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BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

www.boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk

Clerk – Mrs Pauline Bowdery
Assistant Clerk – Mrs Melanie Fooks
Tel – 01634 861237

Beechen Hall
Wildfell Close
Walderslade
Chatham
Kent ME5 9RU

E-mail – bowdery@boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk

To All Members of the Council, press and public.

3rd September 2012

There will be a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on **Monday 10th September 2012** at **Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade** commencing at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business;

1. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.** (7.30)
Members are required to declare any interests or lobbying on items in this agenda.
2. **Apologies and absences** (7.31)
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
3. **Minutes of the Meetings of 9th July 2012.** (7:32)
To consider the minutes of the meetings and if in order to sign as a true record (already circulated).
4. **Land at Impton Lane.** (7.33)
The owners of the land wish to discuss the situation.
5. **Matters Arising From Minutes.** (7.50)
 - 5.1 Minute 2415/4.1 marker at Cossington Lane. Costs for a fingerpost, plus wording have been received please see page 3.
 - 5.2 Minute 2415/4.2 PRow Round Wood valley. The parish office is in consultation with KCC to have a deed of dedication (the most cost effective route for officers) submitted rather than a lengthy form.
 - 5.3 Minute 2415/4.3 Lidsing Road additional signage request. KCC states that due to reduced budgets they are only dealing with safety critical work. The Lidsing Road junctions were reviewed for 2012/13 and other areas, having reviewed crash details, do not require additional work or signage. The locations will be monitored annually to address any emerging safety problems.
 - 5.4 Minute 2416/8.1 Boxley Road/Grange Lane speed restriction. Cllr Bob Hinder attended the Joint Transportation Board meeting on 18th July to highlight this issue see enclosure.

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting.

6. **Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration.** (8.05)
To consider planning applications. Members' are reminded to consider possible section 106 requests or to suggest any conditions.

MA/12/0529 – Amended plans for the erection of new two storey classroom block for Invicta Grammar School and new three-storey classroom block for Valley Park School at Valley Park Community School. To ratify Assistant Clerk’s decision, after consulting with Cllr Wendy Hinder and Cllr Kevin Perry.

Do not wish to object.

MA/12/1426 – Erection of single storey building comprising four retail units for uses falling within Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A5 or D1 with associated pedestrian and vehicular access ways, refuse stores, car parking and landscaping at Land at Penhurst Close, Grove Green.
12/09/2012

MA/12/1377 – Erection of a single storey rear extension at Randbrook, Tyland Lane, Sandling, ME14 3BL.
27/7/2012

National Planning Policy Framework Training 2nd August 2012. A copy of the presentation given by MBC has been obtained by the office and it can be consulted or provided to councillors who had been unable to attend the training.

7. **Planning Applications and Appeals Decisions** (8.12)
MA/11/1414 REFUSED
8. **Walderslade Woods and Volunteer Group** (8.14)
To receive a report/update on the Group’s activities (page 3).
9. **Highways and Byways.** (8.18)
 - 9.1 Beechen Bank Road, Boxley Road speed limit signage has now been completed. Outside Beechmore Drive and Woodlands are road traffic signs still show national speed limits and these should be removed, the Assistant Clerk has informed Highways.
 - 9.2 KCC Member Highway Fund & Community Fund 2012/13 – Paul Carter has provided the Council with a full list of what is available under the above £25,000 fund, (pages 24 -25).
 - 9.3 Signage at KH64 – North Downs Way. KCC are looking to update the website and change the post so that motorbike riders are kept away from the area.
 - 9.4 Advertisement vehicles parked on Gleamingwood Drive.
10. **Consultation on revision of DoT speed limit circular.** (8.24)
To decide on a response see attached report, pages 3-5.
11. **Core Strategy; Strategic Sites Allocation Consultation.** (8.30)
To decide on a response see attached report, pages 5-16.
12. **Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy.** (8.50)
To decide on a response see attached report, pages 16-22.
13. **Policy and procedures review.** (8.58)
Pre application discussions – deferred to the October meeting.
14. **Neighbourhood Development Plans** (8.59)
To receive the draft audit on Lordswood and Walderslade (enclosed). In view of the contents in the Core Strategy (item 10) the Grove Green draft audit document has been delayed in order that any views might be incorporated. The document will be considered at the October meeting.
15. **Beechen Bank.** (9.15)
To discuss the present situation and obtain views of members, report attached (page 22-23).
16. **Saracen Fields open area.** (9.25)

To discuss the situation with regards to ownership and maintenance, see report (pages 23).

17. **Matters for information.** (9.35)
Thank you letter from a resident for arranging and paying for the reduction in the speed limit on Boxley Road and Beechen Bank Road.

18. **Next Meeting.** (9.36)
Next full environment meeting 9th October 2012 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.

In view of the confidential nature (personal details and data) on the Enforcement item about to be transacted, it is advisable that the public and press will be excluded from the meeting for the duration of or part of the item.

19. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC.** (9.37)
To consider the confidential update, enclosed for committee members available to other members on request.

Clerk to Boxley Parish Council.

Items to be returned to agenda: Minute 2368/5.1 Walderslade Woods road/A2045 – work to obtain speed reduction –KHS awaiting plans (04/12).

In accordance with policy the meeting should close no later than 9.30 pm but the Chairman has devolved powers to extend it by 30 minutes.

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Item 5.1 Marker at Cossington Lane. *Purpose of the item; to consider costs and decide whether to proceed.*

Costs have been received for a 6ft Oak directional fingerpost, with the wording Walderslade Woods and these range between £265.00 - £371.00. Installation is an additional cost. Members' views are sought as to whether they wish to go ahead with this.

Item 8 Walderslade Woods. *Purpose of the item; information.*

Report from Cllr Springate.
14 members attended the August 12th Task day. We worked on the Pathway at the Southern end of Cossington Wood, edging the path using the fallen trees, and opening the canopy where possible. A new member was introduced to the group.

Item 10 Consultation on revision of DoT speed limit circular. *Purpose of the item; to decide on a response. Closing date for response 5th October 2012.*

Traffic authorities the guidance to set limits and do work regarding speed issues.

The Department for Transport speed limit circular gives guidance to traffic authorities on setting local speed limits. It also deals with speed related issues such as traffic calming, street slights, 20mph limits and zones etc. The circular, read in conjunction with other guidance and regulations, allows the traffic authority to legally set limits and undertake work. Each traffic authority has the flexibility to set local speed limits that are appropriate to individual roads and local conditions. This is why certain counties have different systems in operation to that of Kent. The circular also allows a traffic authority to decide whether any gain is worth the cost of the work required to have speed limits

reduced. The Government is consulting with an intention to revise and reissue the guidance on speed limits with an aim of increasing flexibility for traffic authorities.

The explanation on the consultation and the draft guidance can be found at www.dft.gov.uk – consultation – consultation on revision of DFT's speed limit circular. The consultation is seeking comments on the issues given below and after reading the relevant section the clerk has made a comment and a suggested reply to the specific consultation question.

Traffic signs. (section 6 urban speed limits). 20mph zones and limits (section 6.1). This section has been expanded with the view to remind traffic authorities of their powers and to make it clearer that highway authorities have flexibility in the use of 20mph zones and limits.

Clerk comment. The section is written in plain English and gives good statistical information to show the benefits of introducing 20mph speed limits (example "Research shows that on urban roads with low average traffic speeds any 1mph reduction in average speed can reduce the collision frequency by 6%(Taylor, Lynam & Baruya, 2000). There is also clear evidence confirming the greater chance of survival of pedestrians in collisions at lower speed").It covers all the issues relating to 20mph zones and limits, such as when roundels and signs should be used.

Q1. Do you agree that this advice about introducing 20mph zones and limits provides useful guidance to authorities considering speed management in urban areas? If not explain your reasons.

Suggested (default) response. YES.

The new circular will be linked to a 'new speed limit appraisal tool' which will illustrate the effects of 20mph zones with and without traffic calming. Previous guidance restricted 20 mph zones without traffic calming to single or a small group of streets. The new guidance will, with the appraisal tool* being used change this restriction.

