

## STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW GROUP

### Minutes of virtual meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 at 7.45pm

1. **Present.** Chairman Margaret Arger (MA), Cllr. Joan Buller (JB), Robin Oakley, (RO), Secretary, Colin Love (CL), Robin Kenworthy (RK), Cllr, Adele Sharp (AS), Cllr,. Paddy Riordan (PR), Cllr. Natasha Davidson--Houston (NDH), Cllr. Joris Eerdeken (JE) Colin Love (CL), Richard Smith (RS) attended from 8.20pm.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr. John Perry, Tom Burnham.
3. **Minutes of Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2022:** Agreed as a true record.
4. **Matters arising.** None.
5. **Ilke Homes – Withdrawal of Planning Application for 94 homes at Lodge Road.** It was noted that the planning application has been withdrawn and MBC are taking no further action on it
6. **Consideration of draft Policy H6 New Development Access Links prepared by Cllr. Joan Buller.**  
JE queried the reason for there being a number of 20 units and it was explained that its is important to set a number, otherwise developers can argue against the neighbourhood plan. JE also queried whether all spine roads should be adopted and it was agreed that they should be. CL agreed to make final revisions to the draft and send them to RO not later than 10<sup>th</sup> November so that the draft can be distributed with the agenda and finally agreed at the November meeting.
7. **Review of Policy H6 Employment Facilities.** It was agreed that this policy needs to be renumbered as H7. It was agreed that it is important that the remaining land at the end of Lodge Road should, if possible, be reserved for commercial development rather than housing and PR stressed the importance of having sites for employment. NDH expressed concern at the suggestion that business development should be encouraged at the farms at Saynden, Brattle and Slaney as she lives opposite Saynden and when maximum electrical power is being used at the present commercial premises there, she tends to lose power and her internet connection is not good. She also pointed out that Brattle now has a florist on site. CL pointed out that some farm buildings could be converted into business premises. RK said that some farm buildings could be used as artisan workshops. AS pointed out that 'Made in Kent' was a group of home working cottage artisans. JB and AS said that we need to protect businesses already in Lodge Road and pointed out that there are currently a number of units which are empty. RS spoke as a businessman and said that he didn't think businesses are keen to come to Staplehurst as it is too far from the motorway, with poor road connections and communications. AS pointed out that change of use for some buildings has been a problem and said that, as an example, MBC had refused a change of use to a gym on one of the units. CL pointed out a mix of office/home working was providing a healthier lifestyle option.  
RS said that he believed that home working was decreasing and more people were returning to commuting and JE said that he believed that such commuters were not commuting 5 days a week and more likely to be 3 days a week.  
RO was asked to review his document, taking into account the views expressed by members, and incorporating an improved preamble suggested by RK, and produce this for further discussion at the November meeting of the Group.
8. **Renewable Energy.** NDH raised the issue of the three applications for solar farms within the parish and sought clarification as companies promoting solar farms advise that at the end of the operational period the sites would return to agricultural use. JB said that the advice given by MBC is that the land would be designated as brown field sites. Brown field designation could lead to the risk of hamlet developments in the future. Wind turbines are also an open option. Solar panels on new houses are not currently being required as a prime building requirement by MBC.
9. **Parking Policy.** The current N P does not have a parking policy and it is questionable whether MBC's parking policy is adequate. JB said that the current Churchill site in the High Street could be approved on appeal without any regulation of car parking for residents or visitors. PR said that we should have a parking policy and JB agreed to draft one for discussion at the November meeting of the Group.
10. **Additional land provision for sports facilities.** RO said that more sites should be allocated to sports facilities as the Jubilee Field football pitches would soon be in use to their full capacity and JB and PR

agreed. CL said that he supports sport and leisure facilities but also the need for land for a secondary school and he suggested the Stanley Farm site on the South side of Headcorn Road. It was agreed that the Home Farm site in Pile Lane which had been the subject of a planning application for more housing would be ideal for a sports hall and additional parking for Jubilee Field. RO suggested that the land between Sweetlands Lane and the railway line, i.e. on the West side of Headcorn Road is flat and could be used for sports pitches. RO to draft a clause.

**11. Answer to FOI request to Southern Water.** No response at this time.

**12. River Beult and its SSS status.** RK agreed to write a short paragraph in relation to that part of the Beult which runs adjacent to, and forms the parish boundary of Staplehurst. This should be with RO by 10<sup>th</sup> November for distribution to members with the agenda for the November meeting.

**13. Dates and locations for the Group meetings from November, 2022.** It was agreed that it was now becoming difficult to continue with Zoom meetings as there are now more members of the Group and Zoom has been presenting problems. RO reported that he had investigated whether the Youth Club is available on Wednesday evenings, which it is, it was agreed that face-to-face meetings would be resumed with effect from the meeting on Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. RO will prepare a draft list of meeting dates for 2023 for discussion at the next meeting of the Group.

**14. Any other business.**

JB said that she had tried to get a slot to speak on the subject of Staplehurst as a Rural Service Centre at the Planning Inspector's hearing on the proposed Maidstone Local Plan but has been refused a slot.

NDH asked that Renewable Energy be placed on the agenda for the next meeting and RO was asked to send her a copy of the work already done on PW 1,2,3 & 4. This was done subsequent to the meeting.

**15. Date of Next Meeting**

**Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at 7.45pm. in the Youth Club**

**No meeting in December**

Robin Oakley 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2022.