

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES 24TH JULY 2023.

Public Forum

A number of residents spoke about their concerns regarding Home Farm outline planning application (23/502771) – lack of infrastructure to cope with growth – schools, Doctors, sewage, water etc. as well as impact of traffic in the area – namely the busy Headcorn Road and a new access into the rural road which is 60mph.

A resident spoke in support of planning application 23/502688 in that provision of EV charging was a planning condition, that there is a lack of the EV charging in Staplehurst and West Kent in general, it is “fast charging” (about 20 minutes), it will be fully sustainable with electricity supplied from sustainable sources and proposed operating hours are 5am – 10pm each day.

A number of residents raised concerns about the Parade planning application (23/503094) the extension of hours will lead to parking problems, extra traffic, problems with anti-social behaviour

Present: Cllr Eerdekens, Arger, Farragher, Mclaughlin, Pett, ash and Mrs Buller – a non-Councillor / no voting member plus the Clerk.

Apologies – Cllr Sharp and Farragher

APPROVAL OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES: Minute Pages 1679P-1681P of 3rd July 2023 available at: <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/planning-committee/>

Not enough Cllrs present at this meeting who were at the last meeting to proposed and seconded the minutes of the 3rd July 2023 – bring back to next meeting.

URGENT ITEMS: Only for items which require a decision before the next meeting on 14th August 2023. Item to be agreed first, and then not discussed until “Agreed Urgent Items” after Councillor Declarations - NA

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 – Cllr Ash and Cllr Pett (23/502771)
4. Requests for Dispensation - Cllr Ash to speak and vote - agreed

AGREED URGENT ITEMS:

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TERMS OF REFERENCE:

A discussion on the review of the Planning Committee Terms of Reference took place with the main points being

Historically planning applications which have wide implications for the village are referred to Full Council

This is so all Cllrs can consider the application – sometimes in the past those not on Planning committee feel aggrieved they have not come to Full Council

Planning Committee Councilors can offer support and information on the planning matters

Following a discussion Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend to Council the following amendment to the Planning Committee Terms of Reference.

“ If a planning application is deemed to have wide implications for the Parish a Planning Committee Councillor can request the Planning Committee Chairman to consult with the Full Council Chairman and refer the planning application to Full Council for consideration and comment”

Agreed unanimously

FULL PLANNING APPLICATIONS: (for comment/recommendation)

23/502688 **Staplehurst Nurseries, Clapper Lane TN12 0JT** – Installation of 8no. rapid electric vehicle charging stations within the existing car park, with associated lighting, substation, feeder pillar and metering box, and equipment.

Following a debate which highlighted the concerns about noise and light pollution in the area for neighbours there was general support. It complies with a planning condition; it meets MBC Local Plan DM2 – sustainable design and Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy PW3. There is a recognized shortage of EV charging points. The Parish Council have requested Maidstone Borough Council to install some EV charging points at either the Parade or Bell Lane car parks.

Main concern was early opening 5am?

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Eerdekenes seconded to recommend support with the condition that the daily operating hours should be 6am – 10pm agreed by majority 3 for, 1 against and 1 abstained

23/502956 **Cocklewood Farm, Five Oak Lane TN12 0HT** - Demolition of an existing dwelling within an ancient replanted woodland, and erection of a new replacement dwelling elsewhere on Cocklewood Farm (Resubmission 23/500231/FULL).

Previously the Parish Council recommended support but Maidstone Borough Council refused on size of building – this has now been reduced therefore support on same grounds as previously With regards to the erection of a new replacement dwelling elsewhere on Cocklewood Farm, Councillors had noted Marden Parish Council's comments and made further and supporting comments as follows:

1. Councillors proposed that a Landscape Plan should be submitted and that consideration should be given to light pollution at the site.
2. If Planning Permission is granted, Councillors recommend that a condition should be applied that ties the new dwelling to agriculture and Cocklewood Farm in particular.

Signed.....Date.....

