

Village Update

AUTUMN 2015

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan – A Significant Milestone

Staplehurst Village has reached a significant milestone in the Neighbourhood Plan Process. Following lengthy analysis of residents' feedback and that provided by Maidstone Borough Council, the Parish Council supported by Fera Urbanism, has prepared an amended draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. The 'Plan' and related documentation have been submitted to MBC, requesting that they take the 'Plan' through the Statutory Regulation 16 Public Consultation.

Subject to MBC conducting another screening with regard to ascertaining the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), it is hoped that MBC will confirm the

documentation is complete and announce the dates for the six week Public Consultation.

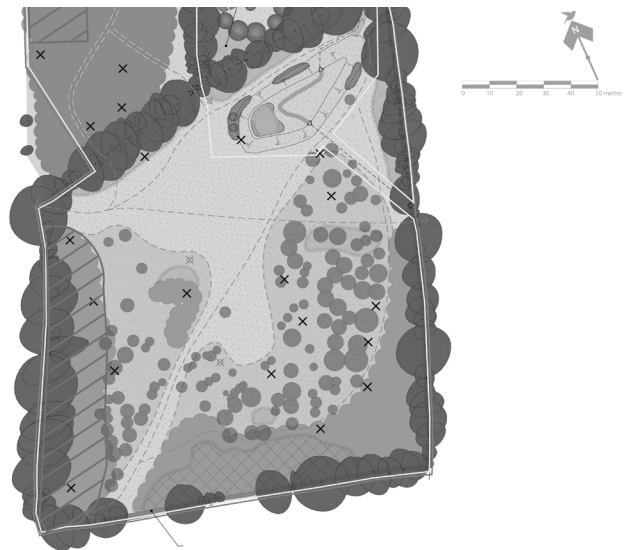
This Regulation 16 Public Consultation is extremely important and is borough wide. This is the last opportunity to deal with any outstanding issues prior to the Examination by a Planning Inspector. The Parish Council therefore encourages all residents and stakeholders to take this opportunity and participate in the consultation and provide feedback.

The documentation will be published on the Parish Council Website at:- http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/neighbourhood_forum1.aspx

Please note that MBC are conducting this part of the consultation.

NEW CONSERVATION AREA FOR STAPLEHURST

The planning application by Taylor Wimpey for new housing south of Oliver Road included a proposal for the woodland area (0.75ha) to the west of the residential development and the southern field (2.15ha) to be largely retained, enhanced and managed for the benefit of wildlife with public access. All mature boundary hedgerows/tree lines were to be retained and enhanced. Taylor Wimpey commissioned an ecology and landscape management plan and have carried out considerable work to improve the value of the land for wildlife. Following advice from the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, Staplehurst Parish Council agreed to take over ownership and responsibility of this area once Taylor Wimpey had completed some further work. Taylor Wimpey will also provide a sum of money which should cover maintenance costs for the first few years. We believe this will provide a very valuable resource for the village, both for informal recreation such as dog walking and for organised



educational and youth activities. It has not yet been decided how the land will be managed, but we hope that a volunteer-led group with an interest in conservation and ecology could be involved.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

DEFIBRILLATOR

The Parish Council agreed to accept responsibility for the maintenance of a defibrillator and external cabinet following consent by KCC to site it on the wall of the library facing the A229. South East Ambulance Service has agreed to this installation. If someone collapses and is in need of immediate attention, the first thing is to ring 999 for the paramedics. The defibrillator is for anyone to use 24/7 and once it is switched on it will instruct you step by step. If you wish to receive a one hour training session to give you confidence in its use, please contact the Parish Clerk.

STAPLEHURST CARNIVAL

The Carnival and Fete Committee received many favourable comments and thanks for another successful event. Due to the generosity of the sponsors and visitors, the Committee will continue its annual distribution of grants to good causes within Staplehurst.

Thanks also go to this hard working group for organising the Staplehurst celebrations to mark Queen Elizabeth II becoming our longest reigning monarch on September 12th. A detailed report will appear in our next Village Update.

PLAYSCHEME

Thanks go to the staff employed by Play Place for providing a well-organised and safe three weeks of activities at the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre. We are grateful for the use of these excellent facilities again this year. MBC have given a grant to help the Parish Council fund this invaluable asset for families.

