

HAMBLEDON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

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Additional Hambledon Parish Council Meeting on 27th June 2023 at 8pm in Hambledon Village Hall.

Present Cllr Stewart Payne, Cllr Alison Scott-Bishop, Cllr Sean Sinnott, Cllr Robin McKeith, Cllr Jude Milan, Cllr Andy Hinde, Cllr Simon Rhodes, Catherine Russell (Clerk).

The meeting opened at 8pm. Cllr Payne explained that this Additional Meeting of Hambledon Parish Council was being held to discuss the application PRA/2023/01265 Land at Feathercombe Farm, Feathercombe Lane, Hambledon, Godalming. General Permitted Development Order 2015, Schedule 2 Part 6 - Prior Notification Application for erection of an agricultural building.

23/98 Questions from Members of Public

A number of members of public were present. Cllr Payne welcomed all present and reminded them of the rules and regulations around speaking.

A member of the family that recently acquired Feathercombe Farm addressed the meeting to speak for the application, which is to construct what is described as an agricultural building at 14-acre copse under the General Permitted Development Order, 2015. The Applicant stated that the application has been put together by consultants and professionals where they have been applying the rules of Permitted Development to ensure that all the boxes were ticked. The consultants advised the Applicant that the building should go in that location. The Applicant and his wife bought the farm recently for the purpose of horses as the main activity. The current buildings are not fit for purpose. This new building will be fit for purpose and this application has been put in first to ensure that they have a place for their horses. From that point there will be another formal application for the yard. The yard is old, the buildings are leaking and full of asbestos. This application will come at a later stage, where they will get rid of the old buildings and replace them with nice buildings that fit in with the landscape. The Permitted Development is a back up plan, if they don't get planning on the old yard, only then would it be built. They would like to turn the yard into a nice space, of a sensible size, for the activity they want to do. They have no intention to offend anyone and they are coming here to stay and be successful. They are not developers and have always lived in and loved the countryside. They are open to talk to everyone and want to enhance not destroy. It is a lot to move to a new place and they are quite busy with horses split across other properties. The farm was an arable farm on sandy land not ideal for farming. Horses are a kind of livestock.

Cllr Payne stated that if they receive permission for the building then they have permission to go ahead and build. This despite the claim it would only be built, if they do not get an as yet unspecified permission relating to the existing buildings. It was not reassuring to know it was a back up plan and we could end up with both. Tonight councillors are considering the sole application and cannot take into account what may happen elsewhere on the land, but is not yet an application.

Question from the public - The building appears to be an equestrian building.

The Applicant stated that the building is not for equestrian purposes, it is for breeding. Grazing and breeding livestock.

Question from the public - Do you have an advisor and did they put it in this manner. Was it your decision to follow this order?

The Applicant stated that it was the advisors who said to put the application in that order. Full planning may take too long and they need something in place.

Question from the public- Did the advisors look at the maps? The application states it can not be seen from public footpaths and it is located by the most used footpaths in the area.
The Applicant stated the consultants had been to the site.

A Hambledon resident wished to address the Council - The resident lives next to the site with a lot of adjoining land with the Applicant's farm. He had spoken to the Applicant on the phone yesterday for the first time and have never met each other. They are the only property with direct line of sight. He does not agree with the strategy and is perplexed. A farm of this size does need to be developed, but should come under planning rules. He has spoken to farming consultants who have given advice. For a farm of Feathercombe's size, the village needs to be open minded. The resident objects to the current plans but there does need to be an open discussion and dialogue. Would they consider withdrawing the application as the technicalities need to be looked at.

Councillors agreed that the Council would like an open dialogue with the Applicant. They are not reassured that they may not use it and can't take that into account for the comments. HPC welcomes Feathercombe's new owners to the village. The village works on harmonious relationships and is open to any discussions.

Question from the public - The fact it may not be built doesn't seem to be in good faith or engender good will. The village will support people who want to work to make the farm a manageable state.