3. Appropriate screening of the property, as a new dwelling in the countryside should be applied as a condition of any permission granted

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend support – agreed unanimously

23/502965 **14 Corner Farm Road TN12 OPN** - Conversion of garage to habitable space

Cllr Mclaughlin proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend support – agreed unanimously

23/503059 **Yew Tree House, George Street TN12 ORB** - Single storey rear extension and replacement garage.

The extension is not large and squares off the back of the house with limited impact on neighbours.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to recommend support – agreed unanimously

23/503094 **3 The Parade TN12 OLA** - Section 73 Application for Variation of Condition 3 (revised the opening times on Monday to Friday from 12:00 hrs to 22:00 hrs (earlier opening) pursuant to application 22/501684/FULL for Change of Use from Shop (Class E) to a hot food takeaway (Sui Generis) and installation of a flue.

This is a variation on an approved planning application – the current approved opening hours are 4pm – 10pm Monday – Friday and 12 noon – 10pm Saturday and Sunday

They are seeking 12 noon to 10pm every day.

The application is inaccurate as some other takeaways close in the afternoons and shut on Sunday.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend refusal as the information on the application is incorrect – agreed unanimously

23/503100 **Lovehurst Paddock, Goudhurst Road TN12 OHQ** - Change of use from equestrian to dog exercise area and erection of stock fencing.

Cllrs noted support from neighbours and there appeared to be a demand for a dog exercise area.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to recommend support – agreed unanimously

LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE:

23/502900 **The Bungalow, Chickenden Lane TN12 ODP** - to establish the existing use as a dwellinghouse without compliance with the agricultural occupancy condition.

Noted

23/502946 **Kingfishers, Chickenden Lane TN12 ODP** - for existing use of a single dwelling- house, being inhabited by persons not solely or mainly employed, or last employed, in agriculture (in non-compliance with condition 2 of the approved planning application MA/02/0237; an Agricultural Occupancy Condition). Noted

Signed.....Date.....

OUTLINE APPLICATION: (for comment/recommendation) (see attached appendices)

23/502771 **Home Farm, Couchman Green Lane TN12 0RU** - for demolition of existing kennels, hardstanding and associated buildings and removal of dog track. Erection of up to 61no. dwellings comprising 51no. on site A, with new access from Headcorn Road, and 10no. on Site B, with new access from Couchman Green Lane (All matters reserved except for access).

Mrs Buller gave the Committee some background information;

In 2020 the Call for Sites included this site – one of 31 sites in and around Staplehurst – this was one of only two that came forward into the revised Local Plan, currently awaiting comments by the Planning Inspector. There are a number of concerns with this site;

Rightly residents have spoken this evening about a lack of infrastructure – Doctors, Nursery places, school places, as well as sewage and water systems. In addition, the “Service Centre” Bus Service has slowly been withdrawn. There is a new “Neighbourhood 20” document i.e. a 20-minute walk to services. The Council does not consider this is being adhered to on this site. The site designs do not have Emergency exits, footpaths and this is only an “Outline Planning application” which is always a concern.

An application came forward in April 2021 – The Parish Recommended refusal and Maidstone Borough Council felt the application was premature due to the Local Plan being reviewed.

Also, in December 2022 Staplehurst suffered low water pressure/ no water supplies for 10 days ruining Christmas for many residents and having a huge financial impact on local businesses, especially our only remaining pub.

Cllrs noted Mrs Buller’s comments and felt we needed to re-emphasise previous points made in the April 2021 application and comments to the Planning Inspector regarding the site. They also thanked residents for their comments.

