

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF
BEAULIEU PARISH COUNCIL
MONDAY 4TH AUGUST 2014 AT 6.30PM, BEAULIEU CHURCH HALL

PRESENT

Cllr. Norris (Chairman), Cllr. Steele, Cllr. Knight, Cllr. Weiss

APOLOGIES

Cllr. Fairweather, Cllr. Shanks

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. J. Beaumont, Mr. W. Slee, Mr. R. Pleydell-Bouverie, Mr. and Mrs. T. Barber, Mr. A. Mills

MINUTES

The minutes of this meeting will be taken and affixed to the next council meeting minutes and will be posted on the parish website.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Norris said two councillors had declared an interest and were asked not to attend the meeting.

Cllr. Norris introduced the councillors and said they have attended two site visits involving this application and two councillors were on the council at the time of the previous application. Cllr. Norris said he would permit Mr. Ratcliffe's representatives to speak for 5 minutes instead of the usual 3 minutes and the public can speak for 3 minutes, 5 if needed.

Mervyn McFarland, Planning Director, Turley - said Turley are the planning consultants for Mr. Ratcliffe in respect of his proposal at Thorns Beach. Accompanied by Peter Clarkson, a representative of Mr. Ratcliffe's and working for INEOS and Charles Morris, who is the architect and designer of the proposed replacement dwelling at Thorns Beach and the replacement Boat House. Said he would talk about the planning policy context and history of the previous application for those who may not have been directly involved and will then pass over to Charles Morris who will talk you through the architecture, the architectural approach and architectural changes that have been made since the previous application. Said he sends apologies that they were unable to attend the site meeting last Saturday. Said regards to the site that this is the 3rd planning application in relation to Thorns Beach and our approach throughout to the application process has been that we recognise the special character and quality of the area and site and develop a special solution for that site. Hopefully through renewing the design access statement you will understand that we have gone to significant lengths to try and understand the landscape quality and the environment quality – the factors which make Thorns Beach a special place. The 1st application was withdrawn and the 2nd was pursued and went to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate after it was refused by the NPA and really one of our reasons for pursuing it to appeal was we felt the NPA were not correctly applying National Planning Policy guides to this proposal and think this is one of the key messages I want to get across. The proposal is being put forward on the basis of Para 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework – development in the

countryside and in rural locations. It advocates a general policy of restraint, but it does permit in certain circumstances that exceptions maybe made and one is for new dwellings in isolated locations where the architectural merit of the proposal is of outstanding quality and that is the benchmark which Mr. Ratcliffe has set and based on which this proposal is being put forward. There were some significant debates in the course of the last application as to whether the site was isolated. It is not completely separate from other dwellings, there are other dwelling around the hamlet of Thorns Beach and along the foreshore, but the Inspector concluded that the test of isolation was met and the NPA had defined that criteria too finely. Went on the consider the special architectural character of what was proposed and said he was in favour of the proposal on the grounds of ecological terms, the proposal was sound in landscaping terms, said a replacement dwelling would enhance the character of the site by providing a building that was more permanent and of more architectural merit than the building that is there at the moment. Considered that in landscaping terms the existing landscape setting was particularly special and did not need radical enhancement. He felt there were one or two issues around the architecture design which lead him ultimately to conclude that it was not of the highest most outstanding architectural quality. He gave a number of clear steers and indications of the work he felt fell short and what would have to be done to address that. Accept that if the proposal was to be judged purely against the core strategy policy of the NPA it would not comply with restrictions on dwelling size and on floor space, but it does not need to meet those tests if it passed the para 55 test of being of outstanding architectural quality.

