

**PLANNING NEWS — May 2023**

The Planning Committee continues to consider submitted planning applications. This bulletin contains news relating to applications dealt with recently, decisions handed down, as well as proposed future action on some current applications.

**Planning Applications and Updates:**

**PA/2022/3072** Stevenson Bros, Ashford Road, Bethersden, TN26 3AP: Redevelopment of existing site (including demolition of existing building) to create 2 no. three storey buildings providing a total of 9 no. affordable housing apartments (comprising of 7 no. 1 bed flats, 1 no. 2 bed flat and 1 no. M4(2) 1 bed accessible flat) with associated parking, landscaped areas and access.

**PA/2022/3073** 1 Linden Business Centre, Ashford Road, High Halden, TN26 3LJ: Redevelopment of existing workshop and former garage buildings to create a mixed use scheme comprising of a new purpose designed sustainable workshop for the Stevenson Brothers (incorporating museum and public café/farmshop) to be delivered by the erection of 22 no. detached exemplar homes alongside associated landscaping, biodiversity gains, improvements to the existing footpath network together with access and associated parking/delivery areas. Linked applications. Bethersden element at 3-storeys is too high and out of keeping with surrounding properties. High Halden element in open countryside approx. 1 mile from the village. Busy A road, no footpaths. Use of cars goes against ABC’s sustainability aims. **WKPS OBJECTION.**

**22/02154/OUT** Land South of Smugglers Close, Hawkhurst — Outline permission (All matters reserved) Residential development of 6 new homes. Designated green space protected by Policy LP3 in the Hawkhurst NDP, woodland with surrounding ponds. AONB. Valuable habitat for wildlife. TWBC Local Plan aims to protect AONB and pursue a ‘landscape led’ planning policy. Steeply sloping site inappropriate for development. Hawkhurst traffic problems, etc. **WKPS OBJECTION.**

**23/500230** Land at Forsham Lane, Sutton Valence – Erection of a care village comprising of an 87-bed care home and 12 assisted living apartments.

Previous application **21/506642** was withdrawn by the applicant. The proposer states that this application is "near identical" to the proposal Withdrawn last year. WKPS objected to previous app. **WKPS OBJECTION. MBC REFUSED** on grounds of harmful to character and appearance of the countryside, consolidation of sporadic development, overall mass, height, footprint encroaching into the countryside at the base of the Greensand Ridge and highly visible from public vantage points and national ProW trail, unsuitable location as poor scope for access other than by car, development has not demonstrated a result in Biodiversity Net Gain, inadequate surface water drainage strategy.

**22/01695/FULL** Netters Farm, Attwaters Lane, Hawkhurst TN18 5AT — Proposed development of a Photovoltaic Solar Array, Battery Storage and Associated Infrastructure. AONB, narrow single track rural lanes unsuitable for construction traffic, use of agricultural land, heritage assets, Wealden landscape, TWBC pre-application advice to the applicant was not to proceed and to find a less sensitive site, site compounds, tall fencing, masts for CCTV and lighting, built form, access tracks, trenches to lay cabling, all damaging and irreversible interventions to the landscape, countryside becomes an industrial site. Consideration of this site should be taken in conjunction with the Lower Ellenden Site (below) (same landowner). **WKPS OBJECTION. Withdrawn by applicant.**

**22/01884/FULL** Land at Lower Ellenden Farm, Water Lane, Hawkhurst TN18 5AX — Proposed development of a Photovoltaic Solar Array, Battery Storage and Associated Infrastructure. AONB, narrow single track rural lanes unsuitable for construction traffic, use of agricultural land, heritage assets, Wealden landscape, TWBC pre-application advice to the applicant was not to proceed and to find a less sensitive site, site compounds, tall fencing, masts for CCTV and lighting, built form, access tracks, trenches to lay cabling, all damaging and irreversible interventions to the landscape, countryside becomes an industrial site. Consideration of this site should be taken in conjunction with the Netters Farm Site (above) (same landowner). **WKPS OBJECTION. Withdrawn by applicant.**

**22/505616/OUT** Land at Moat Road, Headcorn for 120 dwellings. WKPS objected - greenfield, LLV, housing mix, hedgerows/trees, overlooking neighbours, insufficient open space, flooding, infrastructure (doctor, school, water supply to village, sewage), adjacent to conservation area, traffic, no pavement etc. etc.

