



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

7TH APRIL 2026 MINUTES

PUBLIC FORUM –

24/502235/FULL – A resident raised two false and inaccurate pieces of information contained within the application:

MBC confirm that the site is within the High Weald ANOB and the NPPF requires the applicant to “demonstrate exceptional circumstances” to obtain approval. The applicant cannot do this, so the applicant claims the site is not in the High Weald AONB.

Balfour Winery do not acknowledge the claim by the applicant that Balfour Winery is supportive but are against the application but seeking conditions if the application is approved.

26/500532/FULL – a resident spoke to explain that they have purchased the woodland and to manage the woodland they need access plus that the neighbours are causing flooding to the area, so a permeant track is now required where a temporary track had been created.

Present: Cllr Arger, Ash, Sharp, Pett, Mclaughlin and Clerk

APOLOGIES: Cllr Farragher. Absent Cllr Wakeford

APPROVAL OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES: Minute Pages 1848P-1852P of 16th March 2026 available at: <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/planning-committee/> Cllr Mclaughlin proposed, and Cllr Pett seconded to recommend approval of the minutes of the 16th March 2026 meeting, agreed majority 4 for, 0 against and 1 abstained. Duly signed by the Chairman of the previous meeting.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda: -

1. Declarations of Lobbying - NA
2. Declarations of Changes to the Register of Interests - NA
3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda - NA
4. Requests for Dispensation - NA

CLERK'S PLANNING REPORT:

If an application for “300 homes north station Rd Staplehurst” is submitted it will be called in by the MBC Ward Cllr Perry.

MBC response to our complaint regarding ENV Scoping has been circulated, Cllrs Arger, Ash and Clerk to draft a response

Signed by Chairman.....Dated.....

FULL PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

24/502235/FULL: Mathurst Farm Land West Of Goudhurst Road Staplehurst Kent

[The construction and operation of an 18MW solar photovoltaic \(PV\) generation project and widened access to Goudhurst Road with associated infrastructure, including inverters, transformers, substations, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.](#)

Following a debate which included reiterating previous comments but highlighted

- Top Grade agricultural land being turned into industrial waste land – brown field site – due to apparent environmental policies
- Far better locations for solar panels such as housing, industrial sites etc
- Significant environmental damage to the High Weald AONB and the landscape setting
- Negative impact on major, renowned employer in the area

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Pett seconded to recommend refusal on the following grounds.

Agreed unanimously

- a) Flawed and inaccurate application; just two examples being;
1. The site is within the High Weald ANOB and the NPPF requires the applicant to “demonstrate very special circumstances” to obtain approval. The applicant cannot do this, as the applicant claims the site is not in the High Weald AONB and therefore little impact on High Weald AONB
 2. Applicant falsely claims Balfour Winery is now supportive, Balfour Winery is not supportive – . “Solar panels can increase local temperatures and alter wind patterns, potentially affecting the growth and quality of grapevines....the damage to the vines will not be known until after the development takes place...” If the application is approved Balfour Winery are seeking conditions.
- b) Harm to the High Weald AONB
- NPPF paragraph 135c
 - MBC Local Plan Policy LPRSP14(A) and LPRQD4
- c) Adverse impacts on the landscape
- NPPF – paragraph 165a, 169, 187a, 189, 190 and 198c
 - MBC Local Plan Policy LPRSP9, Policy LPRSP14(A) and LPRQD4
 - Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Policy PW2 – new development in the countryside - and PW3 – renewable energy projects
- d) Adverse harm to heritage
- NPPF Section 16
 - MBC Local Plan Policy LPRENV1
- e) Unsafe access arrangements,
- NPPF paragraph 115
 - MBC Local Plan Policy LPRTRA2
- f) Support the residents’ comments, notably N Harper (March 2025) and Alexis Campbell KC (May 2024)

Surely, rather than destroy a nationally protected rural heritage setting, for renewable energy to help preserve the environment, it would be far better to place solar panels on more industrial and appropriate locations.

In addition, the risk of negative impact on major, renowned employer in the area should not be taken.

If MBC are minded to approve, or the application is won on appeal we request the following developer contributions;

- S106 funding to KCC Highways to upgrade and maintain the rural road network

Signed by Chairman.....Dated.....

- S106 funding for EV charging points in Staplehurst
- S106 funding for Community facilities – Staplehurst Community Centre
- CIL funding for Staplehurst

Furthermore, if MBC Planning Officers are minded to approve the application, request that the application is called into MBC Planning Committee and that MBC Planning Committee and Officers undertake a site visit to better understand the negative impact on the High Weald AONB, the rural landscape and the area generally to help inform their debate.

26/500614/FULL: Magnetic Shields Ltd Headcorn Road Staplehurst Kent TN12 0DS

[Removal of existing life expired roof and wall cladding. Demolition of existing redundant projection on west elevation. Replacement of roof and wall using insulated profiled metal cladding. Installation of solar panels to each roof slope and illuminated company logo to front and side walls.](#)

Following a debate which note the welcomed, sensible, environmentally appropriate use of an industrial location for solar panels to generate electricity. Cllr Ash proposed, and Cllr Sharp seconded to recommend approval - Agreed unanimously.

26/500532/FULL: Maplehurst Farm Frittenden Road Staplehurst Kent TN12 0DL

[Application for a new farm track leading to the existing woodland track \(retrospective\)](#)

Following a debate which noted the need for a farm track for woodland management and partially due to neighbours causing flooding to the area. Although retrospective applications are not welcomed, Cllr Ash proposed, and Cllr Pett seconded to recommend approval - Agreed unanimously.

26/500946/FUL: Ash House Frittenden Road Staplehurst Kent TN12 0DH

[Erection of a two-storey side extension and elevational changes. Changes to fenestration.](#)

Following a debate which included, as long as MBC are satisfied that the extension was less than 50% of the original dwelling and include integrated Bat and Bird boxes, Cllr Pett proposed, and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend approval Agreed unanimously.

Lawful Development Certificates - NA

Tree Preservation Orders

26/501070/TPOA : Sobell Lodge High Street Staplehurst Kent TN12 0BJ

[TPO application to remove \(fell\) one English Oak \(T1\) to near ground level. Owner to physically remove any regrowth \(no chemical treatment due to translocation risk\).](#)

Cllr Pett proposed, and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend referral to the Tree Officer but noted concerns about the removal of an English Oak Tree - Agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS: (for noting)

26/500113/FULL 1 King Road Staplehurst Kent TN12 0GU

Conversion of existing roof storage within detached double garage into home office/habitable space including 2no. front dormers and external staircase. MBC granted / SPC recommend approval, with the condition that the application is tied to the main property

26/500247/FULL2 Husheath Cottages Husheath Hill Staplehurst Kent TN17 2NG

Erection of a two storey side extension. MBC granted / SPC recommended approval

Meeting closed.....8.30pm.....

Signed by Chairman.....Dated.....