HEDGES AND LITTER

Overhanging bushes and trees can make walking on the pavements hazardous, particularly for those with pushchairs and our local residents in wheelchairs. Please ensure any greenery you have is kept well-trimmed back from the footpaths. Please remember to take your rubbish home with you and keep our local green areas litter free. We have a number of volunteer litter collectors who help keep the village clean. If you would like to join their ranks please contact the Parish Council office. Many thanks to the volunteers who took part in our Annual Clean-Up last March. The Parish Council, with funding from County Councillor Hotson, has now purchased some bag openers to aid this work.

NEW COUNCIL

Last May fifteen parishioners were elected to the Parish Council in an uncontested election. Simon Green had moved away from Staplehurst so was not eligible to stand. Our thanks go to him for his many contributions. We welcome one new Councillor, Chris Claridge.

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM

At a recent Kent Association of Local Councils conference Staplehurst was reported to be one of only two parishes in the whole country having an emergency plan considered to be 'excellent'. With our plan well established the Team is maintaining momentum by preparing for our annual training exercise scheduled for October. This Saturday morning exercise will be prepared by the Environment Agency and we have no idea what sort of scenario they will be setting us; maybe a widespread and prolonged power failure or the spilled cargo from an overturned road-tanker forcing the evacuation of families from nearby houses ... It could be anything. A 'refresher' session is planned for the next Team meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday 17th September in the Free Church so it would be an ideal opportunity for anyone interested in getting involved to come along. All newcomers will be made very welcome. Find us on the Parish Council website or call Andrew Watson on 891986.

SAXON MEAD, OLIVER ROAD

Golding Homes working with Taylor Wimpey are producing 9 properties for shared ownership available to local people. The next phase of houses available December 2015 are 3 x 3 bed houses followed in March 2016 by 1 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed house. For further information about these or other Golding Homes shared ownership properties please contact Ward and Partners on 0844 335 2240 or shared.ownership@wardandpartners.co.uk.

FITZGERALD CLOSE



On 12th August there was a small ceremony at the new Golding Homes old peoples' development behind the Bell in Fitzgerald Close. The Parish Council named this after Sgt Fitzgerald, the airman whose name was missing from our war memorial for 67 years. Guests included members from the Fitzgerald family, the British Legion and Fegans Charity, Parish Councillors, the Rector, Mrs Sergison and Mrs Anne Storm, who first alerted us to the error on our war memorial. His family have donated a bench in his memory which the Rector blessed, along with the bungalows. These are nearing completion and will be available for rent by local people. Contact Golding Homes for more information.

MAYORAL VISIT

On 29th June the Mayor of Maidstone Cllr Dan Moriarty paid a visit to Staplehurst, organised by Cllr Spearink, to officially open two new ventures. First he visited DK Holdings' new factory and cut the ribbon to mark its completion. Managing Director Brian Salter showed the Mayor and Parish Councillors around the new premises and told us something of the company's work during over 50 years in Staplehurst. Then we went to Lainey's Care Farm at Little Pagehurst which is now successfully providing day care and smallholding skills to many young people with learning difficulties. The Mayor met some of the parents and



*DK Holdings'
new factory*

Lainey's Care Farm



helpers and heard how much difference this venture has made to so many people. Lainey laid on a superb lunch for everyone and the day was a great success all round.

VILLAGE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

One of the improvements most often mentioned in the consultations over the Neighbourhood Plan was a better Village Centre. There were differing views on what form this should take, let alone how it would be paid for. The Village Centre Trust has been doing a great job improving some of the facilities and dealing with lettings, but as volunteers they have naturally had to focus on existing problems rather than taking a longer term view. The Parish Council has organised a working group to look at the future of the Village Centre, with representatives from the Village Centre Trust, the Parish Council, users of the Centre and other residents including Borough Councillor Louise Brice. The aim is to assess the facilities required and which can be supported, how these might be provided and possible means of funding this development. If anyone has any comments or suggestions or is interested in joining the group please contact the Parish Office.

CHRIS CLARIDGE

Having lived overseas for 30 years, Chris and his wife Sally returned to England three years ago to accompany their 14 year-old son who is at school in Sevenoaks. They moved to Staplehurst in January 2015 after falling in love with a 16th century dower house in the High Street. Chris joined the Parish Council in May and his experience on company boards, chambers of commerce and government advisory panels will add a new dimension to our work.



