

Village Update

WINTER 2019

www.staplehurst-pc.uk

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – CALL FOR SITES

As part of its Local Plan Review, between March and May 2019, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) received submissions from landowners and developers offering sites for possible development. MBC has published on its website the information it received from those landowners and developers. You can view the information and a borough-wide map illustrating the location of the sites on MBC's website at <https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/planning-and-building/primary-areas/local-plan-review/call-for-sites>.

The submissions include 32 sites in the parish of Staplehurst. Submission of a site does not mean that it will automatically be accepted for inclusion in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

The Parish Council and its Neighbourhood Plan Review Group are conducting an initial review of the information issued by MBC. At the time of writing, the Parish Council is due to meet representatives of MBC in early December to discuss the information and to ask questions, especially about what analysis of the submissions MBC has undertaken or plans to undertake. The Parish Council will also be working with the Maidstone Area Committee of the Kent Association of Local

Councils, which represents the overarching interests of all parishes in the area.

When assessing the information and engaging with MBC, the Parish Council will be highlighting the need for MBC to take into account, under its Duty to Cooperate, the implications of development proposed in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Draft Local Plan. Such development will have a significant impact on traffic flows along the A229. The Parish Council will also raise its concerns about the inadequacy of inherited infrastructure and the apparent absence of plans to address the situation.

The Parish Council and its Neighbourhood Plan Review Group have been undertaking an update of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan which forms part of the Local Development Plan. We shall continue this work to ensure that the plan continues to serve the interests of the residents of Staplehurst.

If you have any questions about the Call for Sites information, please contact a councillor at the regular Saturday morning surgeries or contact the Parish Office where you can also view hard copies of the published information.

COUNCIL UPDATE

The Council has recently welcomed two new Councillors: David George and José Luis Castro. Both new Councillors have had an immediate and positive impact on the Council through their work on the Greener for Staplehurst manifesto, Parade clearing day and many other initiatives. We are sure you will join us in welcoming them. We look forward to seeing their impact on the village.

We would also like to say a huge congratulations to Councillor Tash Thomas who on the 10th November welcomed her gorgeous baby girl to the world. We cannot wait to meet her and we are sure she will follow in her mum's footsteps in making Staplehurst a greener and better place for all.

PAYBACK TEAM

Since returning to us in June, our Community Payback Team has been working hard in all weathers. To date, its members have made vast improvements at the Church, Village Centre, golf course and Bell Lane car park. Best of all, the Payback Team made a significant contribution at the Parade clearing day alongside volunteers from our community.

The team also took part in the last Village Clean-Up. It will continue to help the village. Some future jobs include tidying the graveyard, clearing a drainage ditch, making some more soakaways and work on the Wimpey Field.

Please say hello if you see them working, they really do appreciate it. The Parish Council always makes sure that they have a lunch provided for them; it is the least we can do for all the hard work they do for us.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

125TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

On Saturday 26th October an exhibition was held to celebrate 125 years of our Parish Council. This was probably the largest exhibition ever held in Staplehurst and a great way to celebrate being one of the first parish councils to be formed in Britain.



Hundreds of people enjoyed the chance to visit all 32 stalls to see what Staplehurst can offer today, as well as looking back on the long history of the Parish Council.

The original Parish Minute Books, borrowed from the County Archives, were on display throughout the event and have been digitally copied so that they are available for any

future research. The first meeting, held on December 4th 1894, saw 34 male residents stand to be elected as the first 9 Parish Councillors.

The event was attended and enjoyed by Her Worship, the Mayor of Maidstone, Councillor Marion Ring, and MP Helen Grant.

The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who was



involved in the event: the organisers, the groups who created and manned the splendid displays throughout the day and of course all those that attended.



FIREWORKS NIGHT



The Staplehurst Family Fireworks Event held at the Jubilee Field on 2nd November was another huge success. The team were worried in the days leading up to the event with warnings of wet and windy weather. However, their never say die attitude prevailed. Martin and his Scouts created another

wonderful Bonfire theme based on "The Phantom Fireworks Express" which was admired by everyone who attended. The rides, the Ferris wheel and all the stalls were busy throughout the evening and enjoyed by adults and children alike. Our local band "Fingles Cave" entertained with their wonderful array of songs.

