

Wivelsfield Parish Council
North Common Road
Wivelsfield Green
RH17 7RH

18 November 2016

Jennifer Baxter
Enforcement Officer
Planning Department
Lewes District Council
Southover House
Southover Road
Lewes

Dear Ms Baxter,

Tree Removal (& Other Issues) at the 'Charters Gate' Cala Homes Development,
North Common Road, Wivelsfield Green

I write to express Wivelsfield Parish Council's extreme dismay at the removal this week of the trees bordering the north-western part of the Charters Gate site, adjacent to the car park of the Mormon Church.

As you are aware from the phone calls that have been made to you and tree officer, Mr Wynn, residents have been shocked and upset by the destruction of this tree line, which had previously screened the site from the west.

The Council's concerns about this are twofold: one, the loss of this established treeline and two, Cala's behaviour in this matter.

The trees had been marked for retention on the plan, provided invaluable screening of the site from the west, and were not dangerous according to the assessment undertaken by Cala's tree expert. No new planting scheme will compensate for the loss of the established screening that the conifers offered.

It is quite clear that the sole reason for the trees' removal was that they were considered to be 'devaluing the properties' (as stated by the Site Manager) and that, as such, they had to go. In taking the unilateral decision to fell the trees, Cala Homes has demonstrated a total disregard for both the planning process and the community with which it claimed to want to foster a good relationship.

Consequently, the Parish Council believes, in order to restore the community's faith in both Cala Homes and the planning process, a stop notice should be placed upon the site until such time as there is a planting scheme – agreed by both District *and* Parish Councils - in place to replace the decimated tree line, and an agreed timescale for its introduction.

Only by showing both the developer and residents that the planning system has some teeth and that developers will not be allowed to ride roughshod over planning procedures, will any faith be restored in the system. Cala Homes needs to feel the consequences of its actions in its bottom line and, if a stop notice is issued and the launch of the showhomes is delayed as a result, so much the better.

The residents of Wivelsfield Green should not and will not put up with what is fast becoming a catalogue of issues with this development. This latest incident, whilst most significant, is just one in a long list of problems and frustrations generated by the Cala site – which are detailed on the attached page. Contrary to building good relationships with the local community, the present management of the site has eroded confidence in Cala Homes and its alleged desire to work with the community around it.

Please help us to show the developers that wilful destruction of established trees, contrary to planning consent and purely for the developer's financial gain is not acceptable, by issuing the requested stop notice.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Gander

Clerk to Wivelsfield Parish Council

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clerk@wivelsfield.org.uk

cc Andrew Hill, Lewes District Council
Daniel Wynn, Lewes District Council
Chris Traill, Cala Homes
Stuart Forrester, Cala Homes
Andy De'Ath, Cala Homes
District Councillor Sharon Davy
District Councillor Cyril Sugarman
County Councillor Jim Sheppard
Nick Roberts, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints

Attachments: A list of the issues encountered this week relating to the felling of trees
Ongoing issues to be looked into

Issues Relating to the Felling of Trees at 'Charters Gate', during the Week Commencing 14 November 2016

1. No permission was sought for the trees' removal, despite this being contrary to the approved plans.
2. It was not sufficient or appropriate that the only body whom Cala approached for permission to remove the trees was the adjacent Church.
3. No consultation was undertaken with either District or Parish Councils.
4. Notwithstanding the fact that, due to 1 and 2, the trees should not have been removed anyway, Cala had not sought approval for an alternative planting scheme.
5. The removal of the whole line of trees had obviously been pre-planned from the number of tree removal specialists on site (6). This was not a case of one or two trees having been identified as being diseased and being removed as a consequence, this was a pre-planned wholesale cull.
6. Despite 4 above, the Site Manager did at first try to claim that the trees were being removed because they were unsafe.
7. The fact that, later on, (and despite the Construction Director's admission that, on the approved plans, these trees were shown for retention) it became apparent that a detailed planting scheme had been produced, further demonstrates Cala's longstanding intention to remove these trees, contrary to planning consent and without seeking to amend the plans granted.
8. Contrary to seeking to foster good relations with the community and being open and receptive to comments, criticism or enquiries, the Site Manager appeared to show contempt for residents' views by making a comment to the effect of 'I wondered how long it would take for someone to come and complain'.
9. The Site Manager gave entirely different stories to different people, regarding who had approved the felling of the trees and why they were being felled.
10. He further admitted to members of the Parish Council that the trees were 'devaluing the properties' due to their height and proximity. At no point did Cala discuss the possibility of reducing the height of the existing trees to increase light, whilst retaining the trees as per the plans.
11. KPS operatives were asked (in the hearing of a member of the Parish Council and her husband) to stop work and not fell any more than the tree they were working on, whilst the Site Manager went to get his copy of the planting scheme. In his absence however, they proceeded to move on to fell the next tree.
12. A member of the Parish Council witnessed that the tree felling also continued after both District & County Councillor Jim Sheppard and the Construction Director had reportedly told them to stop.
13. Cala's actions in respect of the trees has engendered a complete loss of confidence in its commitment to work with the community and, worse, its intention to honour (or otherwise) the tree (and other) plans for the rest of the site. If they have been prepared to flout approved planning once because it suited their purposes, what is to say they won't do it again, unless they feel proper consequences of doing so.

