

**Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 13 February 2017 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close commencing at 7.30 pm.**

Councillors present: Mrs Wendy Hinder (Chairman), Ms L Clarke, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr P Dengate, Mr Bob Hinder, Mr D Hollands (arrived with apologies at item 7.8) and Mr Radcliffe-Godfrey together with the Clerk.

- 1 **Apologies and absences**  
None as all members were present.
- 2 **Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying**  
None.
- 3 **Minutes of the Meetings of 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017.**  
The minutes were **agreed** and **signed** as a correct record.

As no members of the public were present the meeting was not adjourned.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

- 4.1 Minute 2947/4.1 Inconsiderate parking Provender Way, yellow lines. Awaiting response from County Councillor Carter. **Noted.**
- 4.2 Minute 2947/4.2 Grovewood Drive South yellow lines. Awaiting response from County Councillor Carter. **Noted.**
- 4.3 Minute 2947/4.3. Land to the rear of Tesco Grove Green. British Land have responded that they do not own the land to the rear of Tesco, Grove Green. The parish office will attempt to locate the owner. **Action: office.**
- 4.4 Minute 2947/4.4 Litter/flytipping signs. It appears that MBC did install the signs by the Impton Lane junctions however they may have been stolen so new ones are being purchased. **Agreed no further action.**
- 4.5 Minute 2947/4.5 Development Wildfell Close. The planning officer has requested information on drainage and it is not yet clear when this application will be submitted to the MBC Planning Committee. **Noted.**
- 4.6 Minute 2947/4.8. Grovewood Drive North Crossing facility. The resident has informed the office that she will soon be submitting the petition. **Noted.**
- 4.7 Minute 2947/4.9. Parking at Grovewood Drive North, Shepherd's Gate Drive etc. Awaiting response from County Councillor Carter. **Noted.**
- 4.8 Minute 2947/4.10 Grounds Maintenance, identification of potential contractor. Action is being taken to identify a list of contractors. **Noted. Action: Clerk.**
- 4.9 Minute 2949/13.1 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Local Plan. Briefing note will be included on the March 2017 agenda. **Noted.**
- 4.10 Any other matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda. None.

5. **Planning Applications for Consideration**

17/500117/FULL Extension to the existing factory. Unit 33 Adjacent Lordswood Industrial Estate. Gleaming Wood Drive Lordswood.

*Members strongly objected to the planning application and wish to see it refused and reported to the MBC Planning Committee.*

*Reasons for refusal.*

**Highway issues.**

*At a recent Planning Appeal concerning Gibraltar Farm (in Medway just north-east of the Maidstone boundary) it was identified that the Gleamingwood Drive/Lordswood Lane junction had reached capacity [details enclosed].*

*The Gibraltar Farm application, for 500 properties plus community infrastructure will, if allowed, add significantly to the traffic flows along Gleamingwood Drive to access Maidstone and the M2/M20. The Planning Inspector's decision is expected next month (March 2017). This would be in addition to the extra traffic generated by the Lordswood Urban Extension development of 84 properties plus bio-mass unit already approved (Maidstone planning application 13/1797). All these additional traffic*

movements along Gleamingwood Drive will further add to the problems of traffic congestion and pedestrian/cyclist safety at this dangerous and overloaded junction. Further west the complex junctions of the M2 with the A229/A2045 have exceeded their capacity and are unable to cope with any additional traffic generated by development in the Walderslade/Lordswood area, as confirmed in an e-mail of 20/1/17 from Toby Butler, Traffic & Network Solutions Asset Manager, Highways, Transportation & Waste. Kent County Council:

**"These junctions [M2 and A229] have greatly exceeded their design capacity and handle volumes of traffic for which they, and the surrounding road network, were never intended. There are no suitable options for improving traffic flows through the adjustment of signal timings; physical works on the highway network are required. Some options are being considered but these have significant cost implications and take time to develop and implement".**

Furthermore local rural roads are unsuitable for lorries and HGVs and inappropriate use by large vehicles is already causing safety issues for other drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

#### **Impact on the Ancient Woodland.**

40% of the trees on the site will be lost and with no plans yet submitted outlining the proposed replanting the impact on the screening properties of the current bank of trees is uncertain. What is clear is that the area designated for the replanting is smaller than the area being developed and the limited space that would be available to replant suggests an unacceptably insufficient screening of the site. The land taken for the proposed developed is Ancient Woodland - a finite resource that will be lost under hardstanding.

#### **On-site car parking.**

The planning application identifies an increase in car parking spaces by +12 for up to 40-60 additional staff. Whilst the parish council welcomes any increase in employment opportunities this amount of on-site car parking (34 in all) is totally inadequate. The extra car parking is at the detriment of the current lorry turning area which will be axed. Whilst the supporting document and plans state that there will be 'improved turning' this appears to only relate to cars and not lorries or HGVs.

