

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 4th November 2013 at 8.40 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Burnham, Butcher, Green, Kelly, Kemp, Lain-Rose, Manning, Reardon, Sharp, Silkin, Spearink and Perry who was in the Chair.
Parish Clerk: Mr MJ Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gosling whose reason for apology was accepted.

URGENT ITEMS: - Councillors agreed to take one item of urgent business relating to the Parade.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS:

Lobbying – All Councillors declared they had been lobbied about Tesco application MA/13/1726. Councillors Ashby, Buller, Lain-Rose and Reardon declared they had been lobbied about the Parade. Councillors Buller, Manning and Spearink declared they had been lobbied about buses. Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied about the Neighbourhood Plan and salt bins (Village Enhancement Group). Councillor Spearink said he had been lobbied about allotments.

Changes to the Register of Interests – Councillor Lain-Rose said he had provided an updated declaration of interests to the Clerk.

Interests in items on the agenda – none declared.

Requests for dispensation – none requested.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Pages 1304-1307 of 21st October 2013 were proposed for approval by Councillor Silkin, seconded by Councillor Kemp, approved by councillors nem con, signed by Chairman Perry and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

PLANNING APPLICATION MA/13/1726 - Land at Station Approach and George Street, Staplehurst, Kent. Construction of a class A1 retail store, associated parking and petrol filling station; transport interchange comprising bus and taxi drop-off/pick up facilities, railway station car parking spaces, and covered walkway to existing railway station building (to the south of the railway line); and commuter car park and publicly accessible nature area (to the north of the railway line). Resubmission of application MA/12/0232 (for recommendation). *Chairman Perry closed the meeting to allow contributions from the public.* Six residents spoke about the application, commenting that: the new application was little changed from the previous one, showing just minor landscape work and a reduction in parking spaces; the figures for parking spaces lacked credibility; harm to the environment that had been the grounds for refusing the previous application was still evident; the dated evidence in the Environmental Sustainability Review suggested a lack of care and a worrying attitude towards Staplehurst; no account had been taken of the Sainsbury's proposal, for example highways plans ignored the new roundabout; the application reported satisfaction of consultees such as Kent Highways and Kent Wildlife Trust which was not all it appeared. *Chairman Perry reopened the meeting and handed the chair for this item to Councillor Butcher.* All councillors expressed their views on the proposal. Comments against the application were: none of the changes addressed the previously expressed concerns of the Parish Council; the application failed to take account of the new planning context and the permission given to Sainsbury's; there was no meaningful information on highways and bus-stops; there were still restricted sight lines around the George Street junction; Kent Highways should be asked to review afresh the proposal and particularly how the Sainsbury's

and Tesco scheme fit together as well as the impact of further occupation of nearby industrial units; the statements about parking proposals were confused and there appeared to be a reduction in spaces compared to the last amendment of the previous application; an additional deck or decks would create more commuter parking; it was not clear how the bus-train interface would work; the suggestion in Tesco's Planning & Retail Statement that two supermarkets would operate at 65% of their capacity indicated an inefficient and unsustainable use of resources; land north of the railway line should be left untouched as a nature area in its truest sense; nothing in the application justifies an exception being made to policy ENV28; previous planning consents relating to the site were both dated and no meaningful precedent for the current situation; the applicant's failure to engage with the Parish Council about this resubmission, its content and related publicity were all disappointing and did not inspire confidence in the robustness of the proposals. Comments in favour of the resubmitted application were: a second supermarket would provide choice; it would be a good investment for the future and would serve the wider area beyond Staplehurst; the applicant had withdrawn recycling areas to create more parking; planning consent had been given in previous years for applications relating to this site; a second supermarket on a different site would disperse traffic flow. All councillors having spoken, a vote was taken. Recommendation: by majority Councillors voted to recommend REFUSAL of the application (thirteen councillors for refusal, one against) and asked that it be reported to MBC Planning Committee for the following reasons:

- 1 – The resubmitted application shows no material change from application MA/12/0232 and fails to address the Parish Council's concerns expressed in its responses to consultation on that proposal, specifically letters dated 13th March 2012, 29th May 2012 and 19th March 2013.
- 2 – The resubmitted application fails to take account of the new planning context of the permission granted to Sainsbury's. Such a large additional store is far in excess of what is needed to serve Staplehurst and nearby settlements and would potentially attract shoppers from further afield, thereby increasing traffic rather than reducing it.
- 3 - The sustainability and desirability of two supermarkets are questioned by the applicant's forecast that they would only operate at 65% capacity. The case for Staplehurst being able to sustain two supermarkets lacks evidence when there is currently no agreement on what future housing levels will be nor on a core strategy to support any assumptions.
- 4 – As previously stated, the proposed commuter parking north of the railway line is located on completely unsuitable land which is already liable to flooding and would be placed even more at risk; to build here would destroy an important ecological site and contravene existing MBC policies ENV28 and ENV41.
- 5 – The highways issues should be resubmitted for critical examination by Kent Highways at senior level in the context of the planning permission given to Sainsbury's and potential increased occupation of the nearby industrial site. The Parish Council also retains serious concerns about safety issues at the George Street A229 junction.
- 6 – The proposed parking arrangements are inadequate for the increasing number of commuters using Staplehurst station. The claim that there is no other space to increase capacity fails to consider possibly 200 spaces that could be generated by Network Rail installing a second deck above the western parking area, with scope perhaps for a third deck in due course, which would be an option clearly unfeasible on the northern meadow.

Councillors also agreed that the Parish Council too should write directly to Kent Highways at a senior level to press them to reappraise the proposal as set out in reason 5, particularly with reference to Tesco traffic joining and leaving the A229 only 50m north of Sainsbury's traffic.