Q2. Do you agreed that traffic authorities should be able to consider the implementation of 20mph limits over a number of roads, where mean speeds at or below 24mph are already achieved. If not explain your reasons.**

Suggested (default) response. YES.

*Currently being developed and which will be available from the DFT website.

**The speed at or below which 85% of vehicles are travelling.

The speed limit appraisal tool will replace the technical assessment tool and question 3 refers to views on withdrawing the current assessment tool.

Clerk's comment. As there has been no chance to appraise the current system it is suggested that the response to Q3 is NO COMMENT.

Speed limits for air quality purposes.

The revision is to make it clearer that compliance with air quality limits could be a factor in the choice of speed made by traffic authorities (para 23)

Q4. Do you agree that the compliance with air quality limits could be a factor in the choice of speed made by traffic authorities? If not explain your reasons.

Suggested (default) response. YES.

Clerk comment. In the past the parish council has raised concerns about the air quality from roads and the link that this has to speed limits.

Q5. Do you have other comments about the drafting of the revised circular?

Clerk's comment. Considering various issues that have been place, over time, before the Parish Council members may wish to make the following comments.

The Parish Council welcomes the clarification in the draft circular but consider that the Department For Transport is missing an opportunity to vastly improve the safety and quality of life for rural and village residents and makes the following comments.

Section 7. Rural Speed Management

Para 113. The 600m assessments should be increased or a safeguard put in place to ensure traffic authorities have to also take a holistic view too. The crash record of some

rural roads can be extremely poor but this is not recognised if the road is divided into 600m sections. *Clerk's comment. Lidsing Road gets no speed reduction because of the sections rule.*

Para 114. Should include a strong reference to the need to consider whether a footway exists and also to sight lines that are restricted by curves, hedgerows or banks.

Table 2. Consideration should be given to revising the table to ensure that rural lanes (A or B classification) without footways are not allowed to have 60mph limits. It is considered that rural roads without footways with a 60 mph limit are dangerous for vulnerable users.

Para 116. The Parish Council considers that the guidance should be changed so as not to allow a 60mph speed limit on a C or unclassified rural road. This is to protect vulnerable road users and drivers.

Para 118. Rather than 'welcome applications' for zonal speed limits (40 mph in an AONB for example) could the DFT not set a standard and automatically require traffic authorities to install 40 mph limits? Too often traffic authorities ignore the needs of residents and visitors to such areas and can use the guidance to 'prove' there is no requirement to do so. A safeguard could be included that would allow an appeal to the DFT if it felt that it could not allow a 40 mph speed limit.

It is the Parish Council's experience that despite all the evidence (much of it quoted in the guidance) that rural crashes are a) more lethal - *68% of road deaths in Britain occur on rural roads* and b) can be reduced - *A 90% death rate at 60mph is reduced to 50% at 48mph* there has been a reluctance, or that is the experience in this parish, for the traffic authority to proactively deal with the issue. Also due to the financial situation many Traffic Authorities have reduced roadside vegetation maintenance and this is having an adverse impact on sight lines so it is imperative that speed is reduced.

The Parish Council understands that the DFT is trying to give traffic authorities the flexibility to decide on speed limits but what protection is there for rural residents and visitors when that flexibility allows a traffic authority to choose not to act?

Item 11 MBC Core Strategy Strategic Sites Allocation Consultation

Purpose of report: to decide a response to the consultation. Deadline 1st October.

Briefing Note - MBC Core Strategy Strategic Sites Allocation Consultation

Introduction.

The full Core Strategy document is available in a pdf format from the MBC website or from the parish office.

This briefing note includes comments from Cllr Harwood, Cllr Wendy Hinder, and the Clerk and where these occur they are clearly attributed. Cllr Harwood has acknowledged that some of his comments may be a little too political for the Parish Council but they have been included as one person's point of view. As clarification to newer members of the Council I will point out that when a Councillor supplies the office with comments or opinions then these are generally included in a report. Often comments are summarised but in this case the situation is a little too complicated to do so and so they have been reproduced in full.

Where there has been discussion or comments made by the Council, which are pertinent to the consultation, these have also been included. This briefing document follows the structure of the MBC consultation document and page numbers are also included to aid reference to the original document. The MBC draft policy is included in a text box with a grey background.

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Cllr Harwood has suggested:

I am aware that a significant volume of literature (and electronic media) is circulating in the Bearsted area urging residents to respond to the on-going MBC Strategic Sites consultation to oppose allocation of M20 j8 for employment development.

I am very concerned that the larger proposal (some 70 acres in all) at Newnham Court Farm is being seen as an easier option to progress. This is unfortunate as during the last local plan consultation the highest number of submissions recorded related to Newnham Court Farm (indeed, at the one before that Vinters Park topped the list).

Therefore, and particularly as the local press are focusing entirely upon M20 j8 I suggest that Boxley PC should consider drafting a circular for residents at Grove Green, Weaving, Woodlands, Sandling and Boxley village advising residents to respond to the consultation and/or ensure the Downs Mail Boxley PC page leads on the consultation.

Clerk's comment: The Council has undertaken this type of leaflet drop most recently in the Lordswood and Walderslade area concerning the KCC consultation regarding household waste sites.

Clerk's comment: This is the first stage of consultation and ultimately it could end up in a public enquiry. The Parish Council must consider and possibly decide on a baseline stance that it will take when debating and deciding on its response. It could decide:

- *to strongly object and oppose the policies;*
- *to take a more proactive stance and try to influence the policy by responding, where it is considered appropriate, in a semi- positive way and almost embracing the policies; or*
- *to take an in between stance, that is to strongly object but offer alternatives.*

It is up to members to decide but, purely as a balancing counter argument to the Councillors' passionately held views, it is pointed out that there may be benefits to communities from the presumption in favour of development.

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2. Presumption in favour of sustainable development (page 4).

This section gives background information and also explains how MBC has actually got to this point. It is important for the Parish Council to recognise that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the Government expects that Core Strategies will reflect this policy. The MBC draft policies and the consultation document reflect this requirement.

NPPF1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

When considering development proposals, Maidstone Borough Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The council will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies of the council's Local Plan, and where relevant with policies in neighbourhood plans, will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the council will grant planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

1. Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or

2. Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Clerk's comment: None.

3. Policy SS1 - Strategic housing location to the north west of the urban area (5)

"One of the key challenges for all of the strategic sites is connecting them into the existing urban and rural fabric. Communities already exist in Maidstone and the new developments, where appropriate, will take advantage of existing facilities and services. Where new services are provided on these sites, they need to be accessible to the existing communities, the integration of new and existing communities is essential".

Clerk's comment: I was going to leave it up to the Committee to decide whether it wished to comment on the following policy.

Policy SS1a - Bridge Nursery (7)

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Cllr Harwood. OBJECTION: Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations: Public Consultation 2012 (SS1a Bridge Nursery)

The Bridge Nursery site is the most bio-diverse of all of the proposed allocation sites within this consultation document and development of the site could only be achieved through the destruction of significant areas of high quality wildlife habitat (especially significant being extensive tracts of neutral grassland with numerous ant hills and linked open sandy substrates). During a site visit on 21st August a viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) population of Borough-wide and potentially County-wide significance was identified. The viviparous lizard is protected from harm under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Schedule 5 Section 9.1). Particularly notable was a very darkly coloured (almost black) race of this animal recorded across the site. The habitat available within this floristically complex, mosaic site is also likely to support legally protected slow worm, grass snake and potentially adder. Further, a large stand of the UK Red Data Book "near threatened" cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) was showing well within the central and western parts of the site - and happily is setting seed abundantly. The invertebrate population within the site was also of genuine significance. The aforementioned (yellow meadow) ant hills were attracting foraging green woodpeckers during my short visit, and the scarce woodland grasshopper (*Omocestus rufipes*) was abundant. The least interesting part of the site from a bio-diversity perspective is the rather shady and unremarkable secondary woodland which, ironically, is proposed for retention within policy SS1a.

