

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 18th January 2016 at 7.15 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Butcher (until the point indicated in the minutes), Burnham, Claridge, Gosling, Kelly, Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes), Sharp, Spearink and Silkin who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillor Reardon whose apology was accepted.

URGENT ITEMS: - There were no urgent items.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-

Lobbying – Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied about the Neighbourhood Plan, buses and delivery of the Village Update. All councillors declared they had been lobbied about planning application 15/510186.

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interest in Items on the Agenda – none declared.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Pages 1495-1497 of 4th January 2016 were proposed for approval by Councillor Sharp, seconded by Councillor Burnham, APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Silkin and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

15/510186 **Land at Fishers Farm, Fishers Road, Staplehurst** – Development of site to accommodate 185 dwellings, together with associated access road (including reconfiguration of Pile Lane), car parking, landscaping and open space. Councillors discussed the application at length and raised many concerns as set out below.

Layout and Design – (a) the applicant had not met the request for a masterplan for the whole Fishers Farm site, as recorded in Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (Policy H5); (b) the distribution of homes was poor, failing to take account of the dogs at Home Farm and the proximity of the sewage works – the latter point also raised by Southern Water; (c) housing design showed no imagination and failed to demonstrate any attempt to 'leave a positive architectural legacy' or 'add to the positive character of the village' (Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Policy H1); (d) the housing mix was unsatisfactory – councillors particularly criticised the lack of single storey dwellings (Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Policy H2).

Transport – (e) the assessment and proposals were inadequate and displayed a disappointing disregard of local knowledge and experience; (f) councillors challenged the claims advanced for the 'good bus service' - they glossed over the well-known and publicised issues that had generated numerous high-level discussions in attempts to find solutions and they failed to acknowledge the required improvements identified in Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Objective 07; (g) councillors questioned the travel data and forecasts, for example the

apparent disconnect between 67% of work journeys being undertaken by car drivers (Transport Assessment 3.3, Table 1) and the assumption (TA 6.4 Table 5) that 185 homes would only generate 76 departures at a peak time which would include school journeys in that number; (h) councillors did not feel that the exclusion of the impact of a supermarket from the analysis was a justifiable approach given that at the present time the planning permission for Sainsbury's supermarket was still in place and that a future supermarket was one of the key contributory factors in MBC's proposals to allocate housing to Staplehurst – but having excluded the supermarket, the application then failed to address the implications for transport and sustainability in the village; (i) whilst the application acknowledged capacity issues at the A229/Headcorn Road crossroads it offered no explanation as to how the proposals would address the worsening of the situation that the additional traffic movements would cause – councillors wished to see the comments of Kent Highways on these issues and highlighted the requirements for improvements and retention of the location's character as set out in Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Objective 06; (j) the application failed to address the requirement of Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Objective 03 to demonstrate how the new streets and related movements would integrate into the existing village - by way of example, there was no discussion of the impact on the Hurst Close - Newlyn Drive - Fishers Road area or on the narrow, single-lane Couchman Green Lane and Hawkenbury Bridge.

Drainage – (k) there were known flooding and drainage problems in the area, with a high water table level and flood plain of the River Beult; (l) the application's discussion of drainage issues appeared theoretical and ignored local evidence and knowledge and there was no evidence of how the drainage infrastructure requirements of Neighbourhood Plan Policy PW1 (paragraph 7.7) would be addressed – notably there was no evidence of how additional surface water and flood risk would be managed; (m) the drainage report considered the additional surface water only from the Redrow site and not the cumulative impact from the neighbouring Bovis site and elsewhere; (n) Southern Water had confirmed that existing infrastructure could not cope with the needs of the proposed development; (o) the KCC Drainage Engineer had objected on the basis that the site could increase flood risk; (p) the Environment Agency had commented on the area's 'flat and boggy' nature and on measures required in relation to resilience and flood levels.

