



# The Bearsted & Thurnham Society



The Residents' Association for the Civil Parishes of Bearsted and Thurnham

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Ms Amanda Marks  
Planning Officer  
Maidstone Borough Council  
Maidstone House  
King Street  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME19 6JQ

10 February 2015

Dear Ms Marks

**MA/14/506738: application to erect up to 100 dwellings on land at Barty Farm.**

**MA/14/506798 and MA/14/506799: listed building and planning application for the demolition and re-building of section of curtilage boundary wall to listed building.**

The Society has strong objections to these planning applications for the reasons set out below.

There are already on the Maidstone web site a number of excellent letters; in particular those from Dr Felicity Simpson dated 27 January, Mr M Rowe dated 31 January and those of 19 and 31 January from, respectively, Malcolm and Kathryn Kersey. The Society fully endorses the detailed points they make. That being the case we will not repeat in detail all the objections they and others have tellingly made in their representations, but simply outline the key objections which, in our view, should result in planning permission being refused. They are:

- The proposal to build up to 100 houses at Barty Farm is a major encroachment of the built development into open green countryside.
- The site forms part of the foreground to the Kent Downs AONB and should be protected. Development here would create village sprawl.
- As agricultural land it makes an important contribution to food production.

- The extra 100 houses would generate at least another 200 vehicles - possibly nearer 300 given the size of the houses proposed.
- On the developer's own figure there would be an increase of nearly 15% in the number of vehicle journeys made which is unacceptable.
- This in turn would greatly increase vehicle movements on a double blind corner and an already heavily trafficked road.
- The inadequacy of the road junction from the site to Roundwell is likely to cause blockages and bottlenecks whichever way the traffic turns.
- This will place pressure on the "emergency access" to and from the site which the applicants propose to build from Water Lane.
- If the proposed emergency access from the site to Water Lane were ever constructed it would rapidly become the favoured route from the site to the railway station and the green because it is the shortest route. However, Water Lane is unsuitable for such an access. It is narrow, steep sided, prone to flooding and does not allow for widening, especially at its junction with Roundwell. The geology, Gault clay and sand, is an unstable combination and only increases the problems of construction and a road of this kind would only increase the danger to other traffic using the land, including horse riders.
- As Mr Rowe points out, the Kent Design Guide states that for mobility impaired footways the gradient should not be more than 5%. This is not achieved at any of the proposed access points to the site.
- Paragraphs 8 to 14 of Mr Rowe's letter highlights the short comings in the developer's arguments about the adequacy of their proposed road junction at Roundwell and measures they propose to enhance safety, such as the removal of the road centre lines.
- The applicant's proposals to demolish the listed wall adjacent to Barty House and rebuild it on a different line does nothing effective to improve visibility at the junction of the access road with Roundwell.
- A development of the scale proposed at Barty Farm would require a Transport Assessment to be prepared under which the need for adequate visibility would need to be established. This would require a further application for Listed Building consent to remove yet more of the wall. If the first application were granted no doubt, as Mr Kersey points out, it would be argued that, having established a precedent, it would not matter if the rest of the wall was also demolished.

The Society is also concerned that the proposed development would severely increase pressure on hard pressed local facilities and amenities. We have made the point before in relation to the proposed development of Lilk Meadow – a site recently removed from the housing allocation for the Local Plan.

In particular, the knock-on effect of this scale of new development on school places would be dramatic, especially on the ability of parents to secure the schools of their choice. A recent freedom of information request established that in the period 2009-14 the number of children who failed to obtain their first choice at Thurnham Infant School, Madginford Infant/Junior School and St

John's School, Grove Green, was **341**. A further **271** failed to secure their second and third choices.

During that period **90** appeals took place of which only **7** were successful – a success rate of **6.3%**.  
**In 2014 no appeals were successful.**

Children who failed to obtain a place at any of their nominated schools were primarily allocated places at St Paul's (**63**) Bell Wood (**42**), Park Way (**32**), Loose (**32**), East Borough (**24**), Molehill Copse (**20**) and Senacre (**16**). Children were also sent as far away as new Ash Green, Cranbrook, Coxheath, East Farleigh, Kingswood, Harrietsham, Sutton Valence and Allington with all the consequences on parental time, increased traffic and pollution.

A headlong dash for increased housing provision without the necessary infrastructure being provided in step does not constitute sustainable development. For all these reasons the Society believes planning permission for all these applications should be refused.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Vanhecke









ROAD  
CLOSED