Of some archaeology interest within this site is an almost intact pill box (circa WWII), which also has the potential to provide a roost and hibernacula for bats. The key concern in relation to this site is that a high quality survey of flora and fauna is delivered during the remainder of this Summer (by autumn/winter the notable wildlife supported by this site will be hidden) and that the site is adequately protected by an appropriate habitat designation - perhaps Local Wildlife Site. It is crucial that this bio-diverse site is protected from any damage whilst it remains a potential allocated development site. This site is a wildlife revelation so close to a built-up residential area.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTION: Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations: Public Consultation 2012 (SS1a Bridge Nursery)

Following an analysis of the landscape value of this site I wish to add the following objection to this proposed allocation.

The attractive rural character of this site has a significant role in framing the gateway to Maidstone Borough for passengers using the London to Ashford railway line. This busy rail route passes along the northern boundary of the site on embankment and provides impressive views into the site. Indeed, the WWII pill box within the site is a key landmark for those arriving in and leaving the Borough.

Further, this proposed allocation site provides a crucial anti-coalescence role in defining the boundaries of the Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling Borough administrative boundaries.

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Policy SS1b - East of Hermitage Lane (10)

Policy SS1c - West of Hermitage Lane (14)

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Cllr Harwood. Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations: Public Consultation 2012 (SS1C West of Hermitage Lane)

This is an extremely sensitive location and considerable work is required to this policy if it is to be made acceptable.

The threat posed from coalescence with urban areas within Tonbridge and Malling Borough and potential impact upon landscape and biodiversity are a particular challenge. To prevent coalescence and deliver landscape and biodiversity mitigation close co-operation with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will be required to deliver a semi-natural wooded parkland link between ancient Fullingpits Wood and the nearby Oaken Wood / Ditton Common. Creation of such a link should be stipulated within Policy SS1C and affords fully with the NPPF and Natural Environment White Paper i.e. at paragraph 114. the NPPF states: "Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure".

The large field which is the main element of this strategic site formerly comprised rough grassland with some regenerating bramble and dogwood at its fringes and supported a range of grassland wildlife. It was a known site (October 2010) for the grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus*, which has a very local range in Kent, and "widespread reptile" species protected from harm under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. However, the rough grass pasture was recently ploughed (winter 2011/2012) and converted to intensive arable cropping, in advance of the site being promoted as a potential residential development allocation. It is probable that had the field not been ploughed and converted from pasture to intensive arable that extensive (and expensive) surveys, habitat mitigation and (protected) wildlife trapping and relocation would have been required. Indeed, a number of sites identified as Strategic Site allocations within this document feature specific policy references to ecological surveys and mitigation and, largely to their credit, developers / landowners have acted responsibly in this regard. Therefore a powerful message must be sent out by this planning authority that if wildlife habitat with a reasonable likelihood of supporting protected wildlife is damaged in advance of an attempt to achieve a development allocation or planning permission that our authority's default position will be that provision habitat mitigation is required to a standard equivalent to that required to accommodate the impact upon protected wildlife should the site not have been damaged. In this case replacement habitat for a population of viviparous lizard and slow worm (legally protected species last recorded on site in autumn 2010) should be delivered, in the form of rough grassland and open woodland, to allow eventual re-colonisation by surviving animals. The rectangular parcel of land south of Oakapple Lane was, at the time of writing, still relatively intact and will require an ecological survey and potential mitigation for legally protected wildlife. Recommendation 13 "Contribution towards increasing the size of Barming railway station car park" is absurd and sends out all the wrong messages for health and traffic congestion. A site in such close proximity and within easy waking distance to Barming Station should not trigger any requirement for extra car parking. Any investment related to the railways station should be in the form of an enhanced pedestrian and cycle link and not encouraging short journeys by private motor car!

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4. Policy SS2 - Strategic housing location to the south east of the urban area (18)

Policy SS2a - Langley Park (19)

Policy SS2b - North of Sutton Road (24)

Policy SS2c - North of Bicknor Wood (27)

Clerk's comment. These 3 developments are based, adjacent to each other, around Sutton Road (map enclosed) and it is likely that residents of some of the final 1,075 dwellings will use Willington Street/Ashford Rd/New Cut to access the motorway at junction 7 although the area is slightly closer to junction 8. The 3 Sutton Road policies and the S106 improvements that will be required only deal with the immediate area with no contribution to highway improvements further afield.

Policy SS4, Newnham Park deals with traffic issues caused by the proposed development but it contains no reference to any additional traffic from the 3 Sutton Road development areas. MBC is also consulting on an Integrated Transport Strategy (see following item on the agenda) and this directly refers to the need for improvements around junction 7 of the M20 due to the proposed development at Newnham Park. However the Integrated Transport Strategy clearly states that such improvements need to come from S106's but would there be sufficient from the Newnham Park development to cover additional traffic from the 3 Sutton Road developments?

Members may wish to respond to the SS2a-c policies that they should include contributions to highway improvements on highways connecting Sutton Road to Junctions 7 & 8 of the M20?

5. Strategic employment location at junction 8 of M20 motorway (31)

Junction 8 of the M20 was identified as a strategic location for employment, including industry and warehousing, in the original Core Strategy consultation in September 2011. The consultation document states "Junction 8 is the best location for a critical mass of employment uses including premier office development, industry and warehousing. Land will be allocated in this location (identified as policy SS3) for a mix of light industry (B1c), general industry (B2), premium offices (B1a) with limited distribution/warehousing (B8). The council has decided not to identify a site to allocate at this time. Instead it wants to receive further information and feedback on all the potential sites in this location to inform its future decisions. In response to a Request for Sites exercise undertaken between May and June 2012, three potential sites have been submitted to the council. These sites are: Land to the east of M20 J8 (EMP-01-J8) this site is 3.5ha; Land to the south of M20 J8 (EMP-02-J8): this site is 16.2ha; Land at Woodcut Farm (EMP-03-J8): this site is 25.3ha of which some 7ha would be an undeveloped landscape buffer".

Clerk's comment: The Government has deemed that land adjacent to motorway junctions should be used as it is sustainable development. Any development at junction 8 will have a knock on effect on this parish and members are reminded that they were part of the Parish Group fighting KIG. Guidance is needed on what response members wish to make but it is prudent to point out that if they object to any development at Junction 8 this may impact on Junction 7 and with the KIMS development on the Strategic Gap it is already an easy option for further development.

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Cllr Wendy Hinder. Land south of M20 Junction 8

I would strongly object to the development at Woodcut Farm [EMP-03-J8] at J8. MBC spent approx. £1.7 million fighting to protect this land from KIG and to now allow development there would be a backward step and heavily impact on our residents and parishes that fought so strongly against it.

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Cllr Harwood. Land south of M20 Junction 8

I write to object to the allocation of EMP-01-J8 - Land south of M20 Junction 8 for employment use.

This site is clearly too small to be described as a strategic site and the complexity of achieving linkages with the surrounding highway network would inevitably impact negatively upon project viability, local landscape and biodiversity. Additionally, the close proximity of this site to the historic village of Hollingbourne means that any major development in this location would inevitably cause harm to local residential amenity.

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6 Strategic employment site at junction 7 of M20 motorway (33).

Clerk's note: In view of the impact on this parish the whole of the consultation document has been reproduced below.

"Policy SS4 - Newnham Park

6.1 Newnham Park is a 28.5ha site located to the north of the urban area adjacent to junction 7 of the M20 motorway. It is approximately 2.5km from the town centre and is one of the prime gateways into Maidstone. The site is bounded by Horish Wood to the north and Pope's Wood to the east, which is ancient woodland and a designate Local Wildlife Site. To the south is Bearsted Road, beyond which are Vinters Park Crematorium, Vinters Park Local Nature Reserve, and the Grove Green housing estate. The eastern boundary is formed by the A249 Sittingbourne Road, beyond which are Eclipse Business Park and the Hilton Hotel. Newnham Court Shopping Village dominates the western part of the allocation, and the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) hospital is under construction on the northern perimeter of the site together with a new access road. The hospital is due to open in 2014.

