

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Planning Committee Meeting held on the 8th December 2015

PRESENT: Cllrs. Chris Charter (Chairman), Sandy Simpson (Vice Chairman), Shaun Perry, Keith Martin and Robert Carey.

In attendance Louise Chater (Clerk), 47 registered electors of the parish of Earnley, 11 residents of Earnley, 94 members of the public, Chairman of East Wittering & Bracklesham Parish Council, Clerk of East Wittering & Bracklesham Parish Council and two members of the press.

P131.15 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman welcomed the public to the meeting.

Q: What do we know about Stone Harbour Ltd

A: What we understand is the land and property is owned by the Bett Trust (consisting of two trustees) and managed by Stone Harbour Ltd on behalf of the Trust.

Statement from member of public: Earnley Charitable Trust was set up 1953 it had a strict remit to be charitable to young people in particular to children of deceased armed forces officers.

The Parish Council responded: We are currently researching this area and have obtained some data, one of the key things we need to obtain is the trust document and we are currently working on this.

A member of the public stated that they had a copy of the trust document and would forward it to the parish council - thanks was given for this information.

Q: What grounds are the parish council going object to this application on?

A: We can't comment on this at the present time as it will be considered pre-determination.

Q: If you were to object will you be seeking legal advice?

A: Again, when the Parish Council have decided how the Parish Council are going react to this application we will then be able to comment on this.

A member of the public read out a written statement (a copy attached). In it he pointed out that a prospective buyer of a caravan had pulled out at the last minute citing the proposed Asylum Seeker hostel as his reason. The Chairman requested his statement be forwarded to Chichester District Council.

A member of the public made the statement: It is a planning application to change from a residential institution to a hostel a lot of the considerations apply to whatever sort of hostel is opened.

The Parish Council responded that most District Councils have a policy on the use of Hostels. We have been unable to locate a policy on the District Council website and have now requested clarification if they have such a policy.

Statement: If it goes ahead it is very important that the community must welcome and engage with the residents of the hostel.

The Parish Council responded: It is all of our responsibility to make the community to feel safe.

Q: Thousands of pounds have been on the nature reserve what is going to happen to it?

A: In fact, £30 million has been spent on the reserve. The Environment Agency and Natural England will be consulted on the application.

Q: The planning application is short on information on transport. Is there any requirement to show that there is a need for a hostel?

A: We agree that there is a lack of information with regard to transport. It is very unusual to have to state a need within a planning application.

Statement by the public: The accommodation is to be four people to a room, bearing in mind the requirement for prison is only 2 per room.

The Parish Council responded: When the Clerk and the Chairman of the parish council visited the site there were two sets of double bunks per room. It will be Chichester District Council's responsibility to ensure the accommodation meets the safety and suitability of the room size in relation to the numbers.

Q: Can you only take it on the basis of the change of use?

A: The Parish Council can only view the planning application from the view of planning matters not the proposed use as this is not specifically stated in the planning application, however with the knowledge the Council has about the proposal for this site we do need to consider this information.

Q: Is it an application for an asylum seekers hostel?

A: You don't specifically need planning consents for an asylum centre if the site already had the relevant planning consent (Hostel) it could potentially just open.

Statement from member of the public: The application does not state amount of staff.

A: Other than the issue of vehicle movements this is not a planning consideration.

Cllr. Perry closed the public question time.

P132.15 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

District Cllr. Susan Taylor - holiday

District Cllr. Grahame Barrett - holiday

County Cllr. Peter Montyn - prior engagement

P133.15 CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Declarations of Interest on items included on the agenda - none.

2. Dispensation requests- none.

P136.15 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

15/03867/FUL

Stone Harbour Limited

Earnley Concourse Clappers Lane Earnley

Change of use from C2 (residential institution) to a flexible use of C2 and a hostel

As a parish Council we know that the home office is looking to use the centre through their agent Clear Spring. We have heard this at a briefing at Chichester District Council and from the Managing Agent, Stone Harbour therefore we cannot disassociate the proposed use from the planning application. This will not be a detention centre and the initial plan is to use the centre for six month's subject to a projection of the numbers of asylum seekers.

