
**Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee of the Parish Council of
Ashburnham with Penhurst held on Wednesday 21st October 2021 at 7.30pm in the
Ashburnham sports pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Tina French, Andrew Hoad, Ron King, Chris Sinden and Richard White.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Paul Spicer

In attendance: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council and 1 member of the public.

1) Apologies for absence
Cllr Paul Spicer

2) Disclosures of interest
None

3) Open Forum
No comments.

4) Planning applications

Members viewed the following planning application and, after discussion, determined their response *italics*.

- a) RR/2021/2072/P – Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ponds Green, Ashburnham TN33 9FB - Widened access and agricultural use. (Retrospective) (Resubmission of RR/2021/52/P)

Members could see no difference between this application and the previous one. The previous application was refused and members were of the view that this should be refused on similar grounds. Members could see no justification for a change of use and urged refusal and the reinstatement of the site to its previous condition (photograph submitted).

- b) RR/2021/1648/P - Ashburnham Place, Ashburnham Christian Trust Limited, Ashburnham TN33 9NF - Conversion and change of use of existing gardener's bothy buildings and an adjoining lean- to glass house, into a restaurant, including associated internal and external alterations.

Members were very supportive of this application believing the development to be in keeping with the character of the site, to be of economic benefit to the community and to be making use of existing buildings.

- c) RR/2021/2148/P - Honeyland, Honey Lane, Ashburnham, TN33 9FA - Erect agricultural barn

Members oppose this application. There is no viable farming business on this site which is too small to support one. Therefore, there is no justifiable business case even for a normal agricultural barn. The proposed barn is far from a normal agricultural barn and is of a much more sophisticated construction and that is consistent with previous planning history of this site.

5) Additional planning matters

Rother Planning Department

- a) Cllr Hoad reported on a recent presentation by Rother District Council on their overhaul of their planning function. Miles Joyce, who presented, is the interim Development Manager and he outlined a five point plan for process improvement in dealing with planning applications.
 - i) The web site will be improved to give applicants better access to data.
 - ii) The process will be streamlined to eliminate the current multiple hand offs.
 - iii) The IT system is known to be in need of replacement, but as an interim measure they will look for unused features of the current software package which might be used to improve the system.
 - iv) The way the Planning Committee operates is to be rationalised.
 - v) A review of resources, especially human resource, is underway and RDC have allocated £250k as a fund to facilitate this. In the meantime agency staff from Capita continue to be employed to clear the back log of applications.
- b) The planning system of Sevenoaks District Council is said to be an exemplar and RDC plan to consult and learn from them.
- c) Customer Services are to be enabled to answer simple planning questions such as progress information.
- d) The project manager for the overhaul is James Waite and it is expected to be a two year programme.

e) Neighbourhood Plans

Following the comments at the Annual Parish Meeting, Cllr Hoad has had conversations with a number of people and has been directed to speak to Julia Edwards at RDC. He will report on his review and evaluation to the next meeting of the parish council where a decision will be made on whether or not pursue a Neighbourhood Plan.

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Signed (Chair of the meeting)

Date