6.2 Although the KIMS hospital will be privately funded and operated, National Health Service (NHS) patients as well as private patients will be treated there (stipulated by legal agreements attached to the planning permission). The hospital will provide specialist medical facilities, many of which are not available at NHS or private hospitals in Kent, and will act as a catalyst for additional medical facilities, research and medical teaching. The Maidstone Medical Campus will create a specialist knowledge cluster that will attract a skilled workforce to support the Council's vision for economic prosperity.

6.3 Newnham Court Shopping Village has been developed (and continues to develop) in a piecemeal fashion over time and, consequently, the visual impact of this site is poor. The site comprises a range of facilities including a garden centre, a number of ancillary retail units, cafés, a veterinary surgery, a childcare nursery, and a quantum of small business uses. The landowners of the Shopping Village are currently seeking to make improvements to buildings and car parking.

The redevelopment of the site is achievable through the development management process, but the inclusion of the shopping Village within the medical campus allocation will deliver a comprehensively planned development that will provide quality buildings in a parkland setting.

6.4 To the far south east of the development site is a rectangular field of 3.03 hectares, which is bounded by Pope's Wood to the north and east, Bearsted Road to the south and proposed development to the west. This field is identified for new woodland planting, to be developed as a parkland nature reserve, and transferred into the ownership of the Borough Council or maintained by a Trust for its future protection.

6.5 Newnham Park is located in the countryside and lies within the setting of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), where particular attention needs to be paid to protecting and conserving the distinctive character of the landscape. The site is reasonably well screened by mature woodland to the north and east, mature trees and other vegetation along Bearsted Road to the south, and sparser planting on the western boundary.

However, there are long and medium distance views of the site from the North Downs; limited views from Gidds Pond Cottages and properties located to the south east of the allocation; and views from local roads. There are existing landscape features within the site boundaries, which should be retained where possible, and the site is subject to tree preservation orders (No. 1 of 2001. No. 13 of 2010).

6.6 Given the location and containment of the Newnham Park site, the allocation will not compromise the Council's strategy of avoiding coalescence between Maidstone and the Medway Towns.

6.7 The topography of the site is gently undulating, sloping down from the North West and from the south east perimeters into a shallow valley of a stream that runs north-south through the site. Newnham Park is partially developed and the remainder of the site is arable fields.

6.8 The County Ecologist has submitted initial advice based on a broad consideration of site proposals, and concluded that there are constraints to development particularly to

the use of the site along the boundaries with the Local Wildlife Site/ancient woodland where a landscape buffer would be required. There is also potential for indirect impacts to the Vinters Park Local Nature Reserve if the stream and corridor is affected by proposals. Most of the site is of limited ecological value, the areas of interest primarily focused at the edges of the site and along the stream. However, much of the site lies within the Kent Biodiversity Partnership's Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area, which means the area, has been identified as offering the best opportunities for habitat enhancement, restoration or creation. This does not present a planning constraint, but it offers opportunities to develop targeted habitat mitigation and enhancements as part of the site's development. Development will have regard to a full ecological survey, to be approved by the Borough Council.

6.9 The site falls within the Weaving Fringes landscape character area (Landscape Character Area Assessment 2012 - ref 14-1), where condition is moderate overall and sensitivity is low because of the varied land uses and urban fringe influences. The summary of actions are: improve and reinforce the more distinctive and characteristic elements, e.g. ancient woodland, streams, traditional buildings and open landscape at Newnham Court Farm, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB; and avoid significant encroachment of the urban edge where it would detract from the open foreground to the Kent Downs AONB. Given the relationship of Newnham Park to the AONB and its landscape setting, the Borough Council will prepare a local landscape assessment to inform the development brief.

6.10 Newnham Park will be developed in a high quality environment: in a woodland/parkland setting with appropriate provision of open space. The layout of development will make best use of the site's topography in order to minimise the impact of long and medium distance views from the AONB. Of particular prominence is the hill to the north east of the field located to the east of the stream, so development will not be permitted on this part of the site. A robust internal landscape structure will be provided through new planting and green areas, building on existing landscaping within and around the site. New planting will be of locally appropriate native species. Detailed mapping will be required to identify the most sensitive areas of the site in terms of its landscape and biodiversity to guide development.

6.11 A minimum 30m structural landscape buffer between built development and the edge of ancient woodland on the northern and eastern perimeter will be provided, to ensure that trees within the woodland are not compromised. This buffer will include tracts of planting extending into the body of the development to assist in creating the parkland setting. A minimum 10m landscape buffer will be planted on each side of the stream running through the site, providing a minimum 20m buffer. Use will be made of the existing watercourse to manage surface water drainage and, subject to an ecological survey, could be linked to a series of water bodies created by using sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) principles.

6.12 New woodland will be planted on the rectangular field to the south east of the allocated site, to provide net gains in biodiversity and ecological connectivity between the large expanses of Horish Wood and Pope's Wood. It will also serve to further enclose and screen new development.

6.13 An archaeological watching brief will be required.

6.14 New buildings at Newnham Park will be built to a high standard of design and sustainable construction to reflect the site's prime location as a gateway into Maidstone. Building heights will be restricted to two storeys and careful attention

will be given to construction materials, particularly the use of green roofs to mitigate the impact of long and medium distance views from the North Downs. Large blocks of buildings will be unacceptable in the parkland setting. And low level lighting will be required where practical.

6.15 The medical campus will provide for up to 150,000m² of specialist medical facilities. As confirmed in Core Strategy policies CS1 and CS2, the regeneration and revitalisation of Maidstone's town centre is a priority and the town centre will continue to be the primary retail and office location in the borough. Appropriate uses on the site will include

hospital or healthcare facilities, specialist rehabilitation services, medical related research and development, central laboratory facilities, and medical training. Development will be planned in a comprehensive manner by means of the development brief. The brief will specify that the medical facilities on the area to the south of the KIMS hospital and west of the stream will be delivered in advance of those being provided on land to the east of the stream.

6.16 Replacement facilities at Newnham Court Shopping Village will be provided in the vicinity of the existing footprint. In order to assess the impact of proposals on the town centre, a retail impact assessment will be required for both comparison and convenience goods. If the cumulative quantum of retail development is more than 500m² greater than that which is existing on site, then only uses which are complementary rather than in conflict with the vitality and viability of the town centre will be acceptable. A reasoned justification for any departure from this criterion must be submitted with any planning application. Consequently, new additional retail floorspace, such as cafés, restaurants and public houses, together with banks and estate agents, are unlikely to be acceptable. Similarly, leisure uses such as cinemas and bowling alleys, and other uses that are likely to conflict with the town centre, will not be permitted. The town centre functions successfully due to the mix of uses in close proximity to each other. Conversely, retail premises that have a unique and recognised "out of town" format are likely to be acceptable on the allocated site because conflict with the town centre would be unlikely.

6.17 Critical to the successful development of Newnham Park is the provision of appropriate transport infrastructure. Vehicular access to the site will be taken from the New Cut roundabout, with bus and emergency access from the A249 Sittingbourne Road. A bus interchange will be provided as part of the retail redevelopment, together with a car park management plan. A Travel Plan will be required to accompany any planning application. Permeability is an important aspect of the site's development, and enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to the residential areas of Grove Green, Vinters Park and Penenden Heath, and to Eclipse Business Park, will be provided.

6.18 Off site highway improvements will include:

Capacity improvements, and the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities, at the Bearsted roundabout (Bearsted Road/A249 Sittingbourne Road) and the New Cut roundabout (Bearsted Road/New Cut Road); The upgrading of Bearsted Road between Bearsted roundabout and New Cut roundabout to dual carriageway; Traffic signalisation of the M20 motorway junction 7 roundabout; Provision of a subsidised shuttle bus to operate between the site and the town centre, via New Cut Road and Ashford Road; Bus priority measures on New Cut Road, where feasible, and traffic signal priority measures at the junction of New Cut Road and the A20 Ashford Road; and Improved bus links to the site from the residential areas of Grove Green and Penenden Heath.

6.19 The shuttle bus will complement the existing park and ride facility in the vicinity of Newnham Park, which caters for long-term commuter parking. Land at Newnham Park will not be released for development until a legal agreement for off-site highway works has been agreed and signed.

