

Compton Parish Council AGM 2016.

Member's Report: Planning

Since the last AGM I have received through the post from GBC 21 Planning Applications and 7 Tree Planning Applications. There are a number of different forms of Planning Application (Full, Outline, Conservation Area and others) and two forms of Tree Planning Application (Conservation Area and TPO listed trees), but the majority are for Full Planning Consent. Recently, I have begun to suspect that I am not getting all the Planning Applications for the parish, and I have yet to follow this up formally with GBC.

I scrutinise each Application I get carefully, and check the documentation on the GBC website; there are often associated cases, for example previous applications relating to the same property, which may influence my thinking. There may be a torrent of local objection, or none. The work may be trivial or significant. I sometimes seek the thoughts of other individuals who are familiar with the area. Thus guided, I decide either to leave the Application to follow its natural course (as in the recent case of the barn door replacement at Coneycroft Farm, where the GBC officer was bound to consider Planning Policies (NPPF and GBC Local Plan) and Planning Considerations: impacts on AONB, AGLV, Green Belt, neighbouring amenity, and scale and character of building and conservation area), or to circulate the details to Parish Councillors if I believe the Application may be contentious.

Inevitably, the system occasionally fails. Recently, in the case of the New Rectory development GBC (verbally) swear that they sent me details of an Application to fell large yew trees (within the conservation area, but without TPO's) but I never received it, nor any warning email. Neither did the neighbours, who should also have been notified (although "neighbours" whose properties do not adjoin are not entitled to be notified, and this includes those directly across the road), so I intend to follow this up with GBC. In this case I made contact directly with the estates manager at Guildford Cathedral, and he was helpful and obliging; as is common, his take on the facts and circumstances surrounding the case was somewhat different from that of the neighbours, and also valid.

An ongoing issue has been at Monkshatch, where an absentee landlord who has a history of defying the local authority Planning system commenced development work on a patch of land, using heavy earthmoving machinery. Work of such a scale almost always requires Planning Consent and there was no record of an Application so, alerted by neighbours, I requested GBC to investigate, and they have issued a Planning Enforcement notice, although currently they have been unable to serve it owing to the target's change of address.

An equally frustrating situation exists at the A3 end of Priorsfield Road, where a one-acre plot of land which has previously been refused Planning Consent (around 10 and 20 years ago) has been gradually cleared of small trees and undergrowth, then larger trees (all burnt on sight to the chagrin of a neighbour), then fenced and a road access made up, all apparently with the intention of development. However, none of the work to date has required Planning Consent, so instead of a small wood we now have a razed patch of land, and we await developments.

Priorsfield School has started its development work for which it gained permission some time ago, although each phase will require a further Application. Vehicles gain access to the site using the first 100m of Priors Hatch Lane, but despite many objections before Consent was given there have been no subsequent complaints.

Pete Graham, May 2016.