Withering submission from KCC archaeology required the proposer’s archaeological review to start again. New detailed requirements from MBC environmental health. A repeat that MBC housing mix is not being met in the design. More individual submissions about flooding and about infrastructure shortfalls - doctor, dentist, Primary School etc.

Detailed statistics from KCC Education show that there is an existing shortfall of places in both Maidstone South East Planning Group Primary Schools and in Maidstone Area Secondary Schools. The stats show that these shortfalls are forecast to increase. The conclusion is that there are no school places for the 34 school children expected to arise from the proposed development of 120 dwellings. On 16 March KCC Highways objects strongly to many parts of the applicant's traffic survey. It issues a Holding Objection with a requirement to respond to 20 bullet points. **WKPS OBJECTED. WITHDRAWN BY APPLICANT** (reason unknown).

**23/00854/FULL** Land to east of Highgate Hill and south of Copthall Avenue, Hawkhurst TN18 4LS — Variation of Condition 12 of Planning Permission 20/02788/FULL — Amend to allow details to be submitted prior to the occupation of the 51st dwelling. Condition 12, which Dandara seek to amend was very specific: ‘the approved works shall be implemented to highway authority standards and specification, prior to commencement of works on site’.  Notwithstanding the talks with KCC regarding the ‘Hawkhurst Signalling Works’, the condition remains in place. Dandara should either go ahead with the highway amendments as set out in Condition12 or submit the whole development for further review which, given its highly speculative nature, Mr Gove might like to have an opinion on. **WKPS OBJECTION.**

**Appeal Decisions:**

**21/01284/AS** (Appeal ref: 3289039 Decision 3 Nov 2022) Land off Front Road, Woodchurch – Outline for the erection of up to 40 dwellings (including affordable housing), structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children’s play area, surface water flood mitigation, vehicular access point and associated ancillary works. **GRANTED** on appeal.

**21/01361/AS** (Appeal ref: 3302116 Decision 30 Nov 2022) Land North East of 74 North Street, Biddenden – Outline for up to 50 dwellings (including 40% affordable housing), community orchard and allotments, informal public open space, sustainable drainage system, vehicular access point and associated works. **GRANTED** on appeal.

**21/00927/AS** (Appeal ref: AP-81929 Decision 2 December 2022) Land between Bourne House and Summerhill Cottages, Ashford Road, High Halden – Outline application (to consider access) for the erection of up to 28 new dwellings together with the necessary infrastructure. **DISMISSED** on appeal.

For further information on the above three appeals, see the front page of the Spring 2023 edition of Watch on the Weald.

**Secretary of State Decision:**

**20/00815/FULL** Land adjacent to Turnden, Hartley Road, Cranbrook – The construction of 165 new dwellings with associated access, car parking, refuse/recycling storage, landscaping, earthworks and other associated works. A Berkeley Homes application. 36 dwellings granted on land to the west including the Turnden Farmhouse. TWBC planning officer recommended approval to the planning committee and the committee approved the application despite concerted efforts seeking refusal. Natural England requested that the application if granted would be called in by the Secretary of State and the decision would be taken by ministers in the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). A public local inquiry opened in September 2021 and the Inspector recommended that the application be approved. The Secretary of State disagreed with that recommendation and **REFUSED** planning permission. The decision can be read on the TWBC website recorded in the planning documents for the application. Key players in the case were CPRE (Kent), the High Weald AONB Unit (HWAONB) and Natural England; their knowledge and expertise shine through in the evidence they presented throughout the process of this application. Berkeley Homes can only challenge the SoS decision in the High Court or by applying for a Judicial Review. Of course, they may submit another application…

**IMPORTANT NOTE: The report above deals with actions planned as well as action already taken. Readers are asked to note that the opinions and action points are those expressed by the planning committee. They are not always the final decisions. Many items discussed at meetings require further research before we reach a final decision on action to be taken.**