CORRESPONDENCE & CURRENT ISSUES for noting or decision:-

1. Urgent Items – Chairman Perry retook the Chair for the rest of the meeting. Councillor Lain-Rose discussed the enforcement of parking restrictions at the Parade, which he said was adversely affecting businesses and causing problems for visitors and employees who had been given parking charge tickets. He said people had received tickets for parking over an hour despite being given a permit by the Indian restaurant and others had been ticketed when parking under an hour but not visiting a Parade business. He had received reports of people being subjected to harassment. Councillors noted that there had been recent press and website comment about dealing with private parking charges. Councillors agreed that the situation was unacceptable and clearly affecting local businesses, residents and visitors. They resolved to write to the owner of the Parade to express their concerns and request a review of the restrictions. They also agreed to advise the police of their concerns about reported harassment and to investigate whether the area could be designated as an asset of community value.
2. Neighbourhood Plan – Chairman Perry closed the meeting to allow contributions from the public. The Chair of the Rural Settlement Group said that the Neighbourhood Plan project team was due to meet the following evening. He said that output from the design Forum was ready to go live on the Feria website. Councillors agreed that the information and/or relevant links should also appear on the village website. Councillor Buller said that the Village Update would carry a report. A resident stated that he had heard positive feedback about engagement opportunity offered by the event. Chairman Perry reopened the meeting.
3. KALC – Notice of AGM 23rd November 2013 (for decision on attendees and resolutions). Agreed: Councillors Perry, Kelly, Butcher and Spearink would attend: voters to support resolutions 7, 8 and 10 and to reject resolution 9.
4. KALC – Parish Conference 2014: Invitation to submit items for discussion. Suggestions to be notified to the Clerk.

COMMITTEE & FOCUS GROUPS – Reports and recommendations:-

1. Local Transport (TB, BM, PS) Next meeting 06/12/13. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/hawkhurst_transport.aspx
Councillor Spearink advised that measures were being taken to deal with problems on the bus services to schools.
2. Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (JB, PB, RS, PS) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kcc_emergency_planning_group.aspx
3. Planning Committee (PB, MA, JB, TB, AG, SG, PK, NK, JP, PS)
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx
4. Allotments Project Group (JP, TB, PK, JB, BM) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups_1.aspx
5. Strategy & Policy Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, SL, SG, RS) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/policy_group.aspx
6. Finance Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, SG, SL, JR) Next meeting? Report of meeting 22/10/13 posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx. Councillors agreed the recommendations in the report of Finance Group's meeting: donation of £100 to Staplehurst WI in recognition of their assistance at the Neighbourhood Plan events; quotation from Landscape Services to cut grass and fence-line at Surrenden Field (£589.39 and £265.71); quotation from Jubilee Field Management Committee to cut grass at Jubilee Field (£950); quotation from 1st Ace Security for smoke alarms at Jubilee Field Pavilion (£250). Councillors noted that agreement had been reached between MBC and parishes on payment of amounts under the Parish Services Scheme.
7. Playscheme (TB, JB, NK) http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/youth_activities_1.aspx
8. Publicity & Website Group (JP, TB, PK, MA, JB, NK, SL, JR) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/publicity_website.aspx

9. Rural Settlement Group including Neighbourhood Plan (JP, MA, JB, AS) Next meeting 13/11/13. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural_settlement_group.aspx.
10. Surrenden Playing Field Group (TB, BM, JR, AS) Next meeting? <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
Councillor Burnham said that he and Councillor Kelly had met representatives from MBC to discuss the possibility of the Parish Council acquiring the freehold and that initial indications were that MBC was more disposed towards another lease.
11. Village Enhancement Group (JP, TB, PK, JB, PB, SL, JR, AS) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups.aspx.

REPORTS FOR NOTING from local community groups:-

1. Carnival & Fete (SL, BM) 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 04/03/14. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/headcorn_aerodrome.aspx
4. Jubilee Field Management & Users Group (JP, PB) Next meeting 05/12/13. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/jubilee_fields_users_group.aspx
5. KALC Area Committee (JP, PB, PK, RS, PS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 25/09/13 awaited. Minutes of previous meetings posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kent_association_of_local_councils.aspx
6. Kent Community Alcohol Partnership (PB) – Next meeting? Report of meeting 04/09/13 awaited.
7. Knoxbridge A229 Residents' Group (BM, NK, PS) Next meeting?
8. McCabe Day Centre (JB) Next meeting 21/11/13. Report of meeting 17/10/13 posted at 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, PS) Next meeting 21/11/13. Minutes of previous meetings posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx
11. Sobell Cheshire Home (JP, PS) Next meeting 03/12/13. <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
12. Speed Watch (JB) <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/speedwatch.aspx>
13. Staplehurst Community Hub (JB) Next meeting?
14. Staplehurst Patients' Participation Group (JB, RS, PS) Next meeting 30/10/13 (AGM) Minutes of meeting 31/07/13 posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/patient_participation_group_at_health_centre.aspx
15. Staplehurst Primary School Liaison (SL, BM, JR)
16. Staplehurst Village Centre Trust (SL & PB) Next meeting 12/11/13. Minutes of meeting 15/10/13 posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/village_centre_trust.aspx
17. Village Sports & Social Club (PB) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/ot_hers.aspx
18. Youth Club (SL, PK) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_youth_club.aspx

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Before the meeting a resident spoke about her experience of parking at the Parade, the issuing of parking tickets and the impact this was having on local residents and businesses, most notably the Indian restaurant. She asked for the Parish Council's assistance to address the situation.