



BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL
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Clerk Mrs Pauline Bowdery **Assistant Clerk** Mrs Melanie Fooks

A G E N D A

To All Members of the Council, Press and Public

There will be a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on **Thursday 24 January 2019** at Grove Green Community Hall, Penhurst Close, Grove Green ME14 5BT commencing at **7:30** pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:

- 1 Apologies and absences**
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
- 2 Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying**
Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the MBC Monitoring Officer.
- 3. Planning Applications for Consideration - DECISION**
18/506656/FULL Erection of a new two-storey primary school and special educational needs secondary school with formation of new access onto Bearsted Road, together with associated car parking and drop off area, pedestrian access, drainage, areas for formal and informal outdoor play and landscaping works. Popes Field Bearsted Road Weaving Deadline. 29 January 2019

See briefing report (pages 2 - 8)

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting. See note (page 2)

- 4 Next Meeting**
Next Environment Committee meeting 4 March 2019 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7:30pm.

Pauline Bowdery

Pauline Bowdery
Clerk to Boxley Parish Council

Date: 17 January 2019

In accordance with policy the meeting should close no later than 9:30pm but the Chairman has devolved powers to extend it by 30 minutes.

**Supporting agenda papers for the Environment Committee Meeting 24 January 2019.
The Chairman will assume that these have been read prior to the meeting.**

Councillors wishing to suggest changes to any policy or procedure document in this agenda should notify the office, in writing, at least three working days in advance of the meeting to allow details to be circulated at the meeting (or in advance if particularly contentious).

Open to the public.

Parish Council meetings are open to the public but numbers allowed to enter are governed by the Fire Regulations of the venue (approx. 155 at Grove Green Community Hall). Preference will be given to Boxley residents. If the numbers of people permitted into the hall looks like it will be exceeded then visitors from outside the parish of Boxley may be asked to wait for entry and may also be refused entry if there is insufficient room.

Recording of meeting.

Legislation allows for Parish Council meetings to be recorded and if you wish to do so it would help the parish council to know this in advance, but advance notification is not a requirement of the legislation.

Adjournment Note.

Members of the public can only speak or address members during an adjournment to a meeting and the Chairman will use her discretion on who is called and in what order they will be invited to speak. Apart from visiting Boxley Parish Councillors each member of the public invited to address the meeting will be limited to three minutes only. In order to hear from as many members of the public as possible you are asked not to repeat arguments and to keep your contribution as concise as possible.

Every effort will be made to ensure members of the public can give their views but preference on speaking will be given to Boxley residents.

Decision of the Parish Council.

The Environment Committee is responsible for taking decisions on Planning Applications and these are published in the draft minutes placed on the parish council's website. The decision will also be placed in the news section of the website, circulated via the community e-mail alert system for Grove Green and Facebook.

Item 3 Planning Applications for Consideration - DECISION

Pauline Bowdery Parish Clerk.

16/01/19 V2

Briefing report on

MA/18/506656/FULL Erection of a new two-storey primary school and special educational needs secondary school with formation of new access onto Bearsted Road, together with associated car parking and drop off area, pedestrian access, drainage, areas for formal and informal outdoor play and landscaping works. Popes Field Bearsted Road Weaving
Deadline. 29 January 2019

Legal framework.

DCLG Policy Statement Planning for Schools Development 2011

1. Clerk's note. Local Planning Authorities, in this case Maidstone Borough Council, and Local Transport Authorities, Kent County Council, are required to conform to Government legislation and regulations. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the principle document that governs local authorities.

2. NPPF paragraph 94 specifically relates to schools and states *“it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take out proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to develop that will widen choice in education. They should a) give great weight to the need to create, expand the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with schools promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.”*

3. NPPF paragraph 109 relates to highway issues and states *“development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there will be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.”*

4. Clerks information note. Any refusal of or conditions placed on this planning application, by either Maidstone Borough Council and/or Kent County Council, must be supported by clear and cogent evidence as it is probable that any refusal will be the subject of an appeal to the Secretary of State. If the Planning Inspector (appointed by the Secretary of State) considers that the reasons for a Local Authority’s refusal to grant planning permission or the conditions it imposed were unreasonable then costs can be awarded against that Local Authority.

5. Boxley Parish Council is a legal consultee in the planning process. It has a right to object to planning applications but these objections should be for clear material planning reasons (members have access to this list at any Environment Committee meeting). Comments and concerns can be included in any response but carry no or less weight than a material planning reason.

6. Background to and purpose of the briefing report. On 3 December 2018 the parish council received a briefing from the developer which was attended by many residents and the report will cover the main concerns raised.