Councillors asked the Applicant if they felt that they were satisfied that the application is complete and accurate.

As far as the Applicant knows it is complete and accurate.

Question from the public - The planning experts must have seen the response, have they explained their mistake?

The Applicant stated that they are aware of the comments. If full planning is received they will go ahead with plan A, but plan B will still exist.

Question from the public - Why is the building so tall?

The Applicant stated the building was all calculated on volume and size of animals. This is their first application and they are hoping not to need to build it. The location of the building was decided by planning consultants because it ticks the boxes. They don't want to need to build it ever.

Question from the public - The location has no access road

The Applicant stated there is a farm track

Councillors stated that this application may have been to see if the method worked. Waverley have 28 days to respond. They will have seen the responses. This is HPC's first opportunity to meet and the response will be sent to Waverley tomorrow. Councillors are grateful for the village for turning up.

23/99 Apologies for Absence - None

23/100 Planning Matters

PRA/2023/01265 - Land at Feathercombe Farm, Feathercombe Lane. General Permitted Development Order 2015, Schedule 2 Part 6 - Prior Notification Application for erection of an agricultural building.

Councillors agreed it is a complex planning area. Councillors ran through the definition of what constitutes General Permitted Development, the use is for agricultural. Equestrian requires a change of use and would require planning permission. Is there an agricultural trade? If it is mainly equestrian then it is not permitted development.

The strength of feeling with 70 objections to date, including Surrey Hills AONB, Open Spaces and Witley Parish. Many objecting are from the village and confined themselves to planning matters. The Council will ask Waverley to fully take into account the number of objections and consider what may - or may not- be agricultural. All Councillors agree that the documents do not meet requirements and will object.

The following grounds were stated:

The new building is not for livestock, it is a stable block and contains 12 stable units. It is not agricultural and is for equine purposes.

It can't be agricultural with foaling stables, vet room, feed room. All Councillors agreed

Horses are only livestock if farmed for meat or hides.

The Applicant stated that the current farm buildings are not fit for the proposed business, but the metaled road present and buildings could be subject to further applications. The proposed new building has no services, or metaled roads. The application does not address this. Nearby roads are unsuitable for large vehicles or volumes of traffic.

The application does not state that there is no current building present. HPC acknowledges that AONB can be built on for agriculture however this is not a livestock barn. It will cause landscape degradation and light pollution. All Councillors agreed.

The form itself - is it reasonably necessary for agriculture and can it be seen from public land. Cllr Rhodes asked the relevance of the question, does the presence of a footpath impact the decision? Could the Applicants locate the proposed building next to a footpath if it was deemed agricultural under the Order, the answer could be yes. There is a precedent of a proposed barn at Hydestile Crossroads for agricultural purpose. It was turned down by Waverley and that is not in AONB and has no footpaths nearby.

Councillors are not trying to stop people developing the land in an appropriate manner. The concern is only in this planning application. HPC is happy to work with the owners in the future. Councillors believe it should go through the normal planning process.

Feathercombe Farm is an integral part of the village and HPC know the previous owners and the current farmer well. The way forward is dialogue. Councillors agreed that the comments themselves to Waverley will need to deal with the facts and separately can convey a willingness to discuss.

Councillors discussed given they are not planning experts and resources are limited, maybe there could be funds for paid professional advice in the future.

The Council will meet next week and the outcome may be known by then. The Clerk will structure the letter for review before sending to Waverley.

The Council has never known so many objections listed against an application. Councillors agreed it was not permitted development. The footpath 181 is much loved and the open landscape would be ruined. The graveyard is very close and the noise and visibility from the churchyard would have an adverse impact on the tranquillity of this special area which is used for prayer and reflection.

23/101 Dates of next meetings:

4th July 2023	9th January 2024
No August meeting	6th February 2024
5th September 2023	5th March 2024
3rd October 2023	9th April 2024
7th November 2023	25th April 2024 (Parish Assembly)
5th December 2023	14th May 2024

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 21.00pm.