

**Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 8 April 2019 at Beechen Hall,
Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 pm.**

Present: Mrs W Hinder (Chairman), Mrs A Brindle, Ms L Clarke, Mr J Constable, Mr I Davies, Mr B Hinder, Mr D Hollands, Mrs P Huntingford and Mr J Willmott, together with Mrs P Bowdery Clerk.

1 Apologies and absences

None as all members present.

2 Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying

None.

3. Minutes of the Meetings 18 March 2019

The minutes were **agreed** and **signed** as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Minute 3228/4.1 Yellow lines at junctions in Grove Green. Installation of yellow lines should have started on, or soon after, 23 March. As work had not commenced the Clerk was asked to contact KCC for an update. **Action Clerk.**

4.2 Minute 3228/4.3 Traffic survey Boxley Village. The office has approached KCC about whether BPC can have copies of the data collected by the survey lines south of Boxley Village. The Chairman was asked to take the issue up with KCC. **Action Cllr Wendy Hinder.**

4.3 Minute 3228/4.6 Junction 3 M2. Waiting Government response to 10 MPs request for action on local infrastructure. **Noted.**

4.4 Minute 3231/7.2 litter Lordswood, Walderslade and countryside. **Noted.**

4.5 Minute 3231/10. Management of donation to the Friends of Weaving Heath and Woodlands. Members approved the procedure. **Action office.**

4.6 Any other matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda. None.

As no members of the public were present the meeting was not adjourned.

5. Planning Applications for Consideration

18/506656/FULL. Erection of a new two storey primary school and special educational needs secondary school with vehicular and pedestrian access via Kent Medical Campus together with associated car parking and drop off area, pedestrian access, drainage, areas for formal and informal outdoor play and landscaping works at Popesfield, Bearsted Road, Weaving. **Ratified** the Clerk's decision. After consulting members.

The parish council has objections to the amended plans and wishes to see the application refused for the following reasons:

NPPF requires development to be sustainable and only a real proven overriding need can change this requirement. The parish council considers, and it has studied the statistics in the recently published Maidstone Primary School Preference Figures For Entry Into Primary School for Sept 2019, there is no proven need for a new primary school in this area.

The potential other sites investigated, and rejected, by the application have only been considered for the two schools and not just for a single primary school. It is recognised that the majority of SEND students will have to access schooling by private or provided transport therefore the location of a SEND school is not fixed to a specific catchment area, in this case it is anticipated that students may come from as far afield as Ashford. With the removal of the SEND element of the school e.g. the football pitches etc. the primary school will have a significantly reduced footprint and thus some of the rejected sites may be suitable. It is not clear whether KCC Education has actually investigated extending existing schools to meet future need.

The location is unsustainable as it relies on significant numbers of students and staff accessing the site by private vehicles. The amended Draft Travel Plan and Planning Statement acknowledges that the relocation of the entrance onto the Kent Medical Campus "significantly increases the walking distance from the east." The removal of the proposed all weather footpath also means that people "routing from Grove Green or the west would not now use Bearsted Road". There is currently no direct public transport route onto the site and no guarantee that one will ever be provided.

Parking and drop off/pick up provision on the site. The amended plans/documents regarding this are contradictory and it is unclear whether there will be an increase of 12 or 14 drop off spaces. Regardless of the correct figure the amended documents make certain statements that do not pass the most casual inspection.

It is anticipated that 91 vehicles will be required to park in the car park or drop off layby, including vacant mini bus bays, which total 61 places. The positive references to the effectiveness of the drop off/pick up zones/spaces rely on:

