

The meeting opened at 8.10pm.

Present were:-

Austin Adkin  
Jan Ryan  
Andrew Russell  
Keith Ross  
Jennifer Bowden  
Amanda Johnson  
Pauline Scott  
Sheila Cox  
Jane More  
Tony Whitmarsh  
Christine Agate  
Terry Dell  
Kevin Agate  
Paul Rowland  
Julian Holland  
Ruth Parsons  
Elspeth Russell

Ann Adkin  
Una Higgs  
Susan Mattock  
Lena Ross  
Martin Bowden  
John Scott  
Eddie Hutchison  
Roger Bates  
Liz Whitmarsh  
Derek Martin  
Sandra Dell  
Brian Andrews  
Gwen Agate  
Elizabeth Holland  
Peter Williams  
Tom Parsons

Austin Adkin opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and briefly stating the proposed aims of the Association; specifically, to attempt to curb the erection of so-called agricultural buildings which are beyond the scope of any planning control, and in addition to deal with any other matters of local concern. These aims were agreed by all present.

Austin then proposed the immediate election of a Chairman and a Secretary. After a brief discussion, Austin was voted in as Chairman, and Jan Ryan as Secretary, both on a unanimous show of hands.

Apologies for absence were then read out. These came from:-

the Brudenells, the Browns, the Dunns, the Spears, Christine Andrews and Gerry Ryan.

The Chairman then read out a letter from Bob Dunn of Lydens Lane. Bob Dunn wrote that in his capacity as a Councillor serving on Edenbridge Town Council, he would be happy to arrange for a letter to be sent to Hever Parish Council should this prove useful, although ETC does not cover the Hever sites.

Ruth Parsons said that she is Clerk to Edenbridge Town Council, and that the 40 acre field is in fact in Edenbridge - the boundary runs along the top of that field. She added that ETC has already been making representations regarding the state of that field.

The Chairman then re-stated the aims and objectives as set out in the original letter, and asked for additions/amendments from the floor. He added that a full constitution would be drawn up at a later date in committee.

The Chairman then asked for volunteers/nominations for further committee members. Neil Johnson (absent) was suggested as Treasurer. Amanda Johnson said she would ask him. Terry Dell and Keith Ross both volunteered themselves, and both were elected on a show of hands.

The Chairman then asked for comments from the floor, and for specific objections to the spate of barn building etc.

Les Ellis was mentioned as owner of the largest barn so far, and Peter Williams repeated the gist of an earlier conversation he had had with Ellis. Ellis's legal position was discussed, and it was agreed that he has not contravened any existing planning laws.

Ruth clarified the position on the toxic waste spread on the 40 acre field, and also explained the 14 day rule regarding alternative uses for agricultural land.

The Chairman summed up by saying that the barns were obviously intended for eventual conversion rather than as agricultural buildings, and that we should make this clear in our letters.

Gwen and Kevin Agate volunteered the information that they have been approached by the Electricity Board who wish to take a power run from their pole to supply the new 'workshop' to be erected on Brocas Farm. It was generally assumed that this must refer to land owned by a Mr. Richard Sage of Edenbridge. Ruth said that she had heard of no application for change of usage for that land. Derek Martin, who owns land adjacent to the site, said that vast footings, some 60 x 30 metres, had already been dug out. He added that Sage had installed a caravan on the site, although there had been no sign of continuous occupation.

Brian Andrews pointed out that any construction of any sort can be called a barn, though planning authorities could query the agricultural value of such amenities as cesspits. Andrew Russell mentioned the case of Robert Abbott's barn, which was demolished by the council. Amanda said that she thought planning authorities do have some individual powers, and could do more if pushed.

Elsbeth Russell said that she thought the 40 acre field carried a covenant for agricultural use only. Ruth mentioned a ruling called an Article Four Direction, and suggested that the Association contact Martin Whitehouse, and also Brian English of Stick Hill.

Further discussion clarified what is, and is not, agricultural use. It was revealed that none of the barns can be used for livestock without permission from the council. Five separate sites in the immediate vicinity were mentioned. Terry Dell said that the S'Oaks planning people were monitoring the situation. Sheila Cox pointed out that french barns are not indigenous to the english countryside. Kevin added, amidst hilarity, that the 'Crystal Palace' barn was actually a disused fire station. Amanda said she thought that one barn might have been a listed building in Ide Hill, before it was dismantled and brought to Hever, contravening planning regulations in the process. She wondered if this could be checked back. Reaction was doubtful.

Access onto lanes was mentioned, and Brian said that gates and roads on agricultural land need no permissions. The Chairman mentioned mud and damage on public roads.

Andrew mentioned 1992 and the possible effects on our planning laws. After some discussion it was agreed that legal advice should be sought regarding the possible consequences.

Other possible points of objection were raised. These included noise at weekends, the state of our roads and ditches, the increase in traffic and the size of the lorries now using the lanes. Also the fear of sites for acid house parties.

It was suggested that this is an area zoned as being of outstanding natural beauty, and as such tighter planning laws could possibly be enforced. Terry volunteered to check up on the legal standing and the exact areas covered.

Various bodies to whom the Association might write were suggested. These included - the Society for the Preservation of Rural England, the Country Landowners Association, the National Farmers Union, the Wealden District Surveyors Dept., our local MP. the DoE and Chris Patten, Sevenoaks Highways Dept.

Amanda said that she has been approached by Hobbs & Parker, Estate Agents, acting on behalf of Mr. L. Ellis, who wishes to sell his land off in small lots. She added that she believes the barn has already been sold, subject to contract, together with \ \ acres of land. Some discussion concluded that no regulations are being broken by the sale. The case of the Wealden barns was mentioned again in this context, and the Chairman agreed that a letter along those lines should be sent to S'Oaks Planning Dept.

The Chairman then asked for any other matters.

The proposed 'trout lake' in the 40 acre field was mentioned. The 14 day ruling was again briefly discussed. The future of the station buildings and the old goods yard was brought up. The Secretary, and Liz Holland, who have both met the new owner, were able to clarify some points. It was agreed that a watching brief should be maintained. Also discussed were the state of the station road and the pollarding of the poplars, as well as future public access to the station. It was deemed impractical to try to obtain tree preservation orders on the poplars. The rubbish on the line by Warren Bridge and the lack of trackside maintenance were also mentioned. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to BR, and that the local Rail Travellers Assoc. should also be involved.

Rubbish left in the gateways to the 40 acre field, and the fly-tipping in Lydens Lane were discussed. Ruth volunteered to notify the council, who will have it cleared. Possible press coverage of the problem was suggested, also involvement of Hever Castle.

Coffee was then served, and after some informal discussion the meeting broke up amidst many optimistic comments.