#### **Impact on protected species e.g. dormice and bats.**

The loss of more land, especially Ancient Woodland, for foraging wildlife is unacceptable. The improvements to the site with the erection of bird and bat boxes and the introduction of a woodland management plan are welcomed but these should have been part of the existing estates management plan rather than as a sweetener to obtain development permission. In an Ancient Woodland, especially one that is in danger of becoming fragmented by development, any reduction in the size of the existing woodland compartments is unacceptable.

If the development is permitted then the proposed tree replanting should be substantial trees and not whips so as to ensure that the food resources for the protected species are not diminished whilst waiting for small trees to mature.

#### **Section 106 contribution.**

No mention is made of Section 106 funding to improve the local infrastructure yet there is an urgent need for improvements at the hazardous Lordswood Lane/Gleamingwood Drive junction. The parish council would like to apply for a Section 106 contribution towards highway improvements at the Gleamingwood Drive/Lordswood Lane junction.

#### **Pre-application consultation**

I should record that the Environment Committee was saddened that the developer chose not to speak to the parish council prior to submitting the application. While not mandatory such exchanges are, in our experience, invariably helpful to both parties and are to be encouraged.

17/500520/FULL Construction of a single storey side and rear extension at 26 Briar Fields Weaving. *Do not wish to object.*

17/500292/TPO PROPOSAL: TPO Application - Acer campestre (Field Maple) – fell. 83 Lombardy Drive Maidstone. *Do not wish to object defer to the views of the landscape officer.*

Proposed development Forge Lane, Boxley. Extraordinary meeting of the Environment Committee arranged at The European School of Osteopathy, Boxley Village 23 February 2017 to consider this application.

17/500156/FULL Variation of Condition 9 of 15/506330/FULL (Erection of 3 bed detached house) - to vary approved plans to raise ridge line 450mm. Land Adjoining 35 Timber Tops, Walderslade. *Do not wish to object. Members identified inconsistencies with some documents referring to a rise of 450mm and others 400mm.*

17/500388/FULL/ANJO Minor material amendment (variation of condition 2 drawing numbers) of planning permission 14/500290/FULL (Demolition of a number of disused temporary structures associated with Maidstone Studios and erection of 77 dwellings together with access, parking, garaging, landscaping and ancillary works on land to east of Maidstone Studios) - to introduce a 0.5 storey increase in height to 28 of the dwellings within the approved scheme. The Maidstone Studios Vinters Business Park New Cut Road Maidstone. The Clerk was asked to clarify which buildings would be affected and the purpose of the extra height. **Action: Clerk.**  
Decision to be taken out of meeting via an e-mail consultation.

## 6. **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions**

6.1 16/507776/OUT Willow Farm, Tyland Lane REFUSED. **Noted.**

6.2 Gibraltar Farm appeal. As at 01/02/2017 the Planning Inspector had still not decided on the decision. **Noted.**

6.3 16/506229 15 Greensands. The Chairman and Cllr Bob Hinder gave a report on their attendance at the MBC Planning Committee. The development was permitted as Borough Councillors could not identify a material planning reason for a refusal. The Chairman notified members that on the evening the Chairman of the MBC Planning Committee had thanked the parish council for attending and subsequently he had telephoned her to thank the parish council again.

## 7. **Highways and Byways**

7.1 Report on meeting with County Councillor Paul Carter. The Chairman's report on the visit to County Councillor Carter was **received and noted**. The parish council's report to County Councillor Carter outlining the highway issues relating to the parish was **received and noted**. The report had been sent to County Councillor Carter and a response was awaited. Members **agreed** it's release to the public.

7.2 Westfield Sole Road and Yelsted Lane. After discussion members **agreed** that the issue should be taken to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board and that the parish council should meet with the local farmers and the Highway Steward about the situation on Yelsted Lane. **Action: Clerk.** Members **agreed** that the highway issues report provided to County Councillor Carter should be forwarded to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board with a request that it is placed on the agenda for discussion.

7.3 Junction 3 M2. Members **received and noted** the correspondence with KCC that showed that the M2 and A229 junctions "*had greatly exceeded their design capacity*" and currently there was no funds or plans to make changes. Members requested that this information is included in any responses to Local Plans, planning applications, KCC Highways Planning Officers, Bredhurst Parish Council etc. **Action: Clerk and office.**

7.4 General Reserve for Highway Safety improvement projects. Members **approved**, with minor amendments, the Funding for KCC Highway Projects leaflet. It was

**agreed** that the leaflet would be published and residents invited to submit their ideas for funding with a deadline for responses set as 21 April 2017.