Approximately 2,500 people attended and many local groups will benefit from donations from funds raised by the event.



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Scott Woodhams and his team on the Redrow Homes Woodlands Green site. They have won an NHBC Pride in the Job Award for excellence in on-site management.

GREENER STAPLEHURST

Through the initiative of some key villagers, and two of our Parish Councillors, the Greener Staplehurst group has been established and is already taking steps to deliver its manifesto as presented at the Parish Council meeting at the end of summer.

The group's members are working to build a village that lives in harmony with its environment, one that will be here for future generations supporting both fauna and flora.

There are short and long term plans to get the village 'Greener', which include more wild planting, encouraging local business to move to environmentally friendly packaging and processes, continuing the great work of the village clean-up initiative, and encouraging our young people to engage in their natural surroundings - protecting and preserving this as second nature.

The group has already secured a number of tree saplings from the Woodland Trust to be delivered in March 2020, along with the identification of key sites around the village which will be dedicated to wild flower planting, supporting bees and other small creatures.

They continue to work closely within the group, connecting to other key groups in existence as well as tapping into surrounding villages' knowledge and experience and support from the Borough Council who are also prioritising their work in this area.

If you want to follow this closely, please join our Facebook page 'Greener Staplehurst', as we post our progress, along with some tips and ways for all to get involved in making Staplehurst a beautiful place to live for all our creatures big and small.

TALKING MONEY

At this time of year, the Parish Council plans next year's budget. This is an increasingly challenging exercise. Whilst legislation dictates that certain services are provided at county and/or district level, financial constraints mean more and more is being pushed down to the first tier of local government, i.e. parish councils. To inform the current budget process, the Parish Council would welcome your comments about which Parish Council activities are important to you.

Broadly speaking, the Parish Council spends money on delivering services, local representation, administration, employing staff, donations to the community and engaging professional services. The largest of these categories are delivering services and employing staff, both at about 40% of total expenditure in 2018-19. Services include such items as street furniture, lighting (street and Christmas), salt bins, planters, public conveniences, CCTV, grounds maintenance (notably Jubilee, Surrenden and Wimpey Fields and the churchyard), Youth services (Youth Club and play scheme). In reality, staff costs are connected to all the other activities and are not stand-alone items. In the last complete financial year (2018-19), Staplehurst Parish Council spent £175,688.14.

The Parish Council raises its money from a grant from MBC for delivering services, sundry other grants, but mainly from its parishioners in the form of the parish precept. This is a small part of the council tax that you pay to MBC. In 2018-19 the Parish Council raised £145,000 via the precept, equating to £1.16 per week per Band D property. In the current year, this figure rose to £150,650 (£1.19 per Band D property). In these years the precept has represented about 93% of the Parish Council's income.

In the past two years and the current one, the Parish Council has funded about 10% of its annual expenditure from its reserves (or savings). The Council's reserves remain at a satisfactory level, but no-one has a bottomless pot of money. In the coming year, the Parish Council will have exciting opportunities and challenges. For example, the conclusion of a new 125-year lease on Surrenden Field means there are opportunities for investment with security of tenure; the football club has great plans for Jubilee Field; the Local Plan Review poses the challenge of new development and demands on the village's infrastructure; and we must continue to review our Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it remains relevant to the village's future.

The Parish Council would like to know which services are important to you and which are not. What do you feel is a realistic price to pay for your services? This year the precept went up 3% which equated to 3p per week for a Band D property. Is another 3p per week enough? A 10% increase in the precept would cost an additional 13p per week and would provide over £15,000 additional funding. Or should the increase be more?

Please send your views to the Parish Office. To discuss any questions, please contact a parish councillor or the Parish Office by using the contact details in this publication and on the Parish Council website.

ALLOTMENTS

The Parish Council is mindful that some residents would like to have an allotment and keeps a record of all requests. A specific reserve fund for possible allotment provision is held within the Parish Council budget and it would welcome information about potentially suitable sites. The Parish Council has agreed to take on eight allotments that will be provided on completion of development at Hen & Duckhurst Farm (est. 2022).

