



# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

### MINUTES 22<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2024

#### **PUBLIC FORUM**

A number of residents spoke about planning application 24/502235 and made a number of points;

- There are a number of errors in their vehicle routes, the rural roads are already busy with HGV vehicles for Balfour Wines, farms and is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists
- There is no mention of the Tar Pits – Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- The Ecological Consultants report is unsound, this is Grade II Agricultural land, the area is rich in wildlife, it is dangerous to the waterways / ditches already prone to flooding
- It is the wrong location and if approved potentially open up other areas
- There is Ancient Woodland which is not being protected, they cannot get their 15 m gap for power cables through as it is only 11.2 metres wide
- In addition a range of protected species; Lapwings, Loose Flowered Orchid's and Great Crested Newts – monitored by Natural England. The light and noise pollution will be a detriment to biodiversity.
- This is an inappropriate development in the countryside, impacts the Sherenden Wooded Hills, which are deemed highly significant and there are 29 Listed buildings impacted by the proposal
- KCC considered the land to be 3A agricultural land – some of the best in the area
- Access – the proposed access to the site is dangerous
- Environmental - the proposal will have a negative impact on flora and fauna plus water management which is also already an issue in the area
- Sustainability- there are no indications about sustainability / clear up / term – likely to be a brownfield site
- The glare will be horrendous – we have 492 metres of boundary onto our property
- The power cable to connect to the national grid damages ancient woodland, crosses four streams and is dangerous – direct current which also arcs and can cause fires.
- The solar panels destroy the land beneath them to scrub land, it cannot be used to graze sheep!
- There is a need to clean the solar panels which is intensive and can pollute the water course

A resident raised some points regarding 24/502574 in that the conditions were set by MBC and supported by SPC to help protect the privacy of the neighbours – they should remain as they are.

A resident raised some points regarding 24/502042 that the clubhouse was required for Staplehurst Monarchs FC to survive and the stands were a league requirement if the club gets promoted.

**Present** Cllr Sharp, Ash, Pett, Martin and McLaughlin – Cllr Hotson substitute for Cllr Arger – plus the Clerk

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Arger

**APPROVAL OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES:** Minute Pages 1754P-1758P of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 available at: <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/planning-committee/> Cllr Ash proposed and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to approve the minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 – agreed unanimously. Duley signed by the Chairman.

**COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS** regarding items on the Agenda: -

1. Declarations of Lobbying. All Councillors have been lobbied regarding 24/502042, Cllr Sharp 24/502574 and all Cllrs regarding 24/50235
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:**

**Churchill Development:** workers parking in Cornforth Close update. Clerk explained that contractors parking in the area is an issue, but the planning condition to prevent this starts when the superstructure at the Cornhill Development starts to go up – this will be soon. We will keep monitoring it and raise the issue with MBC Enforcement.

**14/505432 Land North of Headcorn Road** (Bovis development) – residents concerned that roads are unfinished. It was explained that this is a grey area. SPC do not sign off any of the documents, we make recommendations to MBC about planning applicants which we hope they take notice of.

When conditions are not being kept to, we can make a complaint to MBC about this and MBC can send Enforcement officers to check.

It looks as though the Management Company is currently implementing a management plan - my advice is to see they keep to it. At this point MBC would likely say it's in progress and not infringed but worth letting MBC know.

Regarding the roads the first instance you have to contact the Management Company to ask

- a) is the road being taken out of adoption
- b) if so why? What's the rationale? and
- c) complain to MBC and KCC

It is vital that local residents – who are the members of the Management Company raise issues with MBC / KCC directly.

Cllr Ash raised a similar issue **at Redrow** – relating to a road that needs significant further work before handover.

**24/502392/FULL 1 Old Bell Place Staplehurst Tonbridge Kent TN12 0FE**

Following a debate that noted the revision is separated from the main dwelling but basically the same Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to recommend that the application is REFUSED and stand by their previous comments. Councillors DO NOT wish the application to be referred to MBC Planning Committee – agreed unanimously

**FULL PLANNING APPLICATIONS:** (for comment/recommendation)

24/502042 **Jubilee Playing Fields, Headcorn Road TN12 0BU** - Erection of a club house with decking area, 1no. 50 person covered seating stand and 1no. 50 persons covered

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

standing area, including repositioning of existing 50 person covered standing area and ticket booth.

