

Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 12 October 2015 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 pm.

Councillors present: Mrs Wendy Hinder (Chairman), Mr P Dengate, Mrs P Brooks, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr B Hinder, Mr M Hinchliffe, Mr D Hollands, Mrs M Waller together with the Clerk and a member of public.

The meeting commenced with a minute's silence to remember Cllr Alan Springate who had recently passed away. The Chairman asked that it be minuted that he was a valued colleague and his contributions to the Committee would be solely missed.

1 Apologies and absences

None required as all members were present.

2 Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying

Cllr Dengate declared he was predetermined on item 6.1. All councillors declared that they had been lobbied on item 6.1. Cllr Hollands notified members that he was the Chairman of the Parochial Church Council (item 7.1).

3 Minutes of the Meetings of 14 September 2015

The minutes were **agreed** and **signed** as a correct record.

Item 7.2 was taken at this point to allow the member of the public to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.33pm to allow the meeting to be addressed about the request for speed limit and/or speed bumps in Weavering Street. The meeting reconvened at 7.38 pm.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Minute 2789/4.2 Bike barrier at Fitzwilliam Rd/Camomile Drive. A report from KCC H.W&T is awaited, the report will indicate the cost of purchasing and erecting a barrier. County Councillor Carter has been approached about contributing towards the cost. **Noted.**

4.2 Minute 2789/4.3 Advertising boards at Roundwood roundabout. These were reported to MBC Planning Department and a response is awaited. **Noted.**

4.3 Minute 2791/7.2 HGV parking on roads. The issue will be a motion for debate at the KALC AGM on 21 November 2015. **Noted.**

4.4 Any other matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda. None

5 Planning Applications for Consideration

15/507623/FULL Application for first floor side extension at 15 Brownelow Copse Walderslade. *Do not wish to object.*

15/506071/LBC Listed Building Consent for alteration of side boundary wall involving removal of a short section to allow for vehicle access at Yew Trees House, The Street, Boxley. *Noted. No further comment to add to the original response.*

15/508064/TPO TPO application to 1no. Goat Willow, Hornbeam, Field Maple and 2no. Cherry – Coppice at 11 Sylvan Glade, Walderslade. *Do not wish to object. Defer to the views of the Landscape Officer.*

15/507520/OUT Outline application with all matters reserved for erection of 5 flexible commercial yard spaces, with each containing a building of up to 500sqm, yard spaces providing a mix of uses with associated access, parking and earthworks, retaining structures and landscaping works at Brett House, St Michael's Close, Aylesford.

Do not wish to object however there is concern over the impact on the adjacent green area. Members would like to see trees incorporated into the proposed landscaping.

15/508053/FULL Proposed infill of external handover area to form internal showroom space with new cladding/redecoration to existing facades at Performance House, Forstal Road, Aylesford. *Do not wish to object*

15/508085/FULL Rear single storey extension with insertion of velux windows at 12 Saddlers Close, Weaving. *Do not wish to object*

6 **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions**

6.1 Lordswood Urban Extension Planning Inquiry 13th – 16th October. **Noted** the parish council will be attending on all days.

6.2 14/503722/TPO TPO No. 1 of 1969: An application for consent to fell 1 no. Sweet Chestnut tree. APPEAL: Dismissed 18 Goldstone Walk. **Noted** appeal dismissed

7 **Highways and Byways**

7.1 Parking at Boxley Village Green. After consideration members' decided **no further action until the Church had progressed its project.**

7.2 Weaving Street Speed Reduction. The Clerk's report on the situation and the various options that the parish council could consider funding was **received** and **noted**. KCC Highways response that no action would be taken as there was no history of personal injury crashes in this area was **received** and **noted**. Lengthy discussion took place on the issue of cars speeding along the road and the dangers this created in the area where there was no footway. It was recognised that the historic design of the road could not be changed and it was felt that speed bumps and rumble strips would not work. After consideration members' decided:

- A request will be made to the Estates Committee for it to;
 - Review the barrier design at the Weaving Street entrance to Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard.
 - Display caution busy road signs.
 - Cut back vegetation to increase the vision splay.

Action clerk.