7. The purpose of the briefing report is to supply members and residents with an overview on specific issues relating to and identified in the planning application documents. Initial impressions gained from the 3 December meeting were:

- a) The need for more primary schools and SEN schools was not challenged.
- b) The need for more SEN places to serve the immediate area (Grove Green, Weaving, Bearsted) was not challenged
- c) The need for more primary school places to serve Grove Green and Weaving was not accepted as proven by many people attending the meeting.
- d) The design, look and schooling facilities, including the outdoor student areas, was not challenged and most people present seemed to consider that it was a good design.

8. The main issues of contention were

- e) Traffic. Additional car movements and congestion.
- f) The proposed entrance location on Bearsted Road.
- g) On and off site parking. Insufficient on-site car parking being provided which will result in dangerous and disruptive parking elsewhere.
- h) The walking and cycling statistics used to justify the sustainability of the school were widely optimistic and misleading
- i) Road and student safety.
- j) Development of a designated Local Nature Reserve.

9. Clerk’s note. In view of the grave concerns raised at the presentation meeting and from correspondence sent to the Clerk this briefing report will primarily deal with the information contained in the submitted DRAFT

TRAVEL PLAN document and the accompanying Proposed Off-Site Works plans (12539-H-05 and 125369-H-06). Where possible the relevant section of any document has been highlighted to support any statement or conclusion drawn by the Clerk.

The following comments are based on the Clerk's understanding of the documents and local conditions.

DRAFT TRAVEL PLAN (DTP)

- **10. Child and pedestrian safety. Current and the proposed improvements to the local footway and footpath infrastructure cannot support safe foot travel to the site.**
 - 11. Footways are less than the modern 2m width that is now preferred. Even with suggested improvements there are lengths of footways that are less than 1.8m. No 'improved' footways are wider than 1.8m and in at least one circumstance a footway (to the east of the development site) goes from 1.8m to 1.3m some 45 m before a crossing point (Plan 125369-H-06) (DTP 2.2.1). 1.8m will just about accommodate a double buggy but 1.3m will not and such a narrow width will potentially cause issues for two way pedestrian traffic.
 - 12. There is a missing link of footway (approx. 140m), to the west of the site (Plan 12539-H-05), which means that there is no safe route to walk or cycle to the site from North Vinters, Penenden Heath or the bus stop near Nottcutts (the nearest public transport bus stop). There are no proposed improvements to create this missing link. Hockers Lane (south) has a large length with no footways or streetlighting.
 - 13. Footways are staggered and would require, if approaching from the east, between one to three road crossings at uncontrolled crossing points (DTP 2.2.1), two existing and one being introduced. The volume and speed of the traffic makes this a dangerous proposition.
 - 14. Proposed widening of footway (1.3m to 1.8m) Gidds Pond Cottages. The proposal to move parking from outside Gidds Pond Cottages to allow the widening of the footway is vague and currently no design has been submitted. Many of the cottage owners have no option but to keep their refuse and recycling bins on the footway as there is no access to any other storage area.
 - 15. There is a proposed footpath across Weaving Heath (Plan 12539-H-05) but this would encourage parents/carers to park their vehicles at Shepherds Gate Drive, which is unsuitable for additional parking, see Road Safety below.
 - 16. Problems already exist due to the poor pedestrian infrastructure and the predicted 59.3% walk to school will introduce significant additional footfall on an inadequate existing footway system.

Also see statements in Road Safety and Sustainability

- **17. Road Safety. The proposed Bearsted Road entrance, even with the suggested improvements, will add an area of traffic conflict due to the introduction of a busy access and exgress onto an already busy road. It is considered that dangerous road conditions will be introduced to the detriment of pedestrians and existing road users.**
 - 18. Proposed crossing point to east of school site. The footway width reduces from 1.8m to 1.3m for a length of 45m until it stops (plan 125369-H-06) it is not possible to widen or extend this footway).
It appears that this crossing point is either in or close to an unlit stretch of road. This pinch point is not only to accommodate pedestrian crossing but also to act as a traffic calming measure. Traffic travelling west will be given priority however the pedestrians trying to cross will be bought into

