

**PLANNING NEWS — April 2024**

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:**

**22/505616** Land at Moat Road, Headcorn for up to 120 houses. PC objected. WKPS objected due flooding, outside village envelope, primary school over capacity, doctor over capacity, sewage etc. **Withdrawn** **in March 2023 and no activity since then. Application resubmitted. In MBC LP 2021-38.**

**23/502771/OUT** Home Farm, Staplehurst. 61 houses on site of greyhound track, all matters reserved except Access. PC objected. WKPS has objected as outside Staplehurst development area set out in the approved Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and other reasons. **MBC Refused** **on 17** **November 2023. In MBC LP 2021-38.**

**23/504068/OUT** Land East of Albion Road and North of Copper Lane, Marden. Outline application with some matters reserved (access only sought) for the removal of 2 former agricultural sheds and erection of up to 117no. dwellings and associated infrastructure.

PC objected as outside the settlement boundary, breaches Policy etc. WKPS objected as not compliant with MBC Local Plan Policy SP17 Development in the Open Countryside etc. **MBC** **Refused** **on 22 December 2023. In MBC LP 2021-38.**

**23/504023** Meadow View, Marden Road, Staplehurst. Extension of existing Gypsy/Traveller site, through provision of a total of 20 Static Caravans, across 5no. plots (net increase 12 Static Caravans) (part retrospective). This site has a ten-year history of applications and Appeals. **MBC** **Refused application on 16 February 2024…fundamentally contrary to Development Plan and NPPF, scale, highways safety and countryside policies.**

**20/505751** Reed Court Farm. Conversion to free range egg manufacture. WKPS objected to the original application because of overdevelopment. Fridays have submitted a new plan that excludes shed no.1 (of 3) but essentially leaving the remainder of the site intact. Continuing objections are being raised to the unresolved impact on the Beult and to flood risk. A new Environmental impact study is required. The new plan does not effectively reduce overdevelopment of the site. **On 19 February 2024** **WKPS objected for a second time, requesting that three of four boundaries be closed in.**

**21/504832** Iden Grange Farm. Replacement of 19 storage units by six houses. WKPS objected to the design, not the principle. MBC are waiting for a revised design. Extension of time agreed (the 8th extension). **Nothing since November.**

**21/505021/OUT** Land at George Street, Staplehurst. Application by Tesco for 61 houses, all matters reserved except Access. The proposal breaches the long-standing MBC rule of no development north of the Staplehurst railway line. WKPS objected on 22 October 2021, in line with the PC. The developer is consulting with Traffic and Network Rail**. No activity** **since May 2023 except extension of time to 14 April 2024. Not in MBC LP 2021-38.**

**23/502352/Hybrid** Land West of Lodge Road, Staplehurst. 88 dwellings and 1000sqm of commercial units. Resubmission of 22/502933 (Withdrawn). **WKPS is supportive in principle** but may object to many details. The PC objects due to non-compliance with elements of the approved Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and some Maidstone Local Plan policies. In July 2023 the developer entered Administration.

On 25th March 2024 **a new application for 81 houses** was registered, 40% affordable, plus 1000sqm of industrial building. It again includes the spine road that relieves the notorious Staplehurst traffic-lights, and which is contested by affected locals. **The design of the new application is much more consistent with the Kent vernacular. WKPS to make a further comment. In MBC LP 2021-38.**

**23/504118** Hook Farm, Kings Lane, Marden. Change of Use of 1 hectare (2.5acres) of agricultural land to use as dog-walking paddock with associated 1.8m height fencing, gate and parking. **An** **Extension of time has been granted.**

**23/504322** The Harrow Inn, The Street, Ulcombe. Change of use of listed public house into 3no. two-bedroom dwellings with associated gardens, access, parking etc. **Amended plan registered on 2 February for one 4-bed house. WKPS to make a further comment**.

**21/01406/FULL/AS** Land between Tyle House Farm and Mount Pleasant, Stocks Road, Wittersham – Erection of 18 no. dwellings and 2 self-build plots with associated parking, access, landscaping and open space to the north of Stocks Road. Outside the built confines; within HWNL; extending into open countryside and along the road; the reduction in the number of houses does not alter any of the facts; Grade 2 agricultural land which should not be lost to development; all previous proposals on this site have been rejected, including on appeal and this should remain the case. **WKPS OBJECTION.**

**MBC Local Plan 2021-38 Approved**

The Plan submitted by MBC to the Government Inspector in March 2022 was reviewed and approved by MBC on 20th March 2024. The principal features of 449 pages are: Lidsing Garden Village (2000 homes), Heathlands Garden Village (5000 homes), planned dwellings in Maidstone town centre are reduced and the safeguarding of the Leeds/Langley corridor is scrapped. 19669 houses are in the new Plan period, of which approx. 2500 are built. The remaining 17000 are profiled according to site plans - 1000pa for 5 years rising to 1350pa.

The features relevant to the Weald are as follows:

The seven categories of Policy have been retained. Our four are unchanged, each with its own Policies: Rural Service Centres, Larger Villages, Small Villages and Countryside.

Staplehurst and Marden Neighbourhood Plans are incorporated.

Four of the larger applications listed below are in this 2021-38 Plan. In each case this again sets up conflict within MBC, with Staplehurst, Marden and Headcorn PC’s and with WKPS.

**Appeal Decisions:**

**23/500230** Care Village totalling 100 units in Sutton Valence. WKPS objected due to inappropriate countryside location with numerous breaches of MBC policies. Gone to Appeal on 7 November. The conclusion states that the benefits (unmet demand) would not outweigh the very significant harm identified and is contrary to the development Plan. MBC REFUSED. WKPS OBJECTED. **Appeal Dismissed on 27th March 2024.**

**22/501335** Solar farm of 74.5ha north of Little Cheveney Farm, Marden. WKPS objected on a variety of grounds including 43% prime agricultural land. Gone to Appeal on 13 September 2023. The Inspector concluded that despite cogent and structured representation, the national policy for solar energy outweighed concerns over BMV (limited loss), countryside (limited harm), heritage assets (low harm), glint and glaze (minor). Moderate weight was given to better biodiversity, to grid connection and to farm diversification. **Appeal Allowed on 5th March 2024.**

**Other Planning Matters/Information**

The public consultation on the Draft Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan is running. WKPS will not be making any comments as the plan relates to the town centre.

**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.**