

BARCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Barcombe Parish Council's Planning Meeting, held on Tuesday 10th December 2024 at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion.

Attendees: Cllrs Alexander, Gwynn, Holman, Smith and Sokoloff; Julia Shelley (Clerk).

MINUTES

1. Apologies: Cllrs Arnold, Skan, Smith, Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Planning Applications

Case: LW/24/0806

Case Officer: Ella Rigluth

Address: Manor House, Deadmantree Hill, Barcombe

Proposal: Replacement of roof with additional lead capping (part retrospective)

Barcombe Parish Council is **positive** towards this application.

Case: LW/24/0785

Case Officer: James Emery

Address: Camoys Court Farm, Barcombe

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 5no. dwellinghouses

Barcombe Parish Council is **negative** towards this application. The full Parish Council statement is attached to these Minutes (see below).

Case: TW/24/0775

Case Officer: James Emery

Address: Downview Farm House, Barcombe

Proposal: Change of use Agricultural units to Dwellinghouses

An extension has been requested and a number questions raised, concerning the application and the situation regarding existing onsite commercial premises.

4. Decision Notices: None

Meeting closed at 7.50pm

Next Meeting 12th February 2025

Reference: LW/24/0785

Location: Camoys Court Farm, Barcombe

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 5 dwelling houses

1. Summary

Barcombe Parish Council is negative towards this application and has significant concerns with the proposed development which are set out below.

The Parish Council would also like to draw the planning officer's attention to comments submitted by other local residents, including Simon Turner and Andrew Pearce, who have provided extensive supporting evidence.

2. Response to the Previous Appeal Dismissal

The appeal made against LW/22/0820 was dismissed by the Planning Inspector on 5th February 2024, where the Planning Inspector's decision highlighted two key issues:

- *'whether the site would be a suitable location for housing having regard to local plan policies; and*
- *the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.'*

The applicant has resubmitted an adapted application (LW/24/0785) to try and demonstrate reduced harm caused by the scheme. However, the proposed changes are minor, and the result is a proposal that will still cause significant harm that is not demonstrably outweighed by any benefits. As such, the Planning Inspectors reasons for refusal still stand, which we have demonstrated below using the context of the appeal decision notice.

a. Location

The Planning Inspector stated *'The proposed development would not provide a suitable location for housing in principle. It would be contrary to Policy DM1 of the LP2 and Paragraph 84 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these allow for new development outside planning boundaries only where such development is consistent with a specific development plan policy or where the need for a countryside location can be demonstrated.'*

Application LW LW/24/0785 cannot address the location issue as the site still remains outside any planning boundary and is countryside. Therefore, this key issue, as identified by the Planning Inspector remains unmitigated.

b. Character and Appearance

The Planning Inspector stated *'I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policy DM25 of the LP2 and Paragraph 131 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to*

ensure that its siting and layout respond sympathetically to characteristics of the development site and relationship with its immediate surroundings.'

The current application (LW/24/0785) attempts to reduce its impact on the character and appearance of the area, by creating 'less harm' than the proposal refused at appeal. However, the fact remains, that the application seeks to place a monolithic block of five modern terraced homes, forming a cramped suburban feature in a rural location, where no similar development exists.

Much is made of the reduction in ridge height compared to the previously refused scheme. Whereas this is just a 200mm reduction, achieved in part by 600mm excavation. This is an inconsequential adjustment in context of the structure's overall height, and one which will have very little impact. Therefore, the Issues raised by the Inspector and reasons for refusal still apply, which were:

'the modern appearance, terraced form and setting within small plots would result in the proposed development standing out as an incongruous and cramped feature in the context of the open and rural character and appearance of the area. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policy DM25 of the LP2 and Paragraph 131 of the Framework.'

c. Planning Balance

In the Planning Inspectors appeal decision, he highlighted that *'The proposal would be contrary to Policies DM1 and DM25 of the LP2. These Policies are consistent with the Framework in focusing on protecting the distinctive character and quality of the countryside.'*

The appellant previously highlighted other appeal decisions in an attempt to support their appeal case, but the Inspector concluded that *'In this instance, the inappropriate location and adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the very modest benefits and as such, the proposal would not constitute a sustainable form of development in terms of the Framework.'*

d. Fallback Position

In the Planning Inspectors appeal decision notice, he also recognised that the appellant has put forward a fallback position but concluded that *'the fallback position carries limited weight in favour of the proposal.'*

e. The Planning Inspectors Overarching Conclusion

Given the very limited changes to scheme proposed in LW/24/0785, the Inspectors conclusion still applies, which stated ***'The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.'***

