

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 6TH 2010.

Present.

Ms R Cottingham.	Chairman
Mrs M. Goodman	Vice-Chairman
Mrs F. Groves	
Dr M Kerry.	
Mrs K. Willis	
Mr C.W.Goudge.	Clerk
There was one member of the public present.	

107. Apologies for absence.

Mrs Cunningham had tendered an apology for absence.

108. Minutes of the last meeting held on November 18th 2010.

The minutes had been circulated were agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

109. Planning.

Appeals

10/01656/FULC	Lawrence Farm Equipment, Hermitage. Change of use from garage to storage
10/01773/HOUSE	Appletree Cottage, Yattendon Road. Extensions.

Appeals have been made to the Secretary of State against the refusal of consent by WBC in both these cases.

Decisions from the Planning Authority

10/10634/FUL	Lawrence Farm Equipment, Hermitage Change of from car sales to car sales & van hire.	Approval
10/02387/HOUSE	9, Kiln Close, Hermitage Conservatory	Approval
10/02551/HOUSE	Mayflower Barn, Wellhouse Farm	
10/02552/LBC	Rooflights	Refusal
10/02588/FUL	1&2, Long Grove Cottages, Hermitage S.73 removal of BREAM	Approval
10/02601/HOUSE	Threshers Barn, Wellhouse Farm Window installation.	Approval



New planning applications.

10/02903/FUL Land off Pinewood Crescent, Hermitage
34 new dwellings.

**The Council objected to the application.
The Council's observations are attached.**

10/02837/HOUSE 37, Dines Way, Hermitage.
Extension.

No objections

110. Grant applications.

These will be considered at the next meeting.

111. Environment

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Minute 100.

i Christmas tree lights.

The required three way traffic lights had been supplied free to the council. It was decided to write an appreciative letter to the suppliers.

ii Grasscutting and tree trimming.

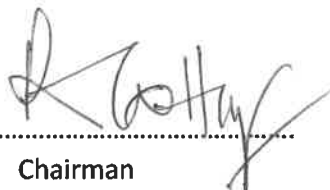
It was decided to accept the quotation from Mr Lawrence for this work in the coming year in the sum of £4,446. *also for the bus chairman.*

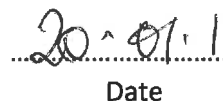
iii WBC Flooding assessment.

It was decided to respond to this from the next meeting.

112. Date of the next meeting.

Thursday January 20th at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church.


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Chairman


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Date

Hermitage Parish Council comments regarding Planning Application 10/02903 – Hermitage Cementation site Phase 2.

Summary and recommendations

This document summarises Hermitage Parish Council observations regarding the recent planning application 10/02903 - Hermitage Cementation site Phase 2.

For the reasons outlined in this document **Hermitage Parish Council objects to the planning application put forward by Miller Homes/Taylor Wimpey** and as such urges the planning department to refuse permission regarding this application.

Hermitage Parish Council believes that the plan to change the use of land from employment to housing a place 34 dwelling on the site is not in the best interests of the village and its' infrastructure.

The main reasons for this conclusion are:

1. Poor quality design within site and housing density
2. Effect of development on Hermitage infrastructure
3. Relationship of the development with existing housing

These will all be dealt with in detail below.

However, the Parish Council acknowledges that it is preferable to have something built on this site since it cannot and should not remain in its current state as vacant land.

The preference expressed by the Parish Council is that it should remain designated as light industrial use. This type of development would be invaluable to this rural community, encouraging small businesses into the area and ensuring that people have employment opportunities in closer proximity to their homes. The developer quotes in the Commercial Market Report compiled by Deal Varney example locations within the region where vacant properties area situated, however, these locations are between 7 and 10 miles away from the village and are not readily accessible from Hermitage by public transport creating a reliance on private transport which should be discouraged. One Parish Councillor noted that local business Yattendon Estates still has regular enquiries pertaining to available industrial units and therefore we believe there is a need.

If WBC allows housing to be placed on this site then the Parish Council asks that fewer houses be placed on this location, leading to a less cluttered development which has a higher quality of living and amenity space for its residents. This lower density would also act as a better compromise between the high density of Forest Edge and the lower density observed at Colyer Close and Orchard Close. It is also urged to keep many more of the mature trees in the buffer strip and maintain its current depth of 10m to mitigate the impact of the development to those neighbouring properties to the west of the site.

