

**Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 18 May 2015 at Beechen Hall,
Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 pm.**

Councillors present: Mrs W Hinder (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr P Dengate, Mr B Hinder, Mr M Hinchliffe, Mr A Springate, Mrs M Waller together with the Clerk (until 8.30pm), Assistant Clerk and four members of the public

1. Apologies and absences

Cllrs Dennis Hollands (Unwell).

2. Declaration of Interests, dispensations, predetermination or Lobbying

All councillors were lobbied on item 8.3 and Cllr Dengate was predetermined on planning application 15/503359/OUT.

3. Minutes of the Meetings of 13 & 20 April 2015

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

Items 8.3 and planning application 15/503359/OUT were taken at this point to enable the members of public to speak and for the Clerk to answer any questions councillors/public may have.

4. Matters Arising From Minutes

4.1 Minute 2744/8.4 Parking at St Michaels Close. The Assistant Clerk notified members' that KCC did not consider there was a need for a dropped kerb crossing outside MEP and whilst the parking issue was acknowledged the site visits had shown that the entrances to the two units were not blocked by vehicles and so KCC would be taking no further action.

4.2 Minute 2744/8.5 Dropped Kerb at Sandling Lane Response from KCC. **Noted** additional signs will be installed to alert motorists that a new pedestrian point is in operation.

4.3 Minute 2744/8.6 Westfield Sole Road Not suitable for HGV signs. **Noted** new signs are on order.

4.4 Minute 2744/8.7 Parking charges at the Cobtree Manor Park car park. **Noted** MBC's response that the proposed charging would be introduced.

4.5 Minute 2744/11 Installation of hard standing/apron at Boxley Road noticeboard. A cost for the work is being sourced. **Noted.**

4.6 Any other matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda. There were none.

There were three members of the public present for planning application 15/503359/OUT.

5. Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration

15/503359/OUT. Outline application with all matters reserved for residential development (approx 89 dwellings) plus open space, biomass plant and access road (plus emergency access) (Revised Scheme) at Land East Of Gleamingwood Drive Lordswood Kent.

Boxley Parish Council considers that there are no fundamental changes to the current application to warrant a change to MBC's previous decision on MA/13/1797 which was to refuse permission.

The Parish Council strongly objects to this application and would like see it refused and reported to the planning committee for the reasons set out below:

The development of this greenfield site is inherently unsustainable.

The Lordswood urban development has a clear strong outer perimeter at Gleamingwood Drive where urbanisation stops. Beyond this perimeter there is only sporadic development in the form of rural dwellings and hamlets. The introduction of 89 residential dwellings cannot be anything but unacceptable urbanisation in undeveloped countryside.

The impact of dominating 2 to 3 storey buildings into a countryside setting will have a harmful and detrimental impact on the countryside, ancient woodland and character of the area including the loss of important wildlife habitats. It is therefore considered that this development is contrary to NPPF section 11.109/112/113/116/118/120 conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Access to the site is through ancient woodland that has previously been protected from development as it is a buffer zone between the urbanisation of Lordswood and the countryside of a strategic gap which stops the urbanisations of Walderslade/Lordswood connecting to Hempstead Valley.

The proposed road layout will result in loss of Ancient Woodland and the subdividing of the area into compartments which will be detrimental to wildlife. The introduction and impact of human and pet, especially cat, activity in the woodlands will have a harmful and eroding impact on the wildlife and wildlife habitats including those of the Dormouse population. The area being developed has a thriving bat population and so development will have an adverse impact on this protected species. There is currently some human intrusion in the woodland margin areas fronting Gleamingwood Drive and Westfield Sole Road and this would significantly increase with the proposed development.

The site is in the setting of the North Downs AONB and it is considered that any development is contrary to NPPF section 11.115 "Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty".

The introduction of additional light pollution and noise pollution will have an unacceptable and urbanising impact on the local countryside.

The government's interactive mapping website (www.magic.gov.uk) shows the proposed site for development is replanted ancient woodland and not a general plantation as indicated in the application's accompanying reports. It is considered that the proposed development will therefore be contrary to NPPF Section 11.118 "Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland and the loss of aged veteran trees found outside ancient woodland". Attention is drawn to the Natural England Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland (SAAW 2012). The introduction of the access/egress highway infrastructure across ancient woodland is also contrary to section 11.118.

The applicant's inclusion of a biomass facility is considered in this case unsustainable and over optimistic for the following reasons:

- At its most optimistic figure it will initially serve only 11% of homes at the site. Whilst there is an expressed wish to increase this facility unless the infrastructure to supply heat is supplied at the development stage it is unlikely to happen.
- The fuel for the biomass facility will come from the replanted ancient woodland area and from another close by ancient woodland site. Whilst the parish council is not averse to seeing woodlands managed as a 'cash crop' it questions the practicality of running such a business immediately adjacent to residential dwellings.
- Any expansion of the biomass energy supply to the remainder of the development will require fuel from other sources and the supporting documentation omits any mention of how the biomass facility will be run in the future and whether it will be set up as a separate business etc. There is

also no information on, or any forecast of, the increased heavy vehicle traffic that will be required to feed the plant.