- conflict with vehicles traveling eastbound trying to sneak through before being stopped by a line of westbound traffic.
- 19. Unless there are active speed cameras introduced and a reduction to 20mph, not the proposed 30mph, the speed and volume of traffic will probably make it physically impossible for pedestrians/children to safely cross the road east of the site.
 - 20. The alternating footway configuration and their positioning on the brow of the hill and bends is a major safety issue for pedestrians and drivers.
 - 21 The proposed site entrance on Bearsted Road will create highway safety issues that it may not be possible to address in the future if this development goes ahead. Traffic turning right onto the site will face problems, due to vehicles turning left or travelling eastbound, which will result in; congestion developing towards Bearsted Village; additional pollution from vehicle omissions; people desperate to access the site to try to get to one of the few parking spaces making unsafe decisions resulting in crashes and road rage incidences. Alternatively, vehicles will go past the entrance and use the roundabout to gain the advantage of a left hand turn onto the site resulting in higher traffic levels at the roundabout and also higher pollution. Drivers trying to exit the site will face and create similar problems.
 - 22. Shepherds Gate Drive, additional parking by people accessing the school site across Weaving Heath. This road is an internal road serving a residential area and due to its design totally unsuitable for heavy use. The design of the estate North of Grovewood Drive North is circuitous and narrow. The only access and egress is on Grovewood Drive North .
 - 23. Grovewood Drive North has the following traffic issues:
 - It is the main road to Grove Green Minor Shopping area (including a 24 hour Tesco store and petrol station);
 - Has no controlled crossing point;
 - Has poor junction sight lines due to a hill;
 - Has a junction with Provender Way which serves St John's Primary School primary school which is extremely busy during drop off and pick up times.
 - The potential introduction of significant additional traffic at a school journey peak time will create additional pedestrian and vehicular road safety problems.
 - 24. Current traffic levels cause problems at the Maidstone Studio roundabout and the 77 dwellings currently being build just off this roundabout will only add to the current problems. Any additional traffic generated by the potential parking on Shepherds Gate Drive will add to the congestion.

See statements in Parking.

- **Parking.**

- 25. The on-site parking provision is totally inadequate for the number of vehicles that will attempt to use the site. It is highly likely that the proposed parking will just about accommodate the staff for the two schools leaving few spaces for parents. The planning documents and statistics seem to indicate that as few as 35 car parking spaces may actually be available for parents.
- 26. With the information provided within the planning application (DTP 3.2 and Table 3-1 and 3-2). It may be possible to 'guesstimate' parking need. Using the widely optimistic statistic of 59.3% students walking to school and factoring a 30% reduction due to sibling intake;
 - 420 (students) minus 59.3% (walking students) minus 30% (siblings)
 - equals 120 potential spaces being needed for parents.

- 27. The value of a drop off and pick up zone is debateable. Whilst it will help in quickly delivering and collecting students the value lessens if there is any delays in doing so or if there is congestion entering or leaving the site.
Drop off and pick up zones may also encourage parents/carers to drive students to the site. Reception and Year 1 students must be handed over to their teachers/parent/carer at the classroom door and so cannot use the drop off or pick up zone. Parents/carers unable to find a free parking space will park in this zone.
 - 28. It has been suggested that due to the staggered start and finish times parents could park in the SEN minibus spaces but this is a senseless statement. In the afternoon it would
 - a) rely on minibuses not arriving early (trying to beat the traffic or coming on after an earlier job) or
 - b) there being no delay in a student leaving a class and a parent/carer moving swiftly off the site.
 Unfortunately parents/carers now see waiting at the 'school gates' as a social/catch up event. It is predicted that within a few months of the school opening these SEN reserved spaces would become unavailable for anything but mini buses.
 - 29. With limited availability of on-site parking parents will become involved in an 'arms race' arriving earlier and earlier to try to get a good parking spot. In some local primary schools parents/carers are arriving 45 to 60 minutes before the school ends. Insufficient parking, on-site congestion and the inability to leave the school site quickly for those who do get a car parking space will result in on-street car parking being the only/preferred option.
 - 30. Car parking on Bearsted Road. Parked vehicles will narrow the road and many may also be bumped up onto footways. The current and proposed footways near the school are 1.3 to 1.8 metres wide and any vehicle encroachment on the footway will either block access for prams and cause major problems for pedestrians. Drivers trying to access their vehicle and in some cases put children into safety seats may well be opening doors into active traffic lanes or blocking footways.
 - 31. Car parking on Hockers Lane and Weaving Street. Any vehicles parked in these roads will effectively block them.
 - 32. Car Parking Shepherds Gate Drive and neighbouring closes (also see Road Safety). This will have a severe and detrimental impact on residents.
 - 33. School events. What happens at major events held at the school/s; Christmas Carol Concerts, Christmas and Summer Fairs, Sports Days and open days? Vehicular use will increase as grandparents, families etc. attend.
- **34. Sustainability. It is considered that calculations on sustainable travel to the site are based on flawed sampling and methodology and the statistics produced to support sustainable travel to school are grossly overstated.**
 - 35. Statements that travel by foot (DTP 3.2)(59.3% students/15% staff) or cycle (0.5% students/2% staff) to and from this site is achievable is based on flawed methodology. Information was gathered from four schools that are wholly within residential areas, with good infrastructure, from which their students are drawn. The proposed site has none of these advantages and walking to the site from the north (Hockers Lane), east (from Bearsted Village, Bearsted Park and Weaving Street) and west (North Vinters Park, Penenden Heath and the nearest bus stop) requires walking in the highway due, in parts, to no footways being provided. It is considered that walking will not be an option unless a parent/carer is desperate. Walking from the south requires the introduction of an all-weather unlit surface across a waterlogged open space.