Should the development proceed, Hermitage Parish Council will be seeking S106 monies to be used for specific uses within the parish and separate details of these will be forwarded to WBC at a later date.

Main issues with the application:

1. Poor quality design within site and housing density

1.1 Housing density

- Proposed density of 35 houses per hectare is higher than that in the existing Forest Edge development (32 houses per hectare).
- Housing density targets of 30 houses per hectare have been abolished and removed from PPS3 to deter the overdevelopment of sites.
- The applicant uses the density of Forest edge as justification of the high density within this design, but limits were abolished to discourage this high density housing and any comparisons with Forest Edge should not be used since different criteria now in place.
- Comparison of the housing density and layout compared to the existing properties on Orchard Close and Colyer Close is not favourable.

1.2 Garden space

- Over half properties have garden sizes $<100\text{m}^2$ which is the recommended minimum for 2+ bedroom houses in WB Quality Design documentation. However, some properties appear to have garden sizes as low as 35m^2 for a 3 bedroom house (plot 10), and the flat over garage (FOG) property on plot 6 has no amenity space at all associated with it.
- Open space nearby notwithstanding, this constitutes poor quality design and crowding of the space to create a claustrophobic atmosphere.
- It also must be noted that open space and play area to the north of the site, provided by the current applicants as part of the Forest Edge development is still not in a usable state over 4 years after the first houses on the Forest Edge were occupied, leading to resentment by the residents of that estate and the wider community in the village.
- Several residents of Forest Edge have contacted Hermitage PC regarding allotments due to insufficient space in their own gardens to grow produce.

1.3 Relationships between properties

- Poor relationships between properties within site can be observed
 - Plot 6 (FOG overlooks and overshadows properties directly to the north and south of it (plots 5,7 and 8)
 - Plot 21 (FOG overlooks and overshadows properties directly to the north and south of it (plots 20 and 22)
 - Relationship of plot 26 to plot 27 results in an overbearing impact and poor amenity to the rear of property 27
 - Relationship of plot 29 to plot 30 results in an overbearing impact and poor amenity to the rear of property 30
- The open space within the site, whilst welcomed, is situated to the south of the site and mere metres away from the existing Pinewood play area. The open space provision in the site would be far better situated further to the north of the site

2. Effect of development on Hermitage infrastructure

- Hermitage Primary school has already been expanded to accommodate the increased population within the village caused by the housing at Forest Edge and Hermitage Green. However, even with this provision the school is over capacity with some residents on those estates have to send their children to schools in neighbouring villages.
- Traffic at the entrance roundabout is already problematic at peak times from the existing Forest Edge development, further traffic movements will exacerbate this problem.
- The Statement of Community Engagement Supplied by the developer identified resident preferences that properties should be low density (which the proposed plan is not), also most people who expressed a preference stated the site should remain as an employment area.
- Cumulative affect of developments at Forest Edge and Hermitage Green must also be considered, the village has rapidly expanded with property numbers increasing from 444 to 735 as a result of those two developments and other housing in the parish over the past few years.
- S106 contributions should be sought to mitigate the impact of any development on the village and suggested uses will be discussed at the PC meeting

3. Relationship of the development with existing housing

- Minimum WB recommended separation distance between rears of properties of 21m is not observed in several instances leading to a loss of amenity for both the existing properties and those proposed including:
 - Plots 30-33 and properties 6-10 on Colyer Close
 - FOG plot 6 and properties to the east on the existing Forest Edge development, causing overlooking of existing garden space.
- The trees in the buffer strip to the west of the plot are subject to a collective TPO (TPO475 Area 2). It is proposed to decrease the buffer planting along this side of the plot from 10m to 6m, however only 8/89 of the existing mature trees in this buffer strip will be retained. Replacement trees will take >10 years to be an effective screen and even then they will fail to be an effect screen for over 4 months of the year due to their deciduous nature (refer to Figures 1 and 2).
- The Parish Council believes that a wider buffer strip of 10m would also be advantageous to mitigate the impact of the development in relation to the properties to the west of the site.
- It is considered that since the mature trees already present (especially confers) perform an adequate screening role that most of the trees in this strip should be retained and supplemented/replaced as necessary via a suitable management of the buffer strip.
- The developer has assessed the trees as individual specimens rather than as a collective and the current screening benefits that the group possesses. BS5837:2005 sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.4 state that collective groups of trees as well as individual trees should be assessed for their value within their existing context. To this end the trees already present in the area to the west of the site have high value for their screening abilities and they should be retained.
- The Parish Council urges a site visit by the Tree Officer be arranged to independently corroborate the trees in the buffer strip and assess its importance as a collective group to that area.
- If the existing TPO is removed under planning approval it is imperative that a simultaneous replacement TPO is in place to protect the new trees in the buffer strip without any lapse in TPO cover.
- Due to nature of housing on Colyer Close (predominantly bungalows), the 2 and 2.5 story plots to the west of the proposed site will be clearly visible from both Colyer Close and Hampstead Norreys Road and as such will create a detrimental change to the street scene (refer to Figure 1). The buffer planting will only soften this impact once mature (>10 years time based on age of specimens indicated by developer) and only during the months the trees possess leaves since the planting proposed