Other Ongoing Issues to be Considered and Looked into Please

All of these have been reported to the Parish Council by residents and passed on to Paul Howick, Andy De'Ath and/or Chris Trail.

In no particular order:

- a. We need more efficient cleaning of the road – not just once a day. Linked to this is that some vehicles are leaving the site without being jet-washed. Also the pavements have mud spread over them in a thin layer with more substantial quantities in places – this is causing the pavements to be slippery. The road markings in the centre also need to be regularly cleaned.
- b. An emergency contact number for out of hours contact needs to be posted at the site entrance.
- c. Safety caps need to be put on the ends of poles sticking out into the footpath diversion around the site.
- d. The reported breach of the perimeter fence needs to be fixed to stop children gaining access.
- e. Communication needs to be improved – emails, texts, requests for meetings, etc need to be responded to in a timely fashion and not ignored. We need to be informed of work and issues that the residents are likely to contact us about, ie workers accessing the site via Downsview Drive (southern water?), the roadworks in Downsview Drive, tree felling, etc.
- f. Signage needs to be placed at the roundabout in Haywards Heath on the A272 directing lorries along the A272. Maybe also at the turnoff to the B2112 – a sign saying no entry to works traffic for Cala homes in Wivelsfield Green? Once they go down the B2112 and see the sign at the turn-off for the village (often not seen or ignored) their only possible route is to continue to the Folders Lane roundabout on the outskirts of Ditchling/Burgess Hill where their satnavs turn them left and they end up on very narrow country lanes going towards Plumpton.
- g. Last week a National Hickman lorry stopped to ask a member of the Parish Council for directions to the site having entered from the wrong direction. He showed her his paperwork and it did not have the requisite instructions as to direction of travel that Cala has assured us are on all their orders. Paul saw this interchange as he drove by but didn't stop his vehicle to offer help.
- h. We have yet to see a sign at the site exit reminding drivers to drive considerately through the village, below or at the speed limit and not using their mobile phones.
- i. Control measures at the site entrance – lorries coming in the wrong direction are not always being turned away. Seemingly a log is being kept – but what impact does that have and what are the consequences of non-compliance?
- j. Residents are still complaining that work is still starting before the agreed start time.
- k. Contractors vehicles are increasingly becoming a nuisance – and indeed at times presenting a hazard – on the road. This week we have had several complaints from residents about the number of site-related cars parked along North Common Road – virtually from the site entrance back to Farncombe Close, as well as cars parked along Farncombe Close and Downsview Drive, with driveways being blocked and contractors using the pathway from Downsview to access the site. A stretch of probably around 200 yards has essentially become a single lane carriage way along North Common Road over the last couple of days, owing to a large piece of machinery sitting on the road near the site entrance which has been cordoned off with barriers, following which you encounter a stretch of parked cars, with little or no opportunity for other vehicles to pull in. This is not a safe situation and covers a length of

road which, under any other circumstances, one would imagine would require a traffic management solution.

- l. Clarification about the play area – the LEAP is being marketed on Cala’s website as a private play area but original plans and discussion indicated that is to be a village amenity which would serve the eastern part of the village. We trust that this is indeed the case and that the blurb on the website is wrong.
- m. There are clear inaccuracies on Cala’s website: Lewes District is referred to as a borough and its reference to a station bordering old Wivelsfield is misleading, since the station, despite being called ‘Wivelsfield’ is geographically located in the Worlds End part of Burgess Hill.

Should you need any further information or evidence about any of the matters raised within these documents, please do not hesitate to get in touch.