- Parents arriving at a steady and even rate over the 30 minute drop off time.
- The turnaround predictions, 15 minutes for KS1 and 6 minutes for KS2, again rely on there being a steady and even stream of vehicles arriving and departing and absolutely no delays in exiting or returning to the vehicle by any parents or students.
- The positive statements concerning turn around for KS2 children are only correct if "parents are not required to leave their vehicle" (Transport Technical Note). So effectively the applicant is stating that KS2 children will be dropped off at the lay by and then what? collected by staff and taken on a long walk to the classroom? Only a Head Teacher can decide on whether students can be dropped off to find their own way or whether, as is usual for primary schools, require KS1, KS2 and often KS3 to be escorted to the classroom door. The applicant is therefore making unsafe and questionable assumptions on what will be acceptable to the Head Teacher. The layby in question is very long and students being dropped off at the end of it will possibly not be in sight of teachers and parents will naturally escort them to the responsible adult. The only other alternative seems to be that all KS2 students line up by the layby waiting for the whole class to be present and walked into school, what happens if it is raining, cold or windy? What is the impact on teachers and would there be enough teachers to do this.
The parish council considers that the turnaround assessments need to be recalculated on KS1 and KS2 students being escorted to the classroom door.
- No extra students/staff arriving due to inclement weather. There is also concern that during such weather there is a change in driving and the parking attitude/patterns which adversely impacts on any school parking, on site or off site.
- No obstruction by double or inconsiderate parking in the car park.
- No early arrival of the mini buses or taxis servicing the SEND school.
- No early deliveries, refuse collections etc.
- The layby not being used as a parking space by parents and not used by parents waiting to pick up KS3 and upwards students.

While there is much about dropping off children it is considered that there is a glaring omission in the absence of a detailed reference to or recognition of the problem of parents collecting children from school. Drive past any school and you will find drivers waiting half-an-hour or more before the school finishes. This applies whether or not it is a requirement that the child be collected in person.

As it is clearly impractical for a parent to arrive at a precise pick-up time and for the 'doorkeeper' to know that a particular vehicle has arrived parents will need to get out of the vehicle to identify themselves. It would be interesting to know how the applicant

intends this problem be addressed. Without a solution, the congestion will be both horrendous and distressing for both children and parents.

The Parish Council considers that the Trust should produce, prior to any further consideration of the planning application, a robust Safeguarding Policy for the transfer of children from parent to school prior to the planning application being agreed.

Many schools offer after school time slots for parents to talk to teachers and there is likely to be parents meeting other parents and arranging events etc. None of which is considered in the turn-over statistics.

Reference is made to the nursery not impacting on the drop off/ pick up time but no reference can be found to the reception class students who like KS1 must be delivered to and collected from the classroom door.

There is concern about the safety of students on the site as the older ones have to navigate a very busy car park with frequent vehicle movements.

It is doubtful whether any children of Primary School age will cycle to school and primary schools often require proficiency training before bikes can be left during the day at schools. Proficiency training is generally only undertaken in the last year of primary schooling.

The applicant acknowledges that the change to the site entrance will result in higher vehicle usage on local roads (149 in the am and 143 in the pm). Amendments to the Travel Mode Share for car/van usage shows a predicted 25% increase, mirroring the reduction in the original walk percentage (59.3% down to 34.3%) however these are only robust statistics if the originals were correct and the parish council considers that the applicant has been consistently over optimistic in their calculations on the students who would be walked to school. St John's School submitted a response to the original planning application Draft Travel Plan and it is considered that it is worthwhile quoting part of this submission.

"However, a high percentage of our pupils live within easy walking distance from our school i.e. less than 1km and therefore within the Desirable and Acceptable categories referred to above. Notwithstanding the Institution and Transportation's guidance, their parents/carers do not follow it. Some 40% + are driven to and from school despite the surrounding roads having wide paths and being residential roads and our encouragement to children and parents alike to walk.

At 3.2.1 of the DTP the baseline for the travel patterns of pupils for the proposed school is that 59.3% will walk. This is a greater percentage than currently walk to St John's despite the majority of our pupils living within 1km compared with very few residences being within this distance of the proposed site.

70% of our staff travel to school by car. At page 26 5.2.3 of the TA assumes 80% of staff travel by car with 6% sharing i.e. net 74%, 17% walking or cycling and 3% arriving by public transport".

It is a well known fact that parents drop off/pick up students often as part of a multi-use of the car. This may be because they work, are going shopping, visiting people, attending classes etc. It is considered that this is the major reason why children are not walked to school.

Interestingly the predictions for staff walking to school remain unchanged from the original even though there is an acknowledged significant increase in the walking distance from the east and south. The parish council still considers that cycling is not an option many teachers will take up.

The Langley Park [Leigh] Academy Primary School, Edmett Way, Maidstone, ME17 3FX also has a travel plan (May 2018). This school is located within a residential area and the travel plan identifies

12 Current travel issues

12.1 Overview

Congestion in the carpark at drop off and pick up is an issue causing arguments between parents.

