



Bearsted & Thurnham Report



*April
2007*

The Newsletter of the Bearsted & Thurnham Society

Kent International Gateway

The Biggest Threat to Bearsted and Thurnham Since the War

Members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Society will be well aware, from the many mass e-mailings we have sent out about it in recent days, of the fight the Society and many others are mounting against Kent International Gateway - a proposal to obliterate totally the entire belt of Special Landscape Area countryside below the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from Thurnham Lane to Hollingbourne by creating there a 'rail-linked distribution park with road-to-rail transfer facilities and associated business development'. If you have e-mail but have not received them, e-mail us your e-mail address now (see back page), and go to the Society's website at www.BearstedandThurnhamSociety.org to catch up with what is going on; sign the 10 Downing Street petition you will find there; download, print out, fill in and send off the reply-paid objection postcards issued by Kent International Gateway; download, print out and display prominently on your property or in your car a campaign poster; and e-mail the managing director at AXA Real Estate Investment Management (stephen.smith@axa-im.com) and the Chief Executive at AXA UK PLC (nicolas.moreau@axa-uk.co.uk) to let them know what you think of AXA for being part of Kent International Gateway's bid to destroy Bearsted and Thurnham, not to say Maidstone and much of Kent.

Do not be too reassured when you hear Maidstone Borough Councillors and officials vowing to fight the planning application when it is made. They have themselves opened the door to it by proposing in their new Local Development Framework Core Strategy to remove the protection from development which this Special Landscape Area enjoys and to label much of it as 'an area of search for development sites' with the aim of attracting 'high quality business and high-pay jobs' to Maidstone. We strongly objected to this at the time, saying that it would open the door to precisely this kind of low-quality, low-pay, environmentally catastrophic development. Adoption of the draft Core Strategy will make it far more difficult for MBC to win if a KIG application goes to appeal - see page 4 for more details. If you want to stop KIG the first step is to stop the Core Strategy. E-mail your elected Councillors now demanding that they vote against it when it comes to Council:

johnhorne@maidstone.gov.uk; allanbradshaw@maidstone.gov.uk
richardash@maidstone.gov.uk; patmarshall@maidstone.gov.uk

If you have no access to a computer of your own, please try to use the computer of a friend, neighbour or family member to do all this. Copies of the campaign posters can be picked up from the newsagents on The Green or the Ashford Road. If all else fails contact the Society for copies of the documents - but we badly need to minimise the demands on our time and printing resources while the fight goes on. If you want to write rather than e-mail, the four councillors can be written to *c/o Maidstone Borough Council, 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone ME16 8HG*. KIG objections can be sent to *KIG Consultation, Freepost Lon 14055, London WC2 1BR* (keep them short and simple: save detailed arguments for the formal planning application stage). The two AXA addresses are: *Stephen Smith, Managing Director, AXA Real Estate Investment Management Limited, 7 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7NX*, and *Nicolas Moreau, Chief Executive, AXA UK PLC, 5 Old Broad Street, London EC2N 1AD*.

Those active in the Society's Footpath Group (see page 7) will be particularly concerned to see that the proposals involve wholesale destruction of ancient footpaths across the land in question, assurances that they will be 're-routed', and that 'none of the existing bridleways will be affected' being utterly meaningless, given that the entire area will be converted from open countryside into an industrial wasteland.

Parish Council Elections

The Society is most grateful to **Trevor Smith** of Mallings Drive for responding to the appeal in our January Newsletter for more Members to consider standing for election to their parish council. Trevor's decision to stand for Bearsted has helped ensure that there will be an election to choose 15 Councillors from a list of 16 candidates, rather than just the automatic re-appointment of existing Councillors without a vote. Two other new candidates whose decision to stand also helped trigger the election are **Wendi Usher** of Merton Road and **Paul Young** of Fauchons Lane. Of the 13 existing Councillors standing again for election, three are Members of the Society: **Geoffrey Licence** (Trapfield Close) and **Kevin Street** and **Patrick Walton** (both of The Landway). Geoffrey and Patrick are Society Road Stewards.

