

Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 12 July 2021 held by Teams due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllrs J Willmott – Chair, I Davies, L Clarke, P Huntingford, C Sheppard, V Davies and B Hinder together Mrs M Fooks, Assistant Clerk and A Brindle

1. **Apologies and absences**

Cllr H Monk - apologies accepted. Cllr W Salter - absent.

1a **Election of Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee**

As there were no forthcoming nominations it was **agreed** to defer this item to the next meeting on 9th August to give Councillors time to consider.

2. **Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying**

Cllr Brindle declared an interest in 21/503488/FULL as she is related to the neighbour on the south side of the property in this application.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 July 2021**

The minutes were agreed and would be signed when possible.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None.

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting.

Cllr Brindle addressed the committee with concerns for the proposed works on planning application 21/503488.

5. **Planning Applications for Consideration – Decision
21/503408/FULL 3 Greensands, Boxley, ME5 9DQ**

Erection of a single storey side/rear extension.

Boxley Parish Council has no material planning reason to object.

21/503603/SUB Walderslade Woods including Land off Wildfell Close, Kent

Submission of details to discharge condition 14 (Noise Levels Scheme) subject to 15/507909/FULL. **No comment.**

21/503604/SUB Walderslade Woods including Land off Wildfell Close, Kent

Submission of details to discharge condition 7 (surface and draining – parking space, garages and turning) condition 15 (sustainable surface water drainage scheme) and condition 16 (details of implementation, maintenance and management of the sustainable surface water drainage subject to 15/507909/FULL. **No comment.**

21/503461/SUB Walderslade Woods including Land off Wildfell Close, Kent

Submission of details to discharge condition 3 (source/manufacturer and samples – bricks, tiles and materials) condition 5 (storage and screening of refuse) condition 10 (arboricultural method statement) condition 18 (proposed physical paraphernalia – open site) condition 19 (energy efficiency) and condition 20 (boundary treatments) subject to 15/507909/FULL. **No comment.**

21/503606/SUB Walderslade Woods including Land off Wildfell Close, Kent

Submission of details to discharge condition 8 (landscape scheme) subject to 15/507909/FULL. **No comment.**

21/503605/SUB Walderslade Woods including Land off Wildfell Close, Kent

Submission of details to discharge condition 12 (reptile relocation and condition 13 (scheme for enhancement of biodiversity) subject to 15/507909/FULL. **No comment.**

21/502698/TPOA Alexandra Hospital Impton Lane Walderslade ME5 9PG

TPO application: G1 - to reduce this group of trees back to provide a 3m clearance of the building and crown raise over the footpath;

G2 - to the group of trees along the building to reduce these back to provide 3m clearance of the building , there is also one dead birch tree to be felled; T8 - fell dead tree; T11/12/13 - these ash trees are showing signs of die back - fell to ground level; T14 - on this oak tree there is evidence of decay from previous pruning so reduce back past pruning point where decay is evident; T16 - mature oak tree showing a large amount of dead in the crown over last few years which looks like oak decline , fell to ground level.

Boxley Parish Council defers to the view of the Landscape Officer.

21/503280/FULL Unit 17 Lordswood Industrial Estate, Revenge Road, ME5 8UD

Change of use from Class E (formerly B1c) (Light Industrial) to B8 (Storage and Distribution) and insertion of 12 high-level vent on the north-east and south-west elevations of existing Unit 17, and provision of tow collapsible security bollards and fire security door.

Boxley Parish Council has no material planning reason to object.

21/503586/FULL Abby View, Tyland Lane, Sandling, ME14 3BL

Erection of a single storey rear extension.

Boxley Parish Council has no material planning reason to object.

21/503555/FULL 20 Harvesters Way, Weaving, ME14 5SJ

Propose conversion of an existing garage to a habitable space.

Boxley Parish Council has no material planning reason to object.

21/503693/TPOA 12 MacGrory Drive, ME14 5GF

TPO application for a (T1) row of 7no Field Maple trees along rear boundary and the right hand tree on other side of fence. Reduce back lateral growth by approx. 1m to suitable growth points. Reduce the heights of the trees by up to 4m and to shape.

