



# BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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12 May 2014

## To All Members of the Council, press and public.

There will be a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on **Monday 19 May 2014** at **Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade** commencing at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:

1. **Apologies and absences** (7.30)  
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.** (7.31)  
Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, lobbying or changes to the Register of Interests.
3. **Minutes of the Meetings of 7 and 14 April 2014.** (7.32)  
To consider the minutes of the meetings (previous circulated) and if in order to sign as a true record.
4. **Matters Arising From Minutes.** (7.34)  
To accept the reports.
  - 4.1 Minute 2639/4.2 Bollards at Sandling Village Hall and Boxley Road, Walderslade. A grant application will be put together for submission to County Councillor Carter but further guidance is sought please report (page 3).
  - 4.2 Minute 2639/4.3 Verge work at Grovewood Drive South. The company responsible for the work has been contacted to remind them that now would be a good time to undertake the work to remove shrubs and grass the area.

## To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting. (7.40)

5. **Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration.** (7.48)  
See attached list (pages 3). For decision.
6. **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions.** (7.54)  
To receive details of information received (pages 3-4).
7. **Neighbourhood Development Plans.** (8.00)  
To receive an update, the issue is being discussed at the parish council meeting on 12 May 2014.
8. **Maidstone Borough Local Plan.** (8.05)
  - 8.1 Community Infrastructure Levy. Ratify response – Noted but no substantive comment.
  - 8.2 Local Plan see report (page 4-8).
9. **Volunteer Groups.** (8.06)  
To receive any reports from volunteer groups associated with the parish council. For information.

10. **Highways and Byways.** (8.12)  
To receive any reports or updates.
- 10.1 Footpath behind Wildfell Close and Green Acres. A resident would support a letter drop to all houses backing onto this path to highlight that property owners should not fly tip over the fences and that feeding of the birds encourage rats and mice. The letter would acknowledge that the recent mild and very wet winter has seen an increase in the vermin population many of which have been displaced above ground due to flooding of their burrows etc.
  - 10.2 Flooding at Round Wood roundabout see report (page 8).
  - 10.3 Potential roadside nature reserve, Boxley Road, Boxley see report (page 8-9)
  - 10.4 The condition of vegetation throughout the parish see report on (page 9)
11. **Policy and procedures review.** (8.16)  
Planning and the parish council explanation leaflet see enclosure and report (page 9)
12. **Changes to planning application procedure.** (8.22)  
To consider the impact on the proposed changes and to identify relevant management strategies see report (page 9-11).
13. **Training needs.** (8.32)  
Members are asked to consider whether they have any specific training requests.
14. **Matters for information.** (8.36)  
To receive any information.
- 14.1 Gibraltar Farm. Proposed Development of 500 Houses. Report from Cllr Dengate (page 11-12).
  - 14.2 Copy of Hugh Robertson MP letter to Alison Broom outlining his views on the Maidstone Local Plan is available from the office.
15. **Next Meeting.** (8.41)  
Next full environment meeting 19 May 2014 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m. Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 12 May 2014.
- 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.
16. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC.** (8.42)  
To consider, if any received, confidential updates.

Pauline Bowdery  
Clerk to Boxley Parish Council.

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.

Items to be returned to agenda:

Dec 2014 Minute 2600/10.4 PROW Round Wood Valley, review the request to KCC PROW for it to be made a PROW. Minute 2639/4.1 Grovewood Drive North crossing improvements.

**REPORTS ATTACHED TO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA 19 May 2014.**  
**Members are reminded that the Chairman will assume that these papers have been read prior to the meeting.**

**Item 4.1 Bollards at Sandling Village Hall and Boxley Road.** *Purpose of report: Decision/guidance.*

Another site has been put forward for bollards (Walderslade Village end of Boxley Road) and it is not clear whether the request for bollards at the junction of Boxley Road/Travertine Road is now relevant.

