



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2019 IN THE MAIN HALL OF MARDEN MEMORIAL
HALL, GOUDHURST ROAD COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

090/19 PRESENT

Cllrs Adam, Barker, Boswell, Brown, Jones, Mannington (in the Chair), Newton, Robertson, Tippen and Turner were present. The Clerk, Borough Cllr Burton and approx. 140 members of the public were also in attendance.

091/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Stevens (*email received whilst the Clerk was at the meeting*), and County Cllr Eric Hotson gave their apologies.

092/19 COUNCILLOR INFORMATION

Register of Interest

There were no amendments to the registers of interest

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Barker had been lobbied from Marden Planning Opposition Group. All Cllrs had received details of the feedback responses received from residents following the Open Days on 15th and 16th November 2019

Granting of Dispensation

There were no granting of dispensation requested

093/19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2019 to be deferred until 10th December 2019.

094/19 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS INVOLVING PUBLIC SPEAKING:

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for the following item:

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman invited members of the public who were in attendance to ask questions or make statements in regard to the Maidstone Borough Council Call for Sites document.

The Chairman opened for the floor for statements: Two residents read out statements to the meeting. One being a generic statement for all sites and one for site 318 (Pagehurst) – *see Appendix A*.

The Chairman the opened the floor for questions as follows:

MBC has been designated as one of the worst areas with air pollution.

Developers are constantly closing roads and impacting on residents' day to day lives.

What is the Parish Council doing about the Call for Sites?

How will the information be submitted to MBC?

Why was there not a question stating "we don't want development" on the feedback form?

Feedback form was not a scientific approach to get peoples response.

Marden has now done its share of having development in the Borough.

Has Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) a map available for all existing sites – Cllr Tippen updated from information received KALC AGM. The Clerk would speak with KALC for information. Ensure MBC knows that Highwood Green should be on the Call for Sites

map and all other maps that MBC produces – The Parish Council, along with MPOG, had raised this on numerous occasions with MBC.

Ensure all S106 money is received before any further development takes place.

Diversions down country lanes when main roads are closed due to utilities/accidents etc.

The Chairman then reconvened the meeting for the rest of the agenda.

Accident spots – not always reported as non-injury - encouraged to log/report accidents where not recorded by Kent Police – advised to send to the Parish Clerk to keep a log.

Too many HGVs going down roads which are not suitable for this size of vehicle.

Concerned that other developments may come to light which are not in the Local Plan.

Road/speed surveys – are there any historic information available from Kent Highways?

Sites 309/318 – real problem with flood risk on both these scheme – resident currently working with the EA on a flood mitigation scheme, surface water would drain on neighbouring ditch where there is no room for attenuation ponds, two tributary streams across site 318.

What is MBC requesting from parishes?

Where will everyone who “moves here” will work.

Following all the questions the Chairman reconvened the meeting for Cllrs to discuss.

095/19 MAIDS

TONE BOROUGH COUNCIL CALL FOR SITES

Cllrs had been circulated the feedback received from the recent Open Days together with the responses received from 18th November to 29th November.

The Chairman then invited Cllrs to discuss the information received.

Cllr Adam stated that the Parish Council would need to respond to any/all the sites with a planning policy reason ie flooding, road/rail transport, environmental impact, biodiversity and therefore Cllrs need to look at each site individually to provide this.

Cllr Brown raised concerns on how the Local Plan Review consultation had been undertaken by MBC. A big bolt on development is not the same as a garden village/whole new settlement and in principle would object to a big bolt on such as sites 226, 309 and 318. A whole new settlement has not been put forward for Marden.

Cllr Turner agreed with Cllr Brown. All the sites put forward for Marden, even if taken cumulatively could not deliver the required infrastructure needed let alone individual bolt on sites. Strategically, as a principle he could not support this.

Cllr Adam stated that six times more sites have been put forward in the Call for Sites for the borough than are needed and parish councils and groups from other parishes will be acting in a similar way as those from Marden. MBC has to go through all the sites to assess their relative planning merits. All Cllrs are aware of the feeling of the parish but need to have genuine planning reasons to respond back to MBC.

Cllr Tippen read out a statement: “Firstly, may I say that at long last it is a relief to be able to discuss the sites that have been submitted in the call for sites. I am sure I am not the only Parish Councillor to have found the last 9 months very difficult. I am very grateful for all the valuable feedback we have received from residents which has given us a wealth of useful information. This includes the MPOG technical document, which is well researched and presented. In considering the sites I am mindful not only of residents’ comments but of the emerging Marden Neighbourhood Plan and the recent submission made by MPC to Maidstone Borough Council on the Local Plan Scoping Themes and Issues consultation. The vision for Marden in the MNP is to ‘ensure that Marden will continue to be a thriving parish, to maintain its individual character, heritage and community spirit’.