Boxley Parish Council defers to the view of the Landscape Officer.

21/503488/FULL 16 Wingrove Drive, Weaving, ME14 5SP

Erection of a single storey extension.

Boxley Parish Council has no material planning reason to object.

It does however have concerns at the loss of trees and because of the difference in height of garden land between this property and the properties to the side ie 32 and 35 Clarence Court, there will be a loss of privacy to those properties if the trees were removed.

MC/21/1520 Land At East Hill Chatham Kent

Outline planning application with some matters reserved (appearance, layout, scale and landscaping) for construction of up to 650 dwellings, primary school, supporting retail space of up to 150sqm with associated road link between North Dane Way and Pear Tree Lane and other road infrastructure, open space and landscaping Re-submission of MC/19/0765.

Boxley Parish Council object to this application for the following reasons:

This area is part of the vital Medway Gap green lung that separates the dense urban areas of Walderslade/Lordswood and Hempstead. Any large scale urban development within this zone would increase urban sprawl.

It should be noted that the applicant has also submitted plans for a 2,000 house development at Lidsing on Maidstone Borough Council's Call for Sites and for 450 houses (between Ham Lane and North Dane Way MC/21/1296). The total for all house developments in this vital green lung, being made by the applicant, is 3,100 which if all are granted would obliterate almost all of the countryside between two densely populated urban areas. For this reason it is imperative that this application is looked at in conjunction with these other applications so that an overall picture can be envisaged.

It would harm the character, function and appearance of the countryside, an Area of Local Landscape Importance and have a negative effect on Capstone Country Park, neighbouring properties, the local road network, and the rural footpath network and would result in the loss of valued open green space within this part of Medway. This is contrary to the following local and national policies:

S1 9 – Development Strategy.

This site is not allocated and is in the open countryside. This policy is designed to give long term protection from significant development in Capstone.

S2 – Strategic Principles

This is not the right location for this development and will reduce environmental quality in this area. Local schools are oversubscribed. Medway Hospital is struggling and local doctors' surgeries are already under severe pressure. Additional housing would put additional pressure on these and other already overstretched services.

BNE1 – General Principles for Built Development

The development fails to function appropriately in relation to the built and natural environment. The proposed scale and massing is not appropriate in relation to the character, appearance and functioning of the environment.

BNE2 – Amenity Protection

The proposal fails to secure suitable amenities for residential properties adjacent to the site.

BNE25 – Development in the Countryside

The development falls outside the urban boundary and is in the countryside. Medway's Local Plan states that it resists developments of this scale on principle.

BNE34 – Areas of Local Landscape Importance

The site is in Capstone Valley ALLI and will result in adverse landscape and visual effects that materially harm the landscape character and function of the area. There are no economic and social benefits to this development that outweigh the conservation of the area's landscape.

L9 - which commits to the protection and maintenance of Capstone Country Park.

L10 - which protects Public Rights of Way.

T1 - The local road network does not have the capacity for a development of this size.

Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework

This development will adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties. It will cause issues with noise pollution, air pollution, outlook, privacy, daylight, and increased traffic and will have a significant and negative impact on the residential amenity of properties adjacent to the site, particularly those living in Carlton Crescent and Capstone Road.

Paragraph 170 of NPPF – Planning Policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

This development is in direct contravention of these criteria. 15 species of bat have been recorded on the site and it contains 1 bat roost. Lighting from the development would have a very detrimental effect on their foraging. There is one active badger set, dormice, slowworms, and common lizards on the site all of which need to be protected. Development of this site will be in contravention of paragraph 170 of the NPPF in that it will lead to a net loss in biodiversity. In addition the proposed development will result in the loss of Chalk Grassland which is a Habitat of Principal Importance. This site contains notable plant species that should be protected and not built over.

Paragraph 175 requires wholly exceptional reasons for development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees).

Given that ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish it must be deemed an irreplaceable habitat. Boxley Parish Council does not consider that this application meets the 'wholly exceptional reasons' required and should be refused. The site is both adjacent to, and encompasses ancient woodland. There is no long term plan to manage either the proposed 15m buffer zone or the woodland to prevent deterioration.