*Clerk's note: Inconsiderate and ugly parking has long been a problem for councillors and residents. The need for bollards is often identified as a last minute suggestion at a meeting and the parish office is asked to investigate and approach Paul Carter for funding. Rather than undertake piece meal work do members wish to have an overall review of the situation and possible locations? It is also suggested that a councillor identifying a need should be clear as to what the problem is and also to produce a design showing how many bollards are needed and where they should be installed. It may help to actually identify whether in some circumstances ugly on-verge parking may need to be tolerated if there is a local parking problem.*

**Item 5 Planning Applications.** *Purpose of report: To consider planning applications. Members' are reminded to consider possible section 106 requests or to suggest any conditions. Members are reminded that the paper versions are available from 7.00 pm*

MA/14/0223 – An application for a 12 x 6 catering van on the car park outside the Harley Davidson showroom at Forstal Road. To ratify the Clerk's decision, after consulting members for a majority view, that this application should not be reported to the MBC Planning Committee.

MA/14/0517 – Alterations to existing double garage to provide ancillary accommodation at The Banks, Boxley Road, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent, ME5 9JE (adjacent to Glenside).  
26/5/2014

MA/14/0594 – First floor extension on top of existing garage to form an additional bedroom at 5 Spenlow Drive, Walderslade ME5 9JT.  
22/5/2014

MA/14/0604 – Retrospective application for the erection of front boundary treatment at Briar Lodge, Boxley Road, Walderslade ME5 9JG.  
22/5/2014

MA/14/0659 – Erection of first floor extensions to eastern and western side elevations, first floor rear extension and single storey rear extension to replace existing conservatory at 22 Gleaners Close, Weaving ME14 5ST.  
3/6/2014

TA/0071/14 – Tree Preservation Order application: TPO No. 1 of 1969: an application for consent to coppice the hornbeam tree leaving as a coppice stool at 12 Celestine Close, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent, ME5 9NG.  
28/5/2014

TA/0073/14 – Tree Preservation Order application: TPO No 1 of 1969: an application for consent to reduce 1no Birch tree stem to 3.5m at 10 Brownlowe Copse, Walderslade, ME5 9JQ.  
3/6/2014

**Item 6 Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions.** *Purpose of report: Information or review.*

MA/13/1760 Three Ashes, Boxley Road. Refused at appeal. *Clerk's note: A copy of the refusal has been forwarded to the MBC Local Plan office with a note that it is submitted*

to support the parish council's statements made to the Regulation 19 consultation.

MA/13/1797 – Lordswood Urban Extension, Gleamingwood Drive.

MA/14/0373 – Advertisement consent for signs at NEXT\*.

**Item 8.2 Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation.** *Purpose of item: Ratification of response.*

### **Policy NPPF 1.**

As drafted this is one-sided as it omits any reference to pre- and post-consultation with the local community. It is asked that the first paragraph be therefore amended to read *"The council will always work proactively with the applicants and the local community jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals....."*

### **Policy SP1 Maidstone Town Centre.**

If MBC wants these strategies to work it needs to provide adequate and affordable car parking. MBC appears to be removing available spaces by re-developing car parks and the cost of parking is a deterrent to town-centre shopping by people without easy access to frequent and reliable public transport.

Similarly, the lack of public toilets inconveniences visitors who may then in future choose to go elsewhere.

### **Policy SP5 Countryside.**

Paragraph 5.57. It is suggested that the last line should read *"Any development needs to be mitigated....."*

Kent Downs AONB and its setting.

*".....farmsteads or within ~~the~~ groups of buildings in sustainable locations."*

Landscapes of local value Paragraph 5.71.

*".....the borough includes significant tracts of landscape **which are in good condition** and are highly sensitive to significant change,".*

It is not clear why **'which are in good condition'** is included. Surely this will encourage land owners to allow land to fall into poor condition or 'grub out' any features so that the land then becomes available for development. It is therefore asked that this phrase be omitted.

In the following two cases it is felt that the draft local plan does not meet the criteria identified in the NPPF section 11 and that these areas should therefore be added to the list of Landscapes of Local Value.

- The parish council is extremely disappointed that the Walderslade woodlands and nearby Beechen Bank are not included in the list of landscapes of local value. These are the remnants of the Ancient Woodlands that covered the four steep-sided valleys that make up this part of Maidstone. Beechen Bank and Tunbury Valley (part of the Walderslade woodlands) were previously designated as Areas of Local Landscape Importance.