In the feedback to MBC we clearly stated that “Categorically no one is in favour of a major extension to existing rural settlements/villages/Rural Service Centres”. The results of our consultation confirm for me that Marden residents are strongly opposed to large scale development. However, as Parish Councillors we need to take a balanced view of all proposals and this what I have tried to do. I have tried to focus on the benefits the land north of the railway line would bring to the existing community. New educational facilities especially a nursery school, could be most welcome, as well as enhanced station car parking and a larger health centre. But I have one enormous fundamental problem with these proposals and that is that they do not benefit the existing community. One of the huge advantages of living in a village environment is easy accessibility to services such as health and education. Plans for the land north of the railway do not provide any connection to the existing settlement. There is no public right of way from Public Footpath KM 242 to the village centre and there is no prospect of this happening as the permissive path passes through church land. Proposals relating to upgrading pedestrian access via the train station are fanciful. Do the developers have any understanding of the demographic of Marden? Do they really think that a parent, who does not have any transport of their own, and lives some distance from this site in to name but a few locations - Vicarage Fields, Highwood Green, The Cockpit is going to walk their child, or push their pram, across a railway station to access the nursery school, Primary School or health services? We all know the answer is no and therefore I cannot see any benefits to the existing community. Parking and traffic congestion in the village is a key concern to residents and therefore additional station car parking could be seen as welcome. But I suspect, indeed I know, that this is too high a price to pay and that residents would be prepared to put up with the parking and congestion issues if it meant that the village is not to double in size.

There are of course many other reasons than those I have listed above why I believe this site is unacceptable. In terms of the other 2 major sites submitted – the plans are either less developed or non-existent. Nevertheless, significant standalone proposals to the south of Maidstone are wholly inappropriate in my view because of the very poor road transport network – both A roads and minor roads. The A229 south of Linton is a notorious accident black spot and to the north there is little prospect of extensive road widening to cope with additional traffic. Added to that people who do not commute to work by train in many cases are not going to Maidstone to work. Our road connections especially to the west to key employment hubs in Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood are along narrow minor country roads. In addition, connectivity to the motorway network, in whichever direction you are travelling, is slow and poor along country lanes. Points have also been well made about flooding across each site. I believe that none of the 3 major sites fit with the vision for Marden in the Neighbourhood Plan and that we have already stated that we categorically oppose any major extension to the existing settlement. There may be some possibility for some further minor development in Marden, but I would wish to reserve judgement on this until the strategic site assessments have been completed. I also think that it should be highlighted to MBC that the site in the Wheelbarrow Industrial Estate (281) is already earmarked in the current local plan as an economic development area and they should assess on that basis and not as residential.”

Cllr Robertson understood absolutely how the majority of the village feel about development and congratulate Marden Planning Opposition Group on the information that they have provided. MPC has a wealth of experience and personally, did not want to see any more development especially large scale.

Cllr Newton had lived in Marden all his life and has been a Cllr for many years. He agreed that Cllr Tippen had put across many of the concerns and issues that he would raise and personally, does not support development north of the railway. Building on farmland and orchards is not appropriate. The flood plain in and around the village has grown over many years.

Cllr Barker reiterated the concerns raised by other Cllrs.

Cllr Boswell thanked Marden Planning Opposition Group on all the hard work and technical data that had been undertaken. Her main concern is the potential impacts on ecology.

Cllr Jones stated that he was fairly new to the village and the Parish Council but had been professionally involved in New Towns. He agreed with all Cllrs comments and, in particular, that the large bolt on sites should be opposed.

Cllr Adam: Majority of the information, and good work, has been provided on site 309 by Marden Planning Opposition Group and the technical document contains good planning reasons why this should not be put forward. Concern is that a lot of focus has been put on that site however some work should be done to get the other sites up to the same standard. Site 318 would be extremely damaging as would virtually merge Staplehurst and Marden together. Planning policy states a site needs to be sustainable and site 226 is not. Some employment sites may be suitable as would offer local employment. Need to look at individual sites and give genuine planning policy to each application and a lot of work needs to be done before the MBC consultation in February. Encouraged all residents to respond to the consultation with planning reasons. MPC is working to get the information across most effectively.

Cllr Mannington had lived, worked and run a business for 42 years. Felt that Marden has had enough development for the younger generation to cope with but there are several sites which offer employment which she could support but, like the rest of the Council was against big bolt-on developments.

All Cllrs agreed unanimously that Sites 309, 318, 226 be reported back to MBC for rejection. Residents are of the same opinion that there should be no large bolt-on developments.

MPC agreed that all responses from third parties and Marden Parish Council would go to MBC.

Cllrs agreed to discuss in more detail the planning reasons for refusal of these three sites and this would be placed on the next planning agenda for 17th December. Reasons are likely to include impact on existing road network, A229, travelling west, towards motorway networks, large scale developments of this nature with traffic travelling east and west would be highly detrimental.

