

UNADOPTED

POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2006 in the Council Chamber, 49 High Street, Polegate at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. T Voyce (Chair), S. Barber, Mrs C Berry, G. Carter, M. Fitzgerald, G. Gibbs, Mrs M Piper, Mrs J Voyce

2 members of the press
16 members of the public

The Chair welcomed councillors and members of the press and public to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Members of the public were also advised that they would have the opportunity to address the committee later in the meeting and once Standing Orders had been suspended.

7190 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr. Harmer.

7191 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs. T & Mrs J Voyce, Carter, Barber, Fitzgerald, Gibbs and Mrs Piper declared a non prejudicial interest in application nos: WD/2006/1415/MEA and WD/2006/1416/MEA.

Cllr. Mrs Berry declared a non prejudicial interest in application nos: WD/2006/1415/MEA and WD/2006/1416/MEA. However in view of the literature that had recently been circulated in objection to the proposed developments, she wished to record in advance a prejudicial interest in matters affecting the High Street.

7192 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 AUGUST 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2006 were adopted as correct and signed by the Chair.

7193 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

At this point the Chair read out a statement that set out the background to the two development applications and identified the Council's concerns. The Council's response to the applications was also clarified as follows:

- Welcome to the most significant planning meeting Polegate Town Council has called, or certainly that I have chaired.
- The first two items on the agenda are applications for Phase 1 and Phase 11 by Pelham Homes, to be sited north-west and north-east of the A22 respectively, on what is locally known as Cophall land.
- Policy S19 of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Structure Plan identifies Polegate for major development. The Wealden District Council non-statutory Local Plan identifies Polegate as suitable to accept allocations of 600 homes west of the A22 and 250 homes plus a business park east of Shepham Lane.
- We have been told that there is an inevitability about vast numbers of new dwellings being built in Polegate for such a long time that we have almost stopped recording our initial response to the idea, but perhaps now is the time to resurrect it.
- The overwhelming first preference of Polegate Town Council, in line with popular feeling within Polegate, was to have no major development within the town. Both long term residents and people moving in from other areas express great praise for the dynamics of our community and it would be our greatest wish that we be left alone to continue to enjoy it. To that end, we fully emphasise with the groups that are endeavouring to stop these applications from being approved.
- However, as a Town Council, our responsibilities are different. We have the onerous obligation to manage whatever decision is forced upon us and the responsible way to do that is to consider all the 'what ifs'. Unlike the pressure groups, we cannot put all our efforts into one possible outcome and then walk away if we fail.
- We can state we do not want any major developments, but the aforementioned documents have already weakened that argument to the extent that Council has now moved on to the 'what ifs'.
- Our dilemma is that if Wealden determine acceptance of 600 homes, should PTC have supported the proposal for 1000 homes in order to achieve the benefit of a parkway station and primary school?
- If Wealden determine acceptance of 1000 homes, should the Town Council have pushed for Phase 11 as well in order to benefit from a grade separated roundabout and a secondary school?
- If both phases 1 and 11 are agreed, will it open the floodgates for other phases to follow because a suitably improved infrastructure will then already be in place?

- Council has considered these issues and formulated the outline of a list of concerns. We must further debate these concerns at this meeting and present them in the format of a response to a planning application.
- I would suggest as a starting point that if we are to have any major development on the proposed site Council states it **must** be supported by the Folkington link trunk road, the grade separation of Cophall roundabout, a primary school and a parkway station, and that it should be our purpose to achieve these provisions with the planning gain from the least possible number of homes.
- The Town Council is obliged to protect local residents from the unthinkable potential outcome that permission is granted for these (and other) major developments without the developers being tied in to the provision of the road and infrastructure improvements we, as a Council, have identified as being essential for our Town's continued viability.

7194 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

WD/2006/1415/MEA Land at and adjoining Honey Farm, Eastbourne Road, Polegate. Outline permission is sought for 1000 homes together with 4,500 sq.m. of employment (B1) development, a one form entry primary school and associated community facilities together with open space, landscape and habitat creation areas with access, including the west of Polegate highway improvements, submitted in detail.

One letter of objection received.

It was then proposed, seconded and agreed by all to suspend Standing Orders to allow members of the public to address the committee and express their concerns. These are summarised as follows.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

There was general opposition to the scheme as it was considered that there would be no major benefit to the town especially as there are no facilities to accommodate the additional population, i.e. hospitals, water supply, education etc. There would also be an unacceptable loss of green space and wildlife habitat. Residents from the Sayerland Lane area expressed the view that they had not been adequately consulted by the developers which was a point of particular concern especially as they would be quite seriously affected by the proposals. Concern was also expressed that the housing allocation appeared to be concentrated in the Polegate area with no consideration given to the rest of the district and that only a small percentage of the development was designated as affordable housing.

The view was also expressed that the Folkington link road should be funded by the Highways Agency and not be reliant on housing development and that major developments sited close to stations and roundabouts would generate a considerable amount of urban pollution.

The close proximity of the proposed development to the Sussex Downs (AONB) was considered to be detrimental to the countryside.

The ability of the developers to actually provide the Folkington link was questioned as the land required for this project was not available and developers do not have the rights to compulsory purchase.

Overall it was considered that the proposed sites are the wrong location for this type of development.

The Chair thanked the public for their input and reinstated Standing Orders.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

The Chair then put the application proposal to the committee for discussion and comment.

It was noted that the planning application was in outline and therefore the Council's comments, concerns and observations were in principle only and that there would be many more opportunities for more in depth consultation as the application progressed. It was also reiterated that whilst the Council's first preference would be for no major development to take place it was considered necessary to have as much input as possible in order to obtain the best possible outcome for the town.