Concern was expressed with regard to the accuracy of the planning application in relation to the conservation area and the surroundings. No mention was made on the planning application of the residential care home, RSPB car park or the properties to the south of the application. It was noted that Drove lane to the east is the only access to Medmerry Holiday Village which is a major contributor to the local economy.

Concern was expressed that the application ~~does~~may not comply with the Charitable trusts requirements

It was noted that one of the key Local Plan vision statements is that residents should feel safe and secure, the proposed use of this building is generating a significant fear of crime.

It was considered that the application would have a negative effect on the tourist economy. The perception in the future for the whole of the manhood peninsula would centre on the asylum seekers centre. At the recent Manhood Peninsula Forum, it had been stated that tourist income from the peninsula made up over 50% of the tourist income for the whole Chichester district.

Concern was expressed with regard to the road safety issues, to access the number 53/52 bus route or shops residents of the hostel would have to walk down an unlit lane with no pavements, recent road traffic surveys highlight that the traffic frequently travels in excess of the speed limit. In addition, insufficient information had been included with regard to the traffic movements.

The Council recognised the concerns of residents that the number of young men in great need and from disparate backgrounds in one location may well lead to instances of public disorder and negatively affect the peace and quiet of the area. Given the small population any instance of public disorder would have a disproportionate impact.

If permitted there would be a significant demographic change to the population of the village of Earnley as there is only approximately 150 residents in the immediate area of the proposed hostel. The asylum seekers were at the first stage the application process and would only stay at the concourse between 3-19 days, however Clear Spring had advised that there would potentially be 200 residents on the site at all times and therefore there could potentially be 6500 young men coming through the site within the year. It was noted that the Concourse previously advertised a maximum occupancy of 101 residents, therefore the proposed application doubled the previous maximum long-term use. Concern was expressed with regard to the detrimental effect this would have on the sewage system which regularly experienced overloading during adverse weather conditions.

In planning law there is no legal definition of a hostel, however a hostel usually provides short term overnight accommodation, which may be supervised. If it was approved, it could open up the possibility of low cost hostel accommodation for bird watches etc which would significantly increase the traffic movements within the parish which is contrary to the limited information supplied within the planning application.

Concern was expressed that the applicants had not complied with 16.28 of the Chichester District Council Local Plan to demonstrate a tourist or leisure facility is no longer required and therefore the application for a change of use was premature. It was highlighted that the British Learning Academy continue to advertise courses at the Concourse in 2016.

The Concourse would be an initial accommodation centre, the asylum seeker will be sent to dispersal centres elsewhere in the country after processing. When you consider the ratio recommended for dispersal areas, Earnley would only take two refugees, this should be taken into consideration when considering an initial asylum centre. It was noted that the Refugee Council recommend that initial accommodation should be located near main centres of population where successful asylum seekers will be dispersed.

There are insufficient support services within a small rural area, there are no drop in services, there are no charitable organisations, and a language barrier within the local area community would be significant.

On a proposal by Cllr. Perry, it was RESOLVED to object to the application as it was considered contrary to a number Chichester District Local Plan Policies and was inappropriate for the local area. On a show of hands, there was a unanimous vote to object to the application.

On a proposal by Cllr. Martin it was agreed that the Parish Council copy the letter of objection to Andrew Tyrie MP and Dominic Smith, Highways Development Manager, West Sussex County Council

The Parish Council business closed at 20.02pm

The Chairman opened the floor to public.

Q: Do Stone Harbour have any experience with working with this client group?

A: Stone Harbour are only the managing agents for the Trust the centre will be run by Clear Spring who are a Home Office Contractor.

Q: The meeting next week is it one long meeting with tea break?

A: No it is two separate meetings to enable different people to attend.

Q: The application states that there are no properties to the south however, there are a minimum of two properties to the south with the only access road via Drove Lane.

A: Please submit a comment to Chichester District Council clarifying this point.

Q: Having received confirmation from Clear Spring that the people staying in the centre would have to sign in and sign out surely this is a dentation centre all bar the name. If it was a detention centre would it require a planning permission

A: A prison or detention centre would have a different set of planning rules.

Q: If they decide to offer courses would that change anything?

A: We don't know until we have had sight of the Trust deeds.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20.13pm

Signed: _____

Chairman Earnley Parish Council Planning Committee

Dated: _____