Community Contributions – (q) councillors noted with disappointment that no Section 106 contributions were proposed for education in Staplehurst – whilst recognising that this was within the remit of KCC, they commented that sending children to primary schools in other villages did nothing for integration into Staplehurst and increased the number of car movements; (r) Councillors noted the proposed modest contributions to local services but also highlighted there were important projects identified by the local community and set out in Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Policy PW1.

General – (s) notwithstanding the volume of paper submitted with the application, councillors felt key information was missing and there were too many errors, questionable assumptions and statements – by way of example, they challenged the applicant when in need of medical care to walk or cycle to surgeries in Marden or Brenchley (list of health centres 'within reasonable

walking or cycling distance' - Transport Assessment 3.22) and questioned the relevance of Coxheath landscape designations (Design & Access Statement 2.7); (t) councillors felt this highlighted the need to give full and meaningful weight to local knowledge, evidence and experience to ensure that a properly informed decision would be taken.

For all the above reasons, proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, councillors voted nem con to recommend REFUSAL of the application and requested that it be referred to MBC Planning Committee.

Councillor Perry joined the meeting.

ACCOUNTS & FINANCES

1. Accounts for payment for approval. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Ashby, the list of accounts for payment was APPROVED. Councillor Kelly abstained. Payments for the period 12 December to 8 January totalled £14,642.08; receipts for the period were £7,342.46 (Parish Council) and £10,000.52 (Village Centre Contingency Account).
2. Summation of Accounts to 8 January 2016. NOTED by councillors and published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx. In response to a question from Councillor Lain-Rose Councillors Kelly and Sharp explained that the Village Centre Management Committee had transferred £10,000 into the Village Centre Contingency Reserve.
3. Budget 2016-17 including Parish Precept – Finance Group Recommendation for approval. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Manning, councillors APPROVED Finance Group's recommendation setting the Parish Precept for 2016-17 at £126,700, equating to £55 per annum per Band D property. Chairman Silkin explained that the aim was to keep the precept at the current year's level and that the increase of 2 pence per annum per Band D property was a result of a rounding in the calculation.

CORRESPONDENCE & CURRENT ISSUES for noting or decision:-

1. Neighbourhood Plan - Examination (Update from Steering Group). Councillor Buller reported that on initial examination of the plan and supporting documents the inspector had raised some questions. The Clerk advised that he had prepared information about the consultation process and that FERIA Urbanism was drafting a response to other questions. He said that the information would be sent to MBC, following which a meeting or telephone discussion with MBC would take place. *Chairman Silkin closed the meeting to invite discussion by ward borough councillors.* Councillor Perry said that a meeting of full council at MBC would vote on the Local Plan on 26th January. He estimated that it would take about another year to put in place the Local Plan and said in the meantime it was important to complete the Neighbourhood Plan process. Councillor Brice discussed the implications of a Local Plan with shortcomings against no Local Plan at all, KCC's allocation of S106 money to schools and her continuing lobbying of Sainsbury's. Councillors Brice and Perry said that they were strongly advocating the case for meeting rural needs and not focusing unduly on Maidstone town centre. The Clerk advised that KCC Economic Development's comments on planning application 15/510186 contained forecasts of pupil numbers at the area's schools and those arising from known planning applications. *Chairman Silkin reopened the meeting.*
2. Caretaker's Report – The Clerk reported that the caretaker was undertaking weekly litter collections and inspections. *Councillor Butcher left the meeting.*

3. MBC Tourism Survey – For comment on survey questions and siting/condition of brown 'tourist signs'. Councillors noted the request for information about sites of local interest and AGREED that Councillors Perry and Spearink should respond.
4. Oakwood Park Grammar School – Community Volunteering Initiative involvement request. Councillors NOTED the invitation from the school to submit projects for the school's 'Volunteer Day' on 3rd March. They requested that the information be shared with All Saints Church and local care homes.

