

The Bearsted & Thurnham Society



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

Caroline Vanhecke, Chair
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Richard Timms
Planning Officer
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Dear Richard Timms

MA/14/506738 OUT: Land at Barty Farm, Roundwell, Bearsted

Dandara Limited in their letter of 25 May has put forward an application to vary four conditions relating to the above application. The Society's response is set out below.

Condition 7 of the planning permission required the developers to submit for approval a landscape scheme providing 1.05 hectares of useable open space within the site and designated in accordance with the Council's adopted landscape character guidance.

The developers argue that the 1.05 figure is calculated in error. The revised plan LN37-0002, they say, shows 0.748 ha of usable open space and landscape buffers, which, they argue, exceeds the amount required under the Council's own guidelines for a development of this scale. There is a suggestion that the Council has misapplied its own policy and that, unless this and other conditions are varied, the development cannot be delivered.

The Society notes that the policy guidance is just that – **guidance** – and that the decision of the Planning Committee trumps such policy guidance.

The plan now submitted in support of the developers' case, LN37-0002, shows the latest disposition of planned open space and landscaping schemes. It varies from the original in a number of respects: primarily the designation of a strip of land (marked blue on the plan) adjacent to Water Lane as public open space. This strip is carved out of what was previously shown as part of the back gardens and landscaping area of the properties backing onto Water Lane.

The Society does not believe that such a strip constitutes useable open space. Instead it simply comprises a narrow corridor running between the backs of the properties on the western edge of the site and the steeply sloping bank of Water Lane. It is not overlooked by the front windows of

these properties, nor is it large or wide enough for games to be played or otherwise used as open space in the accepted sense of the term.

In the Society's view its location will encourage undesirable uses – anything from smoking to drug taking or worse - and could constitute a convenient corridor for burglars to gain access to the back gardens of the properties at this end of the site. In short it is not consistent with the recognised provision of open space, nor with the over riding need for child safety.

The Council must hold to its view about the level of open space and landscaping to be provided. If that means that the scheme is undeliverable in its present form, then it is up to the developers to find ways of delivery that meet the conditions. It is not the Council's role to change a reasonable condition just so that Dandara Ltd can develop the site profitably.

For all these reasons the Society believes that the applicant's request for a variation in Condition 7 should be rejected.

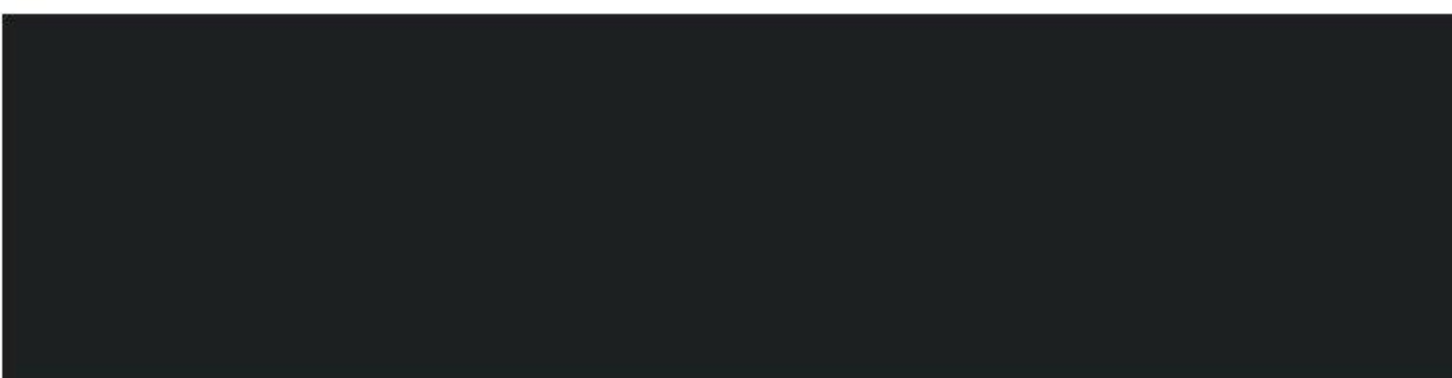
Furthermore, we understand that the developers are already undertaking pre-application discussions about a further revision to the plan for the site – one which could result in still more houses being proposed.

It is important in considering the current application that the Council should do nothing that will facilitate yet another application that would further degrade the amount of open space provided on the site.

Finally on Condition 7, the area shown in red on the southern edge of LN37-0002 seems to the Society to show a subtle reduction in the amount of space given over to landscaping compared with the original proposals. The Council should ensure that this is not the case.

With regard to the proposals for the road junction and associated works, we support the response submitted by Mr Malcolm Kersey. We would add only that, in our view, the dropped kerbs at either end of the reworked road junction are not sufficient to provide safe crossing for children, adults, the elderly or disabled at these points. A controlled crossing should be installed at one end to provide the element of safety required.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Caroline Vanhecke