Mr. Morris said the primary decision that needs to be made is 'is this a good design or not so good'. Said the longer you work in this business the more your own self assessment of design should grow in confidence. Had a long run of projects which had beaten him on paper, but when built seemed to have beaten others – would say that Lime Wood was one. That is how it should be. Then came Thorns Beach and of course there were issues as to whether it was eligible under the planning policy to be considered at all, but began to question myself and that is when it was decided to commission Peter Stewart and get a further assessment. His verdict was extremely positive and he recognised the building had the right feel for a shore location, which he knew very well. One doubt was the south east wing and its connection/link to the main building. When went to appear and the Inspectorate said the design was very good, but just missing it, for one or two specific things, of which the south east wing was probably the most significant. So looked afresh at the design and now the main change to the design is now it is linked by a pergola and not as accommodation. This has been a really positive collaboration process. Knows this building is different, but this is because it is neither traditional nor modern, but somewhere in between. Feels the height is right for the setting. The design should be coherent in itself – coherent in its composition and thinks that is where the last application fell down. Said the external materials should age gracefully. Feels these points have been fulfilled.

Cllr. Norris asked if councillors had any questions.

Cllr. Steele asked Mr. Morris if he had designed this from scratch for Thorns Beach or was the concept something you had in mind for quite some time. Mr. Morris said with absolute assurance that it was designed for Thorns Beach. Cllr. Norris asked if demolition had started on the Boat House, said yes only the slabs are left.

Mr. Slee said he has been here 32 years and lives ½ mile from Thorns Beach. Said please don't think that the small representation of neighbours here tonight indicates that there is widespread support – there is huge opposition. Said in the last 5 days he has taken people out in the boat along the shore to show them. Had to point out very specifically the site as Mrs. Tew's old house is almost unseeable and most people do not realise that with the proposed design it will be huge and stand out from Newtown on the IOW. Concept that you would accept is that the NP rules would never allow a house of this size, so you are going for Para 55. Most cannot conceive that this is an isolated location. From the solent, from my house and from Warren Beach road you will certainly see it, so cannot see how the isolation point, Para 55 is met.

Adam Mills said this is his personal opinion and not that of the Residents Association. 1) said he feels the same about the isolation point. Clear this is not an isolated site, it is in close proximity of houses to the back and in the little hamlet. 2) This point relates to the house, only make comment about the sheer scale in terms of the size of the site and the siting of the house is very close to the sea front and the shape of the house, with the forward thrusting drawing/living room will protrude pretty closely onto the coastline and the pavilion will be extremely close. The question of scale on that site and the proximity to the coast line is a particular concern. 3) Architecture – interesting this it has come up on both the land side and solent side with almost all classical structures. Have an issue with the continuing height of the building in particular the solent side – you have 2 verticals together with the diagonal of the rooms leading to the top room and this emphasizes the scale and height – even though there has been commendable effort to look at the textures to harmonise. The issues are 1) is it isolated and 2) the sheer scale of the building on the site.

Mrs. Barber – said all of us here are bound by the local development authority which make it perfectly clear that the size of a replacement building cannot be more than 30% of the footprint of the original building. Asked Mr. Morris what makes him think that the proposed building is of architectural merit, that is a question of opinion not fact. Concerned with the size of the building it is replacing before its demolition and the size of the building you are proposing to replace it with.

Mr. Barber – said he is an architect and said he would be loath to criticise the design of an architect, however having looked at this project and the previous one I find there is very little difference, both in the planned arrangement and to the elevational treatment. Made a point that there is not a great deal of material difference in the actual design and the innovative building. Stress has been made by the NPA obligations and indeed if you read it very carefully there are exceptions described. These depend upon the location which means that the proposal has to be in a secluded area, this point has already been made. Said if the other properties in the hamlet were to be developed to the extent that this is proposed then you would have a mini town, rather than as described as 'tin town'. Have a report by Prof. Robert Tavenor, who was called in by residents of Thorns Beach, who I would say is somewhat critical of the design. He says the proposed house would not be isolated i.e open countryside and it would be visible from existing houses on either side. The proposed house

would be in a prominent view from the water front and across the solent, and its scale, mass and design character will be such that it will not enhance the characteristics of the local area. The design of the house is neither truly outstanding, ground breaking nor will it be of exceptional quality and represent the highest standard of contemporary architecture and will not significantly enhance the immediate setting. With the greatest respect to Mr. Morris, he has been described as an architect and has an observation to present from the Institute of Architects Board. Cllr. Norris read it and passed to Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris said it was entirely true, I am a FRICS and have worked in the business since 1972, but did not train as an architect. I do not think a good design has to be accompanied by the label 'architect'. I do not think there is a privy of good design which belongs only with someone who is registered with the Architect Registration Council. I do not call myself an architect, but I do get described as one in articles etc. I say 'call me an architectural designer'.

