

MINUTES OF KERSEY PARISH COUNCIL EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17 JULY 2017 IN KERSEY VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT

John Hume – Chair, Veronica Partridge, Andrew Rogers, Giles Hollingworth, Iqbal Alam, Alan Ferguson – Babergh District Councillor, 43 members of the public (1 arrived late) and the Clerk – Sarah Partridge

The Chair welcomed those present and set out the protocol for the meeting. The Parish Council always gives parishioners the opportunity to comment on any matters they discuss. All those present who wished to make comments on the planning proposal would be given the opportunity to speak. Members of the public will be limited to one opportunity to speak for a maximum of three minutes. The Chair reminded everyone that they should remain polite and respect the views of others. All questions should be addressed through the Chair.

98/17 APOLOGIES – were received and accepted from Yvonne Martin.

99/17 ACCEPT MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Veronica Partridge declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 5 for pre application advice for a planning proposal because she is a trustee of the trust which owns the land.

100/17 CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS FOR PECUNIARY INTERESTS RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLORS

The Clerk had received a dispensation request from Veronica Partridge for agenda item 5 for pre application advice for a small housing development proposal for land adjoining the playing field, Kersey. Veronica had requested this dispensation because she has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as she will be the applicant on behalf of the trust owning the land. Councillors discussed this dispensation request and agreed to grant a partial dispensation to allow Veronica to give a presentation on the proposal and answer questions. Then Veronica will leave the meeting room before the Parish Council discusses the proposal and makes any comments. This dispensation was granted for just this one meeting on 17 July 2017. The reason for granting the dispensation was because it would be in the interests of persons living in the authority's area to allow Veronica to speak about the proposal and answer questions relating to the proposal.

101/17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2017 were signed and dated as being correct.

102/17 PLANNING – PRE APPLICATION ADVICE TO CONSIDER A SMALL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR LAND ADJOINING THE REAR GARDENS OF DWELLINGS ON THE SOUTH-WEST SIDE OF VALE LANE AND OPPOSITE THE PLAYING FIELD, KERSEY

The Chair invited Veronica Partridge and her advisors to outline the proposal. Veronica outlined the proposal, which is to build a few small houses on land belonging to a trust of which she is a trustee. They are seeking comments and feedback on the proposal which she hoped would be of benefit to the community. Veronica then handed over to Tim Harbord, a planning consultant to explain the proposal in more detail. Mr Harbord explained that this is a very early stage consultation to help them shape the proposal in the best way for the community. They would seek pre-application advice before a planning application is submitted once detailed plans have been put together. There would be no more than 10 houses on the triangle of land between the rear gardens of the first few houses on Vale Lane and opposite the Vicarage and playing field. A sketch of an initial idea was passed round the meeting but it was stated that this was just one idea and nothing was set in stone. This sketch showed eight houses including four 2-bed units and four 3-bed units of which four would be social housing. As well as parking for the houses there was also provision for additional parking for school

and church use and landscaping. Their aim would be to design a scheme to mitigate any impact on existing properties.

One member of the public left the meeting.

Mr Harbord explained that because Babergh did not have a five year land supply the Babergh housing policies are considered to be out of date and National Planning policies will apply to planning applications. Sustainability will be one issue which will need to be proved. The relationship with the existing village, Conservation Area and listed buildings will all be taken into consideration. This proposed site is outside the Conservation Area and not within the setting of a listed building. The trust is keen for two and three bed units which will be genuinely affordable and remain so in perpetuity. A registered housing association is interested in the project. They had consulted a senior planning officer at Babergh who suggested a small scheme would be worth pursuing. Robert Keeble, the architect involved with this project then spoke about potential design ideas. He said this was the earliest he had brought a project for consultation and design ideas are at a very early stage. The idea is for a linear approach running along the road towards Boxford with houses facing towards the playing field. There would be depth to the scheme, rather than a terrace, with landscaping to soften the edges of the site. The provision of parking would be of benefit to the community as it would take pressure off the parking on the triangle at Vale Lane. They would also like to consult with SCC highways about putting in a safe path around the corner to the church and school. The quality and design of the houses have not yet been discussed but would be something to suit Kersey and the surroundings.

