

# Bethersden Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Mr Colin Tearle Sunny Lawns Densole Lane Densole CT18 7BL  
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## Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in Bethersden Village Hall at 1900hrs.

ABC Councillors' reports are at Appendix A

### **96/2023 Present**

Cllrs A Boyd (Chairman), E Allan, K Brannan, S Buckman, P Buss, J Crannis, K Mitchell and C Tearle (Parish Clerk). Cllrs J Blanford (ABC), A Pickering (ABC), (Community Warden) and 9 members of the public.

### **97/2023 Apologies**

Cllr A Jordan

### **98/2023 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr K Mitchell declared a DPI on Min No: PA/2023/1562

### **99/2023 Minutes of the Meeting of the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

It was resolved to approve and sign these.

### **100/2023 Planning Applications**

To consider the following applications

**PA/2023/1207**-Hoads Wood, Etchden Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3DY  
Change of use from ancient woodland to a camping site, erection of two tree huts and retrospective planning permission for the existing tree hut on site.

**We note that this whole woodland is designated as an SSSI**  
**It is noted that this application includes part of a track being raised by imported waste materials, raising and obliterating the level of the natural track.**  
**This track, allows and leads, to a larger intrusion to the SSSI further into the woodland and the destruction of the ancient woodlands.**

**A "tree house "structure was found which is substantial in size, built about 7 feet off the ground on wooden posts. There was no explanation as to the proposed use of need for, or for any of other structures in this application.**

**There is no obvious access into the site of the structure.**

**The ground cover is natural vegetation which the designated SSSI designation would suffer should extended human intrusion into the woodland.**

**Regarding policies: -**

**Policy SP6 – application is not for high-quality design – crudely built**

**Policy TRA5 – there is no pedestrian access**

**Policy TRA6 – there is no access for cycling**

**Policy ENV1 - Biodiversity – none added to existing natural evolution by this application**

**Policy ENV3a – landscape character and design – as this is SSSI ancient woodland evolved without disturbance of human intervention. This has now occurred. Total destruction on an area included in this application by raising the track with imported materials totally contrary to the SSSI designation.**

**Policy ENV4 – light pollution and promoting dark skies – natural tree canopy controls light unless the applicant intends to introduce artificial light.**

**Policy ENV5 – protecting important rural features – Serious breach - SSSI designation renders total destruction of ancient woodland on this site as illegal. the area this application covers, would introduce unnecessary intrusive structures into the ancient woodland**

**ENV11 sustainable design and construction – non-residential - the existing structure appeared to be deteriorating condition therefore not sustainable.**

**ENV12 – air quality – apart from pollution from earth import and moving equipment on site natural woodland air flow.**

**We submit our observations that this**

- **It seriously breaches the terms of an SSSI, the existing intrusion of the existing structure is detrimental.**
- **The serious detrimental effect of this application on an SSSI.**
- **The detrimental effect of the other waste importation activities and developments on this and the adjoining site for this application.**
- **The detrimental effect of this application for further construction of tree houses into this SSSI ancient woodland**

**Bethersden Parish Council submits that this application should be refused.**

**PA/2023/1268**-Little Surrenden Farmhouse, Ashford Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3BG  
Removal of conditions 6 (Precautionary mitigation measures – Reptiles) & 7 (Bats of permission PA/2023/2375 for “Erection of five replacement dwellings following demolition of existing dwellings and building as confirmation cannot be confirmed for the ecology which was incorrectly requested on the revised consent.