An item to be included on the next agenda to consider and prioritise the current known outstanding problems. **Action: Clerk and office.**

- 7.5 Parking on verges. Members' **received and noted** the KCC template letter that could be placed on cars parking on verges or footways. With minor amendments and two different procedures identified for one-off and persistent offenders the Clerk was instructed to issue the letter as she deemed fit. Cllr Dengate asked that a log of which cars received the letters is kept. **Action: Clerk.**
8. **Grounds Maintenance**  
Litter picking and maintenance. Members' **received and noted** the KCC template letter that could be sent to house or land owners asking them to cut back overhanging vegetation. It was **agreed** that parish councillors and residents would be asked to identify problem areas and the Clerk was instructed to issue the letter as she deemed fit. **Action: Clerk.**  
Members **received and noted** the Clerk's report on the meeting with the Community Payback Services and **agreed** the plan of action proposed to use the service. **Action: Clerk.**  
The Chairman notified the meeting that she and the office had received contact from a business man in the south ward about a verge that was just within the parish boundary. The Clerk was asked to respond that this might be a project that the CPS could take on. **Action: Clerk.**
9. **KCC Freight Action Plan consultation**  
Members **received and noted** the Clerk's briefing note. After discussion the responses were **agreed.** **Action: Clerk.**
10. **Medway Council Local Plan consultation.**  
Members **received and noted** the Clerk's briefing note. After discussion the responses were **agreed.** **Action: Clerk.**
11. **Policy and Procedures**  
11.1 Funding for KCC Highway Projects. This issue was dealt with at item 7.4.
12. **Members Reports**  
Cllr Bob Hinder gave a report on the recent Maidstone KALC meeting which he and Cllr Ivor Davies had attended. The issue of the lack of planning enforcement had been raised but this had not been included in the draft minutes. Cllr Bob Hinder would be contacting the secretary to request its inclusion. Boxley Parish Council's complaint about the lack of enforcement was echoed and supported by many of the attending representatives of other parish councils.  
The Chairman reported that she had raised concerns with MBC about dog waste being left at the old bin base in The Spinney. MBC would not replace the bin but would erect a sign directing residents to the bin located at the top of the steps. The Chairman felt that residents would not be willing to walk to this bin. It was **agreed** that the office would contact MBC to install a new bin or perhaps move the existing one from the top of the steps to the bottom as it would then be on the dog walkers route. **Action: office.**  
The Chairman reported that the MBC Enforcement Officer had been called to one of the green fingers on Boxley Road as work was being undertaken by the owner. He was requesting that the tipping on the site is stopped and that the site to was cleared of the rubbish. The Clerk had also attended and the two persons there, who owned adjoining land, had indicated that planning applications would soon be forthcoming. The Clerk invited the developers to take advantage of the Pre-Application policy of the Environment Committee and to visit a meeting before the applications were submitted. A fence was now being erected around the old KCC site adjacent to the M2 and it was hoped that this would stop the off-road vehicles using it.

13. **Volunteer Groups**

Cllr Ivor Davies reported that the WWG task day had been cancelled due to the snow. The Clerk reported that she had met, at the request of the Chairman of WWG, with representatives of Hadlow College. The college had offered to adapt the KWT Management Plan into work schedules. The information requested by the college was supplied. **Noted.**

Cllr Bob Hinder notified members that a meeting of the FoBW was scheduled for 14 February to set out the work plans for the year. **Noted.**

14. **Matters for Information**

14.1 Concrete bus stop poles. Notification that there was a schedule to replace these was **noted.**

14.2 TPO Cowbeck and Reeds Bank Woods. Members **received and noted** the MBC correspondence that stated that MBC was not proactive in protecting Ancient Woodland. Members **agreed** to take this issue to the Maidstone KALC meeting. **Action: office, Cllr Bob Hinder and Cllr Ivor Davies.**

14.3 Spring clean Campaign 3-5 March. Members were reminded that if they wish to organise a local event that equipment is available to borrow from the parish office. **Noted.**

14.4 2017/2018 budget seat for Timber Tops. The request from MBC that any seat at the play area match the current one there was **noted.** Cllr Dengate expressed disappointment that MBC would not accept a stainless-steel bench and was concerned that people would sit on the seat back and put muddy feet on the seat, the MBC preferred location was also a disappointment. After discussion Cllr Bob Hinder proposed that **a black Phoenix seat with armrests is purchased and installed by MBC. Agreed. Action: office.**

Members' noted that MBC would be undertaking maintenance work on the footpath from Badger Road to the play area.

As it was 9.30pm the Chairman used her delegated powers to extend the meeting by 30 minutes.

15. **New item. Removal of the supply of paper plans to parish councils**

Members **received and noted** the MBC committee report concerning the proposals. The Chairman reported that the Maidstone BC Committee Members had been unhappy with some of the options and had agreed that the committee, not officers, would make the final decision. The proposal would be going out to consultation with Maidstone KALC.

16. **Next Meeting**

Thurs 23 February commencing at 7.30 pm at ESO, Boxley Village to discuss the planning application at Forge Lane, Boxley.

Next full Environment Committee meeting 13 March 2017 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7:30pm.

17. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC**

None.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman ..... Date .....