The development is very close to Darland Banks nature reserve, adjacent to a woodland Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Luton Banks, and Chatham LWS. The increased footfall from an increased local human population would have a very negative effect on these sites all of which contain protected/notable species and habitats.

Boxley Parish Council objects on highways grounds, specifically the impact on the health and safety of other road users and the impact on the local highway infrastructure.

We object to any development which has the potential to increase traffic along Walderslade Woods (A2045) and the already overcapacity Junction 3 of the M2 (Blue Bell Hill).

We are concerned about any increase in North-South traffic, most of which will travel through Boxley Village. This is a conservation area with listed buildings in close proximity to the very narrow road.

No mention is made of the proposed route for HGV's during the construction phase of the development. All the roads leading to it are narrow country lanes.

21/503618/SUB Land at Former Park and Ride Eclipse Park, Sittingbourne Road.

Submission of details to discharge Condition 3 (sustainable surface water drainage scheme) subject to 20/506069/FULL. **No comment.**

21/503653/SUB Boarley Farm, Boarley Lane, Sandling.

Submission to discharge condition 4 (materials) and condition 4 (joinery details) of planning permissions 19/502279/FULL and 19/502280/LBC. **No comment.**

6. **Ratifications**

21/502854/FULL 28 Violet Close, Boxley, ME5 9ND

Erection of a single storey rear extension.

Boxley Parish Council have no material planning reasons to object to this application.

21/502969/FULL 11 Travertine Road, Boxley, ME5 9LQ

Removal of felt tiled flat roof to existing garage and erection of tiled pitched roof to existing garage.

Boxley Parish Council have no material planning reasons to object to this application.

21/502751/OUT Gibraltar Farm, Ham Lane, Hempstead, Gillingham, Boxley Road, Walderslade, Kent ME7 3JJ

Outline Application (with all matters reserved except access) for the erection of up to 450 market and affordable dwellings, nursery and supporting retail space up to 85sqm, with provision of main access to Ham Lane; estate roads, cycle and pedestrian routes; residential and community open space and landscaping; new junction for Lidsing Road/Hempstead Road and realignment and widening of Lidsing Road. Off site related highways works to Westfield Sole Road, Shawstead Road, Hempstead Road, Chapel Lane, Hempstead Valley Drive, Hoath Way roundabout, Hoath Way and M2 Junction 4 (resubmission of 19/500765/OUT).

Boxley Parish council object to this application for the following reasons:

This application is located in "The Medway Gap" which provides a green lung between the Medway towns and those situated in both Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling Council areas and any building in this area would result in urban sprawl. This is contrary to Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan Policy SP17 - The Countryside, Paragraph 4.113 v. Preventing

the coalescence of settlements which would undermine their character and also contravenes Policy SS1 - Maidstone Borough spatial strategy

Paragraph 9. In other locations, protection will be given to the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements, including Maidstone and surrounding villages, and Maidstone and the Medway Gap/Medway Towns conurbation.

The applicant recognises that there are traffic issues on Westfield Sole Road by reason of his proposed improvements. These improvements are only going to be on the stretch of the Road that adjoins land that he owns. The whole road will need improving for it to be safe. An increase of traffic on this road would lead to congestion, crashes and potentially personal injuries as it is a single track road for much of its length and not designed for 2 way traffic.

Boxley Parish Council is very concerned at how the site traffic is going to navigate these very narrow lanes to the site. What is the proposed route for HGV's? There has still been no Safety Audit of Westfield Sole Road and this needs to be done before this application is considered and any decision made.

We object to any development which will increase traffic along Walderslade Woods and the already overcapacity Junction 3 of the M2. Estimated travel movements to the West via Lidsing Road, Westfield Sole Road to M2 Junction 3 is 20%. This is a large increase for a road infrastructure that is already not coping with the current volume of traffic.

There is no provision for North South traffic, most of which will travel through Boxley Village which is a conservation area with listed buildings in close proximity to the road which is narrow. The estimate of trip distribution percentages is 25% of traffic movements to the South. From a development of 450 dwellings this number of vehicles would have a large negative impact on the residents of Boxley Village.