The site is not identified as a suitable site for development within the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and Councillors have objected to the proposed inclusion of the site in the MBC Local Plan Review 18b consultation. It is against policies SP23, DM1 of the local plan and the NPPF. The site is not included in MBC’s Local Plan and there is sufficient supply of land in the current 5-year plan, therefore this site is not necessary. Councillors were extremely concerned about the proposed access onto the dangerous bend on the busy Headcorn Road, and wished to draw the Planning Officer’s attention to the previous requirement for Redrow to amend their proposed access road in their original plans; converting it to a shared access route with Pile Lane. They commented that the Council’s Speedwatch group, on the 2nd April 2021 (bank holiday), recorded over 20% of vehicles exceeding 35mph with some logged at 51, 46 & 45mph far above the speed limit on a quiet day for traffic. Councillors supported MBC Planning concerns that the north part of the site around Pile Lane and Sweetlands Lane is in Flood Zone 2. Councillors agreed to submit photographs taken earlier this year to show evidence of the flooding already occurring prior to any development. Councillors also strongly supported the statement made by KCC that *"KCC has objected to previous development within Staplehurst due to the impact on the signal-controlled crossroads at the junction of Headcorn Road, High Street, Marden Road and Station Road known as Cuckolds Corner. With the committed development the junction will operate beyond its capacity."*, and note that much of the traffic data supplied by the applicant is well out of date. Additionally, Councillors stressed the increased danger this development would create by directing more traffic towards the already seriously treacherous narrow single file Hawkenbury Bridge.

Signed.....Date.....

In addition; SPC does not support this site for the following reasons: -

1 SPC notes that an extra parcel of land has been added to this allocation now known as site B. This means more of our open countryside is allocated for housing. This parcel of land is extremely wet for most of the year and has a public footpath going across it, yet there is no mention of this.

2 These sites are too far from public transport, schools, services and shops making them unsustainable locations, totally dependent on the car (against Policies SP23 and new policy LPRSP15, DM1, Building for life 12 and the NPPF). This will increase the carbon footprint and goes against the very serious issue of dealing with the world's Climate Emergency.

3 We note that the provision of a new bus route to make this allocation viable has been removed from the site details. These sites are more than 400m from a bus-stop and so access to alternative forms of transport is not met, going against current policies.

4 These sites will generate more traffic to the crossroads and now a contribution to improve this area has also been removed in Reg 19. Many ideas for these crossroads have been put forward and been abandoned. The significant changes previously suggested to improve the crossroads would totally destroy the rural character of the village scene (monument, Chestnut Avenue, historical housing) and be financially unviable. Recently, MBC and Kent did a joint investigation into the traffic going through these crossroads on the A229 and declared this area at capacity with no means to remedy this. The joint research declared that no more housing should be built that relied on the crossroads to access services and employment. However, we are now being allocated further sites on the Headcorn Road. We also need to point out that the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan is planning to build hundreds of homes to the south of Staplehurst which will generate a huge increase in traffic through Staplehurst accessing our station, supermarket and the County town of Maidstone. Our historic crossroads will not be able to cope, causing further grid-lock at peak times.

5 These sites would also generate traffic over the dangerous Hawkenbury River Bridge with no provision for improvements to highway safety here. This is a priority on the Highways Improvement Plans for both Headcorn and Staplehurst. Undesirable rat runs in the country lanes in this area will also increase.

6 Site A is planned to be another cul-de-sac estate which is against the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) Objective 3 and Building for life 12. All new housing should be plugged in to the existing built-up area and have a series of well-connected streets.

7 These sites form part of a Landscape of Local Value, being part of Staplehurst Low Weald (against MBC Policy SP17 and new policy LPRSP9).

8 MBC acknowledges that the northern part of the site is in Flood Zone 2 and so not suitable for development. Building on the rest of this site will exacerbate the surface water situation with its high water-table (against MBC Policy DM1). Staplehurst, like many other areas, is experiencing unprecedented levels of flooding. See photos below, Home Farm 14th January 2021.

Signed.....Date.....



Site B from Little Threads – footpath through the mire



Home Farm House at blind junction



Couchman Green Lane- flooded field from stream overflows



Sweetlands Lane where stream meets the ditch



Above from Pile Lane entrance to site – water flowing

On the left from Sweetland to greyhound track water flowing

Signed.....Date.....

9 Pile Lane could be utilised as the access road rather than the Headcorn Road. This would enhance safety by focusing all movements into the existing Great Threads junction rather than creating yet another potential accident black-spot and destroying the ancient hedgerow that characterise this busy rural lane. The second access road could be at the northern end of Pile Lane, just as Little Threads does from the Redrow estate. Pedestrians should be provided for within the estates rather than along Pile Lane. A pedestrian access from the Home Farm to the Redrow estates should be built across the ditches to facilitate connectivity.