Bearsted Parish Plan

Many Members completed the Bearsted Parish Plan mini-questionnaire circulated with our January Newsletter, as a result of which the Parish Plan Steering Group has been able to draw on hundreds of comments and ideas in putting together a detailed draft questionnaire which will eventually go to all households. We also had a splendid response to our appeal to Members to help deliver the questionnaire to households in their areas, encourage their completion, and collect them afterwards - over 50 members agreeing to do so. They will be contacted in due course, but the Parish Plan Steering Group has decided to postpone further action on this until the autumn to allow the entire Bearsted community to concentrate for now on fighting the Kent International Gateway threat.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday 13 June 2007 at Madginford Hall, Egremont Road from 7.30 p.m. Please make a note in your diary to be there. The agenda will be:

- Presentation of the Society's Annual Report
- Annual Report of the Footpath Group
- Approval of the Society's Accounts for 2006/7
- Election of Officers, Committee Members and Examiner of Accounts
- A resolution approving the fielding by the Society of candidates in Maidstone Borough Council elections from 2008 onwards

The fight against Kent International Gateway will be the major element in the debate on the Annual Report. But to remind us all what we are fighting to save, the proceedings will open with an illustrated presentation on the history of Bearsted by Roger Vidler, Chairman of the Bearsted and District Local History Society, and will be followed by a wine and cheese party providing an opportunity for informal discussions with Committee Members and Road Stewards.

Society Candidates in Borough Council Elections

Over one quarter of Member households completed and returned the response form distributed with our January Newsletter, and of those 82% voted in favour of the Society's fielding candidates in Maidstone Borough Council elections from 2008 onwards with only 14% against - hence the final item in the above agenda for the AGM.

Multi-Game Area on the Elizabeth Harvie Field

An even larger majority - 87% to 10% - declared their opposition to the Parish Council's plan to construct a multi-game area on the Elizabeth Harvie Field. The Chairman of Bearsted Parish Council refused to allow the Society to present this result at any meeting of the Parish Council, saying that in his view it was invalid because the background note circulated by the Society had not presented the supporters' case sufficiently attractively. The Society Secretary therefore sent the result in writing to all Parish Councillors, saying that the figures left no room for doubt that if they proceeded with the plan they would do so in defiance of the wishes of the overwhelming majority of residents in all parts of the parish. Bearsted Parish Council still shows every sign of planning to go ahead. One very encouraging development is that the Bearsted Woodland Trust has indicated to the Parish Council that it wishes to present to them an attractive alternative proposal for a more environmentally friendly recreation facility for young people on BWT land. Rather less encouragingly, the Parish Council has put the issue on hold until after the local council elections. If this issue means a lot to you, you might want to ask candidates in the Bearsted Parish Council election how they will vote on it if elected.

Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options

Members whose e-mail addresses are registered with us should have received a copy of the full text of the objections submitted by the Society to Maidstone Borough Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options, which envisage building 10,080 houses and many business sites in the borough over the next 20 years, the majority of them in the open countryside to our immediate east, southeast and north - even Bearsted Golf Club has not escaped inclusion in the areas of search for development sites. It has been estimated that this will generate over 11,000 additional motor cars in the area, many of them presumably driving regularly through Bearsted and Thurnham along the Ashford Road and their other streets and lanes. The objections we submitted can be seen in full at:

<http://consultation.limehouse.co.uk/maidstone/drafts/18/index.html>

(scroll down when you get there to ID 858 and click on 'David Cockerham (40)').

In summary we said that the consultation document:

'Misleadingly seeks to give the impression that the Council is merely implementing housing targets set at central government and regional level when it is in fact advocating higher targets of its own volition, both for total dwellings and for average density levels. It also misleadingly seeks to give the impression that its target of 10,080 houses results from the naming of Maidstone as a New Growth Point when in fact the Council set that target in order to achieve New Growth Point status. It equally misleadingly attempts to put a smokescreen over this by suggesting that the 10,080 figure results simply from continuing the present building rate of 504 dwellings a year, when in fact the decision to continue at that rate was taken in order to achieve the figure of 10,080 and thus qualify for New Growth Point status. There is moreover no case for continuing to build at that rate - a rate generated by the need to meet historic levels of demand which are no longer relevant in an age when the local population is projected to decline in all age groups except 65+. The real motive appears to be a misguided attempt to compete with the Ashford and Thames Gateway Special Growth Areas for reasons which have more to do with civic pride than with the protection of the wellbeing and quality of life of the existing population of the borough and its future descendants. Their interests should be seen in the context of the sub-regional economy as a whole, not in the narrow context of civic rivalry. The consequences of this deeply flawed approach will be: destruction of the green environment on a far greater scale than is necessary to meet real local needs; a much worse level of sustainability than could have been achieved commensurate with the interests of the people; wide scale evasion by developers of their affordable housing and infrastructure contributions by the simple technique of multiple infill development in unprotected suburban gardens causing great distress to communities and leading to even greater unfunded infrastructure requirements; the sucking out of business investment from the town centre to greenfield sites near the M20, with former inner-urban business sites going to housing rather than to the imaginative mixed-use investment needed for town centre regeneration and

vitality; low quality, low paid businesses rather than high quality ones predominating in the new greenfield sites because of the inability of the Council to determine which businesses will win those sites once they are allocated; and massive traffic increases in both the main roads and narrow rural and semi-rural lanes of all communities in the south eastern approaches to Maidstone with huge damage to the quality of life of people living there."