The Maidstone Boroughwide Local Plan states *Beechen Bank – a prominent area of wooded landscape set on a steep sided slope which provides a setting for the built up areas of Walderslade and Impton Lane. Tunbury Valley – an important wooded valley which provides a landscape setting for the residential areas at Tunbury Ave and Impton Lane.* This remains the case.

The steep forested valley sides and mature native woodland of these areas provide much recreational land use. The Walderslade woodlands have been designated as a Village Green for this reason and they also contain historic features (ditches and boundary stones) dating back to the medieval origins of the managed woodland landscape.

- The parish council is also disappointed that once again the open countryside around Lidsing is not included in the list of landscapes of local value. It should be added due to its setting adjacent to the AONB, its distinctive open downland character and its scattering of rural dwellings which includes those in Boxley parish on the outskirts of Bredhurst village. Ancient Woodland, such as Cowbeck Woods and Reeds Croft Wood, are also an important part of this landscape and should be included.

The Maidstone Boroughwide Local Plan states *Capstone, Darling, Lidsing – this area provides a substantial tract of undeveloped land extending from the North Downs into the heart of the Medway Towns. It forms a particularly attractive feature and the rolling farmland and woods in the Lidsing area provide an important view from the M2 motorway.*

A corollary of the above is that the parish council again requests that the urban boundary of Walderslade and Lordswood be realigned to exclude the Walderslade woodlands and parts of Beechen Bank and the undeveloped parts of Boxley Road. It therefore asks that the urban boundary be moved to exclude these areas. See also DM30 below.

SP5 1. (ii)c. Meet local housing needs:

This phrase is woolly and not significantly robust. This section urgently needs a definition of what “local housing needs” actually refers to. It is suggested that the wording is either changed to read *meet immediately local housing needs* or is removed entirely.

SP5 Countryside. This policy is not considered sufficiently robust to protect agricultural land; the policy needs a specific statement to ensure agricultural land remains available for food production with all the ensuing benefits to the local and national economy and environment.

The parish council requested that the urban boundary at Walderslade and Lordswood be realigned to show the Walderslade woodlands, parts of Beechen Bank and undeveloped parts of Boxley Road as rural. It therefore asks that the urban boundary be moved as previously requested.

## **H2 Density of housing development.**

The required density means that the gardens of new houses will be small. As MBC is reducing the number of play and community areas for which it is responsible, there is concern that there will be nowhere for children and young people to meet and socialise out of doors.

More consideration should be given to the minimalist approach to parking provision. The majority of families, regardless of what the Government considers desirable, have two cars. This situation is unlikely to change, at least outside the urban area.

## **RMX1 Retail and mix use allocations.**

MBC must produce Character Area Assessments prior to accepting large scale planning applications so that developers are guided on local character and distinctiveness. Currently it is the developers that are imposing their idea of ‘character’ on an area by using off-the-shelf all-the-same designs which then swamp what is already there.

## **Policy PKR1 Park and Ride.**

Old Sittingbourne Road. In view of the increased employment and retail outlets in the immediate area there is concern that 1,000 places are not enough.

There is also evidence that the P&R is being used by people parking for free and then car-share commuting into London. Insufficient parking provision at Newnham Park and car park charges at the proposed shopping area will also mean the P&R will be used by employees and over 60’s visitors who have free bus passes. This problem could be mitigated by requiring users to pay to park and given a ticket for a free bus ride into the town as is done elsewhere.

**Policy DM1 Development on brownfield land.**

Supported. However the policy should specifically state, as in paragraph 11.2, that "Development of brownfield land is favoured ahead of greenfield development".

**Policy DM2 Sustainable design standards.**

Supported. However due to water shortages issues recently experienced in the South East it is considered that the policy at 4 is insufficiently robust.

**Policy DM3 Renewable and low carbon energy schemes.**

Supported in principle however there is concern that agricultural land is being lost to such schemes, particularly solar farms. It is suggested that MBC proactively supports solar panel installations on industrial buildings and in industrial areas.

This section should be amended to include a clear statement that any energy scheme development allowed on agricultural land must be removed at the end of its 'life' and the land returned to agricultural use. In no circumstances should the land be viewed as a brownfield site because of previous energy scheme usage.