John Beaumont – said he supports his colleagues and reminds everyone that Mr. Morris was introduced as an architect. Mr. McFarland said he introduced him as an architect and building designer. Mr. Beaumont said Solent Protection Society have decided against the latest application, said they considered there to be very little change and are interested in the point of the sea regarding isolation – it is clear there are 8 houses with 150m and this is definitely not isolated, therefore the number one rule is not being obeyed. Regarding other matters of meeting the 55MPG says regarding jacking, that my cousin was jacking up properties in Vancouver in 1955. Other suggestions which are innovative, which have been used for a very long time, suggest if this house was jacked up it would be approx. 4.4m above AOD, which is an awful lot higher than it might be thought of now. Said Mary Montagu-Scott who addressed the inspectorate previously, wonders why the applicant did not find a large house somewhere else and said he needs this dwelling to run his business, where in fact he owns 'Greatfield'. Mr. Morris said on the question of scale, it was explained in the design access statement, that the significant difference in this house and the next neighbour – Durns or Througham Place, it is actually lower by 2-2 ½ m. The really important thing which is hard to understand, because one sees elevations and one sees flatness, it is a very different sort of building from something which is flat fronted. This is why the building comes forward, so you get a broken line when you look at it and of course the height, parts are tall, but lower than neighbouring houses, making a broken skyline and it has a very fragmented, all be it that it is a very symmetrical form and almost classical in its symmetry, but it is balanced and has a coherency. It is tremendously fragmented both in its height dimensions and its front to back dimensions and that makes an enormous difference to for example the flat fronted property of Durns. The apparent size is what matters, not the size on paper, apparent size that is so important together with the very soft pallet of materials, this can make a massive difference and this is something that has to be considered when you question the scale.

Cllr. Steele said she felt this was a very important issue as it was the size of the proposed new house that concerned most people. She pointed out the new house will be almost five times the size of the property it replaces with the scale of the front of the building along the foreshore of particular concern. She referred to page 45 of the planning document which shows the scale of the proposed new house compared to that of Durns and Througham Place which clearly shows that it has a wider frontage than these two substantial properties.

She felt that this raised concerns over the spread and dominance of the property on the site and that it did not fulfil the criteria of Para 55 that states the building should significantly enhance its immediate setting. Mr. Morris said the west wing will be behind existing trees. Cllr. Steele suggested that the building would look more acceptable if just the main building was to the front of the shore line and the pavilion was set back so that the spread of the proposed building was reduced.

Mr. Slee said we have two new residents – owners of Colgrims and Little Marsh. Said they have made enormous efforts to consult neighbours, get feedback and modify planning proposals to meet some of the objections. Both planning applications sailed through as they had support, no big objections, no town hall meetings – nothing. Mr. Ratcliffe has owned Greatfield for approx. 20 years, he is not part of the community, with exception of two parties a few years ago, he has made no effort to get to know some of us, he does have a number of friends, but made no effort to influence in a constructive way people who live here.

