



DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER May 2017

FURTHER UPDATE ON PLANNING

Bicknor Green

A big thank you to all those who took the time to make their comments on the Bicknor Green site which is now closed to further comments. We await the outcome. As soon as we know the Planning Committee date we will let you know so that you can attend and even give a presentation if you wish.

Church Road

The next step we have to consider is an even bigger development on the West of Church Road.

As you will be aware, Maidstone Borough Council submitted their Maidstone Borough Local Plan for independent examination in May 2016. Following comments from the planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, a series of modifications to the Local Plan have been produced and have been published for public consultation. One of these modifications is the proposal for a development of 440 dwellings on the site known as 'West of Church Road, Otham' H1(8) is included in **MM19**.

Downswood Parish Council do not support a development on this site and will be responding to this consultation accordingly. If you feel the same way, the consultation closes at **5pm on Friday 19 May** and we would urge you to view the documents online at www.maidstone.gov.uk/localplan or in a local library and make your views known to the government planning inspector. **THE MORE PEOPLE WHO RESPOND, THE MORE OUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD!**

There are some key issues which MBC must consider when reviewing a planning application. We would urge you to address your comments along similar lines in order for them to be valid:-

Is it positively prepared?

We do not believe that site H1(8) in MM19 has been positively prepared because it will not achieve a sustainable development. The proposal to access 440 dwellings from Church Road is unsustainable in its present state. Church Road is a narrow country lane and the site sits adjacent to an ancient parish church that

has no parking. During Sunday services, concerts, baptisms, funerals, weddings, community occasions and when being used by bell ringers and churchyard gardeners, a long line of parked cars block the road. Through traffic struggles to pass on the remaining stretch of narrow lane. Policy H1(8) fails to address this issue. There is no policy requirement for a developer to provide a car park for the church and there is no policy requirement to widen Church Road. The only mention of highways in H1(8) refers to a stretch of Gore Court Road almost a mile away and transportation issues such as bus services on the A274 Sutton Road which is over a mile away from the site. **MM19 must include a requirement for a developer to provide a church car park to remove parked cars from Church Road.**

Modification MM1 paragraph 11 states that, 'new residential development will be supported if sufficient infrastructure capacity is either available or can be provided in time to serve it.' Site H1(8) has insufficient infrastructure capacity and has no policy requirement to provide any.

Modification MM52 paragraph 1 states that, 'development proposals must demonstrate that the impacts of trips generated to and from the development are accommodated, remedied or mitigated to prevent severe residual impacts.' H1(8) does not have a policy requirement that can accommodate, remedy or mitigate traffic impacts because Church Road is wholly unsuitable for a large scale development.

Modification MM19 paragraph 11 suggests that the impact of the development of 440 dwellings on primary school infrastructure can be mitigated with a financial contribution towards the expansion of an existing primary school in SE Maidstone. If primary school places were created to accommodate the new population, they would not be in walking distance of the site, so would generate further traffic movements, again making this site unsustainable. Church Road is narrow, unlit, has no pavement or lighting and is unsafe for pedestrians or cyclists as it is used as a rat run by traffic travelling at up to 60mph between the A274 and A20. The only safe way to travel out of a site west of Church Road

would be by car, making this site wholly unsustainable.

With no bus service, no GP or school within reasonable walking distance and no possible mitigation for the traffic movements generated, this allocation is not sound and cannot be seen as a sustainable development.

With only 3 access/egress points in Downswood for more than 1,000 homes, the difficulties currently being experienced at these points will only be exacerbated.

Modification MM1 (Policy SS1 of the Local Plan) paragraph 9 states that, 'protection will be given to the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements.' Site H1(8) is an agricultural field that separates the urban areas of Downswood, Willington Street and Senacre. The modification MM19 paragraphs 1 to 7 attempt to preserve the rural character of Church Road and St Nicholas Church, but do not

address the issue of coalescence between settlements. Joining three separate urban communities together to create a massive housing area cannot be justified and demonstrates that this plan is not positively prepared.

Is it consistent with national policy?

As stated above, we do not believe that MM19 will achieve a sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. A development of 440 dwellings West of Church Road would result in unacceptable traffic levels not only on Church Road, but on Deringwood Drive, Mallards Way and Spot Lane in Downswood and Bearsted. In addition, any widening of Church Road to mitigate the impact of the traffic generated by the development would cause the removal of roadside verges and an unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape and nature conservation importance, contrary to the NPPF.

THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE TO HAVE THIS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT REMOVED FROM THE LOCAL PLAN!

PLEASE SUBMIT A WRITTEN COMMENT BY 5PM ON FRIDAY 19 MAY TO SAVE OTHAM AND DOWNSWOOD FROM FURTHER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Your comments will be sent by MBC to the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of state. He will then make his final decision on the Local Plan, producing his final report in July.

How to make your comment:

Online at <http://maidstone-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

Email using the council's forms to ldf@maidstone.gov.uk

By post, send the council's representation forms to: Spatial Policy, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone. ME15 6JQ.

Spires Medical Centre. Regrettably, despite the best efforts of MB Cllr Gordon Newton, KC Cllr Gary Cooke, Helen Whately MP and DPC, the Medical Centre will remain closed.

We understand the temporary minibus service to both the Shepway and Grove Green Surgeries - as kindly arranged by Cllr Cooke - has proved to be very popular. This future of this service is currently under review.

Concerns have been expressed with regards to the future of **The Spires Pharmacy.**

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY, without your custom this valuable service may be lost.

Dates for your diary:

The very popular **OLYMPICNIC** will be taking place between 11 am and 2 pm on **Saturday 15 July.** A memorial to David Nuttall - a stalwart member of the community who passed away in 2015 - will be unveiled during the lunch break.