SS4 - Newnham Park

Newnham Park is allocated for a medical campus, retail park and nature reserve, as identified on the policies map. A development brief, to be approved by the Borough Council, will detail the way in which medical facilities, retail redevelopment and the nature reserve, together with integral landscaping and supporting infrastructure, are delivered in an integrated and coordinated manner. The development brief will address the following:

On site:

1. Provision of a maximum 150,000m² of specialist medical facilities set within an enhanced landscape structure;
2. Replacement retail facilities at Newnham Court Shopping Village, confined to the immediate vicinity of the existing footprint of the current retail park;

3. Creation of a parkland nature reserve of 3.03ha on land to the south east of the site, as shown on the policies map, to be transferred to the Borough Council or maintained by a Trust;
 4. Construction of high quality buildings of a sustainable design that reflect the site's prime location as a gateway to Maidstone;
 5. Mitigation of the impact of development on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting by the provision of new and the retention and enhancement of existing structural and internal landscaping, by the use of the topography in site layout plans to exclude development on more prominent parts of the site, by the restriction of building heights to a maximum of two storeys and the use of low level lighting, and by the use of green roofs where practical;
 6. Medical facilities on land to the south of the hospital and west of the stream will be delivered in advance of medical facilities on land to the east of the stream;
 7. The cumulative quantum of retail floorspace will be restricted to the provision of up to 500m² above that which already exists, and any additional retail floorspace above this limit must be complementary to town centre uses and, by means of a sequential sites assessment, demonstrably require an out of town location;
 8. Submission of a retail impact assessment for both comparison and convenience goods, to be approved by the Borough Council, in order to assess the impact of retail park proposals on the town centre;
 9. Provision of a minimum 30m landscape buffer along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site to protect Ancient Woodland, with tracts of planting extending into the body of the development;
 10. Provision of a minimum 10m landscape buffer on both sides of the stream running north-south through the site (minimum 20m width in total);
 11. Submission of a full landscape assessment and ecology survey, to be approved by the Borough Council;
 12. A watching archaeological brief;
 13. Vehicular access to the site from the New Cut roundabout, with bus and emergency access from the A249 Sittingbourne Road;
 14. A bus interchange as part of the retail redevelopment together with a car park management plan;
 15. Enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to the residential areas of Grove Green, Vinters Park and Penenden Heath, and to Eclipse Business Park; and
 16. Submission of a Travel Plan, to be approved by the Borough Council.
- Off site:**
16. A signed legal agreement for off-site highway improvements prior to the commencement of development;
 17. Capacity improvements to the Bearsted roundabout at the junction of Bearsted Road with the A249 Sittingbourne Road, together with the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities;
 18. Capacity improvements to the New Cut roundabout at the junction of Bearsted Road and New Cut Road, together with the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities;
 19. The upgrading of Bearsted Road to a dual carriageway between Bearsted roundabout and New Cut roundabout;
 20. Traffic signalisation of the M20 motorway junction 7 roundabout;
 21. A subsidised shuttle bus to operate between the site and the town centre, via New Cut Road and Ashford Road;
 22. Bus priority measures on New Cut Road, where feasible, and traffic signal priority

measures at the junction of New Cut Road and the A20 Ashford Road; and

23. Improved bus links to the site from the residential areas of Grove Green and Penenden Heath.

Financial contributions:

22. Provision of appropriate contributions towards highway improvements.

Clerk's comment: Members are reminded that over the years the Council has been approached by the community with requests for a number of improvements in the area. Some of these requests might be met if there is substantial development on this site. Requests received, some of which have been supported by the Parish Council, are;

- *Improve width of Grovewood Drive North and install better pedestrian crossing points on Grove Wood Drive North (wish list). The current pedestrian refuges are inadequate for prams etc. and the introduction of more traffic, vehicular and pedestrian using Grovewood Drive North might attract a S106 payment for improvements;*
- *Roundabout improvements including road markings at Grove Green Roundabout;*
- *Mini roundabout at junction of Grovewood Drive south and New Cut - to aid exiting off of the development(wish list);*
- *Land for a dedicated Scout Hall, community facilities for young people (wish list);*
- *Better protection for the vehicles of Gidds Pond Cottages - perhaps some land at the rear of the properties could be donated to the residents?;*
- *Improved bus services.*
- *Anything on road design to alleviate congestion (wish list)., traffic light management of traffic (wish list).*

Other issues that members may wish to reflect on:

1. *Protection of the streams that feed VVNR. Is it enough protection? Would VVNR like to take on the new woodland if so could they be given funding? Horish Wood is managed by Detling PC (although some of it is in Boxley and a financial contribution was made to the purchase) would there be an impact.*
2. *Improvements to Bearsted Road (by the crematorium and Nottcutts entrance).*
3. *Improved bus services and provision of cycle paths. However bus priority and traffic signals may cause other problems.*
4. *Section 106 funding may improve the area however at what cost to the loss of green space and AONB?*
5. *Retail development at Newnham Park might impact on the Grove Green Minor Shopping Centre which might result in local residents traveling to the new park to shop when previously they obtained some of the shopping at Grove Green. Alternatively it may draw some traffic off of Grovewood Drive North as people from outside the area by pass Grove Green to go to the new shopping area.*

.....
Cllr Wendy Hinder; I consider that the Parish Council is between a rock and a hard place. Some of the improvements which are put forward by the policy are ones that the community and parish council have been asking for many years. However the Council has also fought to retain the Strategic Gap.

I would like to make some general comments on the actual SS4 policy.

Item 5. Possible development would be restricted to 2 storeys however it makes no comment on roof design or roof height and I am concerned that without this the policy appears weak.

Item 16. I am extremely concerned that as a parish we've never seen a workable travel plan and on many occasions have seen travel plans that are inaccurate and not fit for purpose. Perhaps MBC should review the value it places on travel plans on large scale developments.

Item 23. How would MBC improve the bus service to Grove Green when it has no control over bus companies? If the development is providing financial contribution or running a service the policy should actually state this. I consider the current wording is woolly.

I am alarmed at the potential impact on New Cut Road, Grove Green, Bearsted Road and Junction 7 due to the identified development sites at Sutton Road (SS2a-c). Additional traffic from these developments will access the M20 via New Cut Road.

The NPPF and MBC policies clearly state that the Town Centre should remain vibrant and relevant and out of town retail areas should not compromise the town centre. I therefore fully support item 8. I also support the various items protecting the Ancient Woodland and the stream.

.....
Cllr Harwood. Policy SS4 "Newnham Park"

I write to object in the strongest terms to the proposed Policy SS4 "Newnham Park", which allocates a Strategic Employment Site at Newnham Court Farm (M20 J7). Maidstone Borough Council is a signatory of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, which demands that the setting of the Kent Downs AONB is protected i.e. "Policy LLC8: Proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character and identified special components of natural beauty, the setting and views to and from the AONB will be opposed and resisted". This Strategic Site will impact negatively on views to and from the AONB by day and night.

Newnham Court Farm is located within the designated Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area. The scale of the development proposed will impact negatively upon existing habitats, including adjacent semi-natural ancient woodland, the course of a tributary of the River Len (a river categorised as ecologically "bad" under the Water Framework Directive) and extensive rolling grassland. The proposed development would plainly result in a net loss of biodiversity, on and off site, and would make no contribution to the natural environment.

A range of protected wildlife is recorded from in and around the site. In addition the proposed development site is sandwiched between two irreplaceable ancient woodland Local Wildlife Sites to the north and east (Horish and Pope's Wood) and a Local Nature Reserve to the south and downstream (Vinters Valley Park LNR). Increased disturbance, loss of foraging space, changes to local hydrology, light, noise, water, and air pollution will all inevitably negatively impact upon surrounding habitats and the wildlife it supports. The NPPF states at para.109 that the 'planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment'. At paragraph110 it continues 'Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value'. It is clear that this proposed Strategic Site fails on both counts.

