

DRAFT

BELCHAMP WALTER PARISH COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Parish Council meeting was held on 22nd July 2024 at 7:00pm at the village hall.

Present:

Parish Council: Cllr J Walker (Chair), Cllr A Hogsbjerg, Cllr C Krelle, Cllr P. Scott, Cllr R Teverson, Cllr M Winter Ms J Munro (Parish Clerk)

Apologies:

Cllr E Poels

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed approximately 16 village residents to the meeting. She explained that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss planning application no No 24/01403/FUL – Proposed demolition of existing redundant mission hut and erection of new detached residential cottage. New parking for proposed residential unit and additional visitor parking for adjacent residential units. Location: Land south of Cobweb Cottage, Hall Road, Belchamp Walter.

She outlined the format of the meeting:

- Any parishioner who wished would be invited to make a statement,
- After hearing the statements, the Council members would discuss the matter and determine whether it wished to submit a comment letter and, if so the matters to be addressed,
- As with all parish council meetings, the meeting is open to the public and parishioners are welcome to stay and listen to the council deliberations.

She provided some background on planning applications and the role of the parish council:

- The parish council is a statutory consultee in the planning process and is informed of all planning applications and any amendments
- The parish council has no powers to approve or reject a planning application – it can only comment or not on an application in the same way as any member of the public
- The parish council has a Planning Advisory Committee (comprising four councilors). The PAC reviews every planning application and makes a recommendation to the Council whether a particular application should be discussed by the council.
- In light of the consultation prior to submitting an application to BDC, and some concerns expressed, earlier this year the Parish Council determined that, should an application be submitted, it would call an extra-ordinary meeting to discuss the application.
- Anyone parishioners are encouraged to comment directly to Braintree District Council– this can be done on the BDC website.
- She noted that there are valid reasons for commenting on an application and irrelevant reasons. The Parish Council would only consider matters which BDC planning has deemed to be relevant.

She asked whether there were any questions and there were none.

2. Declaration of interest in agenda items

Cllr Walker noted that no councillor had declared an interest in the application and therefore there were no recusals.

Mr Nigel Horne expressed the view that there was a conflict of interest because the Parochial Parish Council (PCC) will obtain a donation from the proceeds of the sale of the land. He expressed the view that any member of the PCC who was also a member of the PC therefore, has a conflict of interest.

Cllr Scott is also a member of the PCC. The PC discussed the matter and noted that whether or not there is a donation to the PCC is not a planning matter and, in its view, there was therefore no conflict of interest and no need for recusal.

Mr Nigel Horne stated that he disagreed.

3. Parishioner Statements

Cllr Walker invited parishioners to make their statements.

Nigel Horne stated that he lives in Upper Croft Cottage and the road is very narrow there. If the Mission Hut site is developed it will eliminate a passing area and make the road a single lane. This will be problematic for traffic and, in particular, the large agricultural vehicles that use the road.

Martin Runnacles, of Rose Cottage, stated the application is being made under a misrepresentation stating that the building has been redundant since 1975 when it's actually currently in use as a workshop for a local carpenter for which rent is being paid and it is therefore in employment use.

Moving onto the proposed scheme, the drawings and application are for a four bedroom house with two parking spaces. Firstly as indicated by the drawings he had circulated approximately 30 to 40% of the house and 40% of the amenity fall outside the development curtilage as outlined in the latest plan which is against established policy.

He urged the PC members to consider the matter of precedent very carefully. Once an application outside the development boundary is permitted, it opens the door to everyone and anyone to make similar applications throughout the village to the detriment of the community as a whole.

Secondly, the proposed dwelling does not match the existing building line on that side of the road. It is not in line with Rose cottage or Waverley at the front and simply protrudes into what is currently agricultural land. He stated this frankly is lazy architecture and not in keeping with the existing conservation area.

Thirdly, there are only two in-line parking spaces shown for the proposed four bedroom property. Most families with four bedroom houses in this village and most others have more than two cars some have work vans and small caravans as well. They will also wish to receive visitors where they will now be no parking. This means they will either park on the road creating chaos for other vehicles but particularly agricultural vehicles and 40 ton trucks moving cereals and sugar beat or they will pave over the front of the new dwelling and any aesthetic looks created will be lost forever.

He noted that in addition there would be a loss of a safe parking space, about five residents' parking spaces and somewhere for the ever-growing number of delivery vans to be able to pull in.