The Kent International Gateway threat proves beyond doubt in our view that these objections were valid. The deadline for objections to the Core Strategy has expired. The aim now must be to persuade Councillors to vote against it when it comes to Council if our objections have been ignored. Adoption of the Core Strategy as it stands will be a huge strategic misjudgement for which Councillors will not be forgiven. If Maidstone Borough Council presses on regardless, adopting and submitting the Core Strategy to central government for approval without substantial amendment, there will be one remaining opportunity to object when it comes up for public examination in the autumn. The Society is seeking to build a common front with other angry parishes in the area in preparation for that, and, if all else fails, a common electoral front for the 2008 borough council elections.

Planning Applications

The united front by the Society, the Parish Council and local objectors succeeded in securing a refusal of the planning application for a development in the garden of **Burnham Cottage** on Sutton Street despite a determined effort by Council planning officials to persuade the Planning Committee to ignore its own policies and pass it. We are delighted to learn that the owners have decided not to appeal. The **St Faiths** developers made a third attempt to secure planning permission to add a double garage to the development very close to the site entrance on Yeoman Lane. We objected for a third time, and for a third time it was refused. We have urged Maidstone Borough Council to require changes to the style and design of the houses proposed for a development in the garden of **Nethermount, Church Lane**, to make them more in keeping with the bungalow and chalet styles of properties in Whiteheads Lane and the lower end of The Orchard, and less overbearing for immediately neighbouring properties. A decision is awaited. The Society spoke at Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee in support of objectors to a retrospective application for approval of the complete demolition of the **Caring Lane Barn** and its replacement by an entirely new office building, when the planning consent was for modification of the existing barn only. Every single committee member nevertheless voted to approve it. This must mean either that if the applicant had applied for this in the first place it would have been granted; or that committee members were reluctant to inflict major financial damage on the applicant by enforcing the planning rules. Neither possibility is reassuring, and makes us wonder how many of our remaining rural barns are safe. The Society took action to get preservation orders placed on two of the trees in the garden at **2 Mount Lane** when it heard that the owner was planning a tree-felling day prior to making

a planning application for a new bungalow there. The application was subsequently submitted but then withdrawn. We do not yet know why, or whether it will re-surface. We did not object to an application to build a house in the garden of 33 Tower Lane because, in the light of approvals granted recently for far more objectionable garden developments, it seemed unrealistic to do so. The application has since been approved, but with an exceptionally long list of conditions designed to ensure maximum preservation of greenery and harmony with the surrounding area. As we go to press, a detailed application has been submitted for the re-development of the Lipscomb Volvo site - one building with 400 m² of office space and 14 apartments, following the grant of outline permission some months ago. We will scrutinise this closely.

Other Recent New Planning Applications

Let us know if any of these cause you concern:

Reference	Location	Description
MA/07/0767	128 The Landway	1 st floor side and single storey rear extensions
MA/07/0764	43 Yeoman Way	Rear extension and loft conversion
MA/07/0763	73 Roseacre Lane	Front, side and rear 2-storey extension
MA/06/1064/01	Lipscomb Volvo	Detailed application following earlier outline permission
MA/07/0709	58 Ware Street	Side and rear single storey extension
MA/07/0700	Downsway, Trapfield Lane	Loft conversion and dormer
MA/06/1180/01	17 Otteridge Road	New 2/3 bedroom bungalow. Detailed application following earlier outline permission
MA/07/0674	15 Otteridge Road	Rear extension replacing conservatory; hip roof extension to single apex
MA/07/0660	1 Spot Lane	Loft conversion with flying gable
MA/07/0655	41 Egremont Rad	New attached dwelling adjoining No.41
MA/07/0639	Bearsted Vineyard, Caring Lane	Change of use from winery and storage to B(1)light industrial
MA/04/1608/04	St Faiths	Revised elevations
MA/07/0634	16 Spurway	Single storey front and rear extensions
MA/07/0621	Mote Hall, Church Lane	Conservatory replacing existing car port
MA/07/0593	2 The Street	Single storey rear extension, front porch and canopy