The NPPF stresses a "town centre first" imperative yet the major expansion in commercial development proposed and in particularly the intensification and expansion in retail floorspace will inevitably compete with and undermine the viability of the town centre. Further, the NPPF states "when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre". The proposed development allocation is entirely dependent upon the private motor car, with routes to and from the town centre circuitous, already heavily congested and residential in character i.e. Sittingbourne Road, Tudor Avenue, Wheeler Street, Penenden Heath Road, Boxley Road etc.. The M20 corridor itself is an identified traffic pollution hot spot failing EU limits for nitrogen dioxide and particulates, further, the entire urban area of Maidstone is designated as an Air Quality Management area - such an unsustainable and remote major development allocation would exacerbate this current untenable situation. Through promoting this site Maidstone Borough Council is failing in its responsibility to address the chronic air pollution blighting the health of local residents.

Maidstone town centre has many sites requiring regeneration and is a truly sustainable location in transport options terms. The introduction of a large out-of-town industrial and retail development at Newnham Court Farm (which would be the first major out-of-town retail development in the Borough) will undermine town centre regeneration and be a catalyst for urban decline, as seen elsewhere in the county.

Such a significant intensification of development will inevitably exacerbate traffic problems, undermine pedestrian safety and increase noise, light and air pollution at Junction 7 of the M20, Bearsted Road, Sittingbourne Road, New Cut

Road, Penenden Heath Road, Sandling Lane, Hampton Road, Ware Street and other local roads. The proposed widening of the Bearsted Road adjacent to the site will result in increased danger to pedestrians and wildlife, with damage to local landscape, quality of life, tree-cover and biodiversity. Such brutal new highway infrastructure will do nothing to mitigate the extra traffic generated – it will merely provide highway stacking space at peak times. Further, proposed bus priority measures in New Cut Road could potentially further damage the environment through loss of trees and verges, with little or no gain in traffic movement terms.

The adjacent “Eclipse Park” employment site remains largely undeveloped after a decade of marketing and what little development that has been progressed has by virtue of design and lay-out significantly negatively impacted the setting and foreground of the Kent Downs AONB. It is unsupportable that further strategically located, beautiful and bio-diverse countryside should be destroyed whilst existing allocated adjacent land lies barren and neglected.

It is clear that Newnham Court Farm (“Newnham Park”) is deleted as a Strategic Site and that any ancillary medical development at this location should be well related to the new private clinic and land-form (not breaching the course of the stream, which must provide a permanent boundary against further eastward expansion). Additionally, no expansion in footprint of retail development should be allowed in this sensitive location. Such limits on urban-sprawl will preclude any requirement for major road widening and requisite landscape damage.

.....

7 Rural service centres (40)

7.1 The following distribution of 1,130 new dwelling on greenfield sites at the rural service centres will be included in policy CS1 of the draft Core Strategy, which is the borough wide strategy setting out the spatial distribution of development. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2009 and the Strategic Sites Assessment 2009 demonstrated an adequate choice of sites to meet this target.

CS1 Additional text
Appropriate greenfield sites, to accommodate in the order of 1,130 new dwellings alongside suitably scaled employment opportunities, will be allocated at the edges of the five rural service centres of Harrietsham (315 dwellings), Headcorn (190 dwellings), Lenham (110 dwellings), Marden (320 dwellings) and Staplehurst (195 dwellings).

Item 11 Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy Consultation
Purpose of report: to decide a response to the consultation. Deadline 1st October.

This consultation has been produced at the same time as the Site Allocation consultation as they are linked. MBC and KCC work together on such issues and documents.

Not all of the actions and policies have been produced below, only areas specific to the parish or which the Council has previously stated an interest in have been included. The full document can be found on the MBC site or forwarded on by the parish office in a pdf format. Again Cllr Harwood has been producing comments and members are reminded that he is dual hatted (a Borough and Parish Councillor).

Clerk’s comments: Members are reminded that over the years the Council has been approached by the community with requests for a number of improvements in the area. Some of these requests might be met in this document (but with perhaps unacceptable ‘knock on’ issues’. Requests received, some of which have been supported by the Parish Council, are;

- Roundabout improvements including road markings at Grove Green Roundabout;
- Mini roundabout at junction of Grovewood Drive south and New Cut - to aid exiting off of the development(wish list);
- Improved bus services.

- Anything on road design to alleviate congestion (wish list), traffic light management of traffic (wish list).

Other issues that members may wish to reflect on:

1. Improvements to Bearsted Road (by the crematorium and Nottcutts entrance).
2. Improved bus services and provision of cycle paths. However bus priority and traffic signals may cause other problems.

Members are reminded that even if they support the proposed policies, in the hope that they provide some of the above improvements, they may not actually happen.

“Action 1 (2012 – 2015): Implement highway improvement schemes at strategic development locations in the north west and south east of Maidstone Urban Area and in the vicinity of M20 Junction 7 and M20 Junction 8 to enable development at strategic site allocations

The development proposed by the Core Strategy will result in a significant increase in the number of private vehicle movements across the borough. These will inevitably have an impact on road junctions within the vicinity of new development by increasing the volume of vehicles that use them. Therefore improvements have been identified as being required at the following key locations:

- a). M20, Junction 7. This includes converting the M20 eastbound approach and the two A249 approaches to the roundabout to traffic signals, whilst leaving the M20 westbound approach as a give way; to prevent traffic tailing back on to the motorway during peak periods. In addition, road markings will be rearranged to improve visibility on the roundabout.
- b). A249 / Bearsted Road Roundabout. This includes capacity improvements and provision of a pedestrian crossing at Bearsted Roundabout.
- c). Bearsted Road / New Cut Road Roundabout. This includes capacity improvements and an enlargement of the roundabout.
- d). Bearsted Road, between Bearsted Roundabout and New Cut Road Roundabout. This includes the upgrading of the road to a dual carriageway in both directions.
- e). Constructing bus priority measures on New Cut Road
- f). Signalising bus priority measures at the junction of New Cut Road and A20 Ashford Road

Projects (a) – (s) are priority schemes to support the housing and employment growth proposed by the Core Strategy and will primarily be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and developer contributions secured under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Locations (t) to (x) (below) are identified ‘crash cluster sites’ which are being monitored by KCC on an annual basis for changes to the crash patterns and to identify potential crash remedial measures to be delivered using the County Council’s Integrated Transport Block funding:

- t). Running Horse Roundabout

It should be noted that no improvements have been identified for M20 Junction 6 because land constraints mean that improvements would be very expensive compared with the level of benefit provided, so these funds will be better spent elsewhere on the network”.

.....
Cllr Harwood’s comments:

Objection: Action 1 (2012-2015) b. A249 / Bearsted Road roundabout

It is unclear what “capacity improvements” entails. Any increased land-take is not supported because of the sensitivity of the local landscape at this key gateway to and setting of the County Town. This roundabout immediately abuts semi-natural ancient woodland (Lower Fullingpits Wood) and a Local Nature Reserve. Verges and banks bounding this location and the roundabout itself support important tree and shrub belts, which deliver a significant local landscape, pollution-busting and biodiversity role.

d. Widening of Bearsted Road to dual carriageway adjacent to Newnham Court Farm / Maidstone Crematorium

This proposal would inevitably result in significant landscape damage and the further urbanisation of a sensitive urban / rural interface location, within the foreground of the Kent Downs AONB and adjacent to wildlife-rich historic parkland

and a local nature reserve, with no gain in terms of reduced congestion or air pollution (widening would simply provide more stacking space at peak time and lead to higher speeds and thus greater traffic noise, atmospheric pollution and danger off peak. Road widening in this locality would destroy a wide belt of pollution-busting trees and shrubs, valuable floristically-rich verges (potentially providing habitat for legally protected reptiles), create a significant physical barrier for local residents (and an impenetrable one for wildlife such as local badgers) and increase disturbance to the adjacent ancient Lower Fullingpits Wood, nature reserve and crematorium. Impact upon local hydrology and silt / hydro-carbon pollution of the local tributary of the River Len, which flows into the Vinters Valley Local Nature Reserve, would be unavoidable and significant during construction and subsequent operation (the local substrate is fine sand). Additional infra-structure such as signage and street-lighting would be especially intrusive at this sensitive location - additional lighting would be particularly damaging to local wildlife and the setting of the AONB. In short, road-widening in this locality would transform an attractive urban / rural interface into something resembling the brutalist A2070 at Ashford, with no benefits for local residents. Further, the scale of development proposed for Newnham Court Farm will result in significant traffic increases on all local roads and token-widening at this location would provide nothing to mitigate. This proposal like the "Newnham Park" Strategic Site is too destructive of the local environment to be acceptable.