Cllr. Norris said he will do a summing up and then discuss and vote. Said it was interesting from the floor that a lot of people are challenging the Inspectorate's decision that the dwelling is isolated. Was surprised when you think we have one of the most densely populated coastal stretched in the whole of England, that the Inspectorate found the area was isolated because we are 10k from Lymington and 8k from Beaulieu, but if that is his decision we tend to accept that as a council, rightly or wrongly that we looked at other aspects of Para 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework 1) Should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless special circumstances 2) Exceptions being that such a design should be truly outstanding or innovative to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. 3) Reflect high standards of architecture. 4) Enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the design and characteristics of the local area. These are the questions we are being asked. Said we are going along, we are being purists, said it is isolated. If we then consider that then we must look at the other criteria. The applicant states the dwelling meets all of the texts described in Para 55 and have amended the application to address comments from the Planning Inspectorate. Para 16 of Inspectorate's report says it might be seen churlish to criticize the design which in some other location would fairly likely be readily accepted, i.e a winner in Sandbanks. However one has to measure the proposal against the highest standards in architecture, various thoughts occur to me. Think the applicant has responded because they have rotated the master bedroom to the top floor, more befitting to a fine home. The top floor no longer contains either of these changes and the Look Out has been removed, thereby removing light pollution from the top floor. The south east wing was removed and replaced with a free standing pavilion with an ambulatory added to provide a suitable visual link. The pavilion contains only guest accommodation with a lower roof height, so it appears subservient to the house. The ground floor of the house is now smaller due to the omission of the south east wing. Automated electric promatic glass is to be used on all large plain glazing and all glazing on the second floor pavilion. Automatic roller black out blinds will be used on all other windows, to stop light pollution and to protect dark skies. No external lighting is proposed. The seaward facing chimneys have been amended and lowered in height.

We have to ask ourselves is this building of the highest standard in architecture? Has enough been done for us to say that the design is now truly outstanding and innovative? Is this proposed new build one of exceptional quality, truly outstanding and of the highest standards? Does it significantly enhance the immediate setting. A lot of people think it is an improvement on the existing building, but I quite like the old existing building. The new building will be significantly larger and the frontage is quite close to the solent shoreline and do we actually like the size and spread of the build? Sensitive to the defining characteristics of the existing area. Have to think on size and also which way you look at it. It is quite interesting as the NPA tend to look at Tin Town, but the Inspectorate said you look along the shoreline . There is quite a tradition of very mixed styles of architecture . The question is does the proposal of the new amended plans make you feel and describe as exceptional, extremely outstanding and highest standards of architecture or do you feel not enough has been done in this third application to make an exception to the policy. Because if it is an exception to the policy and you all say it is – then we go no further, if we say it isn't an exception to the policy, we now have to consider that the applicant has not done enough to deal with core strategy DP10 of NP replacement dwelling and this is something we feel quite strongly about. We have refused several applications on DP10. The existing footprint of the chalet is 185 sq m and the new building is 366 sq m. The new build floor space is 879 sq m – this really challenges DP10. It is a serious conflict. The proposal on the other hand ticks lots and lots of boxes i.e light pollution, rain harvesting, lack of dependence of fossil fuel, no trees damaged in the build of the construction, but have the new proposals gone far enough?

Cllr. Weiss said he found this very difficult for a variety of reason, said site visit was not satisfactory. However I had previously had benefit of going out on the solent and looked at the height sticks, so can draw on that. Said he did support that application for a number of reasons. 1) issue of isolation and said it does not surprise him at all that the Inspectorate said it was isolated. I did use to think it was. Question of quality of architecture, said his background was English Heritage so spent a lot of time working with buildings. Some say the death of creativity in architecture was making architecture a profession. Said the earlier application was of exceptional architecture and appropriate for the site. Enjoyed the wit of the seaside pavilion and continue to think it is appropriate. Very interested in that the Inspectorate wanted the chimney reduced in height and that amused, as I thought they were rather witty. It is isolated and the design is quite exceptional.

Mr. Pleydell-Bouverie said I have lived here all my life and built a new house, and worked within the rules at all times. Felt the applicant was just pushing and pushing all the time. Said it is ancillary, not incidental. 5/6 acres is not a big site for a large dwelling. Durns etc are on bigger sites. The frontage is bigger and looks very long on that site.

Vote – 1 in favour

3 not in favour

Of application for Thorns Beach House – number 14/00520

Recommend refusal for reasons below, but will accept the decision reached by the NPA Officers.

Feel the build unacceptable to DP10

Para 55 – accept isolation - subjective

Does not reflect highest standards of architecture – does not have the wow factor

Does not significantly enhance the site

Will not proceed with application number 14/00529 for the Boat House as take the two together, but refuse as too large, become ancillary.

Cllr. Norris thanked all residents for their participation.

Meeting closed at 7.38p.m.