DAVID WILSON HOMES – DICKENS GATE DEVELOPMENT

On 5th November David Wilson Homes officially unveiled hoarding designs produced by Year 10 pupils from High Weald Academy, which had been created under the theme of Remembrance Day. County Councillor Eric Hotson and Parish Councillor Peter Spearink attended, as did members of families of local people whose names inspired some of the road names, who had been invited



by David Wilson Homes.

The remembrance theme was chosen in part due to the housebuilder's partnership with Royal British Legion Industries whose veterans have produced a range of signs for Dickens Gate. All photographs for the hoardings that were submitted by the pupils are to be displayed in the show home garden at Dickens Gate.

20 MPH AREA

The Road Safety Group wrote to every household along the roads near to the school and Surrenden Playing Field, asking for their opinions about reducing the speed limit to 20mph. This was to inform a request to join a KCC Pilot Study into the effectiveness of reducing vehicle speeds where there are significant pedestrian movements.

There were 86 respondents. 13 agreed and 68 strongly agreed that such a scheme would be beneficial. 3 disagreed and 2 strongly disagreed with the proposals. This nearly 93% approval result has been forwarded to KCC with our suggested area and we eagerly await their response.

STOP PRESS - SAINSBURY'S

Sainsbury's has notified the Parish Council that it intends to apply to MBC to vary the terms of the planning consent for the store and to reinstate the consent granted for the petrol station. A representative has further advised that, subject to board approval, Sainsbury's will aim to deliver the store and petrol station during the financial year 2020-21. As we go to press, arrangements are in hand for a meeting between representatives of the Parish Council and the company in early December.

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES

All Parish Councillors and Parish Office staff have new e-mail addresses. For full details, visit the Parish Councillors and Officers pages of our website www.staplehurst-pc.uk.

VILLAGE UPDATE FEEDBACK

If you have any comments about the Village Update, its content or format, please feel free to share them with us via the Parish Office. Don't forget, you can read past copies on the Parish Council's website.

PARISH COUNCIL CLERK

In June 2020 our Parish Clerk will retire and the Parish Council is starting the search for his replacement now. If you are interested in knowing more, look out shortly for press advertisements and for information on the Parish Council website; or simply contact the Parish Office.

BIN-SHARING

Do you sometimes run out of space to discard your rubbish and recycling? Does your neighbour have bins that are regularly empty? Why not come to an arrangement with your neighbours to share bins whenever they are empty? That will help get rid of your excess waste, save you a trip to the dump and reduce our carbon footprint!

Be neighbourly – donate the spare space in your rubbish and recycling bins!

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Parish Council's festive lights will be installed on lamp columns along the High Street for the Christmas period. A few of the columns will not have lights installed; this is because KCC has excluded them from the licence it has granted to the Parish Council, due to imminent replacement of the columns.

The initiative for the Christmas trees and the lighting at The Parade was put forward by Made by Kent. Many other local shops and businesses, including the Parish Council, sponsored the trees and the large tree lighting was sponsored by Staplehurst Family Fireworks Group. Volunteers from many local groups worked together to put the trees and lighting in place and local children decorated the trees.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Paddy Riordan (Chairman)
Colin Bowden
Joan Buller
José Castro
Mick Chapman
Susan Forward
David George
Sam Lain-Rose
Helen Miller
John Perry (Vice-Chairman)
Zara Rawlinson
Adele Sharp
Peter Spearink
Natasha Thomas
Catherine Walsh

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

DEPUTY CLERK AND FINANCE OFFICER

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

PARISH SUPPORT OFFICER

Mrs Jean Terry

CARETAKER

Mr Paul Nyahwa

Address:

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

Email: clerk@staplehurst-pc.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours:

9am to 1pm Mondays to Thursdays,
other times by appointment (closed Fridays).

SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

- Borough Councillor Perry: last Saturday of each month from 10am until noon (not December)
- Parish Council: last Saturday of each month from 10am until noon (not December)
- PCSO Pete Gardner: Saturday 21st December from 10am until 11am.

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