Following a lengthy discussion the main points were;

- clarified the increase in the covered standing with an extra 50 and covered seating and extra 50 making a total of 100 covered standing and 100 covered seating
- That the extra standing and seating is a SCEFL step 5 league requirement, if the club obtains promotion
- Clubhouse - a general concern about a lack of detail in the application
  - counter – is it a kitchen / Bar?
  - number of toilets, soakaway?
  - Decking?
  - Disabled facilities / access - not mentioned?
  - increase in usage – time and size of clubhouse – plus likely increase in crowd therefore question lack of a transport statement and KCC Highways comments

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to recommend approval subject to clubhouse details; – kitchen / bar, number of toilets, soakaway, disabled access and facilities plus question the lack of a transport statement due to increased usage. Agreed majority; 4 for. 1 Against, 0 abstain - but DO NOT REQUEST the application is reported to Planning Committee.

24/502235 **Mathurst Solar Farm, Land West of Goudhurst Road** - The construction and operation of an 18MW solar photovoltaic (PV) farm and widened access to Goudhurst Road with associated infrastructure, including inverters, transformers, substations, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.

The debate highlighted a number of concerns

This is because of the sensitive nature of this very large site which has ancient woodland adjacent to it and has cultural heritage importance on site.

#### **Environment –**

- several protected species such as Lapwings, Loose Flowered Orchid's and Great Crested Newts, which are monitored by Natural England
- noise and the detriment to biodiversity.
- significant harm to the character and significance of the countryside,
- harm to Ancient Woodland. Note the 15 metre access route for power cables is not achievable – it is only 11.2 metres
- Previous reports categorised land as better quality than the submitted Ecological Consultants report, so we question the Ecological Consultants report. The land is BMV agricultural land, contrary to the Local Plan which directs solar farms to lower grade agricultural land,

#### **Heritage**

- harm to the settings of Heritage Assets, Tar Pits which are Non-Designated Heritage Asset and not even mentioned on the application, and 29 listed buildings adjacent to the site
- Public Right of way through the site

#### **Light pollution in the countryside**

- there is significant glare caused by the solar farm – especially to the south and south west.

#### **Flooding**

- the area is prone to flooding need detailed water management plan as local ditches not sufficient

#### **Access**

- access for construction and maintenance traffic is very limited along rural roads – already used by seasonal farm vehicles and potential dangerous

**Term** – not clear how long this site would be used.

The reference for Solar Panels is brownfield sites or industrial roofs rather than high quality agricultural land. Have alternative, less environmentally harmful sites, been considered?

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to recommend refusal - agreed unanimously - on the following grounds as the application is contrary to **MBC Local Plan Policy LPRINF3** -Renewable and low carbon energy schemes – namely

1a – negative impact on the local area

1b- negative impact landscape and visual impact on local residents

1c – negative impact on heritage assets and their setting – Non Designated Heritage Asset (Tar Pits) not even mentioned, 29 listed buildings in area and proposal would damage an Ancient Woodland, note only a 11.2m wide gap for power cables not the required 15m wide gap and in addition crosses 4 water courses

1d – negative impact on local residents – noise / glare

1e – negative impact on local transport network – rural road not only during construction but ongoing maintenance and Transport Statement is inaccurate

1f – negative impact on ecology and biodiversity – large proposal in Sherenden Wooded Hills – defined as a sensitive area - and is home to species such as Lapwings, Loose Flowered Orchid's and Great Crested Newts. The requirement to clean Solar Panels means that contaminated water enter the water courses and the removal of vegetation will increase the likelihood of flooding in the area.

2. this land is classified as best and most versatile – Previous reports categorised land as better quality than the submitted Ecological Consultants report, so we question the Ecological Consultants report– and should not be used for a solar farm.

In addition contrary **MBC Local Plan Policy LPRSp14 (A)**

1b – negative impact on the protection of landscape character, areas of Ancient Woodland

3 – negative impact on water courses

In addition contrary **MBC Local Plan Policy LPRSp14 (B)** Historic environment

2 – the removal of Non-Designated Heritage Asset

3 – no positive heritage policies

4 – has not considered Heritage as a key aspect of site master plan, in fact ignored it.

We note the **MBC Local Plan "biodiversity crisis"** and the proposal is "contrary to enhancing the Biodiversity". We appreciate that low carbon energy has a place but has an alternative less environmentally harmful site been considered?

If the Planning Officer is minded to approve the application we request the application is reported to Planning Committee.