is deciduous in nature, meaning the screening will be ineffective for over 4 months of the year.



Figure 1: Current view towards proposed site from Colyer Close including current tree buffer strip (top) and same view showing proposed tree removal and replacement with 'semi mature' planting at time of completion- no buffer trees in this area will be above 5m (bottom). Replacement trees are 2-5m high and will not form an effective barrier for >10 years after planting. The red line in the bottom picture shows an impression of the ridge heights of properties to the west of the development, indicating how the street scene will be affected from this perspective.



Figure 2: View east along Orchard Close, clearly showing that properties on the far side of the proposed site on the existing Forest Edge development can already be seen from this position during winter months. The proposed development will be even more visible to the residents of Orchard Close.

Appendix:

- Significant flooding of Orchard Close was observed in 2007 and is recorded within Hermitage Parish Flood Survey Plan sheet 2 of 4 (ref 2002/FLD/26/2102). There is a large change in height between the western edge of the plot and Colyer Close and removal of mature trees from the buffer strip will increase the potential for further flooding.
- Properties very close to the existing buffer strip (eg Timbervale and Bramble's End in Orchard Close) could be subject to groundswell damage upon removal of trees very close to the property and full assessment should be performed before tree removal work be carried out.
- There have been complaints to the PC from residents of Forest Edge regarding the parking provision in the existing development. With the announcement on the 3rd of January 2011 the government is removing national planning restrictions put in place in 2001 that required councils to limit the number of parking spaces allowed in new residential developments, it is hoped that a more suitable parking provision will be allocated to this development, reducing the need of on road parking.
- The development will create a new junction on the Forest Edge estate which is the main pedestrian route for children going to schools in the morning during rush hour, therefore concerns for children's safety is foremost.

- Some properties are 2.5 story in design going against the preferred 2 story design ethic outlined in the Hermitage Village Design Statement adopted by WBC
- Footpath location to rear of properties in proposed development and Forest Edge gives and increased risk of crime, especially since it is enclosed by 1.8m fencing for most of it's length.
- Plan P751/01 shows to the south of the plot a 1.8m close board fence cutting across the footpath, this needs to be corrected.
- Affordable housing would be better served interspersed throughout the development rather than in two terraced blocks to encourage integration.
- Section 5.10 of the DPP Planning statement indicates that there is a clear preference for housing on this site by residents, however in the statement of Community Engagement document, section 4.4 the public indicated that very few were in favour of housing on the site (6%) whilst the majority of people stated that the site should remain as commercial usage (24%). Therefore the statement by Miller Homes and Taylor Wimpey is clearly untrue.
- All along the southern boundary of the site, on the BT exchange site stand several mature cypress trees, each standing approximately 100ft tall. The rear aspects of plots 13-18 will be in constant shade unless the trees are drastically reduced in size. Concern is also noted that adequate root protection zones are placed around these trees during any building works to minimise risk to those trees on land adjacent to the site.
- Adequate maintenance of this buffer strip is imperative to minimise the impact of this development on the surrounding area. The developer has indicated that a management company would be set up to tend the area. It would be preferable for that land to be adopted and maintained by WB to ensure proper maintenance is achieved. Perhaps S106 contributions dedicated to this purpose or clauses in the deeds for the proposed site guaranteeing regular contributions would ensure that maintenance is guaranteed over say a 50 year span would be appropriate.
- If any properties are allotted as shared ownership then it is hoped that legal restraints are put in place that the shared ownership does not lapse with the sale of these properties.