Residents living in the northern part of the site would be faced with:

- A 370m walk to access the green open area;
- A 750m walk to leave the actual development.

Pedestrian access to the local facilities, including schools and health centre will require from:

- The north residential area a 1.75km – 2Km walk or
- from the main development area a 1.4 – 1.65 km walk.

The parish council objects to the misleading information presented in the Transport Assessment which calculates the distance to the local facilities from the site entrance and not the residential areas. It is therefore highly likely that residents will rely on motorcars to access local services making the development unsustainable.

There is clear local evidence that residents do not like to walk through wooded areas, even adjacent to roads, the nearby Walderslade Woods development is a residential development in a wooded area and reliance on cars is much higher than in the adjacent non-wooded areas.

NPPF Section 6 delivering a wide choice of quality homes sets certain standards for this type of greenfield development. It is considered that this application fails to meet these standards. Specifically section 49 sustainable development: 50 sustainable inclusive and mixed communities; 53 development would cause harm to local area; 55 sustainable development in rural areas *“where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”*.

The Transport Assessment Statement regularly quotes the Medway Plan Policy T2. The actual road network that residents would use to access the motorway network is within Maidstone and KCC. It is considered that insufficient consideration/research has been undertaken on:

- The impact on Walderslade Woods Road (A2045), the M2 feeder roads and the heavily used narrow, winding Westfield Sole Road.
- The ability of the junction of Gleamingwood Drive and Lordswood Lane to cope with the additional usage.

Although there has been a minor adjustment to the location of the entrance it is considered that the proposed entrance is still unacceptable. Gleamingwood Drive is poorly designed with inadequate vision splays, on-street car parking and multiple junctions on a long bend. Due to its poor design any additional traffic introduced into this system will have an adverse impact on the safety of current users. A shared pedestrian/cycling route exists in Medway. The MBC section of Gleamingwood Drive does not have a cycle path and there are no, as stated in supporting documents, *“quieter cycle routes linking the site to Capstone Farm Country Park & ski centre or Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre”*.

This application will contravene ENV35 of the MBC borough wide local plan and BNE34 of the Medway plan as development would have an adverse and harmful impact on the character of the area and the loss of a local amenity. It is considered that the economic and social benefits of this application will not outweigh the overwhelming priority to conserve the area's landscape, which has already seen excessive development and a massive loss of wildlife.

The draft Section 106 legal document is worthless. The application makes minor reference to the supply of affordable housing but the size and scale of the suggested residential dwellings bear no relationship to affordable housing. The draft section 106 document has two options which is the supply of affordable housing or, when the developer demonstrates that this would not be viable none will be supplied. The omission of smaller units from the submitted plans speaks volumes.

The application indicates that if the development is allowed then this would safeguard and allow more management of the surrounding Ancient Woodlands and yet the Section 106 statement makes no reference to this and without a strong legal document safeguarding funds for future maintenance the statements concerning this are invalid.

It is considered that the planning application fails to meet the three dimensions, as identified in NPPF Achieving sustainable development, namely

- **Economic role** – the land in question is not the right type nor is it in the right place.
- **Social role** – there is an in-balance (towards larger houses) in the mixture of properties put forward with an inadequate and already overloaded supporting local service infrastructure.
- **Environmental role** - The development will destroy biodiversity due to the loss of ancient woodland and the development of a greenfield site.

The meeting was opened to allow the members of public speak and all three supported and **agreed** with the Committee's views. At 8.25pm the Clerk and the members of the public left the meeting.

CLlr Dengate requested that KCC H, W & T reconsider their decision on the transport survey based on the lapsed time between applications. **Action office letter to KCC.**

Members requested a check with MBC on the TPO status of this ancient woodland.
Action Office.

15/502789/FULL – Change of use from a dwelling house (C3) to a residential care home (C2) at 8 Tollgate Way, Sandling, ME14 3DF.
WITHDRAWN

15/502812/ENVSCR – EIA Screening Opinion: Change of use from a dwelling house (C3) to a residential care home (C2) at 8 Tollgate Way, Sandling, ME14 3DF.
WITHDRAWN

15/503218/TPO – TPO application to fell 1 Silver Birch at 15 Brownelow Copse, Walderslade ME5 9JQ.
Defer to the views of the Landscape Officer.