**No comment**

**PA/2023/1286**-Box Cottage, The Street, Bethersden, TN26 3AD  
Alterations to a two storey outbuilding including the erection of an external staircase  
**Bethersden PC supports this application**

**PA/2023/1340**-Land north east of Sewage Works, Norton Lane, Bethersden  
Change of use of land from equestrian to residential. One detached two-storey dwelling with a detached access from Norton Lane, parking, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

The Parish Council maintain their strong objection to further development off Norton Lane and completely disagree with the case officers view that it will not be visually intrusive-

This application has not been considered in relation to another large detached house approved by the same officer for the same applicant under reference PA/2022/2679 and again developing what had been previously approved for equestrian use with an original condition preventing it from becoming a residential plot. (This is what this Council considered to be Planning Creep )

**This a narrow country lane used as a “rat run” for commercial traffic with no footpaths and directly serving both the primary school and Scout hut with young pedestrian traffic.**

**The access is proposed to be shared with the Sewage Works and the Scout Hut and will present unnecessary danger to the existing children using the scout hut. Its proximity to the Sewage works means it will suffer from pungent odours from the south westerly prevailing wind not withstanding the assertion of the “odour Report” to the contrary submitted with the scheme.**

**The drainage at this lowest part of Norton Lane is historically bad and suffers from a poorly constructed road culvert which often causes flooding to the house garden directly opposite this site-**

**So we consider the loss of yet another equestrian field to present an unacceptable form of development because of road safety, drainage and environmental considerations and should be refused.**

**PA/2023/1292-Ramsden Fm, Standard Lane, Bethersden, TN26 3JR**

Erection of a replacement timber framed haybarn

**No comment**

**PA/2023/1389-New property at The Cot, Ashford Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3BD**

Single storey annex – to be used as an independent dwelling

**Bethersden PC recommend refusal of this application as in a previous application this dwelling was given planning permission to be occupied in conjunction with The Cot**

**PA/2023/1536-Orchard Field, Bethersden, TN26 3AN**

Proposed garage conversion for new bedroom with en-suite.

**It was resolved to support this application**

*At this point Cllr K Mitchell declared a DPI and left the meeting*

**PA/2023/1562-Pilgrims Rest, Old Surrenden Manor Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3DJ**

Proposed wood storage building following demolition of stables

**This application is for a building to replace “stables” on the site. It is planned to join with two other existing buildings in situ, and continues the unacceptable industrialisation of this area**

**The first application was accepted as a hay barn and situated the other side of the field. This building was moved to join the building in the second application but no reference for such a planning grant has been noted.**

**The second building was planned to provide work – with woodwork for disabled and challenged young people – indeed a considerable number attended the Parish Council meeting and due to their presence and the stated employment prospects, persuaded the parish council to a favourable acceptance. It would otherwise have been objected to and considered an intrusion and industrialisation of the countryside.**

**The application to move the stables was made to the top of the site to make the first two buildings “operable” and close off the second gateway that was seriously impeding on the occupier of the bungalow adjoining. This was approved subject to conditions as it was in open land but was stated as necessary to make the buildings 1 & 2 work.**

**Now the applicant, having applied and received approval – subject to conditions – one being that this should be for private use only to make yet another application encumbering the site.**

**The present application PA/2023/1562 is proposed to now replace the stables. Its footprint as much larger than the footprint of the stables and appears now that the stables move was a means to make this open land into “a developed site”**

**This is continuing development creep in the countryside and is unacceptable. There is no agricultural use, the volume of the construction is excessive and imposing, it is huge in relation to the existing area and as there are no sufficient private processes taking place for it to be built.**

**We wish to remind you of the condition of private use on the site. This application is not required for the private use**

**Bethersden Parish Council therefore objects to this application and should planning officers be minded to approve, then we would like it “called-In”.**

*At this point Cllr K Mitchell rejoined the meeting*

**PA/2023/1529**-Green Gables, Ashford Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3BB  
Detached garage and fencing

**It was resolved to support this application**

**PA/2023/1460**-The Old Stables, Ashford Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3LE  
Proposal for shed/garden room.

**No comment other than we believe this is supposed to be a listed building.**

**PA/2023/1599**-Land adjacent to Riverside Fm, Etchden Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3DS  
Change of use from agricultural to equestrian, erection of stables and barn; associated hard and soft landscaping.

