Bethersden Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Mr Colin Tearle Sunny Lawns Densole Lane Densole CT18 7BL
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I hereby give you notice that a Parish Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th February 2025 at 1900hrs in Bethersden Village Hall.

All members of the Council are hereby summoned to attend for the purpose of considering and resolving the business to be transacted at the meeting as set out under.

Dated this 7th day of February 2025

C D Tearle

Parish Clerk

AGENDA

To receive reports from County and Borough Councillors and public questions and comments on agenda and non-agenda items (this section will be limited to 15 minutes or otherwise at the discretion of the Chairman. There will also be a presentation from Safeplay Playground Services about their proposals for phase 2 of the playground improvements.

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

A Councillor who declares a DPI in relation to any item on the agenda will need to leave the meeting for the whole of the item and not be able to speak or take part, unless a relevant dispensation has been granted. A Councillor who declares an OSI will be able to speak on the item, but will be required to leave the meeting for the vote.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the 11th December 2024

4. To Elect two Parish Councillors by Co-option

5. Chairman`s Report

6. Parish Clerk`s Report

7. Planning Applications

a) To note the response to the following applications

PA/2024/1917-London House, The Street, Bethersden, TN26 3AD

Erection of Self-Build Dwelling to include amenity space provision and parking. Plus part demolition of existing garages associated with the former sorting office facility.

It was the view of Members that the Parish Council objects to this application.

1**. At the outset, we are aware of three previous applications attempting to develop this site (two in 2020 and one in 2022), all of which were either "*withdrawn prior to determination*" or "*disposed of by the Council as undetermined* ". During these**

preceding applications, we note that there were numerous valid planning objections raised by many local residents.

We are concerned that cases of several "repeat" planning applications for the same development over a short period of time results in a form of "consultation fatigue" among the surrounding community, that very often leads to a diminishing level of objections over time, or the regrettable common misconception that all previous objections will always be simply "carried forward" by the Council.

With this in mind, we would respectfully urge ABC to fully review the wide range of previous planning objections that were raised by local residents in regard to the forerunners to this latest application, in order that the issue of "consultation fatigue" does not inadvertently reduce or overlook the extent of genuine outstanding local concerns over the proposed development.

2. Insofar as the current scheme is concerned, while we broadly support the principle of appropriate, small scale, in-fill development within the envelope of the village (which of course this is), nevertheless we consider that there are many factors (and potential shortcomings) in this planning application that we consider the Council will need to take fully into account in its assessment, not least:-

- **(i) the close proximity, and resultant potentially overbearing impact, of the proposed development (and the use of the narrow access driveway) on the surrounding group of statutorily listed, and other, important local dwellings/buildings,**
- **(ii) the potential for the proposed development to lead to unacceptable levels of traffic congestion at the access point off The Street, and the related loss or disruption of some of the very limited number of parking spaces at the front of the Village Stores out and/or the displacement of some of the parking spaces out onto the adjacent very narrow carriageway.**
- **(iii) [note – to add to this concern, it appears that, if the scheme is approved, the refuse bins are indicated (on one of the submitted drawings) to be left for collection in an very unclear location in front of the Stores building, that will impinge on a location where cars currently park, (and also in a location over which and out of keeping with, the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, and the future householder has no control),**
- **(iv) the loss of trees and established vegetation on the application site, is always highly regrettable in a Conservation Area location and should generally not be supported.**

Finally, in recognition of the main point 1 above, we will be asking our local Borough Councillors to "call in" the application for determination by the Council's Planning Committee, if officers are minded to recommend the grant of planning permission. This will at least give the opportunity for local people to speak at the Planning Committee to voice their view

PA/2024/2400-Barn at Low Wood Fm, Ashford Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3AP
Prior approval for the change of use of Dutch Barn and land within its curtilage to a dwelling house and associated operational development.

We are aware that the Council previously granted a prior approval in regard to this Dutch barn building at the application site in 2021 under ref 21/00631/AS and that the current application is a straight renewal of that earlier approval.

As a result, unless there has been a material change of planning circumstances between the date of the 2021 application and now (in regard to the site and the proposal etc), which we suspect there has not, we would wish to merely repeat the response we made under the previous application, which was as follows:-

"*The Parish Council supports this application as there is a precedent for giving consent for the conversion of old agricultural buildings to be made into dwellings. However, attention needs to be given to the narrow access road to the farm as it is at the end of the lane which has quite a few dwellings along it".*

That said, it is noted that the officer's planning report in 2021 included a statement that assessed and responded to the point we raised on this matter. This concluded that there would be "*no significant highway safety issue*". Provided this remains the case, we would wish to make no further comment on the current scheme.

b) To consider the following application

PA/2025/0146-Land 100m east of Buckhall Cottage, Bull Lane, Bethersden
Cllr A Boyd has declared an OSI on this planning application
Widening of the existing entrance and laying of hardstanding for agricultural storage (retrospective).