Judging of the **Garden Competition** will take place during early July.

Christmas Carols and Lights will be held on Saturday, 2 December commencing at 4.30 in the Community Centre.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

We are here to represent all residents, so if there is something you think we could help with, why not tell us?

Parish Clerk—Teresa Irving. 7 Firs Close, Greenacres, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7LH.
Telephone: 01622 717466 Email: teresa.irving@btinternet.com

Your Parish Councillors are:

Roz Cheesman (Chairman), Bill Greenhead (Vice-Chairman), Ann-Marie Butler, Martin Weeks, Scott Carmichael, Sam(antha) Brooks, Kate Pearson, Peter Fincham & a warm welcome to our newest member, Andy Fairhurst

Why not come along to one of our meetings to hear what goes on? All meetings are open to the public and there is an opportunity for you to ask questions there and then. Or you could email or write to our Clerk, who will make sure your views or correspondence are heard.

Full council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, except August, in the Community Centre at 8pm.

Future 2017 meetings will be held on: 6 June, 4 July, 5 Sept, 3 Oct, 7 Nov & 5 Dec.

DPC website—Please see below

USEFUL CONTACTS:

PCSO's David Earl & Neil Denney Always use 999 for emergencies and 101 for non urgent matters

Downswood & Otham Borough Councillor, Gordon Newton: Tel 07769 676238 or email: gordonnewton@maidstone.gov.uk

Kent County Councillor, Gary Cooke. Tel: 03000 415 978 or email: gary.cooke@kent.gov.uk

MP Helen Whately. Westminster Office: 020 7219 6472 or email:

helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk Post: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Constituency Advice Surgery -Parkwood. Friday 11 Nov 2016 between 16.00-19.00

Whilst information can still be found on our website: www.downswood.org, work is underway to replace it with a brand new look. (Further info to follow)



Don't forget to check the Downswood Parish Council Facebook page. As well as regular updates on our website and twitter feeds the latest happenings in Downswood are posted on Facebook too - If you haven't already done so just "like" the official Downswood page so the latest info is always in your newsfeed

COME TO THE DOWNSWOOD
OLYMPICNIC
2017

SATURDAY 15TH JULY 11.00 AM
TO 2.00 PM AT MALLARDS WAY PARK

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY WITH TUG OF WAR,
SACK/RUNNING/THREE LEGGED,
RELAY AND THROWING RACES.

BRING A PICNIC OR
ENJOY A BURGER OR TWO FROM THE BBQ.
ICE CREAMS AVAILABLE!

A DPC
EVENT

PUBLISHED AND PRINTED BY DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

DOWNSWOOD'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - 04 APRIL 2017 - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Downswood's residents are well served and represented by a small hardworking, dedicated team.

The Parish Councillors are **Bill Greenhead; Anne-Marie Butler; Martin Weeks; Scott Carmichael; Sam Brooks; Kate Pearson; Pete Fincham and me, Roz Cheesman**. We have a vacancy due to Simon Roberts' relocation from Downswood. The councillors are unpaid holders of public office in this the **apolitical** ground roots level of Local Government. **Teresa Irving**, Parish Council Clerk to Downswood (also to Otham), leads and advises extraordinarily well, and Litter Picker **Jim Noyce** ensures the centre of Downswood is clean and tidy. DPC has much support from and regularly liaises with **MBCllr Gordon Newton, KCCllr Gary Cook and MP Helen Whately**. The Church, KCC, MBC, CPRE, KAPC, JPG, Pharmacist, Schools, Police, DCA, Natural England, Environment Agency, NHS England are just a few of those with whom we liaise.

Important matters which have taken/are taking a great deal of time include **The Local Plan; Nearby developments** (adj M20/J8; Sutton Rd area, North of Bicknor Woods, field adj St Nicholas Church++), also **infrastructure** - especially **Water Supply and Quality, Sewerage and Roads; Closure of Downswood's surgery and transport to other surgeries; Potential loss of Spire's pharmacy, and Cessation of Arriva no 8 bus and unsatisfactory replacement**.

'Downswood Diggers' comprising Parish Councillors and volunteers have undertaken many tasks, ie clearing vegetation by SSI and pedestrianized Church Road.

DPC's two main annual community events have been successful, happy times for all ages:

Olympicnic - at Mallards (initiated by Simon Roberts) relies on Cllrs and much needed extra voluntary assistance including that of Richard Young, John Leaf & Charles Tanswell to achieve a fun time for all. Competition to win medals was sometimes fierce. It is hoped during **this year's Olympicnic Sat 15 July**, (weather permitting) to unveil a memorial stone to David Nuttall who set much of the landscape for Downswood.

Christmas Carols and Lights - singing led by St Nicholas' Church Choir and brass band of extremely young, competent musicians. **Christmas motifs** were switched on by Downswood resident Deputy Lieutenant Trevor Sturgess. Richard Young generously donated the two Church Road motifs.

Mallards & Foxden Play areas now have new equipment. Young resident, Sophie Lawrie's persistence paid off regarding provision of the latter. Work has commenced on coppicing the islands.

DPC continue assisting the **DCA**, including a stall at DCA's annual fete.

Remembrance Wreath from Downswood Residents was placed in St Nicholas Church and at Otham Green's War Memorial by Cllr Pearson.

Garden Competition, Judge Alex Rennie, former Hadlow College Head Gardener/Lecturer - Results: 1st 11 Grampian Way, 2nd 14 Mallard Way, 3rd 48 Reinden Grove; Highly Commended 19 Reinden Grove and 66 Longham Copse.

Website Upgrade - DPC is very grateful for work currently in progress where soon all relevant DPC information may viewed

I thank everyone, including the several voluntary litter pickers - who assist DPC and the community in any way. That's what makes Downswood so great!

ROZ CHEESMAN