

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 15th August 2016 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Burnham, Claridge, Gosling, Kelly, Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry, Sharp, Spearink and Silkin who was in the Chair.
Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillors Butcher, Reardon and Riordan.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interest in Items on the Agenda – Staplehurst Junction Mitigation Proposals: Councillor Gosling declared she had already submitted her views to MBC; Councillor Perry read a statement: "I am currently Chairman of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning Committee and I must not pre-determine any decisions that might be taken by this Planning Committee. In order to ensure that no pre-determination takes place I shall not take part in any discussion under the above agenda item, unless it is to answer a question of fact, and I shall abstain from voting on any item raised under this agenda item."

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Minute pages 1550-1552 of 1st August 2016 were proposed for approval by Councillor Ashby, 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. Councillors Claridge and Lain-Rose abstained.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS - REVISED DETAILS: (for comment)

Consideration of Staplehurst Junction Mitigation Proposals for:

- 14/505432 **Land North of Headcorn Road TN12 ODT** – Residential development to provide 167 dwellings, areas of public open space, associated landscaping and infrastructure and the formation of new vehicular access from Headcorn Road and pedestrian access from Fishers Road, Fishers Close, Hurst Close and Headcorn Road. Emergency vehicle ingress only from Fishers Road. SPC had REFUSED (Min 1396 & 1486).
- 15/507124 **Stanley Farm, Headcorn Road** – Outline application for the erection of up to 110 dwellings (access being sought). SPC had REFUSED (Min 1226P).
- 15/510186 **Land at Fishers Farm, Fishers Road** – Development of site to accommodate 185 dwellings, together with associated access road (including reconfiguration of Pile Lane), car parking, landscaping and open space. SPC had REFUSED (Min 1498).

Councillors discussed the proposals in the context of the three planning applications and declared they had been lobbied. They thanked residents for their e-mailed and spoken contributions which they felt expressed many well-founded concerns. After some discussion, proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, councillors agreed that the proposals did not change their reasons or recommendations for REFUSAL of all three applications nor their request that they be referred to MBC Planning Committee. Councillors

Gosling and Perry abstained. Councillors commented on the proposals: the narrowness and rerouting of footpaths, with the consequent creation of desire lines, constituted a danger particularly to pedestrians; the measures ran counter to the promotion of safe walking and cycling routes in the Maidstone Local Plan and Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan, notably Objective 02 in the latter document; the proposals showed complete disregard for the mobility-impaired and should be subject to compliance testing against DDA/Equality Act 2010 provisions; the narrowness of the proposed vehicle lanes would increase the risk of vehicles mounting the pavements – there was already evidence of pedestrians being clipped by vehicles; the narrowness of the proposed vehicle lanes would not accommodate the volume or manoeuvring needs of HGV traffic which was already significant due to depots on Marden Road and Station Road and would certainly be increased by construction activity; the proposals' general observations about vehicle speeds were unacceptable as evidence – local Speedwatch had solid data to demonstrate that speeding was an issue in the area; the proposed new locations of the bus stop and crossing in the High Street gave cause for serious concern that the proposals were little more than a desk-top exercise – the locations were poorly chosen, being located too close to a bend and would present a serious hazard for all types of road user; the assumptions about future traffic movements appeared flawed, taking no account of movements generated from developments occurring in surrounding areas especially to use Staplehurst station, itself shortly due to increase its car park capacity; the justifications provided to support an assumption that new development traffic could be reduced by 5% appeared both untested and unrealistic given the importance of vehicle travel to most people in a rural village; the design of the submitted proposals was unsympathetic to the nature of a rural village high street and took no account of the relevant guidance in the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan.

FINANCE REPORTS:-

1. Accounts for payment for approval - Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Manning, the list of accounts for payment was APPROVED. Councillor Kelly abstained. Payments for the period 8 July to 5 August totalled £8,369.13; receipts for the period were £9.30 (Parish Council) and £0.50 (Village Centre Contingency).
2. Summation of Accounts to 5th August 2016 (for noting) – Noted by councillors and published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.
3. Wimpey Field – Reports and proposed expenditure relating to:
 - a) proposed works (for decision) – Cllr Spearink discussed his and Councillor Riordan's report dated 02/08/16 which had been previously circulated. Proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Gosling, Councillors APPROVED recommended expenditure to cover the work set out in the report and associated quotations from Twig Group: (i) £1,886.72 for vegetation clearance; (ii) £195 for herbicide treatment; (iii) £2,600 for installation of approximately 70 metres of footpath. Councillors AGREED that such works should be carried out following transfer of land from Taylor Wimpey to the Parish Council, with the exception that Taylor Wimpey should be asked for its consent to translocation of a hibernaculum before then to avoid disturbance of wildlife.
 - b) estimate for legal costs relating to the transfer - Councillors AGREED to ask Buss Murton to advise and act for the Parish Council, noting the estimated cost of £600 plus VAT and legal fees.
4. Surrenden Play Area Balance Beam – Expenditure on replacement. Councillors NOTED the content of the Assistant Clerk's report dated 04/08/16 and AGREED to purchase a new beam plus associated fittings at a cost of £171.31, the item to be fitted by the village caretaker.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:-

