

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF ST MARGARET'S-AT-CLIFFE

The Ordinary Monthly Meeting of the above Parish Council is convened for MONDAY 8TH JANUARY 2024 to be held at St Margaret's Village Hall. The meeting proper will start at 7pm, with public participation from 6.45pm for 15 minutes.

(Any questions / issues to be raised by the public).

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 11th December 2023.
2. Declarations of interest on any agenda items.
3. Reports from County and District Councillors, together with any CSU reports.
4. Clerk's Report.
5. (a) To consider planning applications received ahead of January meeting.
6. Glebe Field / The Bay Trust - to agree next step.
7. Civic Cemetery and Garden of Remembrance - to agree plan of new plots.
8. Finance and Accounts:-
 - a) To approve payments made since December meeting.
 - b) To consider Budget for 2024-2025.
 - c) Decision on Precept for 2024-2025.
 - d) Consideration of quote for Kingsdown Road pavilion roof repairs.
 - e) Consideration of Clerk salary for 2024-2025. **(TO BE HEARD IN CAMERA)**
 - f) Consideration of payment rates for maintenance contractor **(TO BE HEARD IN CAMERA)**

9. To consider any updates re grasscutting contract for 2024-2025.
10. Correspondence.
11. Reports from Councillors, to include:-
 - Cllr Fulford re 80th anniversary of D-Day arrangements - update following Volunteer meeting 3rd January.
 - Cllr Fulford - proposal re village business signs - update re proposed costs.
 - Cllr Checksfield re Community Safety Unit forum meeting.
 - Cllrs Fulford and Checksfield re approach to Neil Baker, KCC Cabinet Member for Transport re village bus service.
 - Cllr Fielding re Ash Grove - Parish Council involvement re tenancies etc.
12. Village Maintenance and Matters affecting the Parish:-
 - a) Playing Field Inspection / maintenance plan for Play Area.
 - b) Signs for tennis courts - wording to be decided.
 - c) Land sold off Sea Street - any update received.
 - d) Meeting to be arranged re Christmas event with volunteers for feedback.
 - e) Great British Spring Clean Campaign - 15 to 31 March 2024.
13. Information received since last meeting. Anything raised to be added to next meeting agenda.

Tuesday 2nd January 2024

Jane Cook
Clerk to the Parish Council

Planning applications

23/01336 Erection of a detached dwelling, garage, vehicular access, parking and turning area with landscaping -
Neptune, Bay Hill

To ratify decision as follows:-

The application for a detached house in this plot on Bay Hill is assessed not only for its merits as a contemporary dwelling but also for its impact on the St Margarets Bay Conservation Area. The proposal would turn a natural woodland site into a large dwelling with residential garden space. The site is extremely steep and the placement of a dwelling and associated amenities here will require radical alteration to the whole plot, significantly changing the landscape appearance. A wide driveway is planned to extend through the length of the plot, taking up further land. A substantial loss of biodiversity appears Inevitable.

This is a landscape conservation area so effect on the landscape is a particularly important consideration. The site is also in/adjacent to the Heritage Coast and close to the Kent Downs OANB which surrounds the village. This site has long been an area of mature woodland and vegetation and so contributes to the natural landscape character in this part of the Bay. It is part of a larger woodland area. It is undeveloped land outside the confines, outside the Local Plan allocations which propose substantial housing. It is within the Conservation Area. Consequently the Parish Council objects to any housing development on such land.

The St Margaret's Bay Conservation Area Character Appraisal states:

When assessing planning applications, the local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and its setting. Policies in the Local Development Plan positively encourage development which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas”.

For the Parish Council to support this application it would have to be satisfied that the development would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. When measured against relevant national and local planning policies the application does not appear to meet this requirement.

NPPF policy 174 states:

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

NPPF policy 185 states:

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects..... In doing so they should...

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

The application does not appear to be compliant with either of these two sections.

Dover Local Plan policy SP4 deals with Residential Windfall Development. It places several restrictions including:

c) In the case of settlements in, adjoining or surrounded by, the Kent Downs AONB or Heritage Coasts, that the proposal complies in the first instance with the primary requirement of conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty

d) It would conserve and enhance landscape character and biodiversity and not result in unacceptable intrusion into the open countryside or the loss of, important green spaces within the confines that contribute positively to the existing character of that settlement; Local Plan policy SP13 also emphasises the importance of conserving the landscape and biodiversity and states in section

e) All proposals within, or affecting the setting of, the AONB and Heritage Coasts must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty in accordance with the requirements of Policy NE2.

Policy SP14, Enhancing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, places further requirements on developments to conserve habitats and specifically states in section d

All development must avoid a net loss of biodiversity and will be required to achieve a net gain in biodiversity above the ecological baseline in line with Policy NE1

Policy NE1 specifies the requirement for biodiversity net gain in section 3

All planning applications must be supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and supporting reports with information to demonstrate how at least 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved....

Policy NE2, Landscape Character and Kent Downs AONB, requires that proposals should demonstrate particular regard to the Landscape Character Area and states in section d proposals will be supported if:

The development would enhance the special qualities, distinctive character and tranquillity of the AONB and the Heritage Coasts

Application 23/01336 does not appear to meet this or any of the referenced policies in the Local Plan

In Policy SP4 section 3 it is stated:

New dwellings (both isolated and non-isolated) elsewhere in the countryside outside of settlement boundaries will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances under one or

more of the criteria i) to v),

None of the exception criteria then listed in Policy SP4 appear to apply to this application. In view of the difficulty of reconciling the planning application with relevant sections of national and local planning policies which protect the environment, in the absence of a biodiversity net gain plan or environmental impact assessment, and having regard to the Conservation Area Character Assessment, the Parish Council is concerned about harm to the landscape in the Conservation area and therefore objects to the application.