

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Meeting of Isfield Parish Council
held on Wednesday 16th August 2023
at Isfield Village Hall.

31. Present

Cllrs G Sambrook (Chairman), A Keys, S Cramond and T Mitchell-Cobb.

District Councillor C Coleman, Alison Stevens (Clerk) and ten members of the public were also present.

32. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Brooks. The reason for his apologies was accepted by the Full Council.

33. Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 24th July 2023

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 24th July 2023 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

34. Clerk's Report on Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on this agenda

The bank has now added Councillor Keys to the Parish Council's list of bank signatories.

35. Disclosures of Interest

There were no declarations of interests nor were there any changes to the Register of Interests.

The meeting was then suspended.

36. Questions from Members of the Public

Ms Meakin read from her opening statement which was as follows;

- 1) Although the Councillors will be fully aware of this, I want to draw attention to the fact that this **retrospective** planning application concerns the conversion of an existing double garage (entirely in keeping with its setting with oak doors etc.) into what is effectively a separate urban-style dwelling (complete with kitchen, bathroom, connection to sewage system and an outside sitting area) which has been offered as a holiday let since March 2023 **without any attempt to apply for planning permission**.

Further the conversion is entirely out of keeping with other properties in the immediate area. It was given a separate house name plate and was immediately advertised for Airbnb letting as soon as building was completed in March 2023, and this has continued since. Apparently no thought or consideration was given to the impact this would obviously have on the very nearby neighbour living in the Grade II listed Pear Tree Cottage. Mrs. Crosby, the adjoining very near neighbour to the conversion, was not informed that the conversion would be a holiday let.

- 2) Wealden's Planning website helpfully lists 20 issues they will consider in respect of comments on planning applications. **The Buckham Hill neighbours can validly make comments of objection on at least 15 out of these 20 issues** and we will do so. For example, there are many infringements in this retrospective planning application of local and national planning policies.
- 3) Mrs. Crosby has highlighted the following issues:
 - **Neighbour amenity and wider impact:** intrusion, loss of privacy, noise, light

pollution.

- **Visual Appearance:** not in keeping with the area's distinct character.
 - **Heritage Assets and Harm to Grade II property:** Pear Tree cottage is an early 19th Century Georgian pink Gothic cottage. The conversion is less than 4 metres from this Grade II property and detracts from it.
 - **Adverse Impact on the Ashdown Forest:** Buckham Hill lies within the 7km of protected area of the Ashdown Forest.
 - **Highway safety issues:** nearness to a blind corner well known for its danger, adequacy of parking, reversing on to the highway, vehicle movements, traffic generation.
 - **Precedent;** future development infill.
- 4) Mrs. Crosby has also pointed out many **misleading and inaccurate statements** in this retrospective planning application. This does not give us confidence that we can rely on the overall accuracy of the retrospective application. Quite the reverse.
- 5) We are very disappointed that **Wealden Planning Enforcement has been unable to stop the on-going temporary letting that started in March 2023** and has been continuous ever since.

Other residents from Buckham Hill supported these objections and also said that;

- 1) In a Google search it looks like the mature beech hedge is being removed.
- 2) Other applications have been refused in Buckham Hill because there are no pavements so this should be too. An application for the Oast House had a condition imposed that meant it had to use obscure glass to protect the neighbour's privacy. This doesn't.
- 3) Sewage already 'bubbles up' onto a neighbouring field and this will make the situation worse.
- 4) Changes have been made without planning permission.

Mr Gilfillan, the applicant, said;

- 1) Parking is not permitted outside the development. The garage was previously used for storage so no parking spaces have been lost.
- 2) The hedge is not being removed. There is a mobile fence around it for the chickens and it must have been this that was shown on the Google map.
- 3) The new design is a matter of opinion, the roof and walls are staying the same.
- 4) He was allowed to change the garage within his permitted development rights but later found he needed planning permission to rent it out. This was disputed by neighbours who said its proximity alone would have meant it breached any permitted development rights.
- 5) The sewage arrangements meet the Environment Agency regulations.
- 6) They have not received any complaints in the six months they have been operating as an Airbnb.

District Councillor Coleman said;

- 1) She has spoken to the Case Officer who explained Wealden has a Rural Tourism Policy in favour of such developments and any material planning considerations will need to be balanced against that. Residents said it breaches that policy because it adversely affects the neighbours.
- 2) If more than three objections are received the application will be called into Planning Committee North for a Decision.

In reply to District Councillor Coleman's comment that the Case Officer has highlighted support for tourism Ms Meakin quoted from page 10 of Mrs. Crosby's addendum objections:

'From Mr. and Mrs. Gilfillan's own submission, items 1.2.2 – 1.2.6 in the Section PLANNING POLICY, I note the following points taken from policy documents and planning policies of the WD Local Plan, have been highlighted which actually supports many of the concerns covered within the IMPACT ON NEIGHBOUR AMENITY of my objections and are therefore contrary to this retrospective planning application:

Policy DC7 – Tourism Accommodation in the countryside: supports the development of rural

buildings for tourist accommodation where the use will not adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbourhood, by reason of noise, disturbance or traffic. (Again, the converted garage does exactly that!)

The meeting was then reopened.

37. Planning Applications

WD/2023/1878/FR - Oaktree Cottage, Buckham Hill, Isfield, TN22 5XZ - A retrospective application for change of use of existing outbuilding to C3 short term holiday let with associated external alterations – Isfield Parish Council supports the objections made by the residents of Buckham Hill. It also objects to this application because it is retrospective, full planning permission for the changes has never been sought, the property has been allowed to be rented out in the meantime and the loss of Amenity for the neighbouring Pear Tree Cottage. The Airbnb to the west elevation looks directly into the garden and conservatory/dining room. This along with the added car engine noise, and light pollution is significantly detrimental to the resident's current peaceful enjoyment of their garden which they have enjoyed for many years.

WD/2023/1943/F - Boathouse Farm, Lewes Road, Isfield, TN22 5TY - Proposed agricultural dwelling (resubmission of WD/2022/2002/F) showing alternative siting – Isfield Parish Council has no objections to this application.

38. Wealden Local Plan Preparation

A discussion took place on when the best time is to make the Parish Council's views on the Owlsberry and Ashdown Business Park developments known, so they can be included in the Local Plan. It was generally agreed that submitting any comments too soon could prove to be counter-productive and that there is not much we can do at this stage.

39. Questions from Parish Councillors

Councillor Cramond confirmed he is looking into the possibility of having an electric vehicle charging point in the village and will report back when he has more information.

There were no further questions and the meeting closed at 7.45pm.