Cllr. Mrs Piper said that as she had always worked to preserve the countryside she did not feel she could support this application.

At this point the Chair again proposed suspension of Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak and this was seconded and agreed by all.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

Some further comments from the public were then received as follows.

A resident said that a letter had only recently been received from Wealden District Council advising of the planning application and expressed disappointment that residents had not been properly consulted prior to the application being registered.

An opinion was expressed that the proposed Parkway Station would mean the loss of Polegate Station as it was considered unlikely that the rail authorities would agree to operate both stations.

Residents also commented that developers had approached them offering incentives not to object to the application.

A gas main had been installed at the same time as the bypass was under construction which indicated prior knowledge of the planning proposals.

The Chair advised residents that there had been several opportunities for public consultation and involvement as follows:

A three day public exhibition was held by the developers at the United Reformed Church Hall on 29th June, 30th June and 1st July.

Officers from WDC Major Applications Team were available outside the Council Office on 3rd July for public consultation.

A Full Council meeting, open to the public, was held on 24th July at which the development proposals were discussed and residents also had the opportunity to speak at this and future Planning Committee Meetings.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

The Chair then asked the committee to finalise its response on this application and it was agreed by all, with the exception of Cllr. Mrs Piper, to submit the Town Council's comments, concerns and observations, as follows, to the District Council.

Phase 1

Pelham Homes - land west of Cophall Roundabout

Whilst the Council's first preference is for no major development, it would support the provision of 1,000 new homes provided there is sufficient planning gain and benefit to the town. However, the provision of a 4,500 sq.m. business park is a matter of concern as it is not considered to be sustainable unless it is linked to the parkway station. Without this facility the units are almost certain to stand empty.

It is agreed that the Folkington link trunk road is an essential component of the application. It is also agreed that the A27 (Lewes Road) should become a no through road past the entrance to Stud Farm which will be a benefit to the residents of that estate. However the Council objects to the planned vehicular access to the application site via the old A22, not the new trunk road, and would prefer access to be provided from the new roundabout on the proposed Folkington link to service the whole site., including the proposed primary school. Council also supports the provision of a pedestrian and cycle access from the new development to the High Street via Brookside Avenue with the provision of a pelican crossing under a footbridge.

The provision of a Parkway Station is supported as this will alleviate commuter parking. However an alternative provision for substantial parking would need to be provided should the Parkway Station not be a feasible option.

The provision of a primary school is considered to be essential as the existing school is at saturation point and would not be able to accommodate any additional intake.

With regard to community facilities, the Council would wish to see the following provision:

- Convenience store to be located at the Parkway Station
- Doctors surgery/local treatment centre
- Dentist
- Multi purpose sports hall
- Tennis courts
- Community Centre
- Place of worship
- Cemetery
- All weather sports facility
- Outdoor cinema
- Community open space

Tennis and all weather sports facility to be located on Council land.

However, the Council would not support phase 1 in isolation if the development did not provide sufficient planning gain and benefit to residents.

The provision of a graded separation and the provision of an underpass are considered essential which may not be achieved by the provision of phase 1 in isolation which may only provide a high level roundabout. It is also considered essential that the graded separation of the roundabout should form part of a 106 agreement.

WD/2006/1416/MEA Land at and adjoining Honey Farm, Eastbourne Road, Polegate, together with land at and adjoining Bramley Farm, Bay Tree Lane, Polegate. Outline permission is sought for 2,200 homes together with 9000 sq.m. of employment (B1) development, two x one form entry primary schools, a secondary school and associated community facilities together with open space, landscape and habitat creation areas with access, including the west of Polegate highway improvements, submitted in detail.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed by all, with the exception of Cllr. Mrs Piper, that whilst the Council's first preference is for no major development, it would support phase 1 if there was provision for a grade separated roundabout. However if this is not possible then consideration would be given to supporting phase 1 and 2 together, and that the same comments as for phase 1, WD/2006/1415/MEA, be submitted to the District Council, with the exception of the provision of a business park which is not considered to be a viable option unless it is linked to the Parkway Station. It was also agreed that because of the need for a grade separated roundabout, if this could be provided within phase 1 of the development then the Council would not support phase 2.

Suggestions for the use of commuted sums in relation to both applications:

- Contribution towards the regeneration of the town centre and improvements to the shopping precinct.
- Additional parking on railway land adjacent to Black Path Road.
- Continuation and improvements to the road system into Eastbourne, in particular Cross Levels Way with the provision of an additional roundabout to assist traffic flow and alleviate congestion at Cross Levels Way.
- Provision of a link road between the Cophall phase 1 development site and Eastbourne and no right turn out of the development onto the old A22.

7195 DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

WD/2006/2020/F 67 Greenleaf Gardens, Polegate. Demolition and reconstruction of garage on new ground bearing raft.

NO OBJECTIONS

WD/2006/2112/F 17 Hastings Close, Polegate. Dormer to rear and escape window to front roof slope.

NO OBJECTIONS

WD/2006/2194/F 17 Westfield Close, Polegate. Single storey side extension and internal alterations.

NO OBJECTIONS

WD/2006/2131/F 65 High Street, Polegate. Internal alterations and new shop front, widening front door.

OBJECTIONS:

1. There is no adequate vehicle access to the rear of the premises.
2. Premises would be more suited to a retail business.
3. A mortuary is not appropriate in a retail and residential area.

7196 DETAILS OF PLANNING DECISIONS

There were none.

7197 CORRESPONDENCE

a) Invitation from WDC for Council representatives to participate in workshops to explore ideas on developing a Design Guide as part of the LDF - no members were able to attend.

7198 PLANNING UPDATES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

The apparent lack of consultation and involvement of residents living in Shepham Lane with regard to the proposed Pelham Homes developments was discussed and noted.