**BPC support this application, but however note the ease to which changes will be able to made to the uses once established.**

**NOT/2023/1631**-Ashford Golf Centre, Bears Lane, Kent, TN23 3BW  
Prior Notification – Telecommunications mast. The installation of a new sharable 25m lattice mast which is to replace an existing 15m monopole mast and compound. The tower is to host six antennas, two 600mm dishes which will be mounted to a ring frame.

**It was resolved to support this application**

### **101/2023 ABC Local Plan 2041 – Call for sites**

Members noted the previously circulated document calling for sites.

### **102/2023 Bethersden Design Statement**

It was resolved to set-up a Working Group of all members of the Parish Council to review the previous document (2003) and to update it.

### **103/2023 Chairman`s Report**

This period and the school holidays have been relatively quiet except for the proposition by Stagecoach Southeast to stop the No 2 bus Ashford-Tenterden via Great Chart, Bethersden, High Halden. A public petition signed by over 600 people and a public meeting at the village hall helped in Stagecoach retaining four services a day. KCC refused to interject but stated that they were going to safeguard all the services for school children. It is now a use it or lose it situation and it is unlikely that if it is not used there is nothing can be done to continue the service. The parish council has joined Wealden Wheels but that in itself has problems with setting up a service that suits everyone.

At a planning appraisal of an application for tree houses in Hoads Wood – a “SSSI” and ancient woodland – led to the identification that a large area of trees had been gouged out of the wood and substantial quantities of earth and waste material fly tipped there. It is understood that a High Court injunction covers the area - ABC Enforcement officer is aware.

The Community Warden retires this month and we wish to express our gratitude for her service. Kathy first started as Warden for Bethersden, before being allocated to share with other Parishes in the area, as well as the town of Ashford itself. She was very strong and challenged the behaviour of some of the community population. She always had an ear for someone who wish to make a report but did not wish to get themselves in difficulty with perpetrators. When she was “spread so thinly over the borough she still made time to patrol Bethersden.

Attempts to involve KCC Highways officials, even the Director of KCC Highways has not replied. regards matters of traffic meters, crossing and speed watch, on the A28 we have had no result or even replies to emails, despite requests from the Parish Clerk – this is disappointing.

I have just received an email from our county councillor regards the new lead for highway drainage

The drainage improvements on the A28 have not yet been tested by heavy rains but that is a blessing for those downstream on the Bethersden Stream as they still have had to await conformation of the proposed works of straightening the stream and adding a third pie under the school Road. We were promised a pubic meeting to allay the fears of those who suffered such serious flooding in the storm of July

Diversion of the ditch flows are being considered to reduce and bypass some of the surface water from lands north of the street from flowing into the road drains in The Street. We still await the arrival of an ABC drainage expert for the George Field attenuation tank. Nothing heard regards the Stevenson’s site redevelopment.

The Parish Council has been exasperated by vandalism at the recreation ground and has accumulated quotes to erect CCTV cameras on the site. Once identified perpetrators are likely to be legally dealt with and compensation obtained .

Work goes on with the renovation of the kitchen at the Tennis club, it will be smart when completed. This work is funded by the tennis club.

A recent inspection of the children’s play area has identified some of the wet pour coving is damaged. The council continues to seek a resolution to the renewal of play equipment.

The gate to the carpark has been broken off. Work is starting soon to replace the post.

And repair the boundary fence between the Football pitch and the Peter Adams trust lands. A stile is being put in to stop persons damaging the fence when recovering a ball.

Two trees in the hedge line by the road are going to be felled on advice of a tree surgeon as the trees are dying and boughs overhang the footpath from the car park to the pavilion. They are being removed to avoid any falling Boughs on the footpath.

The repair orders have been given for the two lens covers on the MUGA court that have been broken again since previous repairs were made

Next year is another “D” day remembrance to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> Jume and we will have to decide what form of event we wish to hold for the day. It is promoted as the “largest navel, air and land event”. Our Beacon will need to be dusted off! We will need to register our event Nationally if we wish to take part.