COMMITTEE & FOCUS GROUPS – Reports and recommendations:-

1. Local Transport (TB, BM, PS) Next meeting 12/02/16. Minutes of meeting 04/12/15 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/hawkhurst_transport.aspx Councillor Burnham said he would ask Southeastern Trains about when they would be installing a community noticeboard at the station. Councillor Spearink said there was a new operator for the Bluewater bus service. Councillor Buller said she had reported to Arriva a number of recent service failures.
2. Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (JB, PB, RS, PS) Next meeting 20/01/16. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kcc_emergency_planning_group.aspx
3. Planning Committee (PB, MA, JB, CC, TB, AG, PK, RS, PS) http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx
4. Allotments Project Group (TB, PK, JB, BM) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups_1.aspx
5. Strategy & Policy Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, CC, SL, RS) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/policy_group.aspx
6. Finance Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, SL, JR) Next meeting 29/04/16. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx. Report and recommendations arising from meeting 15/01/16. Councillors considered the report of the meeting and AGREED: Bell Lane Toilets Lease - the Parish Council enter into the new lease proposed by MBC, noting that it would expire in 2028 but that the Parish Council could give six months' notice of early termination (proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Perry, Councillor Kelly abstained); Knoxbridge Highway Project – the Parish Council allocate £1,000 from its General Fund as a contribution towards the cost of proposed gateway and 50mph speed limit measures on the A229, noting that Frittenden Parish Council had been requested to make a similar contribution and that the remaining funds up to the balance of approximately £5,000 would come from County Councillor Hotson's KCC Member's Budget (proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose); Christmas Lights 2016 – interested members should advise Councillor Kelly if they wished to participate in a proposed review of ways to improve the display in 2016; Planter Maintenance – the Village Enhancement Group should write a new specification for the content to include higher and trailing plants; Office Computer Support – continue arrangements with Arron Services for 2016-17; Skate Park Annual Repair – the responsible Finance Officer should liaise with Evolution Skateparks about the specification and extent of work required for 2016 and report to next Finance Group; Surrenden Field CCTV Maintenance – continue with Cam-Tech Services for 2016-17 and ask Councillor Reardon to report on the effectiveness and life expectancy of the current system; Bell Lane Toilets Sani Bins Service – continue with Eco-San Ltd for 2016-17 (all proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Spearink).
7. Economic & Tourism Development (PS) Next meeting?
8. Oliver Road Open Space (PK, SL, AS, PS) Next meeting?
9. Playscheme (TB, JB) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/youth_activities_1.aspx
10. Publicity & Website Group (TB, PK, MA, JB, CC, SL, JR) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/publicity_website.aspx Councillor Buller reported that the distribution dates for the Village Update in 2016 would be 29th February, 27th June and 31st October. She said the Group would bring a proposal about distribution arrangements to the next meeting of Full Council. She requested copy for the next issue to be submitted by 29th

January. She advised that the next Update would contain a short article about collation of information about road accidents.

11. Rural Settlement Group (JP, JB, TB, AS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 04/11/15 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural_settlement_group.aspx.
12. Staff Group (JB, PK, SL, BM, JP) Next meeting?
13. Staplehurst Village Centre Development Group (TB, AG, SL) Next meeting late January/early February 2016 http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/village_centre_redevelopment_group.aspx. Councillor Lain-Rose reported that a surveyor had that day undertaken a survey of the Village Centre and his report was now awaited.
14. Surrenden Playing Field Group (TB, PK, BM, JR, AS) Next meeting? <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
15. Village Enhancement Group (TB, PK, JB, PB, JR, AS) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups.aspx. Councillor Lain-Rose said he had spoken to the landlord of the Parade about installing replacement waste bins.
16. Youth Club (PK) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_youth_club.aspx