The Chair confirmed that since this was an early stage proposal and not a planning application the Parish Council would not be deciding to support the proposal or not, but just to give some non-binding comments. It is an opportunity for people to express their views and make comments on the proposal.

The meeting was adjourned to receive comments from the floor.

Many members of the public present spoke against the proposal as it would devalue their property and there would be a loss of quality of life. The access to this proposed development would be on a narrow road near to a sharp blind bend. Several members of the public stated that more housing was not needed or necessary in Kersey and more use should be made of existing housing stock, some of which has been unoccupied for some time and is in a poor state of repair. Others commented that if there is a need for housing in the area it should be built in towns where there are facilities, services and employment and not ruin villages with additional housing. It was commented that Vale Lane was built in the 1960's and was an expansion of the village; this proposal would be just another small expansion. It was stated that this proposed development is on agricultural land and if housing was built here it would set a precedent for more housing on other agricultural land in other areas of the Parish. Mr Harbord said every planning application is considered individually on its own merits. Regarding the need for housing, there is a need for more housing in the District and in November 2015 Babergh had six names on their housing register wishing for housing in Kersey, several of whom had strong links to Kersey. It was commented that Kersey is not a sustainable village and this proposal was on green belt land. At times the debate was quite heated with emotions running high. It was reiterated again by members of the public that they felt there was no requirement or need for more housing in Kersey.

One member of the public re-joined the meeting.

It was questioned as to whether the Parish Council had considered doing a Neighbourhood Plan or Parish Plan. The Chair confirmed that there was a Parish Plan for Kersey and that the Parish Council had considered completing a Neighbourhood Plan. They had decided that it was too large and expensive a project for the Parish to carry out, particularly as Neighbourhood Plans can be overruled, by planners, so could be a fruitless exercise. Tim Harbord commented that a Neighbourhood Plan should be a positive vehicle to support development in a Parish not to just prevent development and fossilise a village. One member of the public brought up the fact that there had been a small housing scheme proposed in a nearby location in the 1970's but this had been refused following a Public Inquiry.

Veronica was thanked for her early consultation with the Parish.

One member of the public joined the meeting.

Some residents of Vale Lane were very concerned about the impact this proposal would have on the value of their homes, loss of amenities and loss of views over open countryside. One resident was concerned about the type of people who would live in the affordable homes. If this proposal was built there were fears of further development behind more houses in Vale Lane. Kersey doesn't have many facilities and this location near the bend would increase traffic near the playing field. The Chair said that in planning law the loss of view or effect on property values were not valid reasons for consideration when deciding a planning application.

Tim Harbord commented that for small developments there is not a requirement for an element of social/affordable housing but the trust felt this would be a good thing to do. They could just put together a proposal for market housing. There was a discussion about social/affordable housing and the definition of affordable housing. Alan Ferguson, the Babergh District Councillor for Kersey, said that affordable housing rent is 80% of market rent, but as Kersey is an expensive area rent would be higher than in Hadleigh.

There were more comments that there is no need for housing or affordable housing in Kersey and that Kersey is not a sustainable village as there are no services, no bus and no post office. Hadleigh would be a better place for more houses as one can walk to the doctors, shops and other services. It was stated that Kersey is not the right place for children. A question was asked about the evidence of the current need for housing in Kersey. Tim Harbord said they had not explored the current need at this stage. The Chair confirmed that the Parish Council is looking into the idea of carrying out a housing needs survey but this would be quite expensive.

One member of the public left the meeting

The concern about setting a precedent of building on agricultural land was again mentioned. A question was asked about the utilities for these new houses, with possibly up to an extra 40 people this would put pressure on existing utilities. A question was asked about the capacity at the school. It was clarified that currently Kersey School is not full and children living in the catchment area are given priority for places at their local school.