## **104/2023 Parish Clerk`s Report**

- a) During September we have permitted the use of the recreation ground football pitch to a girls football team called Park Farm Rangers U13 whilst there normal playing facilities are being repaired. They are happy to use the ground as it is.

- b) The floodlights on the tennis courts have now been repaired.

## 105/2023 Finance

It was resolved to approve the schedule of payments and bank balances.

1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023	£
Lloyds Bank – Treasurers Account	64,303.99
Lloyds Bank – George Field Account	14,143.27
Co-op Bank	21,128.01
<b>Income</b>	
Lloyds Bank (Int)	20.05
S106 – ABC	7219.00
<b>Expenditure</b>	
C Tearle (Salary July & Aug + Expenses)	2,366.78
*Wealden Wheels	20.00
*Business Stream	73.64
Countrywide Rec Grnd (526047 & 530435)	500.88
Countrywide George Field (525753 & 530145)	657.80
KALC (Training)	84.00
Zoom	15.59
Chris Buckman (Handyman) (invs 08 & 07)	375.00
Bethersden Primary School (S106 Agreement)	7000.00
*Southern Electric (Rec Grnd)	151.05
Leo Lyons Digital (Website, email Service & Maintenance Various)	330.00
Amazon (Printer/Copier/Colour)	417.05
InkXpress (Spare Cartridge)	74.40
Screwfix (2 Locks Recreation Grnd)	43.98
Bethersden Village Hall (Rent)	25.00
Gallagher (Annual Council Insurance)	2,030.16
The George (S106)	1,624.17
Bookers (Printing Paper)	21.49
• Previously paid	

## 106/2023 Councillor Training

Cllr A Boyd is to investigate if it is possible to have some training sessions in Bethersden starting with Finance and Planning.

## 107/2023 Bus Services

Cllr S Buckman reported that the 518 bus service which used to return with school children from Ashford now stops at Matalan and not as promised at Tenterden. She is investigating this.

## 108/2023 Wealden Wheels

The Clerk reported that we had joined this organisation.

## 109/2023 Date of the next meeting

This will be on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Bethersden Village Hall at 1900hrs.

### **110/2023 Exclusion of the Public**

It was resolved to exclude the public and the press from the meeting for the following item of business by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

### **111/2023 The Recreation Ground**

- a) Cllr K Mitchell appraised Members of the progress made in selecting a suitable system. Five companies had been looked at and he was authorised to pursue three of the most suitable.
- b) The tennis club floodlights have now been repaired
- c) It was resolved to accept the quote from Biddenden Arboriculture Ltd. To fell one oak and one ash tree on the roadside boundary of the recreation ground as they are diseased and dying.

### **112/2023 S106 Monies**

The Clerk appraised Members of the projects for which he was bidding for S106 funding for. There was a need to make these applications as many are shortly to expire.

### **113/2023 Misconduct Allegations**

An update of the current ongoing investigation was given.

## **Appendix A**

Cllr J Blanford (ABC)

Discussed the need to create reed filtration beds in the along the river Stour to filter the nutrients which come from housing caused by substances like washing powder. This is the issue which arresting the Chilmington development.

ABC is awaiting responses in its call for sites for the new Ashford Local Plan, which she hopes will put a limitation on new dwellings in rural areas.

She is minded to “call-in” the new Bears Lane planning application if planning officers are minded to approve.

Shortly there will be a month of musical events in Ashford at multiple venues.

There followed a long discussion on the possible merits of any new Local Plan.

Cllr A Pickering (ABC)

ABC are looking at the possibility of moving to International House which they own to lower operating costs and disposing of their current site.

They currently have 485 members of staff with 160 desks.

SY Developments

Discussed proposals to develop the Shepherd Neame owned site behind the Bull Inn at the intersection of the A28 and Bull Lane.

The current proposal is for 40 dwellings, of which 16 would be Affordable Homes, and 25% for first time buyers. These proposals would be under policy HOU5.

There would be a public consultation.