Even though this area of the Headcorn Road now has a 30mph speed limit, a large proportion of vehicles drive in excess of this. SPC has commissioned a week-long road traffic survey in the Headcorn Road, due to be carried out in November 2021, see below

TRANSPORT TRAFFIC SYSTEMS (TTS) 24/11/21 – 30/11/21 Report by Malcolm Buller 11/1/22

Headcorn Road just east of Poppy's Nursery 30mph Westbound towards Cuckolds Corner

	0-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-60	61-70	71-100	TOTAL
Wed	1354	912	371	104	22	8	0	0	2,771
Thur	1111	848	329	73	27	10	0	0	2,278
Fri	1071	839	322	91	24	0	0	0	2,347
Sat	780	817	338	71	16	2	0	0	2,024
Sun	614	613	298	92	14	8	0	0	1,639
Mon	1230	758	229	40	12	4	0	0	2,273
Tue	1369	802	308	53	11	5	0	0	2,548
2021	7,409	5,589	2,195	524	126	37	0	0	15,880
% of total	<i>46.66</i>	<i>35.20</i>	<i>13.82</i>	<i>3.30</i>	<i>0.79</i>	<i>0.23</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

8,471 = 53.34% are speeding. 2,892 = 18.13% were recorded at 36mph and above in the week including the 163 = 1.02% vehicles exceeding the 50% threshold. See comments below.

Headcorn Road just east of Poppy's Nursery 30mph Eastbound towards Hawkenbury

	0-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-60	61-70	71-100	TOTAL
Wed	1347	1028	412	95	18	11	0	0	2,913
Thur	1192	932	405	83	14	10	1	0	2,637
Fri	1186	909	396	94	8	3	0	0	2,596
Sat	767	852	359	73	16	2	0	0	2,069
Sun	520	662	366	88	25	2	0	0	1,663
Mon	1476	786	272	39	7	0	0	0	2,580
Tue	1369	837	335	67	16	2	0	0	2,626
2021	7,857	6,006	2,545	539	104	32	1	0	17,084
% of total	<i>45.99</i>	<i>35.16</i>	<i>14.90</i>	<i>3.15</i>	<i>0.61</i>	<i>0.19</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0</i>	

9,227 = 54.01% are speeding. 3,221 = 18.85% were recorded at 36mph and above in the week including the 137 = 0.81% vehicles exceeding the 50% threshold. It is of concern that well over half of vehicles are speeding in this residential area, with many at speeds that would receive a police

Signed.....Date.....

caution or points on their licence. A controlled pedestrian crossing would give a strong visual reminder as well as improve pedestrian safety.

On every day, more vehicles left Staplehurst than entered via this route! Does this confirm we don't need any more houses?

SPC thought that the Bovis Estate was to provide a Puffin crossing, but the condition was only for dropped kerbs. There is no safe designated place for a proper pedestrian crossing to connect with the housing on the south side in this site allocation.

SPC expects all homes on sites to be carbon neutral which can be achieved by strong policies elsewhere in the revised Local Plan.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to recommend refusal by majority 4 for refusal, 0 against and 1 abstained on the following policy grounds;

MBC Local Plan policies – SP17 SP23, DM1 of the local plan and the NPPF.

MBC new Local Plan Review policy LPRSP9, LPRSP15,

Building for life 12

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) Objective 3, PW2

If the Planning officer is minded to be approved we request that it is referred to the MBC Planning Committee.

DECISIONS: - Noted

23/500404 **Weald Cottage, Maidstone Road TN12 ORE** - Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement two storey dwelling to include a basement and new access to form in-out drive (Amendment to approved application 22/504221/FULL). MBC GRANTED with 14 conditions. SPC had recommended Refusal (Min 1663P).

23/501696 **Newstead Farm, Couchman Green Lane TN12 ORT** - Erection of an equestrian hay barn. MBC GRANTED with 5 conditions. SPC had recommended Approval (Min 1672P).

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

Signed.....Date.....