

**Minutes of a meeting of District Planning Committee
held on Thursday, 17th December, 2020
from 2.00 pm - 3.25 pm**

Present: R Salisbury (Chair)
D Sweatman (Vice-Chair)

R Bates
A Eves
S Hatton

R Jackson
C Laband
R Webb

R Whittaker
J Dabell
G Marsh

Absent: Councillor A Peacock

1. ROLL CALL AND VIRTUAL MEETING EXPLANATION.

The Chairman advised that Cllr Walker and Cllr Coe-Gunnell White have decided to stand down and he welcomed Cllr Dabell and Cllr Marsh to the committee. The Chairman commenced the roll call to confirm the Members present. Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services provided a virtual meeting explanation.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Peacock.

3. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

No declarations of interest were received.

4. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2020.

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 15 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed electronically by the Chairman.

5. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

6. DM/20/2877 - LAND NORTH OF TURNERS HILL ROAD, TURNERS HILL, WEST SUSSEX, RH10 4PE

The Chairman confirmed that all the Committee Members had received the agenda update sheet.

Andy Watt, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report seeking outline planning permission for a single chapel crematorium with a single abated cremator and natural

burial site with associated access, car parking, landscaping and drainage. He noted that the agenda update sheet listed the updated consultation response from WSCC Minerals and Waste Planning Authority and the agent's response to a representation and to the council's consultant.

The Senior Planning Officer highlighted the location of the site which is opposite the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and adjacent to an Ancient Woodland. He noted that the proposed layout plan used the existing access with a one-way traffic management arrangement and associated parking. The application included a footpath extension which would connect with the public footpath at the south west corner of the site.

The Senior Planning Officer noted that some viewpoints would experience significant harm in landscape terms which were set out in the report. The Committee were advised that there would be an adverse impact to the character and beauty of the countryside and the setting of the AONB; and that the benefits of the application do not outweigh the significant harm to the landscape in the context of District Plan policy DP12 in particular.

The Chairman outlined the procedure for the public speaker.

Ms Jackson, the applicant's agent, spoke in support of the application.

Cllr Gibson, speaking as Ward Member advised that he supported the officer's recommendation. He noted that over 60% of the letters received that supported the application had come from people outside the district, and many of those had a crematorium closer to them. He had not been advised that any of his electorate had difficulty accessing the services of a crematorium or that the Surrey & Sussex crematorium could not meet demand. He expressed concern that the matter of air quality had not been satisfactorily addressed. The prevailing wind direction would move particulate matter towards Turners Hill and suggested the need for an environment impact assessment.

Members discussed the impact on the landscape, the proposed access, parking provision and air quality for Turners Hill village. Several Members stated they would support the officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

The Chairman reminded Members that no objection had been received from the Highway Authority. He noted an objection regarding the landscaping that would be adjacent to Butchers Wood. He asked the Senior Planning Officer to highlight the comments made by the Planning Inspector.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that the Environment Agency had been consulted and their comments were listed on pages 75 – 77. They had made comments on water drainage into ground from the site and advised conditions could be added in relation to water pollution. He noted that the Planning Inspector had commented on the earlier dismissed appeal for houses on this site, DM/16/1887 "*that landscaping designs should not be used to hide an otherwise unacceptable largescale development*". He stated that the proposed landscaping design was for dense woodland planting to screen the proposed development, whereas an unregimented, lighter planting scheme was more appropriate within this landscape, as proposed in the permitted natural burial ground. There would still be harm to the landscape character of the area after the maturity of the planting and noted the impact from viewpoint 11 in respect of the setting of the AONB. He confirmed that an

environmental permit would be necessary for pollution prevention and control legislation, and further information would be required.

A Member noted the comprehensive supporting documents for the application and commented that the 15-year maturity landscape design showed good mitigation. They would not be supporting the officer's recommendation.

Members expressed concern over the proximity to the adjacent AONB, relocation of the natural burial site, contamination of the River Medway, the need for another crematorium and the site had been described as a brownfield site.

The Chairman noted that the site was currently unkempt but advised there were many areas like that in the District. He highlighted that commercial requirement was not a planning consideration and he asked the Senior Planning Officer to comment on the need for an additional crematorium in the area and the description of the site.

The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that this was not a brownfield site. He advised that with a drive time of 41 minutes the whole of the District is covered by existing crematoria surrounding the District. He noted that only four replies were received from the 20 funeral directors in the District invited to take part in a survey conducted on behalf of the applicant. The 10 questions related to the need and benefit of new crematorium in Turners Hill. Two replies agreed that a new site is needed in Turners Hill, and two said it was not needed. He stated that there was no statement of community involvement submitted with the application.

Cllr Webb spoke as Ward Member and he expressed concerns over the access to the site but noted that Highways had raised no objections. He supported the officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

The Chairman advised that the adjacency of the site to the AONB, landscape views, location of the site and mourners experience should be considered, in order to reach a balanced decision.

The Solicitor took a named vote on the officer's recommendation with the changes in the update sheet and the Committee voted 8 in favour of the motion, 2 against and 1 abstention.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstained
Bates, R.			✓
Dabell, J	✓		
Eves, A.	✓		
Hatton, S.	✓		
Jackson, R.	✓		
Laband, C.		✓	
Marsh, G	✓		
Salisbury, R.	✓		
Sweatman, D.	✓		
Webb, R.	✓		
Whittaker, R.		✓	

RESOLVED

That planning permission be refused as per Appendix A, the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the intrinsic character and beauty of the local

countryside, including the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which would be further harmed by the necessary woodland mitigation screen planting. This harm is not considered to be outweighed by an overriding need for this development and is therefore contrary to Policies DP12, DP16, DP25, DP26 and DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policies THP8 and THP13 of the Neighbourhood Plan, the provisions of the NPPF, in particular, paragraphs 8, 11, 124, 127, 130 and 170, Objectives FH2 and FH3 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 and Design Principles DG3, DG7 and DG11 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD.

7. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

None.

The meeting finished at 3.25 pm

Chairman