The proposed work will create a fast route away from the development towards Maidstone and the M20 through Boxley Village. In November 2018 a traffic survey in Boxley village recorded an average 52,391 vehicular movements per week which is already too many. The single road through the village is unclassified and narrow and any additional traffic would have a severe and direct impact on the residential properties that line the road as it is a linear village. The Parish Council has received several reports from pedestrians who have been hit by car wing mirrors whilst using the very narrow pavements. Any increase in traffic through this village would be dangerous.

Boxley Parish Council objects on highways grounds, specifically the impact on the health and safety of other road users and the impact on the local highway infrastructure on Lidsing Road, Forge Lane, Westfield Sole Road, Yelstead Lane, Harp Farm Road, The Street (Boxley village), Walderslade Woods and Junction 3 of the M2. The Traffic Plan predicts traffic movements of 223 at the am peak and 221 from the pm peak. From a development of 450 houses where presumably at least one person will need to travel to work this seems very underestimated.

We have concerns over the proposed access via Ham Lane. The proposed widening of Ham Lane is unlikely to be sufficient for the likely number of traffic movements/day. We could not find any detailed plans of the proposed scheme to widen the road on the application documents.

It is an urban development on greenfield land that is designated agricultural. As such it would be contrary to policies S1, S2, BNE25, BNE34 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and would harm the character, function and appearance of the countryside and the Area of Local Landscape Importance.

In relation to the matter of 'Access' and the connection to and from Lordswood, a large proportion of the proposed access works are located on land designated as Ancient Woodland. The NPPF (in paragraph 175) requires wholly exceptional reasons for development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees). Given that ancient woodland takes hundreds years to establish it must be deemed an irreplaceable habitat. Boxley Parish Council does not consider that this application meets the 'wholly exceptional reasons' required and should be refused.

The Development relies upon the existing urban area of Lordswood for its day to day amenities. Local schools are oversubscribed. The Doctors are already under pressure and getting an appointment is difficult. Additional housing would put additional pressure on already overstretched services.

The proposal is contrary to Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE5, BNE7, BNE8, T2, T3 and T4 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

The Developer cites community involvement and consultation but Boxley Parish Council has received no communication from them or invitations to any consultation events. As a neighbouring parish directly affected by this development we would have expected to be consulted.

This area is part of a vital green lung that separates the dense urban areas of Walderslade and Lordswood and Hempstead. The applicant has submitted plans for a 2,000 house development at Lidsing on Maidstone Borough Council's Call for Sites and for 650 houses between North Dane Way and Pear Tree Lane (East Hill). The total for all house developments in this vital green lung by the applicant is 3,100 which if all are granted would obliterate almost all of the countryside between 2 densely populated urban areas. For this reason it is vital that this application is looked at in conjunction with all of the applicants other applications so that an overall picture can be envisaged.

7. **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions Received and Noted.**

8. **Highways and Byways**

8.1 Highways Improvement Plan

Councillors considered the plan it was agreed that items 1. Installation of Bollards on Beechmore Drive and 11. Pavement Patching in Boxley Village had been completed and could be removed. Two additional areas were discussed and it was agreed that these would be included on the plan:

- Leybourne Close – Drain blocked mud and leaves collect – Drain to be cleared.
- Boxley Road/Beechen Bank Road to amend to *say installation of a pavement on part of Beechen Bank Road*. Cllr Hinder had produced a map and a report on the length previously when this issue came to the committee's attention a few years ago.

8.2 Boarley Lane

There was no update available for the meeting. Cllr Sheppard explained that many derogatory comments had been made about the lack of involvement from the Parish Council on the Sandling Residents Facebook page. It was agreed that the Assistant Clerk contact Cllr Brindle as she has been working very closely on this to see if there was any update the Parish Council could issue via community alert. **Action Asst Clerk/Cllr Brindle.**

8.3 Junction 3 of the M2 –

Cllr Hinder confirmed that the Thames Lower Crossing was coming up and this directly affects Junction 3 as the two are intertwined. A further update will most likely be available for the next meeting.