Suggested response

At the outset, and as a matter of principle, we wish to make clear that we always endeavour to support local farms and local farmers and recognise both as a crucial part our local (and national) economy. In the context of this current planning application this includes our recognition and acknowledgement of the significant improvements that have been made in this revised planning application (compared to the earlier withdrawn scheme submitted under ref PA/2024/1355). Nevertheless, there are regrettably two aspects where we still have objections and concerns:-

1. The site is located on a typically narrow section of Bull Lane carriageway that, in our opinion, is entirely unsuitable as a site to manoeuvre (into or out of) large farm vehicles, plant, equipment and machinery. This, combined with:-

- **(i) the proximity of a nearby pronounced 'bend' in Bull Lane (immediately to the east of the site access),**
- **(ii) being in a section of speed derestricted country lane (60mph) and**
- **(iii) with the access gates set back only approx 8m from the edge of the carriageway (and thus not allowing any large vehicle to pull entirely off the carriageway if arriving when the gates are closed),**

It is very likely to present (a) extremely dangerous traffic hazards/movements, (b) occasions when vehicles overhang the narrow carriageway (c) and/or parked (waiting) vehicles on Bull Lane, and thereby represents a potential combination of factors that will result in a circumstances of factors that are potentially highly prejudicial to the safe and free flow of vehicular (and other) traffic along this section of Bull Lane.

Consequently, we would ask that the highway authority be consulted on this application and that its advice be taken fully into account by the Council in the determination of the scheme.

2. We are also concerned that the large, "crushed aggregate" surfaced compound that is being created by virtue of this planning application, could give rise to a new land use to provide open site storage (either short term or long term – or even permanent) and for unknown numbers and types of vehicles (that may or may not be related to the host farm unit). We submit that this is out of keeping with, and harmful to, the attractive rural nature of this relatively isolated location in Bull Lane.

As a result, we submit that such a use is visually harmful to character and appearance of this rural site and to the surrounding, predominantly open countryside. We believe that this is another material planning consideration that needs to be taken fully into account by the Council in the determination of the application.

On this basis, we wish to continue to express our objections to the scheme. That said, we do acknowledge and appreciate that:-

- **the alternative style of access gates as now shown in the revised application (described as "deer-gates") are a marked improvement compared to the design/appearance of the unauthorised gates.**

- **the applicant is proposing the removal of the entire perimeter palisade fencing as part of the revised scheme, despite some aspects of the fencing falling within the limitations otherwise imposed by "permitted development". We do accept that this does help reduce the "industrial appearance" that currently exists at the site and**

- **the applicant is actively involved in a "rewilding programme" in the interests of promoting wildlife conservation and the wider environment – which is to be commended.**

However, we do not accept that these three factors are of sufficient weight to entirely override our primary planning objections and concerns as set out above.

Finally, if the Council is ultimately satisfied that our objections can be overcome (and/or decide that they should be outweighed or disregarded), we would request that safeguards need to be put in place, through clearly worded and robust planning conditions, that achieve the following – as a minimum:-

(i) that a restricted time period be imposed that secures the removal of the existing gates;
(ii) that a restricted period be imposed that secures the removal of the perimeter palisade fencing (as part of the applicant's stated intention aka "unilateral undertaking") and
(iii) that only farm and other vehicles/plant and machinery directly associated with the host farm unit (or the operations of host farm unit), be allowed to operate from, and/or be stored on, the application site.

It is our view that these conditions would be appropriate to endeavour to reinstate and safeguard (to some degree) the rural character and countryside appearance of the application site, especially when viewed from Bull Lane.

8. Hoads Wood Progress Update

9. Bull Stables

10. Bethersden Parish Plan Review

11. Parish Meeting

To agree a date and time for the Annual Parish Meeting

12. Finance

To resolve to approve the schedule of payments and bank balances.

30th January 2025	**£**
Lloyds Bank – Treasurers Account	57,651.74
Lloyds Bank – George Field Account	9,013.63
Co-op Bank	21,128.01
Income	
Bank Interest	14.55
Expenditure	
C Tearle (Salary & Expenditure) Dec/Jan	2,649.10
Chris Buckman (25/24)	300.00
Countrywide Grnds Maint Ltd (616005/616334; 610639/610996 & 617468)	1419.60
D/D SSE Energy Solutions	143.47
The Play Inspection Co.	208.80
St Margarets Church	421.77
Leo Lyons Digital	420.00
Geoxpere Ltd (Parish Online)	32.40
D/D Business Stream (Recreation Ground)	45.47

13. St Margarets Churchyard

To consider a request to pay last year`s mower maintenance costs.

14. VE Day Celebration

15. Social Media

To consider researching the feasibility of setting up a social media account and administering it eg costs, administration, etc.

16. Recreation Ground Annual Safety Audit

To review its findings

17. Date of the Next Meeting

This will be on Wednesday 12th March 2025 at 1900hrs in Bethersden Village Hall.

18. Exclusion of the Public

To resolve 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

19. Playground Working Party Report - Playground Phase 2

20. Future S106 Monies (see confidential report from Cllr M Peters)