



The Bearsted & Thurnham Society



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

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Simon Rowberry
Planning Officer
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
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30 November 2018

Dear Mr Rowberry

PLANNING APPLICATION 18/504836/EIOUT, BINBURY PARK, BINBURY LANE, DETLING

This letter sets out the Society's objections to the above planning application.

First, the site does not form part of the approved local plan adopted only a year ago.

Secondly, the Council already has sufficient land allocated to housing to last for the next six and a half years, and sufficient land allocations to meet its immediate employment needs.

Thirdly, the site lies within the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the current proposals run contrary to the North Downs AONB Management Plan.

Fourthly, the development proposed will result in the loss of countryside and significant urbanisation in a rural area.

Fifth, the area is poorly served by public transport – the nearest railway stations are Bearsted and Maidstone East and buses do not run past the site after late afternoon. Development on this scale would therefore result in substantial extra use of private cars with all the congestion and pollution that will bring to areas where air quality already fails to meet pollution standards. Because of these shortcomings the site cannot be regarded as sustainable.

Sixth, we are not convinced that the proposed park and ride scheme would achieve the objectives claimed for it. We believe that the park and ride scheme would have to demonstrate a significantly improved journey time or long term parking in Maidstone would have to be severely restricted, or

made more expensive, to persuade drivers to change their mode of travel. The proposed changes to the bus service suggested in the application are not supported by a clear business case and lack credibility.

Traffic predictions for vehicles on the A249 assume that 15% will stay within Binbury Park. This figure has been determined by comparison with one other development – that at Kings Hill. However, the mix of housing at Binbury Park (including 40% affordable housing) is significantly different to that at Kings Hill which may be expected to affect any conclusions that can be drawn from the comparison. A more robust approach would have been to examine a number of other developments in the wider area that are more directly comparable to the proposal at Binbury Park.

Seventh, the criticisms of Heritage England and Kent County Council of the harmful impact of the proposals on the heritage assets on the site and the inadequacies of the heritage assessment are very concerning.

There are two other matters that are also of concern to us.

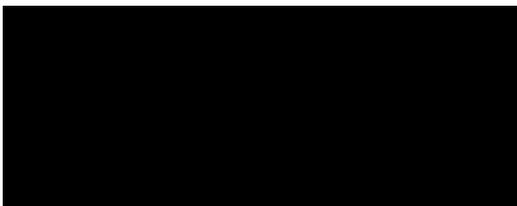
In her letter of 5 November, Gail Arnold, Deputy Managing Director of the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group, drew attention to the fact that the need for a new medical facility at Binbury Park had not at this stage been identified by the CCG or discussed with the developers, and that the CCG would expect a more detailed discussion with the Council and the developer at an appropriate date in the future.

She went on to point out that the Binbury Park development alone would not trigger consideration of the commissioning of a new general medical practice as it is not a resilient, safe, sustainable or attractive service model to commission new practices serving a small population. (The population of the site, if developed, would likely be in the region of **4-5,000 people**, while over **8,000 people** is the working figure for population growth to support a new surgery.) The inclusion of a new surgery, while, on the face of it, an attractive proposition, is not therefore likely to materialise – at least in the foreseeable future. Another factor pointing to the prematurity of this application.

Finally, we are concerned about the water supply to the site and its effect on other areas served by the aquifer. Water supply in Kent is already under stress, especially in dry summer months and this proposal would only increase the strain on already stretched resources.

For all these reasons we believe that planning permission for this application should be refused.

Yours sincerely



P.P. Caroline Vanhecke