15/503387/ADV. Advertisement Consent for 5 non-illuminated sponsorship sign at roundabout at Westfield Sole Road Walderslade. *Wish to object for the reasons set out below:*

- Roundwood roundabout is currently maintained and paid for by Boxley Parish Council and has been for several years following a grant from County Cllr Paul Carter and funds from Borough Councillor Wendy Hinder's devolved budget to improve the grassed area of this roundabout.
- The shrub beds have been planted with various flowering shrubs and plants and in Spring the middle bed is planted with daffodils, any signage will block the view of these and will be detrimental to the improved area.
- This is a busy roundabout and members feel these signs would be a distraction to motorists.

If the officer is minded to approve members have asked for the following caveats to be implemented:

- If the signs are damaged in any way they are to be removed and replaced within 14 days.
- KCC takes on the responsibility of maintaining and funding the roundabout.

15/503458/TPO. TPO application to crown reduce 1 Oak tree by 1-1.5m, remove two lowest limbs of 1 Hornbeam, crown reduction of 1 Pear tree by 3-4ft at 8 Travertine Road Boxley Kent ME5 9LQ.
Defer to the views of the Landscape Officer.

MC/15/0550 – Revised drawings for the construction of a 4 bedrooomed detached dwelling with associated detached carport/log store at Highview Farm, Lordswood Lane, ME5 8JP. *Noted*

15/503655/FULL. Variation of Condition (12) (BREEM) of Planning Permission MA/14/503218/FULL (Erection of depot/workshop building (Class B2) with ancillary offices and sales; access, parking, vehicle washing facilities and landscaping; and including rooftop installation of photovoltaic panels.) - to allow submission of final 'Very Good' certificate within 6 months of first occupation at Brooklyn Yard Chatham Road Sandling Kent ME14 3AW.
Do not wish to object.

15/503636/TPO. TPO Application to fell 1 Sweet chestnut at 6 Micawber Close, Walderslade ME5 9JZ. *Defer to the views of the Landscape Officer.*

15/503486. Removal of current shed and construction of open fronted storage unit 30m x 9m x 4.5m high. Storage of Banger racing cars at Broad View Farm, Blind Lane Lidsing.
As there was insufficient information supplied to make an informed decision, members asked to defer the decision to allow the office to talk to the planning officer and a decision will be made out of meeting after consulting the committee.

6. Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions

None.

7. Volunteer Groups

7.1 **Received** and **noted** a report from Rob Burrows Chairman of WWG.

7.2 **Received** and **noted** a report from Friends of Boxley Warren Chairman, Bob Hinder. He also added the groups thanks to the office staff for all their hard work in preparing the stands during Election Day. He also passed on his thanks in advance for their help with the stands for the Bredhurst Wood Fayre which will be held on the weekend of 30 – 31 May, 2015 where the group has been invited to attend. Cllr Bob Hinder also confirmed that Sunday 24 May task day has been cancelled.

8. Highways and Byways

8.1 HGV parking on residential roads. The meeting received Cllr Ivor Davies's report on the Area Meeting of KALC. The parish council's request for support was well received by members attending and Maidstone KALC would be offering support. Cllr Martin Hinchliffe suggested that the Parish Council waits to see what happens with Kent KALC as they appear to be taking up the issues on a county wide basis and review any updates available. Cllr Dengate requested the opportunity for the Parish Council to discuss this issue with the new MP Helen Whatley, Cllr Ivor Davies explained that he had already invited her to address the Parish Council. **Agreed** if nothing heard then a new invitation would be sent to the MP after the September recess. **Action: office.**

Item to be returned to the agenda in September unless information is available before this date. **Action: office.**

8.1.2 Petition. **Noted** a draft is with Cllrs Martin Hinchliffe, Paul Dengate and Ivor Davies for approval.

8.1.3 Report of the KALC meeting with KCCH, W & T Interim Director. **Received** and **noted.**

8.2 Litter picking. Members **received** and **noted** the Clerk’s report that MBC Street Cleansing team is restructuring to provide cover over a 7 day period instead of 5 with a resulting increase of cleansing in the rural areas. Members agreed to monitor this new system and bring back to the agenda if there are any issues.
Action: Cllrs and office.

8.3 Bike barrier at footpath linking Fitzwilliam Road and Camomile Drive. After consideration of the situation and the report from the Maidstone CSU Cllr Dengate proposed and members **agreed** in principle to a contribution, dependent on costs, towards the purchase and installation of a barrier. **Action Clerk to investigate costs, other sources of funding and circulate to members.**

8.4 Repair work Boxley Road (Walderslade) **Noted.**

9 Policy and procedures review

Laminated planning advice sheets – **Noted** still fit for purpose.

10. Matters for Information

10.1 Parish Guide to Drainage 2015 **noted** electronic version available on request

11. Next Meeting

Next full environment meeting 8 June 2015 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.
Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 29 May 2015.

Meeting closed at 9.07pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman Date