He noted that he had a number of other objections which he would raised with BDC planning officer, as they are mostly concerned the effect on Rose Cottage.

In summary he noted that whilst he was grateful to the applicant for his generous offer to support the church by contributing to the Parish share it was important to point out that none of that contribution would go towards the fabric of our own church but rather into a salary and pension fund for clergy. He also added that waving through bad planning for a financial contribution to the Church of England does not benefit the village in the least and will be harmful in the long term.

Judith Tatnall, of 3 Croft Cottage, stated that, by way of background, the property had been owned by a member of her family for fifty years and during that time they had been parking on the land by the mission hut and assumed that arrangement would continue in perpetuity. She acknowledged that this was a personal concern. She further stated that parking is an issue as there is limited parking in the village. The proposed development would remove three visitor parking spaces. Whilst the application does indicate some visitor parking, it is not allocated to anyone, which means people will not have a right to park there.

In considering the parking at the house, Judith Tatnall, noted there were two parking places on the plan which were on behind each other. This would mean cars would have to reverse out onto the road which would be a dangerous. She also expressed concern that new residence might pave over the front of the house to provide additional parking space since a four bedroom house will often introduce, up to 4 extra cars in the village.

She concluded by saying that she and her husband got older lack of parking outside the house will become more of an issue.

Polly Gerrard of Cobweb Cottage stated that she was very concerned about the parking. People need places to park and the proposal will reduce the parking in the village. As to the effect on the church – if the proposal goes ahead, it will lose the annual income from the people who park there and pay rent .

Becky Poynter of Wheatleys stated that she did not think there should be any discussion of any proposed donation to the church or indeed the effect on the church as in her opinion that was not a planning issue and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the application that had been filed with BDC. On the subject of the need to reverse onto the road, she noted that people are already doing that. She stated that she has lived in the village for around 50 years and in all that time the mission hut has not been used as a community asset.

Martin Runnacles that the Mission hut is currently used by a carpenter and questioned whether there would be anywhere else for him to work if the proposal went ahead.

Nigel Horne stated that the bend is blind both ways both before and after the mission hut if the hut was developed therefore this would cause traffic problems he further noted that the telegraph pole which is rented by BT provides Internet services to the house and some of the lines go right over the house he asked what will happen to the Internet should the mission be developed and who would pay for any changes to the cabling that was needed?

Monika Shepherd stated that with respect parking she lives in a cottage with no on road parking she therefore parks in the village hall and pays for that privilege. She noted that many of the cottages in the village come without on road parking. With respect to the mission hut itself, she said that having a shed that stores material for one member of the community is hardly a significant contribution to the community. If the hut is developed, an additional family can come into the village which will have a positive effect on the community.

Nigel Horne noted that the mission hut provides somewhere for someone to work. He also questioned how an additional family coming into the community could contribute to the community.

Becky Poynter noted that whilst bringing an additional family into the community wasn't necessarily a planning issue in her personal opinion an additional family would be good for the village. She also questioned whether the hut was designated as a business or rather was merely being used as a storage space.

Polly Gerrard stated that the cottages surrounding the Mission Hut are very old and constantly in need of repair. No builder she noted would be prepared to park anywhere except outside the building the builder was working on. Consequently, the builders would have to park in the road when these constant repairs are needed and this would cause traffic chaos.

Tilly Poynter expressed the view that a new house would be a great opportunity to welcome a new family into the village. There may be people who want to live near their family who could rent it.

Cllr Walker thanked all those who commented. She asked if anyone had any further remarks they wished to make. No one had any further comments.

4. Parish Council Consideration of Application

Cllr Walker asked the council members to express their views on the application and what they had heard. The following matters were raised:

- The current parking is on private property and could be revoked at any time. While it is unfortunate that some residents are losing their current parking, this is not a planning issue.
- Parking is an issue in the village.
- The issue of traffic and access is a BDC issue and something that highways would comment on – it was noted Highways had not submitted a comment on the portal.
- The issue of a precedent was discussed. It was noted that precedent was a valid issue to comment on an application but only where it can be shown there would be a real danger that a proposal would inevitably lead to other inappropriate development. The Council did not feel the proposal met this threshold.

All council members agreed that there was not a valid reason to object to the proposal and, therefore, it would not submit a comment.

There being no further business Cllr Walker thanked Council members for their time and parishioners for their interest and attendance and closed the meeting.