The remaining sites would be discussed in more detail when further analysis had been undertaken by MBC; information from the Call for Sites documents had been received and local knowledge taken on board.

Cllr Burton spoke to the meeting stating that KCC and MBC were working together but the traffic modelling is not going to be ready immediately to provide evidence for the sites. In 2022 the current Local Plan ceases after that the NPPF takes over which could make way for any developer to come in with an application. MBC therefore need to keep on top of the timescale. Following the General Election the numbers for housing in the South East may be taken back to Central Government to reconsider.

Cllrs were also asked to consider that irrespective if any additional station car parking is made available the rail network / capacity of trains cannot be extended.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.09pm

Date: 10th December 2019

Signed:

Cllr Lesley Mannington

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**Marden Parish Council
Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting
3rd December 2019**

Appendix A

PUBLIC FORUM

Statement 1:

Position statement by Marden Planning Opposition Group:

Thank you to everyone for coming here tonight, we really appreciate your support. The unique event of the 18th May March for Marden where almost 2,000 people marched as a village united in opposition, was only made possible due to the strength of feeling in the village and the support that you, the residents of Marden, have given us.

When the Call for Sites maps and information were published, and Marden was surrounded by a sea of red it left a lot of people shocked. However, as there has been roughly 6 times more sites for housing submitted into this call for sites than is needed to fulfil the borough's housing numbers, we should persevere more strongly than ever. Marden may not need to be developed further at all. We ask you, our parish and borough councillors, to encourage the swift sifting out and rejection of these unsuitable applications in our parish. It is absolutely vital these unsuitable sites in Marden area rejected BEFORE any of them get into the new MBC Local Plan document.

Marden is a village that is at present termed a rural service centre. As we move forward in this MBC local plan process, we implore our parish councillors to tell any officer of Maidstone Borough Council that as a village we are at capacity.

We also encourage the parish council (aided by our group where we can) to continue to lobby the borough and county councillors to interrogate the Section 106 monies that have amassed some £3.5 million for Marden in time limited agreements, and to encourage the expedient spending of that money. This money is to mitigate for the effects of the recent housing developments in our village and is meant to be for the benefit of current and new residents alike. We must not forget that many of the recent already approved housing in the village is not yet finished and as a result is still not yet inhabited.

If I can be totally clear for a moment – it was 600 houses that generated the £3.5 million. In your recent Marden Neighbourhood Plan you have suggested an additional 198 dwellings could be built. This number will clearly not generate this kind of money for Marden again. Therefore, it is imperative that you as a parish council, together with us as a village, never stop asking – “where is Marden's money?”

Our group has provided MPC with factual technical information detailing why Marden is not the right location for garden communities or any large development sites. We have also highlighted the inaccuracies that we have found in the Call for Sites submitted proposals, and I know that lots of other people have also contacted MPC with their views on development. Amongst many other things Marden has serious highways, sewerage, drainage and flooding issues.

One of the principles of a garden community is that residents must be engaged throughout the process. Our petition, signed by nearly 3000 people could not have said our message more clearly;

We as a community DO NOT share the vision of the landowners, DO NOT support the proposal, and will NOT engage with or be involved in the creation of a “garden community” in or around Marden village, and we ask that you as our parish council keep on re-iterating this to any officer or developer that asks “the view of the village”.

Our MPOG group have provided you with the documents, links and videos of our campaign so far, that has garnered local and national press attention. We also ask that you present this information to Maidstone Borough Council as the views of Marden.

We look forward to the newly written Marden Neighbourhood Plan coming to referendum in the New Year and the opportunity for us, the residents of Marden, to vote on it.

We make this statement as your electorate, the people that you ultimately represent and who vote for you. Tonight, we look forward to your statement regarding further development in Marden and we hope and feel sure that you will express an opinion that is in line with that of the residents of Marden.

Thank you.

Statement 2:

Residents Comments

With reference to Site 318 – Land which has been offered for housing on Pagehurst Farm. This site straddles both Staplehurst and Marden parishes.

I speak on behalf of many residents of both parishes.

In April 2017 the Planning Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, dismissed an appeal, by the developers, for a solar power station – I quote “because of the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the landscape”. There were many other reasons given to support his dismissal.

We believe the reasons given would apply to any proposal to build houses on the same site.

Marden Parish Council Planning Committee refused permission for the afore mentioned solar power station. We hope that, should site 318 be considered by Maidstone Borough Council for development, Marden Parish Council Planning Committee will deal with this proposal in a similar manner.

Thank you.

Feedback was also received from many residents following the Parish Council Open Days on 15th and 16th November together with responses received up until 29th November 2019. All the comments were presented to Cllrs prior to this meeting.