e. constructing bus priority measures on New Cut Road

It is unclear what this proposal precisely comprises. Any widening of New Cut Road is not supported because of the inevitable harm to the local landscape and potential to increase danger to pedestrians on this residential road and walk-to-school route. This road was widened significantly when the Grove Green estate was constructed and has subsequently become much faster and more dangerous (with tragic results). Any further widening would inevitably result in increased danger to pedestrians from higher vehicle speeds (especially off-peak) and would result in the loss of important road-side trees and verges. Negative impacts upon wildlife are a particular concern in this locality as New Cut Road abuts the bio-diverse Vinters Valley Park LNR and Weaving Heath and traverses a tributary of the River Len. Current bus activity on New Cut Road is currently extremely limited and I am not convinced that even with major development in countryside to the north that any increase in bus services is commercially viable. Bus priority measures at existing junctions sounds attractive in theory, however, the likely result will be that local residential traffic congestion would increase and that any bus priority road space would in fact seldom be used (much to the frustration of the locals).

q. A20 Ashford Road / M20 link road roundabout

This is an extremely sensitive location in landscape and biodiversity terms and is sensitive to damage and increased urbanisation. Verges and banks adjacent to this roundabout and M20 junction 8 support documented populations of legally protected wildlife (reptiles) and a significant flora including extensive stands of the very local plant bird's-foot. Proximity to the Kent Downs AONB, where increased light-pollution and other negative landscape impacts are to be avoided, is a key concern. Further, the geographical relationship of this locality with the River Len means that the ingress of silt and other pollutants into the water-course during construction and operation is inevitable.

r. Ashford Road / Willington Street junction.

Proximity to historic Mote Park and an attractive residential neighbourhood raises significant questions as to how this proposal could be achieved without significant negative impacts upon local landscape and quality of life i.e. erosion of the Park, loss of footway, verge or gardens.

s. M20 junction 8.

This is an extremely sensitive location in landscape and biodiversity terms and is sensitive to damage and increased urbanisation. Verges and banks adjacent to M20 junction 8 support documented populations of legally protected wildlife (reptiles) and a significant flora including extensive stands of the very local plant bird's-

foot. Proximity to the Kent Downs AONB, where increased light-pollution and other negative landscape impacts are to be avoided, is a key concern. Further, the geographical relationship of this locality with the River Len means that the ingress of silt and other pollutants into the water-course during construction and operation is inevitable. The justification given for such a significant intensification of highway infra-structure at this junction is far from convincing”.

.....
Action 4 (2012 – 2015): Introduce a 16+ Travel Pass for bus travel

“KCC has committed to introduce a new bus pass for 16-19 year olds, to make travel more affordable for sixth formers, college students and apprentices. It will cost £10 per week and provide unlimited bus travel 7 days a week, promoting modal shift and providing significant social inclusion benefits”.

Clerk’s comment; Do members wish to support this policy?

“Action 5 (2012 – 2015): Investigate a reorganisation of the Park and Ride fare structure to target private vehicles rather than passengers only

“Currently the Park and Ride fare structure is such that it does not encourage car sharing as one car load of passengers is expected to pay multiple fares to use the service. This issue conflicts with the objective of reducing the number of vehicles on the road network and has also contributed towards the Park and Ride Service’s annual subsidy requirement. This is clearly not sustainable in the current financial climate and puts the future of the service at risk. Therefore MBC will explore the feasibility of shifting the fare structure for the Park and Ride Service from ‘Pay-to-ride’ to ‘Pay-to-Park’ by 2013.

.....
Cllr Harwood’s comments:

Objection: Action 5 (2012-2015) 7.18 Park and Ride Fare Structure

Maidstone Borough Council has investigated a change to charging for vehicles rather than individuals on a number of occasions and for a number of practical reasons has retained the current approach.

A key concern arising from such a change is how it would impact upon local residents who rely upon the Sittingbourne Road park and ride service – as their only local bus service. The absence of any other public transport option for residents in East Ward mean that the park and ride bus is a life-line for many people

There are far more significant concerns attached to the future of park and ride than fare structure, such as the future economic viability of the service and falling passenger numbers. Current costs are clearly unsustainable for the Borough Council in the current economic climate. It is likely that any rationalisation of the service will lead inevitably to a reduction in service.

A further concern relates to the environmental performance of park and ride, a better understanding needs to be established as regards traffic generation and hence pollution arising from this service. Anecdotal evidence exists for statistically significant cross-town car journey generation, undertaken to reach Sittingbourne Road park and ride rather than more local sites, to ensure access to favoured drop-off points close to places of employment.

This document fails to convert into specific actions local and national policy designed to deliver sustainable transportation options – as admirably set out in the front end of the document. Indeed, it is as if two documents have been bolted together: a philosophically progressive preamble leading into regressive private motor car focused “predict and provide” highway projects.

.....
Clerk’s comment; Boxley Parish Council has previously brought to MBC’s attention that it should investigate the possibility of slightly amending the P&R bus routes to allow them to dip into residential areas and pick up fare paying passengers. This ‘opening’ up of the P&R buses to use by residents would mean fewer empty buses and an improved service for residents. By increasing the frequency of public transport it is likely that more

residents will find it more convenient to use buses and hence reduce the amount of traffic on the road. It was understood that by having more frequent stops that it may some people from using the P&R system so it might not be a full bus service but one that compliments the current service (or introduces a new service). It could also be that the P&R buses only operate at residential bus tops off peak times. The Sittingbourne P & R by-passes 2 large residential areas with empty buses.

“Action 6 (2012 – 2015): Introduce Parking Standards to ensure a means by which development can ensure an appropriate amount of parking is provided and reduce its overall demand for car parking

The new Parking Standards will ensure that the needs of car users are reasonably met but also that the agreed level of provision does not undermine more sustainable modes of travel where these are readily available. However, where there is no alternative to use of the private car, the Standards will enable a fair and appropriate amount of parking to be provided. The Standards will also provide for developments’ cycle parking requirements, as well as ensuring that they incorporate electric vehicle charging infrastructure where appropriate. It is anticipated that the Parking Standards will be introduced by MBC during 2013-2014”.

.....
Cllr Harwood’s comments:

Objection: Action 6 (2012-2015) Parking Standards

Maidstone Borough Council planners, residents and the planet have benefited from evidence-led flexibility in parking provision. It would be as retrograde step to place planners in the bureaucratic strait-jacket of a rigid parking standards regime.

Planners have historically successfully resisted efforts to “over-provide” on parking and hard-standing through such an evidence-led approach and have achieved high quality soft landscaping and other positive design features as a result. The introduction of parking standards will inevitably lead to applicants and others seeking maximum parking provision to the detriment of environmental sustainability, landscape and good planning.

.....
Clerk’s comment: The Environment Committee has long been concerned about the fact that on-street car parking is causing problems for residents especially in the Lordswood and Walderslade areas. The converting of residential garages into rooms and the fact that most residential garages are too small for modern cars means that some residents have no alternative but to park on the street which often causes problems for pedestrians and other road users. Perhaps the planning department should force developers to build bigger garages and put on a restriction that they cannot be used for any other purpose.

“Action 7 (2012 – 2015): Increase long stay parking tariffs (4+ hours) and season ticket tariffs for Council owned car parks by 50% (excluding inflation)

This action will contribute towards the management of demand for private vehicle trips into the town centre and is directed at encouraging car commuters to consider walking, cycling or using public transport as an alternative. This will have the effect of better managing traffic congestion and related problems in the town centre during peak periods”.