- Residents would be asked, via the newsletter, to report to KCC signs overgrown by vegetation, potholes etc. The resident present was asked to report the worn out road advice of SLOW.
- KCC would be approached to review the signage currently present to see if the road needed additional signs and to request road roundels showing the speed limit are installed. **Action Clerk.**
- Clerk was asked to investigate whether the barriers at the two PRow that had entrances on Weaving Street were sufficient. **Action Clerk.**

7.3 Redundant utility boxes on verges. **Noted.** KCC is investigating the issue to see if it can put pressure on BT to remove the redundant box. **Noted.**

7.4 Experimental Traffic Order, Sandling Road, Chatham. **Ratified** the Clerk's decision, after checking with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, to write a letter supporting the request to make this order permanent. Cllrs Wendy and Bob Hinder will attend the meeting. KCC Highways is looking for a way to improve the current design of the bollards to allow some parking but still excluding HGV's. Funding will be applied for in the next financial year to improve the footway and include a cycle path and as this is a registered cycle route it is likely to attract the necessary funding. The white directional arrow in the road is being repainted black and if the temporary road traffic order is made permanent the arrow will be burnt off. **Noted.**

7.5 Installation of hard standing/apron at Boxley Road noticeboard. **Noted** the explanation on the issue regarding the cost for KCC to investigate the site and decide whether permission is given. The parish office was asked to proceed but also to write to KALC to request that this is debated at the AGM. **Action Clerk.**

8 **Volunteer Groups**

- 8.1 Walderslade Woodlands Group. Cllr Davies gave an update on a recent task day and informed the meeting that the group were working on designating the woods into zones to make it easier to find your way. The group was also considering a tribute to Cllr Springate.
- 8.2 Friends of Boxley Warren. Cllr Bob Hinder informed members that the next work day was planned for 1st November and as there were still concerns about the security afforded by the new entrance design the group would be working away from Pilgrims Way. KWT and the parish council is going to be approached for funding for some of the work.

9 **Policy and Procedures Review**

None scheduled.

10 **Maidstone Local Plan**

- 10.1 **Received** and **noted** the MBC explanation on why the parish council's request for a change to the current Walderslade/Lordswood urban boundary issue was not possible.
- 10.2 MBC Public Consultation. **Received** and **noted** the Clerk's briefing note. After discussion the response was **agreed**.

Policy SP5 - amendments relating to landscape and landscapes of local value.

The countryside.

Boxley Parish Council considers that Policy SP5 Countryside paragraph 6 dealing with Landscapes of Local Value should include:

Country side around Lidsing.

This is a substantial tract of rolling countryside which is adjacent to the North of the Kent Downs AONB scarp. This area prevents the coalescence of the Medway Towns and Lordswood/Walderslade area and has sweeping long distance views, for instance to the Thames Valley and skylines. The area has scattered settlements, small woods and stands of trees which are characteristic of Kentish rural countryside and which is extremely sensitive to change.

It is considered that this area meets parts i, ii, iii, v, vii of the criteria for LLVs. The recent objection from the community relating to the Lordswood Urban Extension planning application indicates that there would be community support for a LLV thus ensuring part vi would be met.

Beechen Bank.

A prominent area of wooded landscape set on a steep sided slope which is the only long distance view of the five wooded valley's that form Walderslade (meaning wooded valley). The public view and skyline is a dominant feature in the area and as Ancient Woodland is a finite resource it is highly sensitive to any change. Beechen Bank forms part of a band of original Ancient Woodland running from Wouldham in the west to Thurnham and beyond in the east. The Ancient Woodland preserves evidence of thousands of years of human activity in the countryside.

It is considered that this area meets parts i, ii, iii, v, vii of the criteria for LLVs.

Walderslade Woodlands.

Forty hectares of Ancient Woodland that runs adjacent to the M2, Walderslade Woods road (A2045) and Boxley Road. The woodlands create a visual amenity and shields the large Walderslade Woods development from the adjacent roads, including the M2, providing a dense green backdrop.

The woods dominate the setting of the area and as Ancient Woodland is a finite resource it is highly sensitive to any change. It is an ecologically diverse area with Kent Local Wildlife Status and forms part of a band of original Ancient Woodland running from Wouldham in the west to Thurnham and beyond in the east. Ancient Woodland preserves evidence of thousands of years of human activity in the countryside including in this case a mediaeval boundary bank and ditch. The parish council, having received community support, has taken an

active role in ensuring the woodlands are enhanced including the successful submission of the area as a Village Green.

It is considered that this area meets parts i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii of the criteria for LLVs.

Cowbeck and Reeds Croft Woods, Lordswood.