8.4 To consider any issues raised at the meeting

There were none.

8.5 To request safety audits to be carried out by KCC on the following areas:

- Grovewood Drive South
- Chiltern Hundreds public house to Notcutts roundabout.

Cllrs were concerned that despite requests being made for the last 6 months for these meetings the Parish Council are now being told that the KCC contact is very busy. It was agreed that KCC is contacted again and a request for a site visit and not a virtual meeting is made to all of the above areas directly after the results of the Boxley Village Speed Survey have been published. **Action Asst Clerk/KCC.**

8.6 MBC Park and Ride Scheme

This is linked to the safety audits above.

8.7 Speeding Boxley Village including Sandy Lane Junction.

This is now being undertaken and clarification for the length of time the pneumatic tubes are in place will be sought. **Action Asst Clerk to liaise with KCC.**

8.8 Dale Court.

The installation of the fencing and motorbike inhibitor was now complete. Cllr Huntingford informed members that a family using a pram often walked this pathway and would notify her if they were experiencing any difficulties with manoeuvring around the motorbike inhibitor. Members **agreed** that they would not want to disadvantage other users from walking along this footpath and would monitor it. If any complaints were received these will be reported at the next meeting. **Action office.**

8.9 Harp Farm Road – flooding

Members **agreed** that this was becoming increasingly worse even in drier weather and requested that this was urgently brought up with KCC again. **Action Asst Clerk to liaise with KCC.**

9. **Policy and Procedures**

None to review.

10. **Walderslade Woodlands**

Cllr Sheppard confirmed that the necessary paperwork for the CIO had been signed and forwarded to the Parish Council's Solicitors. He also confirmed that it was KCC's solicitors that are delaying the process.

11. **Electric Charging Points for Electric Vehicles**

Councillors **received** the Assistant Clerk's update and after consideration **agreed** that as the proposed scheme was still in its infancy that the committee would review it again in 12 months' time to see what the take up is amongst other community halls. **Action Clerk to place on the agenda July 2022.**

12. **Task List**

Councillors received and discussed the items on the task list and the following observation was made:

- Further quotations were being sought for the refurbishment of the Boxley Sign

The task list will be a standing item on the agenda for members to be kept informed of outstanding or ongoing issues.

13. **Members and Officers Reports**

Cllr Ivor Davies requested whether it was possible to obtain a list of all local large scale developments and have them plotted on a map to show the cumulative effect they will have on the parish and its surrounding areas. It was agreed that the Assistant Clerk would contact KCC to see if they could help. It was also agreed that this is added to the task list.

Action Office.

Cllr Ivor Davies also requested that the office contact CPRE to notify them of the other large scale developments being put forward in the area ie Lidsing Garden Settlement and Gibraltar Farm. **Action Office.**

14. **Residents Concerns**

Cllr Hinder raised two concerns:

- Residents of Beechmore Drive and Leybourne Close are concerned at the lack of cutting back of trees and shrubs and bushes in their roads. **Asst Clerk to Liaise with MBC/KCC to ascertain dates.**
- Lots of complaints are being made on social media about the lack of grass cutting in the borough. This is deliberate as they are trying to encourage biodiversity. It was agreed that the Assistant Clerk contacts John Edwards at MBC for a press release that can be uploaded to the PC's website and Facebook page as well as circulated via our community alert. **Action Asst Clerk.**

14. **Consultations**

None.

15. **Response from Helen Whately Received and noted.**

16. **Volunteer Groups**

The Friends of Weaving Heath BBQ has been delayed until after restrictions have been lifted. Date to be confirmed.

17. **Items for Next Agenda**

None given at the meeting deadline for next meeting is 30 July, 2021 with the office.

18. **Next Meeting**

Next Environment Committee meeting 9 August 2021.

19. **Enforcement and CIL/Section 106 updates from MBC**

- A notification of a breach of planning has been submitted to MBC enforcement regarding No.3 Woodlands.
- A Resident is in dispute over access, on KCC owned land, to the rear of his property at No 33 Woodlands.

Meeting closed 9.00 pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman Date