**Policy DM 4 Principles of good design**

- (ii) Respond positively to ~~and where possible enhance~~ the local, natural or historic character of the area. Particular regard will be paid to scale, height, materials, detailing, mass, bulk, articulation and site coverage - incorporating a high quality, modern design approach and making use of vernacular materials where appropriate;

It is considered that the reference to "enhance" should be deleted from the policy. Modern iconic buildings placed within a traditional area rarely blend in. It is possible to have modern designs that complement an area however this does not appear to happen in Maidstone.

Policy DM4 (v) is strongly supported.

**Policy DM 5 Residential garden land.**

This parish council has not changed its view that gardens should be treated as greenfield sites. If development is to be entertained, MBC should state precise criteria for allowing such development along the lines of

'Development will not be permitted if the ratio of the footprint of the proposed new dwelling to its curtilage exceeds that of the existing dwelling to its new curtilage.'

Development is in keeping with the character of the current property and the street scene in general.

**Policy DM 6 External lighting.**

Supported but amended to include that account should be taken of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Character Area Assessments, the Kent Design Guide and the Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty Management Plan.

**Policy DM 8 Residential extensions, conversions and redevelopment**

Supported.

**Policy DM9 - Non-conforming uses.**

Supported.

**Policy DM 10 Historic and natural environment.**

Supported.

**Policy DM 11 Publicly accessible open space and recreation.**

Supported however grave concern that MBC won't accept responsibility for the maintenance of new open spaces.

**Policy DM 12 Community facilities.**

Supported.

**Policy DM17 - Economic development.**

Supported.

**Policy DM18 - Retention of employment sites.**

Bredhurst Business Park (in Westfield Sole Road, Lordswood) is omitted from the list of industrial areas.

**Policy DM 20 District centres, local centres and local shops and facilities.**

Supported but doctors' surgeries should be included in the list at 4.

**Policy DM 23 Housing mix.**

The housing density identified in policy H2 means that mainly smaller units will be built. This is not a balanced mix as required in this policy.

At the same time, in some established areas, due to the number of extensions given planning permission, the housing mix is becoming unbalanced as smaller properties are enlarged. This policy should be extended to take into account the cumulative effect this has on an area.

**Policy DM 24 Affordable housing 102**

*The target rates for affordable housing provision are:*

*(i) Previously developed land - urban - 15%;*

*(ii) Greenfield and private residential gardens - urban and urban periphery - 30%; and*

*(iii) Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages - 40%.*

The Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages do not have, or are ever likely to have, the local infrastructure or affordable public transport to support 40% affordable housing. It is suggested that urban areas, which is where both the need and the demand are, should have the 40% ratio with the countryside etc. having the 15% ratio.

**Policy DM 25 Local needs housing**

The parish council does not support Section 1. This will allow MBC to solely decide who will be offered accommodation in villages with people from the urban area on the waiting list being forced to take accommodation in say a village with poor public transport links to the town/workplace or be removed from the waiting list.

Local residents, either living in the village or in the surrounding countryside may also be excluded from consideration if they are not on the MBC housing list. Section 1 effectively contradicts the ethos of this policy which is local needs housing.

**Policy DM 30 Design principles in the countryside.**

2. Outside the Kent Downs AONB, SHOULD not result in harm to landscape of high ~~highest~~ value and respect the landscape character of the locality;

The parish council requested that the urban boundary at Walderslade and Lordswood be realigned to show the Walderslade woodlands, parts of Beechen Bank and undeveloped parts of Boxley Road as rural. It therefore asks that the urban boundary be moved as previously requested. See comment on SP 5 above.

**Policy DM 31 New agricultural buildings and structures.**

Supported.

**Policy DM 32 Conversion of rural buildings**

Supported.

**Policy DM 33 Rebuilding and extending dwellings in the countryside.**

Supported.

**Policy DM 34 Change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden land.**

The policy should be expanded to include:

- Automatic continuing protection for any trees covered by TPOs. Currently this status is lost when planning permission is given for change of use which can result in previously protected trees being felled before a fresh TPO is, if ever, applied for.
- Any such new garden should be classified as a greenfield site.