3. Other Matters

a. The reuse of agricultural buildings is not justified

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF allows for re-use of agricultural buildings, but (among other provisos) does so only if the building is redundant, and it enhances its immediate setting. Neither case applies to this application:

- The building has not, to our knowledge, been advertised for agricultural use and has not been shown to be redundant.
- In fact, there is a demonstrated and continued need for it to serve existing agricultural operations, prevented only by a refusal to re-let it.
- The design and density of the proposal does nothing to enhance the immediate setting as clearly stated in the Planning Inspectors decision notice.
- Furthermore, no attempt has been made to show need for new housing in a countryside location. Again, this is clearly stated in the Inspectors decision notice.

b. The proposed site is still a working farm

The proposed site is a working farm that will continue to be used as such. Not only will the proposal remove valuable farming infrastructure that is necessary to support local farming operations, but the proposed dwellings will be immediately surrounded by farming activities and subject to noise, smell and other associated risk factors.

The acoustic barrier as required by PD approval (01/04/2021) to protect residents of the new development against these factors is absent on the newest planning application.

There is also no proposed accommodation for farm traffic. Currently, large farm vehicles access the fields to the north and west of the proposed development by the farm entrance. This application removes that access with no alternative route being offered.

Furthermore, the application doesn't appear to show consideration for the safety implications this could introduce to its residents. The applicant has proposed that residents could use a footpath that crosses working agricultural fields as a means of access to village facilities, where farm machinery and livestock are regularly present.

c. There is simply no safe pedestrian access from the proposed site to any of the village facilities

There is a lack of safe pedestrian access to any of the village amenities. The current application now proposes pedestrian access to village facilities either via an unlit, 60mph road with no pavement or using a very indirect, often muddy route across working agricultural fields. It should be noted that Application LW/22/0820 also proposed the use of a footpath across agricultural fields, albeit an unofficial one,

which has now been changed to the much longer route across the fields using a public footpath, both equally inappropriate.

Residents of the proposed site would be totally dependent on private car transport, even to access village facilities.

The application's Traffic Survey acknowledges that '*..to reach the existing pedestrian infrastructure in the area, pedestrians are required to walk in the carriageway.*' It continues: '*However, whilst on site vehicle volumes were observed to be low, there is ample room on the verges adjacent to the carriageway for pedestrians to take refuge if required.*'

This statement is inaccurate as there is no safe provision for pedestrians in the limited verges by the side of the road.

This application clearly contravenes Core Policy 13 – Sustainable Travel, which '*promotes and supports development that encourages travel by walking, cycling and public transport and reduces the proportion of journeys made by car*'.

d. The sustainability for further development in Barcombe

The LPP1 Spatial Policy 2 specifies that any future developments should take into account the effect of the cumulative impact of unimplemented permissions in the settlement.

Barcombe is classified as a small service village and the Parish has now already significantly exceeded its housing targets for the period up to 2030 as set out in the Lewes District Local Plan Part 2 (LLP2) that specified a range of 30 – 100 new homes. Currently, 102 new homes have been granted planning consent in Barcombe Cross and construction has now begun on some of those.

The proposed site is outside the village planning boundary by approximately 300 metres and has not been assessed as developable by the LDC Planning Department for good reasons. This development would significantly extend the village boundary and could set a precedent for similar inappropriate developments around Barcombe.

Introducing further unsustainable development would be reckless and would exacerbate an already poor outcome for the Barcombe community.

e. Inaccurate data used regarding Barcombe's infrastructure capacity

There have now been very significant levels of development approvals (>100 new dwellings) in Barcombe Cross since the applicant's original application was submitted. All of which place significant demands on infrastructure services that are already at capacity. With no new infrastructure upgrades planned.

In the case of Barcombe's primary access route where this development is proposed. Traffic on Barcombe Mills Road has already significantly increased since the original traffic survey was completed in November 2019, which will be further compounded by the 102 new homes now approved for development in the Barcombe Cross.

There are frequent closures of the proposed sites primary access road (Barcombe Mills Road) due to flooding at Barcombe Mills, which the applicant has shown no consideration for in their application.

4. Conclusion

It is the view of Barcombe Parish Council that this proposal conflicts with the development plan and its adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, it should be refused.