, Rydon have been excluded from the Government first home ownership scheme.

The Parish Council opines that offering 40% affordable housing is another gesture towards 'Very Special Circumstances' to outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

Burstow Parish Council commissioned a housing needs survey in 2019. That survey reported that the level of need was for 16 dwellings; of which 7 were on the housing register. Since 2019 a 51-dwelling affordable housing development has come forward, built and is occupied. In addition, application 2022/1658 – Land next to Meadow View, Smallfield, was recently approved by Tandridge District Council. This development offers 120 dwellings; of which 40% is to be affordable. The Parish Council would posit there is no requirement for additional affordable housing in the Parish and therefore no *Very Special Circumstances* regarding Green Belt development are relevant.

Landscape Value

The Tandridge DC Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study, Smallfield 2016, states that this site is particularly visible as the open and rural setting along the northern approach to Smallfield, along Chapel Road and that any development would have a **major** impact. The study also considered the landscape capacity and states

Site SMA013 has substantial sensitivity due to its inconsistency with the existing settlement form/pattern, its contribution to the setting of the surrounding landscape, and its visual sensitivity. Combined with moderate value, the site has low capacity for housing development. Development in this area would have a significant detrimental effect on visual amenity and the character of the landscape.

Burstow Primary School currently has children from Horley, Crawley, Pound Hill and other areas on its register as there are more places available than children from the Parish. More than 50% of the children attending(216c) do not live in Smallfield and so travel by private vehicle. In our opinion, there are other viable alternative locations should a new school be needed.

Transport & Sustainability

NPPF 104 states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan making and development proposals so that

- (a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;
- (b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
- (c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- (d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed, and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and

(e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality place

Furthermore, NPPF 105 then goes on to say;

The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

Chapel Road is an unclassified/minor road in Smallfield, designed to link smaller towns and villages. It is a relatively narrow, two-lane road, with a narrow pavement along the eastern side. Due to the dwellings located along the east of Chapel Road there is no capacity to increase the width of the pavement to the minimum 1200mm recommended in the Disability Discrimination Act. The west boundary of Chapel Road is predominantly grass verge, with regular culverts cut into it. Whilst there is scope to create a new pavement on the east side bordering the proposed land, this capability does not extend beyond the site's southern boundary. There is insufficient width on the road to allow some be repurposed as pavement. Residents of the new development or children attending the current school would have to walk along a narrow pavement to reach the village and services.

There is a very limited bus service to and from Smallfield and Chapel Road is served by the cruiser 315 service, operating between Dormansland and Redhill. There are 2 buses from Dormansland to Smallfield, Mon- Fri only, that would enable children to arrive at school before 9am and none coming from the Redhill direction. The nearest train station is in Horley; which is 2.7miles or a 50-minute walk away. It is reasonable to assume that school staff, students and residents of the proposed development would be reliant on private vehicle for transport.

Burstow Primary School currently has children from Horley, Crawley, Pound Hill and other areas on its register as there are more places available than children from the Parish. More than 50% of the children attending(216c) do not live in Smallfield and so travel by private vehicle.

The most recent census (2021) results for the Parish are now published and over 56% of workers use a car or van to travel to their place of work. By comparison 2.3% travel by train, 1.2% by bus, minibus or coach and less than 1% by either taxi or motorcycle. Less than 9% of residents do not own a vehicle. This clearly illuminates the lack of available public transport and the need for residents to have access to private transport.

Each year we see an increase in the number of vehicles passing through our village. The Traffic Commissioners office award more and more HGV operator licences to companies either operating in or around Smallfield leading to an increase of HGV movements. Whilst these vehicles generally do not speed, their size and the 'air wake' they create due to narrow roads and pavements contributes to an impression of speed and a feeling of danger.

Recent significant building of residential homes close to Smallfield include;

- Forge Wood, Crawley 1,900 new dwellings
- Riverbrook Place Crawley 190
- St Modwyns, Copthorne 500 homes
- The Acres, Horley 710

All of these generate additional vehicle movements on nearby roads, many of which pass through Smallfield.

We have an active Speed watch group in the Parish. They operate in 6 locations, covering the entry and exit points around Smallfield. As part of their hour-long sessions, the team record the total number of vehicles passing. Throughout both 2022 and 2023 the Group held 94 sessions, spread evenly across the 6 locations. The total number of vehicles recorded over the 94 hours was 36,620 in 2022. By 2023 this had increased to 40,433; a 10.4% increase in just 12 months.

The proposal to provide 270c new dwellings does not correlate with either 104 or 105 of the NPPF

When considering development proposals regard should be given to NPPF 110 where it states specific applications should ensure

- (a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- (b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;

NPPF 112 states

- (a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- (b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

It is clear from the lack of public transport and the unsuitable pavements that this application does not meet these requirements.

Character and Appearance

Whilst no details of dwelling appearance are included within the scoping report, Rydon state their intention to provide 'up to 3-storey dwellings'. At present Smallfield does not have any buildings greater than 2-storey. The site is overlooked by low density dwellings on the opposite side of Chapel Road. The majority are detached dwellings, either bungalows or two-storey, each sitting within a relatively large plot of land. The NPPF and Tandridge DP7 – 'General Policy for New Development' requires any new development to be in keeping with and contribute to the distinctive character, appearance and amenity of the area in which it is located.

