

# HALSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2015 IN THE PAVILION, STATION ROAD, HALSTEAD AT 18.00

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Terry Brooker, Chairman  
Cllr. Phil Draper  
Cllr. Barry Gardiner  
Cllr. Grosvenor,  
Cllr. Christine Halliday

**IN ATTENDANCE:** The Clerk; Cllr. Baldwin

The meeting convened at 18.06

### 1 APOLOGIES

All members were present and signed the attendance register.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

### 3 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

#### 3.1 APPEAL BY BLUEBELL CEMETERY PROPERTIES LTD

To agree representation to send to the Appeal Inspectorate

**After intense discussion the following document was agreed unanimously.**

The Parish Council believes that the applicant has no intention to develop this land as each subsequent application is made immediately after the consent for the previous application has expired.

Consent was given for the 1995 planning application on Appeal. In 2000 the trench was dug and Council agrees with SDC that the trench was dug in the wrong place. Now it appears to have been re-dug and is currently pegged out with metal markers. The Parish Council notes that in March 2000, Mr Downs of Downs Planning Partnership was agitating as the permission for the cemetery would expire in May 2000 and his client would need to start work on the land in April so that it could be proven that work had commenced on the site. Mr Down's letter made mention of a formal complaint of mal-administration.

Council is surprised that Mr Stanley Joseph Beanland, who had made a signed declaration that he carried out work on the site, travelled from Suffolk to undertake this work. Council is also surprised that an independent company MLM Building Control Ltd from Ashford was used to oversee the building work rather than the Sevenoaks District Council Building Control Officer.

The proposed development is within the Green Belt where strict policies of restraint exist. This is ancient woodland and many trees are covered by tree preservation orders. There is a rich diversity of flora and fauna and rare moths have been identified as breeding in the woodland. My Council believes this contravenes EN17B, para 118 ..... *'Planning Authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles: if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), then planning permission should be refused'*. Council has been advised that there is an under-ground spring also a track way which pass through the woods.

The proposal would be inappropriate, over development and harmful to the maintenance of the character of the Green Belt: Policies EN1 and GB1 relate.

Policy L08 of Sevenoaks District Council's Core Strategy states: *'that the extent of the Green Belt should be maintained. The countryside should be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible.'*

Council has many concerns about the increase in traffic on the A224. The road is extremely busy due to the close proximity of the M25, the exit from this motor-way is literally just over the road from the proposed entrance to the cemetery. Its closeness to the M25 will encourage people to travel into the village. The road where the wood is located in is used by commuters and there are double yellow lines and parking bays all along the road due to the close proximity of the railway station.

This would mean a large car park would have to be provided for people using the cemetery which would cause further encroachment into the Green Belt. The Government is encouraging people to use public transport rather than motor vehicles. Knockholt train station has a very limited timetable during the 'non-rush hour' and the local bus service is also very restricted.

Bluebell Cemetery properties Ltd state that in 2013 the trench was dug but this was actually dug in 2000, as mentioned previously, and was obviously only included in the hope that this would classify as 'proof that work had been carried out' - thereby providing proof that work had started and validating the application.

The only work carried out by Bluebell was to cut brambles and vegetation from around the kerb stones along the access road. There has been no attempt to build the Chapel and Woodman's shed, or to mark out the layout of the car park. The applicant appears to carry out the minimum work possible to try and keep the development active.

Council believes that the statement and observations made by Brian Ash QC regarding the TPO regulations in 2014/15 are arrogant and inflammatory.

The Parish Council is surprised that, the would-be developers of the land, who have only been in possession for a relatively short time, are able to produce so much information of what has gone before. The Parish Council is also extremely concerned that the owners are selling burial plots when there is no infrastructure in place to deal with these and plans have not been produced indicating where these plots will be dug and how the cemetery is to be managed.

There are also two signs at the entrance to the site advertising that the cemetery is opening in 2016 but at this time there is no permission for any work to be carried out to facilitate this.

The Parish Council believes there is no demand for another cemetery in the vicinity. There is a Church in the village within half a mile with a cemetery and recently planning permission was given for a crematorium with burial plots in Old London Road which is approximately one mile away.

The Parish Council repeats there is no indication that there are special circumstances for this development.

#### **4 INFORMATION**

##### TREE WORKS.

SE/15/03303/WTCA. Pheonix Cottage, Clarks Lane

1 large Holly; 1 large Malus– trim both trees

##### PLANNING DECISION

##### **Refusal**

SE/15/02036 Oakside, Otford Lane

Erection of detached outbuilding.

**The meeting closed at 19.25**

**39/15-16**