1. Community Led Housing – Invitation from NALC to complete survey (by 30/09/16). Item deferred.
2. Developing capacity to deliver council services – Invitation from NALC to complete a survey about shared service delivery and other initiatives (by 30/09/16). Item deferred.
3. Emergency Planning Exercise 27/09/16 – Appeal from Kent Resilience Forum for Volunteers. Item deferred.
4. Fly the Red Ensign for the Merchant Navy Day - 3rd September – Invitation from the Mayor of Maidstone (for decision). Item deferred.
5. Mayor's Visit to Staplehurst 14/07/16 – Correspondence (for noting). Item deferred.
6. No Pagehurst Solar Steering Group – Correspondence: request for financial assistance (for decision). Councillors NOTED advice from KALC and the Clerk relating to the provision of financial support and voted to DECLINE the request. Councillor Buller abstained.
7. Village Clean-Up – Information about event scheduled for 17th September (for noting). Item deferred.
8. Parish Surgery – (i) Written and verbal reports on parish surgeries held 6 & 13 August (TB/JB) – Item deferred; (ii) Appointment of representatives for future dates: 20th August - Councillor Burnham, 10th September – Councillor Manning.

PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS (from Committee/Groups/Office on specific issues or as regular update)

1. Clerk's Report – Item deferred.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
 - a) Housing in Staplehurst – Report on:
 - (i) Staplehurst Housing Survey: for approval of content of survey. Councillors asked that either the survey or the covering letter be amended to accommodate Borough Councillor Brice's suggested use of 'signposting' to guide respondents through the survey.
 - (ii) Affordable Housing Information Event: for approval of planned arrangements. *Chairman Silkin closed the meeting to allow a contribution from Borough Councillor Brice.* She advised that whilst she was pleased to see the Parish Office's work on the initiative, she herself had been engaging with MBC about this. She expressed concern that it would be premature to engage developers at this stage. *Chairman Silkin reopened the meeting.* Councillors NOTED the work undertaken by the Parish Office to support the recommendation by Strategy & Policy Group to organise an affordable housing information event. They AGREED at this stage to put further work on hold pending resolution of outstanding development applications and to facilitate coordination between the Parish Office and Borough Councillor Brice/MBC.
 - b) Neighbourhood Plan – Note on Examiner's Report and Next Steps (for decision). Item deferred.
 - c) Strategy & Policy Group – Report of meeting 08/08/16 (for noting) and recommendations (for decision). Item deferred.
 - d) Tree Walk – Information about proposed event on 15th October (for noting). Item deferred.
3. Verbal Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
 - a) Sainsbury's in Staplehurst – Report on meeting with Sainsbury's scheduled for 10/08/16 (RS/PK/JP/JB). Chairman Silkin reported that Sainsbury's representatives had stated that the meeting was an indicator that Staplehurst still featured in the company's plans, but there would not be any construction in 2016-17. He said that the representatives had undertaken to send a formal statement

from the company. In the meantime the representatives had agreed to consider what steps could be taken to improve the petrol station site.

REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS for noting:-

1. Borough Councillor's Report – Item deferred.
2. Kent County Council Local Transport Plan 4 – Consultation (for comment): closing date 30/10/16. Item deferred.
3. Maidstone Borough Local Plan – Advice of dates for examination hearings (for noting). Item deferred.
4. Maidstone Borough Council Community Infrastructure Levy – Draft Charging Schedule Consultation: closing date 16th September 2016 (for comment). Item deferred.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS (written reports for noting):-

1. Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch – Minutes of Meeting 21/07/16. Item deferred.

URGENT MATTERS (at Chairman's discretion, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting)

No items were raised.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Before the meeting the Chair of RSG urged the Parish Council to press ahead with the Staplehurst Housing Survey. Immediately prior to discussion of the Staplehurst Junction Mitigation Proposals sixteen residents including County Councillor Hotson and Borough Councillor Brice spoke. County Councillor Hotson discussed in some detail the issues that after many months of meetings and correspondence still concerned Kent Highways and Transportation. He said that the latest proposals failed to provide the mitigation required to meet safety concerns, notably those identified in the road safety audit, congestion and the use of alternative routes. Kent Highways and Transportation therefore maintained a holding objection to the related planning applications. Borough Councillor Brice stated concerns about the proposed width of footpaths and traffic lanes and about the proposed crossing location. She supported the idea of a public meeting and encouraged support for an on-line petition and advised that compulsory purchase was not an option. Other speakers raised many points: MBC had not adequately notified residents about the proposals; blight on properties in the vicinity; the narrow footpaths would be hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists; two sets of traffic signals in close proximity would have a detrimental impact on the efficiency of traffic flows; there was clear evidence of speeding in Station Road and High Street; the proposals would encourage the creation and use of rat-runs; the proposed guard rail would inhibit access to the BT junction equipment; the submitted plans failed to show Sleeper Alley and the High Street petrol station site; the modelling did not take account of wider development, especially to the south, and the likely increased traffic movements to and from the station; the proposals went against the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans which encouraged safe pedestrian and cycle routes; inadequate footpath widths would be further reduced by encroaching hedges; in minimising the widths of footpaths and traffic lanes the proposals would be dangerous for all road users and especially pedestrians, cyclists, disabled, elderly and infirm; the modelling seriously underplayed the movements of HGVs both in terms of vehicle numbers and carriageway requirements.

After the meeting a resident thanked councillors for giving consideration to the approach by the No Pagehurst Solar Steering Group. He said he had written to Sainsbury's and received a courteous response advising that there would be no construction in Staplehurst in 2016-17.