A prominent area of Ancient Woodland that is part of the band of original Ancient Woodland running from Wouldham in the west to Thurnham and beyond in the east. When viewed from the Capstone and Bredhurst area and the M2 it creates a dominant dense green background hiding the urban development at Lordswood and beyond. It is part of the green wedge separating the Medway Towns and Lordswood and Princes Park from coalescing. It is ecologically significant as it is home to dormice and bats, contains ancient and veteran trees and the indicator species which identify it as Ancient Woodland.

It is considered that this area meets parts i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii of the criteria for LLVs. The recent objection from the community relating to the Lordswood Urban Extension planning application indicates that there would be community support for a LLV thus ensuring part vi would be met.

Cuckoo Woods and surrounding area, Sandling (parts of the area have SSSI status).

A prominent area of wooded landscape that is viewed from the scarp and large areas of the AONB. With its diverse habitats and landscape features it is sensitive to change which will also adversely impact on the setting of the AONB. The Ancient Woodland preserves evidence of thousands of years of human activity in the countryside and is a finite resource that is highly sensitive and irreplaceable. It is considered that the value of this area, as viewed from the AONB and M20, and the role it plays in softening the impact of the urban edge of Maidstone is sufficient to require the LLV status

Proposed new housing site allocations

Boxley Parish Council would like to make a general statement on the issue of housing and infrastructure. The draft proposed new housing site allocations state *Community Infrastructure. Appropriate contributions towards community infrastructure will be provided where proven necessary*. MBC has yet to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy or the Integrated Transport Strategy and it is vital that these happen before the Local Plan is finally approved and planning applications start to be submitted for the many sites.

Housing site allocations proposed for deletion

No comment.

Housing site allocation proposed for amendment

The draft policy state *Community Infrastructure. Appropriate contributions towards community infrastructure will be provided where proven necessary*. MBC has yet to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy or the Integrated Transport Strategy and it is vital that these happen before the Local Plan is finally approved and planning applications start to be submitted for the site.

Whilst it is recognised that there is a need for housing it is considered that the Leeds/Langley bypass needs to be put in place before more housing development takes place. There is particular concern about the impact on traffic movements along New Cut Road and Bearsted Street. The Grove Green residential area only has access/egress onto New Cut Road and with planned development (over 70 dwellings at the Maidstone Studio site) there are currently periods of significant congestion which can only worsen. Additional development at the Sutton Road site will increase traffic movements through the Grove Green area to access the M20 and whilst this policy highlights the highway improvements needed immediately around the site it does not deal with the knock on effect on the infrastructure close to the M20. The Parish Council asks that MBC notes this concern and ensures that the issues raised are taken up in the draft Integrated Transport Strategy.

Proposed new employment site allocation

The aesthetic impact of this site on the surrounding area is unacceptable. There will also be a detrimental environmental impact due to increased traffic especially if there are traffic issues on the M20 or if Operation Stack is activated

Proposed new Gypsy and Traveller site allocations.

No comment.

Policy DM11 - Open space and recreation

Boxley Parish Council wishes to see the inclusion of a statement concerning where any financial contribution towards off-site provision is spent. Any such contribution should be used to improve/upgrade the local facilities rather than any further afield.

Nursing and care homes

No comment.

Park and Ride site allocations proposed for deletion Sittingbourne Road

It is considered that there needs to be a replacement Park & Ride site in this locality.

11 Kent County Council Consultations

11.1 Street lighting. Members' **agreed** the response which supported the turning off of street lights between 12 midnight and 5.30 am however they would only wish to see any of the suggested dimming taking place in areas that have been investigated and deemed appropriate. **Action: Clerk.**

As it was 9.30 pm the Chairman used her discretion to extend the meeting for another 30 minutes.

11.2 Highways and Transportation survey. After lengthy discussion covering: the poor service received from KCC in repairing lights and roads; lack of proactive repairs; and the lack of communication the response was **agreed. Action: Clerk.**

12. Matters for Information Received and noted.

12.1 Cobtree Manor Park Car Park. MBC has decided to charge £1.50 for any period between 7 am and 9.00 pm; with an option of a £40.00 annual season ticket.

12.2 Timber Tops, Lordswood Play area. MBC has identified it for refurbishment in 2016/17.

13. Draft Budget 2016/2017

The draft budget was **received**. Cllr Dengate suggested including some budget to clear vegetation and clean road signs. It was **agreed** to defer the item to the next meeting to allow further investigation. **Action: Clerk.**

14. Next Meeting

Next full environment meeting 9th November at Beechen Hall commencing at 7:30pm.

15 Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC

None submitted.

Meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman Date