If Planning Committee is minded to approve the application we recommend a condition to return the land to grade II - (good) agricultural land in line with **MBC Local Plan Policy LPRINF3 3** provisions for the return of the land to its previous use must be made when the installations have ceased operation

24/502574 **Holman House, Station Road TN12 0QQ** - Section 73 - Application for Minor Material Amendment for variations to approved plans condition 2 (to allow changes to the rear inset dormer (north elevation); changes to first and second floor windows (east elevation); and an additional rooflight (north elevation)); and to condition 3 (to reflect these proposed changes to the plans) pursuant to 20/502770/FULL.

The debate highlighted that the MBC planning conditions were put on to protect the neighbours – these are still valid and are supported by Staplehurst Parish Council and the proposed Minor Material Amendments should not proceed

In addition, although not a planning matter, the properties are being sold as per built rather than planning permission and any enforcement notice in the future would impact on our new residents of Staplehurst and not the developer.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to recommend refusal – agreed unanimously - based on the following; that the current planning conditions should remain and the proposed amendments to the original consent would result in overlooking and an increased threat of overlooking to adjoining occupiers. This would constitute a material change to the approved plans.

If the Planning Officer is minded to approve request that the application is called in to Planning Committee.

24/502716 **26 Jaggard Way TN12 0LF** - Erection of a two-storey side extension, single storey rear extension and porch.

Cllr Hotson proposed and Cllr Pett seconded to recommend the following comment;  
With regards Residential Extensions SPD Section 4 the extension is overlarge for the property, there is a loss of private open space and there is a negative impact on the street scene.  
If approved the driveway should be permeable as there is run off into the road

24/502792 **9 Brooks Close TN12 0PP** – Erection of a single storey side extension

Cllr Ash proposed and Cllr Pett seconded to recommend approval of the planning application – agreed unanimously

24/502793 **Knoxbridge Farm, Knoxbridge, Frittenden, Cranbrook TN17 2BT** - Change of use of egg production buildings to commercial uses within Classes B2 and B8, part demolition of building, removal of links between buildings, alterations to fenestration, installation of sustainable drainage systems, and landscaping.

Following a lengthy debate, (which was closed to allow a resident to speak) request is for either general industrial or storage – which is very open ended, several points were noted

- A220 is a very busy road,
- Concern about 24 hour access on the neighbours quality of life – noise, light pollution
- Concern about 24 hour access on impact on local ecology
- Support Frittenden Parish Council’s comments set out below;

**Frittenden Parish Council considered the above application at a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and resolved to recommend that it be refused on the following grounds:**

**(i) Notwithstanding a 5,000 sqm limit on parcel distribution, there is no limit on the number of separate occupiers which could increase Trips and adversely impact on traffic on the A229.**

**The transport report suggests a decrease in Trips but how can this be the conclusion without knowing the range of uses and number of separate occupiers?**

**(ii) There is no limit on hours of use or vehicle movements which could result in adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbouring area due to noise and light pollution."**

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to recommend refusal – agreed unanimously on the following grounds;

**MBC Local Plan LPRCD6 – 1.iii unacceptable impact on the amenity area. In particular the impact on nearby properties (Noise and light pollution)**

If Planning Officer is minded to approve request referred to Planning Committee and if approved seek a condition of restrict access to between 8am – 9pm

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Pett seconded to suspend standing orders and extend the meeting by 30 mins – agreed unanimously

**NON-MATERIAL AMENDMENT:**

24/502547 **The Hop Picking Machine Shed, Mathurst Farm, Goudhurst Road OHQ** - of application 22/505902/FULL: Installation of Velux window - Noted

24/502630 **Holman House, Station Road TN12 0QQ** - to application 20/502770/FULL: Proposed alterations to window aperture and glazing of first floor side windows.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to offer comment of support as this proposal of glazed fixed obscure windows supports the privacy of neighbours.

**PRIOR NOTIFICATION:**

24/502536 **Overbridge Farm, Marden Road TN12 0JH** - for the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from agricultural to 1no. dwellinghouse and associated operation development.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to offer comment of the proposed dowering will not be sustainable, there is flooding in the area and currently the visual display on to the road is poor.

**DECISIONS:**

24/501416 **70 Greenhill TN12 0SU** - Removal of existing boundary garden wall and replace with the erection of an extended garden wall. MBC REFUSED. SPC had recommended Approval (Min 1747P).

24/501527 **Huntsman's Stables, Maidstone Road TN12 0RH** - Erection of a detached house and detached garage with storage above. MBC REFUSED. SPC had recommended Refusal (Min 1751P).

**Meeting closed...10pm.....**

**These minutes are not verbatim, the decisions are accurate**

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....