“Action 8 (2012 – 2015): Increase short stay parking tariffs (<4 hours) for Council owned car parks by 20% (excluding inflation)”.

As with Action 8 above, this action is also for the purpose of managing the demand for private vehicle trips into the town centre and encouraging modal shift. However, it is recognised that short stay town centre car parking plays a vital role in supporting businesses in the town centre and so this is reflected in the lower level of tariff increase proposed when compared with the Council’s long stay parking tariff increase. This is considered reasonable by the Council as the new parking tariff levels will still remain competitive with the private town centre car parking market”.

“Action 12 (2012 – 2015): Introduce a subsidised shuttle bus between the Strategic Development Location at M20 Junction 7 and the town centre, to be funded by development coming forward at this location

Development at this location will need to be sufficiently linked to the town centre in order to complement the land uses in the town centre. This will be achieved by providing a shuttle bus linking the site to the town centre via New Cut Road and A20 Ashford Road”.

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Cllr Harwood’s comments:

Objection: Action 12 (2012-2015) Subsidised shuttle bus between M20 J7 and M20
Experience suggests that such a shuttle bus is unlikely to be commercially viable and the movements of empty buses will simply further pollute a known pollution hot-spot. Relationship with the existing Sittingbourne Road park and ride could also be problematic – adding further costs to this already expensive service.

The costs associated with such a shuttle bus are likely to be significant and it would be absolutely unacceptable for any public funding to be ploughed into this commercial venture. A far more cost effective approach would be to use available funds to improve the frequency and extent of the existing (currently poor) local bus service serving adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

The collateral landscape damage accruing from any widening of existing highway infra-structure, such as New Cut Road, needs to be balanced against this proposal and the overall desirability of major commercial development within the foreground of the Kent Downs AONB at Newnham Court Farm.

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Clerk’s comment; It is unlikely that someone doing shopping at Newnham Park would want to also shop in the Town Centre and travel between the 2 by a bus. It is also unlikely that the workers at the proposed development would be able to go to Maidstone and back in their lunch break so it is likely that there would not be a large demand for such a service and the money would be better spent on providing a good bus service that took in other local residential areas.

“Action 22 (Ongoing): Implement Maidstone’s Air Quality Action Plan to minimise the impact of transport on air quality and facilitate the delivery of low carbon vehicle infrastructure

Acceptable limits of Nitrogen Dioxide dictated by EU law have been exceeded in six locations within the Maidstone Urban Area, (Map 7.3) including Lower Stone Street and the Wheatsheaf Junction. Maidstone’s Air Quality Action Plan (MAQAP) has been introduced to address this and to improve the borough’s air quality more generally. Great potential now exists for low carbon vehicles to play a major role in the way we travel and it is increasingly likely that they will replace the existing fossil fuelled fleet in the future. Therefore Government both at a central and local level must be prepared to facilitate this shift, which has been identified as an action objective in KCC’s Environment Strategy.

The following initiatives will be employed by MBC and KCC to deliver the objectives of the MAQAP and to enable a shift to low carbon vehicle use:

1. Investigate the re-routing of vehicles to avoid designated Air Quality Management Areas
2. Provide incentives to encourage the uptake of low carbon vehicle use at no revenue loss to MBC or KCC
3. Maintain an active role in the Freight, Taxi and Bus Quality Partnerships to ensure the uptake of the European Emission Standards for vehicles
4. Facilitate the introduction of low carbon vehicle charging/fuelling points and to ensure this infrastructure is compatible across Sussex, Surrey, Kent and Greater London by participating in the ‘South East Electric Vehicle Network Partnership’. This will support local car dealerships selling low carbon vehicles and the development of low carbon technology. It will also be achieved by a requirement to provide an appropriate percentage of low carbon vehicle compatible parking spaces through supplementary planning guidance such as parking standards for development.
5. Investigate, and seek to create a public sector run low carbon vehicle refuelling infrastructure. This will be developed by working in partnership with other public sector bodies and funded by the public sector and/or grant funding. A reciprocal public sector

refuelling infrastructure would enable the public sector to champion low carbon vehicle procurement for their own fleets in order to realise the longer term carbon and potential financial savings this technology can offer 6. Investigate and support public/private partnerships for low carbon refuelling stations in the borough to help businesses gain access to low carbon fleets and the potential longer term financial savings that low carbon vehicles may provide

7. Develop a greener MBC fleet through the inclusion of a sustainable transport procurement policy in the MBC Procurement Strategy The MAQAP will be updated at a minimum of every 5 years in accordance with Local Air Quality Management best practice to ensure it is a living document that evolves with a changing traffic environment and advancements in green technology.

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Cllr Harwood's comments:

Objection: Action 22 (2012-2015) Implement Air Quality Management Area

This objective does not go far enough to address the significant health and quality of life impacts arising from traffic pollution in Maidstone. Indeed, a far better understanding of the negative health and economic impacts of air pollution in Maidstone Borough is required if an effective response is to be marshalled. Maidstone Borough Council needs to make difficult decisions on air pollution for the sake of its residents and currently unthinkable options such as restricting vehicular access to urban areas during significant periods of air pollution limit exceedence need to be urgently introduced. The recent shift to diesel powered vehicles has had a particularly negative impact upon NO2 and particulate levels within urban areas and this needs to be specifically addressed.

I am very surprised that no mention is made of the need to increase street tree, green wall, semi-natural green space and other vegetation coverage in urban areas.

Current science indicates that this is the most effective (and cost effective) means of mitigation for traffic pollution in urban areas, with the potential to reduce pollutant levels by some 30% (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18873391>).

There is a strong argument that this should in fact be Action 1 not 22!

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Clerk's comments; Members have in the past been very concerned about the air pollution around roads and the M20.

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Other Cllr Harwood comments:

Objection: Action 14 (2012-2015) Public realm

I totally reject the assertions made in this action regarding the recent re-paving of the High Street, which through removal of trees, configuration and materials used has made pedestrian movement uncomfortable and hazardous in equal measure. If the pedestrian experience is to be improved attractive, safe, tree-shaded, unpolluted environments need to be created. Recent research states that street trees, green walls and other vegetation is the most effective means to address traffic pollution in urban environments. In Maidstone such vegetation is being removed at a frightening pace.

At 7.32 I totally reject the proposal to further urbanise the tow-path of the River Medway and have significant safety concerns regarding the current interaction of pedestrians with cyclists on the river side. Further, the suggestion of a new footbridge between Earl Street and St. Peter's Street is clearly unviable and any available resources should be invested in improving pedestrian links on existing crossing points i.e. bridge gyratory and high level.

Objection: Action 17 (2012-2015) Maintain existing P & R provision at the current level of service

Such a proposal is practically undeliverable and essentially undesirable. The park and ride service has significant underlying problems, with its viability and performance, which will require dynamic change if the service is to survive. Better research is also required as to whether the service does indeed minimise congestion and pollution.

Item 15 Beechen Bank. *Purpose of report: information and possible action.*

Cllr Springate has asked for the Parish Council to be proactive regarding Beechen Bank. MBC is looking to cancel the designation Area of Local Landscape Importance in the next Core Strategy. This Council has suggested that it could be a 'green wedge' although when approached, at a recent training session, MBC Officer's couldn't actually explain what this term actually meant. The Officers suggested that the Parish Council submits any such land as a 'Local Green Space' to be identified as such by MBC possibly in a Core Strategy supplementary document.

Beechen Bank is Ancient Woodland, protected by TPOs but privately owned, a request to the Land Registry (costing £4) might identify how many land owners there are but it would give no other information. Before undertaking this action MBC would be approached to see if it had this type of information.

Item 15 Saracen Fields grass area. *Purpose of report: information and possible action.*

At its meeting on the 9th July 2012 "Members **received** and **noted** the Clerk's report after much discussion Members **agreed** for the office to respond to the resident who reported this issue to see if they had considered purchasing the land for themselves. Members asked to review this again once a response had been received".

The resident has not attempted to purchase the land, and it is not clear who actually owns the land now, but is of the opinion that KCC should, having maintained the land for so many years take on ownership and responsibility.