SMA013 at Chapel Road is proposing to create 270c dwellings, plus land allocated for education. Any new development of this nature would be in direct contravention of DP7 as well as DP10. To the north of the site lies an historical building, Burstow Manor. Development of this site will cause harm to the Manor.

Any development of this site located to the northeast of Smallfield, would immediately create a 'bulge' in the village boundary, invading into the Green Belt. This could lead to further development pressures and there are few natural 'site boundaries' that would allow the area to be protected.

Many residents in Carey's Wood, The Cravens, Charlotte Grove and Hayes Walk moved into their homes some time ago. Part of the reason they choose their home was because of the quiet, rural nature of the area. To build a school, immediately beside their homes will take away the amenity/green space feeling of their homes. They did not choose to live beside a school (with all the noise, parking and disruption schools bring) and therefore should not have a school imposed upon them. When Rydon attended a briefing meeting with the Parish Council this point, along with others, was made and the parish council suggested the school be placed toward the northern end of the field. This, along with other suggestions was ignored.

Flooding

Smallfield is low lying, on predominantly clay ground. Water drains west towards the river Mole but is impeded by the M23 where water is culverted and must be piped from one side of the motorway to the other. The most recent severe flooding episode was in 2013/14 where, despite having no large water courses, over £10m of damage occurred. The NPPF aims to direct development away from areas that are known to flood to other low risk areas. P160 states a cumulative risk assessment approach should be followed, taking in to account cumulative impacts in or affecting local areas susceptible to flooding. P162 then looks to direct new development away from flood risk areas. Most of the flood remediation works identified in 2014 remain outstanding, including a flood remediation program.

P167 places responsibility on planning authorities to ensure that a flood risk is not increased anywhere else if they grant consent for development. The southern boundary of the site is known to regularly be under water and the bridle path in the southwest corner is frequently under water during winter months as water runs off the land.

Smallfield has a combined waste/storm water system, a throwback to when water was nationalised. No improvements to or increase in capacity to drains has been carried out in at least the 60+ years. Residents living in Orchard Road, Plough Road, Wheelers Lane and Redehall Road find themselves unable to use a toilet, take a shower, wash clothes, etc during periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall. There simply is no capacity left in the system to cope and, rather than have their homes flooded with sewage, they chose not to generate any wastewater themselves. Thames Water engineers, during site visits, have told residents that the pumps are simply not powerful enough to cope with the demands and that a new larger main is needed.

The Flood Event of 2013/14 showed the % of rainfall in the period at being 150% of the annual average rainfall between 1991 and 2020. In 2023 we again experienced 150% of the average rainfall. Climate Change is increasing the amount of rain experienced in our area.

The proposal would give rise to great harm to the Green Belt's openness by reason of its built form, its density, layout and domestic curtilage. Any proposal would have to demonstrate that this and only this site could be used to provide a new school and 270c dwellings. Tandridge DC has excluded this site from its draft Local Plan, whilst also identifying other areas within the Parish and it is clear that there are no 'very special circumstance' that outweigh the harm.

For all of these reasons the Parish Council urges Tandridge to refuse this application.

2023/1480 – Woodside House, Copthorne Bank, Copthorne

Demolition of existing dwelling, garage and outbuildings (retention of shed and garage).
Erection of 2 x detached dwellings and 1 x detached garage with new driveway and car parking areas.

The Planning Committee notes this site is located within the Green Belt. The applicant offers no 'very special circumstance' that outweigh the permanent harm caused to the Green Belt.

Recommend: Refuse

6. Decisions and Appeal

2022/1044/Cond1 – Wat Sri Intra Atula, Copthorne Bank, Copthorne

Details pursuant to the discharge of condition 3 (Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Statement) and condition 4 (Materials) of planning permission ref: 2022/1044 dated 3 March 2023. Removal of marquee. Construction of Thai Buddhist Temple *Approval of condition details.*

2023/1163 – Winnetts, Normans Road, Smallfield

Demolition of timber constructed residential block and various out buildings. Erection of 6x two bedroom semidetached dwellings and extension to Winnetts house to form 5x 1bedroom flats. (Outline application for Access, Appearance, Landscaping & Layout) *Refused.*

2023/1227 – Redcot, Weatherhill Common, Smallfield

Retrospective approval for boundary fencing fronting a highway and extension of the curtilage to the newly fenced boundary *Refused.*

2023/905 – Redcot, Weatherhill Common, Smallfield

Retrospective approval for boundary fencing facing highway. *Approved*

2023/1265 – 10 Park Road, Smallfield

Erection of a rear dormer in connection with conversion of resultant loft space to habitable accommodation. (Certificate of Lawfulness for a Proposed use or Development) *pp is not required.*

2023/1252 – Rookery Mead, Rookery Lane, Smallfield

Certificate of Lawfulness to seek confirmation of non compliance with condition 2 GO/R.145/73: agricultural occupancy. *Granted.*

7.The Clerk

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 18.59. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 9th January 2024. The time will be confirmed nearer to the date. Any Councillors attending via Zoom do not vote.

Signed.....

Dated.....