**Policy DM 37 Expansion of existing businesses in rural areas (120)**

Supported.

**Policy ID 1 Infrastructure Delivery (126)**

What is the point of building affordable housing without the necessary supporting infrastructure in place to serve and sustain it? This parish council believes that the 'pot' for affordable housing should be determined entirely separately from the other items on the list. This will allow better prioritisation of the remainder without 'provision of affordable housing' draining the kitty.

**General comment.**

There is concern about how Maidstone's infrastructure will cope with the high level of development that is planned.

There is concern that planning officers' have the right, once a development has commenced, to allow a developer to fell or undertake work on a tree covered by a TPO.

**Item 10 Highways and Byeways. Purpose of item: Information and decision.****Item 10.2 Flooding at Round Wood roundabout.**

E-mail KCC on 2 May 2014:

*"I can advise that I already have works planned here overnight on the 6<sup>th</sup> May to undertake a very thorough clean off all drains, lines, manholes and any soakaways in the area of the roundabout. The crews will be recording the condition of all lines and chambers using CCTV. I am hopeful the work will put an end to the flooding issues here but if it is found that any further work is required this will be reported back to me for further action".*

Update email KCC on 8 May 2014:

*"We attended over the last two nights and cleared out everything within the roundabout. Some further work will be needed for drain lines and manholes which are outside of the roundabout as they will need different traffic management. I'll be getting this work raised once I have spoken with the roadworks co-ordinators as I will need to close Westfield Sole Road and Harp Farm Road (on separate occasions) to be able to fully resolve this flooding issue.*

*Please do feel free to drop me an email if you require updates on this or any other drainage enquiries within your Parish".*

Note. Lordswood Lane and Boxley Road were also reported.

**Item 10.3 Potential Nature Reserve, Boxley Road, Boxley.**

Notification from KWT

*"I am contacting the Parish Council regarding a road verge in the Boxley area, which has been identified as an area of conservation interest. The road verge of interest is along one side of Boxley road and runs over the rail tunnel (please see attached map). The verge supports a range of chalk and neutral grassland habitat indicator species, including large numbers of Lizard orchid *Himantoglossum urcinum*, a Kent County Rare Species and Red Data Book species.*



I have attached a draft citation, which outlines a recommended cutting regime to maintain and enhance the road verge. The main concern is to avoid cutting the verges during the summer, when most of the grassland plants will be in flower to allow them to set seed. A full width cut and clear should be carried out at the end of the summer in September.

A copy of the citation and a map has also been sent to Kent Highways Services and CTRL for their comments. Please could the Parish Council consider/discuss the possible designation of this area and provide me with any feedback. If there are no issues regarding the designation of the verge, signs and posts could be erected sometime during the Autumn 2014.

It may be helpful to have someone local to become a volunteer warden to keep an eye on the verge and report on any damage or monitor the flora and fauna (I am very happy to meet up on site and help with identification). If there is anyone who you think might be interested, I can be contacted at the above address/ phone number or alternatively I can be e mailed at:

[eamonn.lawlor@kentwildlife.org.uk](mailto:eamonn.lawlor@kentwildlife.org.uk)

**Item 10.4 The condition of vegetation throughout the parish – views are sought.** Report by Cllr Wendy Hinder

I have noticed that the vegetation around Walderslade in particular is growing rapidly and already many footpaths are looking very overgrown and untidy. We did have a cut out here very early this year and my fear is that this is only May and we used to get more than one cut a year which helped to keep it under control. Whilst appreciating the financial constraints I have requested that MBC comes and views the problem areas.

I would be interested in hearing what other areas look like. Grove Green appears to be looking pretty good especially when compared to Walderslade.

Wendy

**Item 11 Policy and procedures review** *Purpose of item: decision.*

**Planning and the parish council explanation leaflet**

An updated leaflet is enclosed for members. The leaflet has been changed to reflect the non-availability of paper plans (see section Can I see planning applications?). No other changes are being suggested to the original document as the Clerk considers that it is still fit for purpose.

**Item 12 Changes to planning application procedure.** *Purpose of report: information and guidance.*

The proposed changes come into effect on 6 June however it is likely that it will take some time for the change to percolate through the system.