Unless KCC requires primary school children to be walked beside or on dangerous roads that have no or missing parts of footways then Draft Travel Plan Figure 2-3 Walking Isochrone and paragraph 2.2.9 cannot be accepted as sound evidence.

- 36. Cycling to school. Due to the student age group and narrowness of the footways it is highly probable that cycling will only be undertaken by adults. No regional or national cycle route goes anywhere near to this site and so cycle access will be along very busy (and in one area unlit) roads with extremely busy roundabouts to negotiate. Draft Travel Plan Figure 2-4 Local Cycles Routes and paragraph 2.2.11 are factual but not, in this case, relevant evidence of a good cycling network supporting sustainability.
- 37. Public Transport. Paragraph 2.3.1 The closest bus stop is identified as 650 m to the west but there is no continuous footway to reach it. So, in this case not relevant evidence of a good public transport system supporting sustainability.

- **Other**

- 38. Pollution. This site is within an Air Quality Management Area with omissions exceeding recommended parameters. (Air Quality Assessment 4.3 and Table 2) Congested traffic around the school site and on the road outside will add to the omissions problem and children being at a level closer to car exhausts will be the primary sufferers.
- 39. Local Road Network. Pinch point at Gidds Pond Cottages (DTP 2.4.2). The '*platoon like traffic movement*' described will be moved, due to problems of turning right into and out of the site, to the proposed school entrance. Vehicles trying to avoid this will use the roundabout to gain a left hand entry advantage adding to the congestion referred to in the statement.
Any traffic issues on the motorways, A249 and A20 has an immediate knock on effect in the area resulting in congestion back to Bearsted Village and also on New Cut Road, the New Cut Road/A20 Ashford Road junction and in Grove Green itself. Congestion will also be experienced at Penenden Heath and North Vinters.
- 40. Upgrades to the Local Highway Network. Funding has not been fully received for this project and work planned falls short of improving the New Cut/A20 Ashford Road junction. Until the work is guaranteed the value of these improvements should be treated with some caution.
- 41. SEN School. Whilst the Draft Travel Plan is mainly aimed at the Primary School there are some issues that must be considered with regards to the SEN School.
38.5% of pupils are likely to be brought to the site by taxi that equates to roughly 57 taxis along with 16 cars and numerous minibuses (DTP Table 3-2). The concerns regarding parking and access and management of the site are dismissed with the 'staggered start and finish times' response. The success of this type of site management relies on no taxis, cars or minibuses turning up early to either drop off or pick up, it is envisaged that there will be a particular problem with 'overlapping' from both schools at the end of the school day.
- 42. Current footways are poorly managed and regularly narrowed by encroaching vegetation. Leaf fall in the tree lined areas also make them slippery and puddle splash from potholes is also a problem.
- 43. Road Safety Audit it is not clear whether KCC has yet requested one.
- 44. Draft Travel Plan. There is no comeback on any development if a draft travel plan doesn't work, it is therefore vitally important that the statistics and assumptions contained in this document are robustly challenged and investigated. With all due respect every school in the immediate area has parking problems but in the case of this location off-site parking cannot be accommodated without a severe impact on the safety of other road users, pedestrians cyclists and residents.

45. Alternative Entrance Location and Kent Medical Campus (KMC) site

46. The issue of access being from KMC, to the north of the Cygnet facility, has been the subject of many comments. This may not deal with the issues/concerns regarding additional traffic movements and added congestion in the area but it will likely reduce the dangerous highway conditions that it is felt would be introduced if the entrance was on Bearsted Road.

47. To ensure no off-site parking would occur on Bearsted Road the proposed pedestrian entrance would also have to be moved, as any form of an entrance will attract parents/carers to park there. Removal of any form of entrance on Bearsted Road would, however, significantly increase the walking distance to the schools from the north, east and south and would require pedestrians, unless they take a longer route through Grove Green, to walk on a section of public highway with no footway.

48. The landowner refuses to allow access from KMC as it would cut across a site allocated for development (Planning Statement 3.3.4).

49. Currently all internal roads on KMC have yellow lines.

50. There is no bus service into KMC although this is an aspiration of the managers of KMC.