

Ditchling Parish Council

Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held in the Lower Hall, Ditchling Village Hall on Monday 13 February 2017 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs.Madden (in the Chair), Smith, Madden (Mrs), Orme, Ingham (from 7.45pm), Guggenheim, Keeley and the Clerk, Mrs M. Warner.

Public Participation:

There were no members of the public present

1. Declarations of Interest: None
2. Apologies for absence Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Robinson, Jones, McBeth, and Leaver who were on holiday.
3. Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30th January having been circulated, were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
4. Planning Applications

4.1 SDNP/17/00126/FUL Notcutts Garden Centre, Common Lane. Proposed refurbishment and upgrade, including replacement of some existing structures, and amended internal layout. **Objection**, there are inaccuracies in the application documents, page 3 of the Design and Access Statement correctly notes that the site sits within the boundaries of the South Downs National Park. However, the map on page 3 shows a boundary line several miles adrift from the actual boundary and gives the impression that the site falls outside of the SDNP. It is noted that the Design and Access Statement contains provision for the service vehicle exit to be altered 'if possible' to encourage a right turn only. It is essential that this exit is altered so that HGV vehicles must turn right when exiting the site. Current restrictions do not permit HGV vehicles to enter the village of Ditchling with its narrow streets. The Parish Council would request that altering the exit for service vehicles is included as an essential condition, should planning permission be granted. The ESCC Freight Strategy clearly shows the village of Ditchling as a restricted area. From discussions with Notcutts the Parish Council understood that the company was looking into a separate postcode for the site so that sat-nav directions to the site would avoid the village centre. We have not heard whether this solution has progressed.

The Baseline Assessment checklist states that there are no existing trees within the development area, this is incorrect. We would request that all trees remain and that a proper arboriculture assessment is prepared, the existing trees will be essential in screening the enlarged developed site, particularly to the East of the site. It may be appropriate to plant further trees to improve screening.

Traffic is problematic in Ditchling, there are over 10,000 traffic movements per day and in peak times the narrow streets can become gridlocked. It is disappointing that the application does not include a Travel Plan or any consultation with ESCC Highways Dept. and does not consider the impact that the enlarged business will have upon the local road network. The proposed site with a play area, maze, leisure zone, increased retail space and a doubling of restaurant space the site will attract increased visitor numbers. The Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston emerging neighbourhood plan states that:

Through traffic movements of all kinds will be discouraged because of the damage to the ancient fabric of the villages, the impact on quality of life and the environment, the danger to pedestrians, and the resultant congestion. (Trans 5)

The application includes a maze of approx 4180m² in long grass, but there is insufficient information regarding this significant feature to assess its impact on the landscape.

Question 18 on the application form has been incorrectly answered NO- clearly the application does involve the loss, gain, change of use of non-residential floor space. This should be corrected.

Whilst the Parish Council encourages local businesses and recognises that Notcutts is a valued local employer, it requests that further consideration is given to the points outlined.

4.2 SDNP/16/06333/HOUS Down House Underhill Lane Westmeston Erection of side single storey boiler house, two storey rear extension, ground floor infill of a service alley with first floor extension above and a 2 bay oak garage with log store. This application was considered on 9th January 2017, no further discussion is required.

5. Matters raised by Councillors for exchange of information only. None

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Chairman 27 February 2017