*Clerk's note: It is suggested that now would be a good time to have a mini-review of how the committee approaches and makes a decision on planning applications.*

Members should consider whether they actually require access to the individual planning application at a meeting or whether viewing the plans prior to the meeting is sufficient. *Note: This is the 'why' question that should always be asked/answered before any work is undertaken. Members may decide that for certain types of planning applications they may only need a paper site plan.*

Members will be asked whether they wish to have access to all or some applications at the meeting.

Members should consider whether all members having a say at the meeting is the future way for the committee to work. They may decide that a few councillors will be tasked with making a recommendation for the response which, if the planning application is not controversial, is then accepted by the committee. *Note: this could be worked in a way that the recommended response for some applications could appear on the agenda or be e-mailed in advance to committee members.*

Members will be asked whether they wish to identify a new way of working with a minimum of three councillors making a recommendation.

Members may decide that they do need access to planning applications in which case it could be live via the internet or where internet service is not available by down loaded documents. Councillors with internet access are already asked to view plans on-line prior to a meeting but at least two councillors do not have easy access to a computer. Pre meeting viewing access can be arranged at the parish office but it is up to individuals to make an appointment.

Late planning applications are received and a draft supplement agenda is sent out the Friday before the meeting to notify members of plans received after the agenda is issued. Arrangements can be made to view any late received plans in the half hour before the meeting.

A new system could be introduced that committee members are informed of planning applications as soon as they are received.

Clerk's comment: it is not possible to print off A1 plans and there is a financial impact if councillors ask for all documents to be printed off.

For the committee to remain effective and efficient it is suggested that the following issues are considered:

- Members must commit to viewing planning applications online. Either by using their own computer or attending the office to access the MBC website. *Note: plans can be viewed at the MBC gateway and computers are available at local libraries.*
- Members must be disciplined in how they work at the meeting. *Note: it is easy to look at a paper plan, and plans can be spread around the table, however it is time consuming to have to download or find on a website a particular plan and then open it up etc. Only one page at a time can be viewed so a member should be prepared to ask themselves 'do I have a real reason for asking for a plan to be accessed'. If a councillor has not found the time to access the planning application should they not be prepared to wait to see what other members say before asking to look at the plan?*
- An agreed procedure along the lines of:
  - Planning application number is read out.
  - Members decide whether a decision can be made without opening up the document.
  - If it is a complicated planning application that requires discussion then the plans will be shown in the following order.
    - *Site plan.*
    - *Elevations existing and proposed.*
    - *Floor plan, if relevant.*
    - *Landscaping, if relevant.*
    - *Any other documents as needed.*
- Advance warning to the office or chairman if a councillor feels something is controversial or will need a lot of discussion.
- Parish office to set up equipment in such a way as to make it easier for members, prior to the meeting, to view plans on the laptop etc. *Note: this is easier when at Beechen Hall but more difficult at any other venue.*
- The attending member of staff, especially when at other venues, to ensure that councillors have access to the laptop (if necessary) to view plans prior to the start of the parish council meeting. The Chairman of the Parish Council will be asked for support to stop other councillors interrupting this work.

- A review of the current equipment and whether it is sufficient. *Note: equipment must be portable and able to be used at other venues. It is important that councillors do not decide on what they want to see supplied without considering the impact on the office staff responsible for transporting it and setting it up.*
- Do members wish to change the way planning applications are presented on the agenda? Do members wish to see a recommendation or mini report along the line of .... *The Clerk/Asst Clerk cannot see any planning material reasons to object. Note: this will have an impact on office time however if it saves time at the meeting then this may be cost effective. If this suggestion is agreed then it will need to be trialled because if meeting time is not saved then the impact on the office may be such that it will be impossible to continue without in-depth consideration of the impact. An important question that would need answering is would this stop people looking at plans?*

**Item 14.1 Gibraltar Farm – Proposed Development of 500 Houses. Report from Cllr Dengate. Purpose of item: Information.**

I visited the public consultation at Lords Wood leisure Centre on the 09/05/2014 at 17.15, the meeting at the time was very busy.