Tim Harbord said that any new developments incurred a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This charge helps to pay for improved infrastructure and services. The Parish Council would only receive a small proportion of this CIL. CIL has replaced section 106 agreements.

The Chair invited further comments but none were made in favour of the proposal.

The meeting was reconvened. Alan Ferguson and four members of the public left the meeting.

Veronica Partridge left the meeting room as agreed in the scope of her dispensation.

The Chair then gave each Councillor the opportunity to give their comments.

One Councillor stated that the piece of land in question is in the setting of the Grade I listed Church and Historic England would need to comment on the affect this proposal would have on the setting. He also said that the way housing need is assessed at the moment was spurious as it was just names on a list. A proper survey was needed to establish if there is a need for more housing in Kersey. He said that Kersey is not a sustainable village and he had done a survey of all the hinterland villages in the area and found that Kersey is not an area where there should be any development. With regard to the proposal he said that residential amenity would be affected and needed addressing. He was concerned that this development would be a form of ribbon development on the edge of the village which may then continue and was the thin end of the wedge. The type of design was another concern which would need careful consideration. He was also concerned about how this would change the character of the whole area.

One member of the public re-joined the meeting.

Another Councillor commented that the question of housing need should be answered. He felt that if a need was identified then there were not many areas in the village any better than this for housing but agreed there was a detrimental effect on some properties in Vale Lane.

Another Councillor summed up the main comments and concerns raised by members of the public including that the proposal would devalue their properties and spoil views over the countryside. It may set a precedent of building on agricultural land and was near a blind bend. The affordability of the social housing was questioned as Kersey property values are high. The question of the need for housing was mentioned. There are no utilities in place. He questioned how this proposed development would help the wider community. Provision of additional parking may help a little. He

took huge exception to the comment that 'Kersey is not a place for children'. There is a school which is currently undersubscribed and families should be welcomed. Children and young people are very important to a community and we should not be trying to prevent people from living in this area unless they are wealthy. He questioned whether the Parish Council and those already living in the village should be suggesting that Kersey is not a suitable place for any more housing and to just say 'no' to all development. He felt that the Parish Council needed to think carefully about considering the needs of the whole Parish and not just the central village of Kersey.

The Chair commented that he was very pleased that the Parish Council had been given the opportunity to comment at this very early stage. The demand for housing needed to be assessed properly. Another Councillor commented that there are tried and tested ways to assess housing need and although it may be expensive it was something the Parish Council needed to do. If no need is identified then there would be no need for any future development in the Parish. The Clerk stated that a housing needs survey results would only be valid for five years.

The Chair said that a way needed to be found to make better use of the existing housing stock in the Parish as some properties have been empty for some time and others are in poor condition. He disagreed with comments that Kersey was not a sustainable village; this suggests that Kersey could not support any future development which he did not believe to be true. He said that this proposal raised lots of questions such as why eight homes and why the proposed location. Would there be any community benefit. He also commented that the design, appearance, size, standards and sustainability of the proposed houses need to be thought about carefully. The layout and landscaping with a reasonable buffer would be needed to protect existing properties. There were questions about how a housing association would manage the properties, select residents and set rents. If the development were to go ahead it would be a great opportunity to create a model development which others would look to as an excellent example to follow. The Chair summed up by saying that the overwhelming ~~argument~~ emotion from the meeting was that the development should not take place in this location but the Chair questioned as to whether there are any other suitable locations in Kersey. He concluded by saying that the kernel of the debate was the question of whether there is a need for more housing in Kersey. The Parish Council needs to find a way to identify if there is a need for additional housing in Kersey. The emotion of the meeting was that there is none.

103/17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair had received complaints from residents in the centre of the village about antisocial noise and use of garden machinery such as shredders in back gardens, particularly at unsociable hours, such as 9pm on a Sunday. Residents were reminded to be thoughtful and considerate.

104/17 PARISH TIME – No items raised.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

There are no sheets appended to these minutes.