13 Travel survey results

modal split (actual) - pupils

	8/May/2018
Walk	21.0 %
Park & walk	2.5 %
Scooting/skating	11.5 %
Cycle	2.5 %
Bus (all types)	
School bus	0.0 %
Public bus	0.6 %
Train	0.0 %
Car (alone)	54.1 %
Car share	5.7 %
other	1.9 %

NB rounded percentages may not add exactly to 100.0%

This school opened in September 2016 and it has, **despite being in a residential area**, still not managed to get the majority of children to be walked to school with cars delivering and collecting 61.3% of students.

91.7% of staff access the site by car with two teachers cycling if the weather is good.

The statistics from Langley Park show that the draft travel plan produced for the Popesfield site is, to be perfectly blunt, rubbish.

The additional traffic using local roads and possibly having problems accessing the site, resulting in tail backs to the roundabout is also of concern. Grove Green, Weaving and Bearsted currently suffer from congestion problems and the additional schools will only add to the issues.

There is concern over noise and air quality at the site and also outside Gidds Pond Cottages. The air quality at the MBC receptor site near the KIMS site currently regularly exceeds guidelines and it is considered that introducing two school which are only accessible by vehicle is contrary to NPPF. Many of the students that the applicant predicts will walk to school will be required to walk along Sittingbourne Road or Bearsted Road directly through heavily polluted areas.

Unless the proposed 30mph speed limit outside Gidds Pond Cottages is enforced it is considered that drivers will speed between the two build outs before breaking heavily. The congestion caused by the build outs and additional traffic at the roundabout backing up will increase pollution levels due to idling engines.

The lighting and usage of the proposed football pitch is of concern. This site is close to residential properties and is a known bat area and the artificial lighting will possibly have an adverse impact on residents and bats which are a protected species.

As highlighted in the KCC EAS response dated 25 January 2019 insufficient ecological information, to show the impact on bats, reptiles etc. has been provided for this site and also at Weaving Heath which will be affected by the proposed sewer pipe.

It is considered that the introduction of a new primary school in the area will have an adverse impact on the catchment areas of adjacent primary schools. Catchment boundaries will be shifted and it is likely that several schools will be affected as children travel from one area to another often using private vehicles.

It is proposed that a sewer pipe is laid across Weaving Heath to connect the proposed site to the main sewers. Sewage will be pumped uphill until gravity takes over to draw it into the existing system at Shepherds Gate Drive. Details have been provided on the 24 hour emergency storage should the pump fail and also on some possible localised flooding (caused by rain) on the car park, thus stopping cars being parked and increasing pressure on the drop off/pick up turnover figures. There is, however, no reference to the fact that by laying the sewer across the wet area of Weaving Heath gravity will drain the heath water down towards the school site. Not only is this an additional potential flood hazard for the car park but it will also fundamentally change the habitats that currently exist on the heath.

The proposed site is a Nature Reserve, subject to a separate planning application for change of use, and the parish council objects to any development.

There is concern that the from petrol and oils run off from vehicles using the large car park will enter the surface water drainage system. It is acknowledged that the SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753) assessment has highlighted a low pollutant hazard and put in mitigating measures but it is queried whether petrol interceptors are needed.

With regards to the removal of the 19 Poplar Trees (TOP 13/2011) there is significant concern about the adverse impact on the street scene, see exchange of correspondence from MBC Landscape Office. Considering large swathes of trees were removed to allow Kent Medical Campus to be developed it is essential that these trees should be retained to maintain the quality of the visual amenity of the area.

If Maidstone Borough Council is minded to approve this application or if it goes to Appeal then the parish council requests the following:

- A robust condition to stop any pedestrian entrance being introduced onto Bearsted Road in the future.*
- Sewer pipes, due to potential damage to Weaving Heath, must be 'moled' into position. Damage to Weaving Heath must be properly repaired and habitats reinstated.*

Cllr Bob Hinder notified members that there was an issue with the bus routes quoted as serving the site and the Clerk was asked to investigate and add to the parish council's previous comments.

Action Clerk.