REPORTS FOR NOTING from local community groups:-

1. Carnival & Fete (SL, BM) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_carnival_fete_committee.aspx
2. Churchyard Liaison (PB, PK) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups_2.aspx .
3. Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee (JP, BM) Next meeting 08/03/16. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/headcorn_aerodrome.aspx
4. Jubilee Field Management & Users Group (JP, PB, PK) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/jubilee_fields_users_group.aspx
5. KALC Area Committee (RS, PK, PB, JP) Next meeting 24/02/16. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kent_association_of_local_councils.aspx
6. Kent Community Alcohol Partnership (PB) Next meeting?
7. Knoxbridge A229 Residents' Group (BM, PS) Next meeting?
8. McCabe Day Centre (JB) Next meeting? Reports of meetings 23/09/15 and 22/10/15 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/mccabe_day_centre.aspx
9. Neighbourhood Watch (JB) http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx
10. Police/Parish Liaison (PB, BM, AS) Next meeting 18/02/16. Report of meeting 24/09/15 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx
11. River Beult Catchment Improvement Group (JP, PS) Next meeting 03/03/16. <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
12. Sobell Cheshire Home (JP, PS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 01/09/15 awaited. <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
13. Speed Watch (JB) <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/speedwatch.aspx>
14. Staplehurst Community Hub (JB) Next meeting?
15. Staplehurst Library Users Group (JB, BM) Next meeting?
16. Staplehurst Patients' Participation Group (JB, AS, RS). Next meeting? Report of meeting 14/10/15 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/patient_participation_group_at_health_centre.aspx .
17. Staplehurst Primary School Liaison (AG, SL, BM, JR)
18. Staplehurst Surface Water Management Plan Group (PS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 27/07/15 awaited.
19. Staplehurst Village Centre Trust (MA, PB) Next meeting 10/02/16 (AGM). http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/village_centre_trust.aspx
20. Village Golf & Sports Club (PB) Next meeting? <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: *Before discussion of planning application 15/510186 the Chairman temporarily closed the meeting to allow contributions from members of the public.* Six residents expressed their opposition to the application. Highways: adverse impact on the A229/Headcorn Road crossroads which according to the assessment are at times operating 30% over capacity; projections exclude a future supermarket and do not consider the

potential rat-run implications for Hurst Close and Newlyn Drive; the secondary access onto Pile Lane would attract traffic in excess of the capacity that could safely be accommodated by Couchman Green Lane and there are no proposals for improvements; the access is dangerously close to a blind bend – if agreement were to be given a 30mph limit should be extended before any construction begins; a solution to crossroads capacity must be found before building and not afterwards; some report statements suggest a lack of sufficient observation, such as those relating to the suggested non-impact of right-turning traffic on vehicle flows. Drainage: the submitted report focuses on the Redrow site in isolation; the water table level in the area is high; run-off levels would be multiplied considerably; drainage from the site would increase the extent of the flood plain; Neighbourhood Plan policy PW1 identifies required investment in infrastructure and utilities, which is not adequately addressed by the application; there is no evidence of engagement meetings covering flood risk; photographs of local flooding were shown. Residential Amenity: the secondary access and eastern houses would be located very close to Home Farm and its dogs, which was evidence of poorly designed layout; the siting would not be beneficial for either existing residents or people who bought such new properties; there are no proposals for the enhancement of residential amenity. Connectivity: the public right of way is in a poor condition and does not provide a user-friendly route; the Neighbourhood Plan policy PW1 and objectives 1-3 seek far more and better options for pedestrians and cyclists than are proposed in the application; paragraph 4.29 of the Transport Assessment is unacceptably vague about proposed connectivity with the Bovis site. Absence of a masterplan: provision of a masterplan is a requirement of Neighbourhood Plan policy H5 and the MBC Local Plan considers Fishers Farm as one site; the lack of a masterplan and coordination between developers has led to plans being made separately and with questionable assumptions; it was disappointing to be asked to consider the submissions in isolation. Construction: there is recent experience of disruption arising from construction works and this larger site could bring bigger problems. Design: there is no compelling design feature and most disappointingly no inclusion of bungalows or other suitable single-storey accommodation.

POLICE REPORT: PCSO Gardner's report stated there had been 8 crimes: 2 burglaries (one arrest); 2 burglaries other than dwelling (one arrest); 1 theft from motor vehicle (two arrests); 1 theft of motor vehicle; 1 theft; 1 criminal damage.