PLANNING UPDATE

An application for 16 houses and 6 flats south of George Street (14/501185) was refused by MBC. The applicant appealed, but the planning inspector dismissed this. Staplehurst Parish Council had submitted comments to the inspector and spoke at length at the hearing.

An application to use part of the existing buildings at Greenworld, Cranbrook Road as boarding kennels (15/50382) has been approved by MBC. The Parish Council had no objection in principle, but requested further information on the likely impact of noise on nearby residents, which the applicant supplied.

An application for the change of use of a field adjoining Frittenden Road for gypsy and traveller accommodation (15/504228) was recommended for refusal by the Parish Council, who also pointed out that the details supplied with the application were totally inadequate for it to be properly assessed. MBC have now requested the applicant to provide a design and access statement, a flood risk assessment, a phase 1 habitat survey, a site layout plan, a landscape assessment, a traffic impact assessment and a justification for the development.

The Parish Council has recommended refusal for additional gypsy and traveller accommodation east of The Paddocks in George Street and the development of ten new dwellings at Woodford Farm, Maidstone Road.

FINDING OUT ABOUT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

As the local planning authority MBC gives notice of new planning applications by displaying a small notice at the site and by writing to occupiers of neighbouring properties usually only those which actually adjoin the site. Staplehurst Parish Council is not required or funded to publicise planning applications, but as a courtesy to residents we distribute notices when applications are to be considered at the Parish Planning Committee. These

usually go to the property in question and the five nearest neighbours, although if an application is likely to be contentious, the number may be increased. In view of the timescale for comments to MBC, and as distribution is by volunteers, this may not give much advance warning. The Clerk redistributes the MBC weekly list of planning applications covering the whole Borough and can add you to the email circulation list on request.

Chairman's Report

The 7th May General Election was more significant for Government and MBC than for Staplehurst Parish Council which lost one Councillor, but gained another, Chris Claridge. MBC changed hands and reverted to committee working which is much more cumbersome, slower and with fewer "sanity checks". This will prove difficult for Staplehurst in the future, especially on planning issues.

The Annual Parish meeting happened on 11th May with two interesting presentations from Kim White OBE on Gypsy and Traveller lives and Steve Grantham from Beginners 2 Runners on the running programme that has started at Staplehurst Cricket & Tennis Club. There were various reports from Village groups and individuals including Councillors Hotson, Watson, Perry and PCSO Pete Gardner. In spite of savage cuts to police budgets, Staplehurst still remains a largely peaceful and well behaved village.

Our Neighbourhood Plan is being submitted under regulation 16 for a borough-wide consultation. This is important as upon submission, it passes out of our control, and thus, even as a draft, becomes a more significant legal document that developers and MBC must consider. So Staplehurst's voice becomes louder.

Rory Silkin, Chairman

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Local electors and the press have a right to listen to Parish Council Meetings, but not to take part. At the beginning and after the closure of the Parish Council Meeting the Chairman will invite members of the public to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes each relating to issues on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to MBC which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre. Planning Committee meetings begin at 7pm with Full Council following on at 7.30pm (if planning agenda is short). Contact the Clerk for details or check the website calendar page.

Meetings (usually Mondays) in 2015 are:

Monday September 21st

Monday October 5th

Monday November 2nd

Monday December 7th

Monday October 19th

Monday November 16th

Monday December 21st

ANNUAL AUDIT

The annual audit of this Council's accounts to 31st March 2015 has been concluded with a clean bill of health. Copies are available from the Parish Office or on the Council Website.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Rory Silkin (Chairman)
Tom Burnham (Joint Vice Chairman & Acting Chairman of Planning)
Paul Kelly (Joint Vice Chairman)
Paul Butcher (Chairman of Planning)
Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Chris Claridge
Anne Gosling
Neal Kemp
Sam Lain-Rose
Barrett Manning
John Perry
John Reardon
Adele Sharp
Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Mrs Sue Bassett

ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

Address:

The Parish Office,
Village Centre, High Street.
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours:

9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays,
except on Thursdays when it is by appointment.

SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Perry's surgery will be on the last Saturday of each month, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon.

PCSO Pete Gardner will hold Police Surgeries on these Saturdays from 10am to 11am on 7th November and 12th December.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues.