19/501025/FULL. Erection of one detached 3 bedroom house with garage and parking at Goldstone Walk, Walderslade. **Ratified** the Clerk's decision. After consulting members, *Wish to see refused for the following reasons.*

- This is overdevelopment of a site and if permitted there will be an adverse and negative impact on adjacent neighbours and the street scene from Impton Lane.*
- The proposed access/egress will create a significant safety issue for pedestrians/cyclists using the footpath linking Goldstone Walk to Impton Lane. This narrow and quite short walk through connects Goldstone Walk, and beyond, to the local bus stops and the pick up points for the school buses and commuter coaches. The footpath is extremely narrow and there is insufficient space for the applicant to provide any vision splay so pedestrians and cyclists will have absolutely no warning that a vehicle is about to drive across the path in front of them and the driver's own view will be similarly restricted. Due to the existing cramped space at the footpath vehicles exiting or entering the property will have to undertake an immediate 90*

degree turn in a very short space. The proposed access and egress to the site would result in a turning circle/parking area being taken out of commission for other road users.

The lack of a vision splay, the proximity of the proposed access/egress to a well use footpath and the need for any driver to drive across a footpath which they cannot see down is unacceptable.

If the planning officer is minded to permit the parish council asks that it is reported to the planning committee and that the TPOs on the applicant's trees on the site is not removed.

19/501388/FULL PROPOSAL: Erection of a front porch. Highmill, Tyland Lane Sandling. The Parish Council has no material planning reasons to object.

Food trading renewal application to sell hot/cold food from a trailer at St Michaels Close, Aylesford. Do not wish to object.

6. **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions**

Appeal Reference Number: APP/U2235/D/19/3224110, written representations.

Two storey side and front extension combined with a first floor side extension above existing ground floor extension. (Resubmission of 17/506384/FULL and 18/503229/FULL) 6 The Covert Boxley Chatham Kent ME5 9JJ. Appeal Starting date: 2 April 2019. **Noted.**

7. **Highways and Byways**

7.1 Minute 3011/8.3 Westfield Sole Rd/Yelsted Lane/ Harp Farm Rd. after discussion on the difficulty of using Westfield Sole Rd alongside HGVs it was **agreed** that the council would ask for a Road Traffic Order to prohibit HGVs on the stretch of Westfield Sole Road between Lidsing Road and Bredhurst Industrial area and restrict HGVs to access only from the Round Wood roundabout. Also is it possible to have Do Not Follow SATNAVs signs erected at Westfield Sole Road? **Action office.**

7.2 Flooding Sandy Lane/Boxley Road. Flooding has been reported at this site and KCC are investigating whether the culvert is blocked. **Noted.**

8. **Policy and Procedures**

None scheduled for review. **Noted.**

Predisposition and Predetermination. **Noted.**

9. **Members and Officer's Reports**

Cllr Hayday reported that he had undertaken a litter pick along New Cut Road and collected 8 bags. A request for a litter bin, mainly for dog waste, was to be made for New Cut Road south of the Lodge Road roundabout. **Action office.**

Cllr Brindle reported that some councillors will be attending the members briefing on the A249/junction 7 improvements at The Hilton Hotel tomorrow. **Noted.**

10. **Volunteer Groups**

Cllr Ivor Davies reported that the Walderslade Woodlands Group held a task day on 7 April. **Noted.**

The Friends of Weaving Heath and Woodlands, Grove Green. An update on recent work and task date was **received** and **noted.**

11. **Matters for Information**

MBC Member Training - Planning Conditions Workshop. It was **agreed** that a copy of the presentation slides will be forwarded to members. **Action office.**

12. **Items for Next Agenda**

Requests for items to be included on the agenda to be submitted no later than 13 May 2019. **Noted.**

13. **Next Meeting**

Next full Environment Committee meeting 20 May 2019 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7:30pm. **Noted.**

As no members of the public were present the Chairman did not pass a resolution but notified members that the meeting was going into confidential session.

14. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC**

Enforcement. A verbal update on three outstanding issues were received by members. Section 106.A response is still awaited from KCC as to it claiming the KIMS S106 and allocaing the funds for additional yellow lines at Grove Green. An update on the restricted parking issues is also awaited. **Noted.**

Meeting closed 8.17pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman Date