This is a large development that spans from North Dane Way as far back as Elm court and from Lords Wood Leisure centre and as far south as far as Roots Wood.

I had an opportunity to view the presentation and talk to one of the developers\consultants and in my opinion some of the statements that were being made by the developers were easily challenged and I felt that this was more an exercise in gauging public opinion with a view to counteract those opinions\objections when the planning application is submitted.

The developer was of the opinion that Medway Council will initially object and refuse the application and they would then appeal the decision.

Some of the notable points that I identified.

#### **Road Infrastructure**

With the addition of 500 homes there is likely to be based on 1.7 cars per household an additional 850 cars on the road. These are likely to use already congested roads at peak times although their modelling software indicated that this wouldn't be the case I would argue that the software is flawed and doesn't take in sufficient number of variables to deal with driver habits.

No improvements to the surrounding roads were shown within the presentation although through my discussions it was indicated that S106 would be made available to Medway authority for such improvements.

No consideration on major junctions like the M2 were considered at both the Bluebell Hill and Gillingham junctions.

There is also the possibility that North Dane Way is likely to be extended to support the housing development needs, although not currently linked up to Walderslade Wood.

#### **Health**

Little or no consideration of the impact of potentially 2000 residents would have on the already overstretched local facilities at Lords Wood Healthy Living centre. Although there was discussions around financial assistance I would challenge how that funding would be utilised to minimise the appointment delays and access to facilities on the existing population plus the additional potential.

#### **Schooling**

The developer has already indicated under S106 that they have been in discussion with Medway authority around the introduction of a new primary school within the development area or financial assistance under S106 to the existing schools within the area.

#### **Flooding**

This was mentioned, however being located at the top of the Capstone Valley the likelihood of flooding is likely never to happen within the lifetime of the majority.

However the run off caused by the covering of ground is likely to have an impact on the lower reached of the valley. (This current development is not likely to be the cause, it is likely to be caused because once this development is in other developments for the remainder of the valley is likely to follow.

### **Resources**

This is likely to have an additional impact on natural resources as is any development of scale. There was no mention of grey water harvesting, solar heating or electricity, wind harvesting or other means to reduce the impact constrained reserves.

No assessment had been undertaken, were not visible at the consultation on manmade resource, Schools, hospitals, schools, etc.

Loss of natural habitat that will affect local wildlife and habitat.

### **Farm Land**

There will be a loss of farm land that will in the future have a significant impact on this country's ability to feed itself, as it is we already have to import produce from overseas to maintain the subsistence of the UK.

### **Natural Woodland and Green Space**

Trees and green space are very important commodities for the health and wellbeing of the existing population and residents for the area, and when lost to development there is no replacing of such areas. This development will need to consume some of that resource.

### **Industry**

The development talks about the strategic location and access to local industry for employment prospects siting Lords Wood Industrial area as one such area within close proximity. These areas that they mention are very small and have limited employment opportunities, this development will primarily focus on the London Computer at best.

The recent Asbestos First (Asbestos waste transfer station) will ultimately be surrounded by housing on all sides if this development was to proceed an environmental disaster just waiting to happen, regardless to the failsafe's that are in place.

### **Public Transport**

This was mentioned as being good and the developers see the residents making full use of the existing services. I agree the development is on primary bus routes, however there was no indication that these would be re-routed through the proposed development. If they were then this would impact the time taken to get to key transport hubs, like Chatham town centre, Chatham and Gillingham Station; who wants to take up to hour to get to these locations?

No additional town parking consider to alleviate parking problems at key points e.g. railway stations.

### **Summary**

There are numerous other reasons that this development is ill conceived and unsustainable and I'm sure others will find more reasons as time progresses. My biggest concern is that if this application for development is approved it will open the potential flood gates for other developers that have long looked at this and surrounding areas as ideal areas to extend the urban area of Lords Wood, one recent one that comes to mind is the proposed Lords Wood Urban extension that Maidstone Borough Council has recently rejected on the grounds of un-sustainability. A Facebook page has been set up to create public awareness; not 24hrs after the consultation there are already 360 likes for the page "Save Capstone valley". I actively encourage you all to visit the page to better understand the issues.