Footpath Group Walks Programme

Date	Start Time & Place	Route
Saturday 19 May	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. at Coldblow Youth Hostel	Coldblow - Scragged Oak - Broad Street - Five Wents - Aldington - Civiley Wood - Coldblow. Distance: 6 miles.
Saturday 16 June	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond	Bearsted Green - Barty Farm - Five Wents - Broad Street - Scragged Oak - Coldblow Lane - Aldington - Bearsted Green. Distance: 6½ miles
Saturday 21 July	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. at Harrietsham Railway Station	Harrietsham - Goddington - No Man's Acre - Lower Deans Farm - Merlewood - Hogbarn Farm - Marley - Kingboro Farm - Harrietsham Church - Harrietsham Station. Distance: 5½ miles.
Saturday 18 August	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. at Coldblow Hostel	Coldblow - Little Buds - Squirrel Wood - (A249) - Rumstead Farm - Old Forge Farm - Hucking - Hucking Hill House - Little Scragged Oak Farm - Coldblow Hostel. Distance: 5½ miles
Saturday 15 September	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. at Ham Lane, Lenham	Ham Lane - Lenham Square - War Memorial - North Downs Way - Little Pivington Farm - Warren Street - Waterditch Farm - North Downs Way - War Memorial - Ham Lane. Distance: 6 miles
Saturday 20 October	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond.	Barty Farm - Ripple - Five Wents - Strickets Garden - Hollingbourne - Eyhorne Street - Musket Lane - Service Station - Snarkhurst Wood - Five Wents - Chrismill Lane - Barty Farm - Bearsted Green. Distance: 7 miles

Friday Evening Walks are also now taking place on the second Friday of the month (note however that the September walk be on the 7th not the 14th) and will continue to do so up to and including October. They start from Bearsted Green Pond at 6.30 p.m.

Neither the Society nor the Walk Leaders accept any responsibility for any accidents occurring to or caused by any person, animal or dog on our walks. Walkers are urged to be vigilant when crossing or walking on roads, paths, etc. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on leads and under control at all times. Adults should be members of the Society, and children should be accompanied by a responsible adult. Walkers need to wear stout footwear, bring adequate wet weather clothing, be prepared to negotiate rough ground, and be able to climb over stiles and up steep slopes. For further details call Mike Perring on 739109.

Wet Weather may make it necessary for the Walk Leader to change the route. If in doubt, telephone 736467 or 739109.



Round The Oasts

An occasional feature page in which we review interesting aspects of life past and present in and around Bearsted and Thurnham. This piece draws on material in 'Thurnham Watermill' by R Spain which appeared in 'A History of Bearsted and Thurnham' published in 1988 jointly by the Bearsted and District Local History Society and the then Bearsted and Thurnham Residents Association - a forerunner of the Bearsted and Thurnham Society

Thurnham Mill, lovingly restored and converted into a beautiful home by David and Pam Garner, must surely qualify as one of Bearsted and Thurnham's special treasures. The origins of milling near this site can be traced back to the Domesday Book when 'Turneham' was recorded as having one mill which then stood 200 yards upstream of the present site. It first appeared on a map in 1707 marked 'Corn Mill' when it was shown as spanning the River Len, but conveyances record its ownership as passing in turn from Edmund Chamber de Thurnham in 1624 to Ellis Ellis of Otham, William Cage of Milgate, William Barber, John Bovis and finally, in 1777 to Richard Ballard, after which it became known as Ballard's Mill, appearing under that name on a map of 1815.



In earlier times there appear to have been two mills on the site, one used for corn and the other for cloth fulling and, later, hemp. Sometime before 1829 the old mill was pulled down and the Cage family built the present delightful weatherboarded one beside the lovely little stone bridge over the Len on the Otham Lane, on a piece of land in the Milgate Estate called Byfrance. It was then leased to a Robert Blinkhorn. In the early 20th Century it was purchased by Frederick Marshall, and willed by him in 1930 to Frederick Naylor along with the coal yard and corn stores in The Street - one of those now also converted into housing and the other due to be. The last miller was Albert Wratten of Hollingbourne. Milling ended during World War II when the mainshaft broke, having had a narrow escape before that when an unexploded shell was found lodged in the machinery during corn milling.

Already suffering from the growing traffic rat-run from Shepway to the M20, the precious rural setting of this little gem could be lost forever if Maidstone Borough Council's Core Strategy goes through. Treat yourself to a walk down Otham Lane to enjoy it, and to

Published by the Bearsted and Thurnham Society

*Chairman
Brian Clifford,
Hope Lodge, St Faiths Lane, Bearsted ME14 4JN
Tel: 739952
e-mail:
TheChairman@BearstedAndThurnhamSociety.org*

*Secretary & Vice-Chairman
David Cockerham
1 Manor Rise, Bearsted ME14 4DA
Tel: 738140
e-mail:
TheSecretary@BearstedAndThurnhamSociety.org*