

MILLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held at Milland Memorial Hall on Thursday 6 August 2020

(Covid requirements on social distancing and hand sanitizing were adhered to.)

These Minutes are a general, not verbatim, record of the proceedings.

Present: Councillors: -

Mr C Stopher (Chairman of Planning), Mr J Parker, Mr N Cartwright, Sir J Wigram,
 Mrs J Pilkington, Mrs M Truss, Ms V Williams (Clerk designate)

Public: R Bates (Woodsmen) – c/o Smugglers Cottage

Mrs A Lange – Rondle Wood
 Mrs M Kearley – Rondle Wood
 Mr S Parkinson – Borden Village
 Mr W Carver – Rondle Wood
 Mr R Duveen – Rondle Wood
 Mr A Owens – Rondle Wood
 Mr & Mrs Jackson – Rondle Wood
 Mr J Morton – Borden Village

Apologies / Letters / Emails of comment received from:

Ms E Parkin – Letter of objection read out.
 Mr J Valler – Email of objection read out.

Planning application proposal SDNP/20/01796/FUL – Closing date for comments 11th August 2020

Applicant: Ms G Tuite

Location: Smugglers Copse Borden Milland West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from forestry to mixed use comprising forestry, production of forestry products, education and training courses and associated camping.
 Erection of barn for use for forestry, production of forestry products, education, and training courses. Erection of toilet and shower building.
 Retention of roundhouse, framing bed, pizza oven, IBC and solar panel.

Welcome and Context

The Chairman, Mr Colin Stopher, introduced the application to the meeting. The South Downs National Park (SDNPA) is responsible for the planning and enforcement matters within the National Park. Initially applications are made to the Chichester District Council who have delegated authority to make decisions on most applications, however in more complex applications these are called in by the Authority which is the case with this application. The Parish Council is a consultee along with other statutory bodies including the Fire brigade, WSCC Rights of Way and Highways authorities. Decisions on planning applications are guided by the South Downs Local Plan 2019 and locally by the Milland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016. These documents define what should and should not be built in this area.

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Material considerations are taken into account in deciding an planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision. They can include (but not limited to): traffic, noise, design, appearance and materials, government policy, previous appeal decision, nature conservation.

The Public were given the opportunity to raise their concerns about the proposals.

These included:

- The proposal could lead to increased noise, traffic on quiet country lanes and degradation of woodland, wildlife, and surrounding area. Impact on the character and integrity of Borden Wood and the immediate surrounding narrow lanes which are not suited to increased traffic.
- Locals have seen the reduction in wildlife including rare and protected species.
- Duplication of woodland craft enterprise across the road at Dangstein.
- Strong concern about development 'creep'. Will there be an intensification of use of the site? Will it lead to a planning application for an industrial/commercial building or residence on the site?
- Concern about the slow response of the enforcement process on the site.
- Local concern and anger at the grubbing out of such a large swathe of sweet chestnut, possibly making the areas species poor.
- Concern that more area of sweet chestnut will be removed in the same way.
- The proposals are not in the character of traditional coppicing.
- There is a strong local feeling that the recommendations in the appeal have not been complied with and therefore it was not appropriate for this application to be made.

The Chairman referred to the appeal decision where in the penultimate paragraph the inspector indicated that should

'A properly thought out proposal with evidence as to numbers and frequency of the different types of activity and conditions to control that, as well as provide a certainty as to the impacts on the site of parking, camping and the potential proliferation of structures would all be necessary to allow a reasoned determination by the Council as well as proper consultation and reassurance for neighbours. I have no doubt that given the evidence I heard that a proposal for some level of intensification about the current low level use could be acceptable and would sit comfortably within the national park, but I am not satisfied that I have evidence to suggest what that should be...'

Mr Richard Bates, woodsman at Smugglers, responded on behalf of Ms Tuite:

- There is no link with the activities of Mr Cox at Dangstein.
- Mr Bates wants to run woodcraft courses. Although these are also being run at Dangstein he feels there is enough scope for courses to be run on both sides of the lane.
- The barn is needed to securely store equipment. He will build from local wood to blend in with surroundings including the roof tiles.
- Other courses planning including chair making and timber framing (if there is enough interest).
- He wants to diversify into whittling, pole lathing and wood crafts including basket making.
- There will be no milling on site.
- No buildings will be rented out. What is built on the site will be used only by people doing the courses.
- People on courses will be able to stay on site i.e. overnight to sit around a campfire and watch the stars. The site is situated in a Dark Sky Reserve.
- There are no plans to graze the site and it is not in the proposal.

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He spoke about the community's concerns regarding the loss of wildlife but said that Ms Tuite was interested in biodiversity. She plans to put up bird boxes and to do all she can to increase biodiversity. There is a good number of lizards, adders, bird, and deadwood around for beetles.

Other points he made:

- The barn is needed for the courses because the workshops need equipment.
- Coppicing will be done on a small scale. He will be doing two areas at a time and will be using the wood.
- Woodcraft courses will help support coppicing and will help increase woodland knowledge in the National Park.
- Regarding the previous clear felling of the site, i.e. grubbing out the roots, which caused so much outrage, was nothing to do with him. He, also, was shocked.
- Ms Tuite is planning to replant it with a focus on biodiversity. Currently Ms Tuite is watching what is growing in the area this summer to see what comes up. She is planning to replant with traditional / native species.
- He will be clearing to promote glades through the coppice.
- There are no plans to remove more sweet chestnut.
- It was noted that sweet chestnut needs to be managed. The coppice on site was planted in the 70s and will die out if not managed.

There was final general discussion and questions.

Councillors were asked for their comments and they included:

- Damage brought about by the change in management from forestry to grazing. Noted that grazing is not in the proposal only the camp.
- Increase in traffic
- Desire to expand with different courses.
- Fundamental change of use from forestry to mixed use.
- Could we seek assurance that there would be no further development on the site.
- Exact area of the application to be clarified.
- Activities and records of attendance to be logged.
- Concerns about provision of water in case of fire from campsite.
- There should be no electric lighting on the site.

The Planning Committee were asked to vote on the application on the basis of either Objection, Support or Neutral.

The vote was: - Objection x nil, Support x 2, Neutral x 3.

The Council would submit its response along with a range of conditions they would like placed on the site should the SDNPA permit the application.

CONCLUSION 7.30pm

Chairman: _____ Date: _____

These Minutes are unconfirmed until signed by the Chairman