



# The Bearsted & Thurnham Society



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

Caroline Vanhecke, Chair  
92 Ashford Road, Bearsted Kent ME15 8PQ



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.

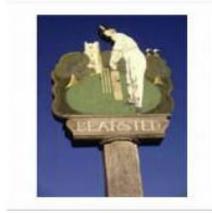
Yours sincerely

Caroline Vanhecke









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

9 November 2015

Dear Ms Marks

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

The Society has sent objections to the development of this site on 10 February. We continue to be opposed to the revised proposals submitted for the above application and we support the objections made by local residents and especially those by Mr and Mrs Springett in their letter of 30 October.

Their points are well made. The current proposals to remove the centre line markings between Barty House and Cross Keys simply adds a further hazard to pedestrian safety and will do nothing to slow vehicle speed. Nor are the pedestrian refuges, for the reasons Mr and Mrs Springett explain, an answer to the dangers pedestrians will face both in Roundwell and Water Lane. Finally, the proposals to remove the section of wall at Barty House, fronting onto Roundwell, are unacceptable and damaging to the setting of Barty House, a listed building.

For all the reasons given here and in our previous letter the Society believes the proposals are unacceptable and planning permission should be refused. Indeed, we doubt whether, had not Maidstone's search for housing sites reached desperation proportions, the Council would be entertaining such a wholly unsuitable location. The desperate search to meet a 5 year housing supply that many consider unnecessary and unsustainable, should not be used as a reason for granting planning permission for an ill-conceived proposal on a site which is fundamentally unsuitable for residential development and will only increase dangers to motorists, pedestrians and horse riders using Roundwell and Water Lane.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Vanhecke



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The Residents Association for the Civil Parishes of Bearsted and Thurnham



C/O The Chairman  
Bearsted & Thurnham Society  
5 Shillingheld Close  
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Kent ME14 4QA

Amanda Marks  
Mid Kent Planning Support  
Maidstone House  
King Street  
Maidstone  
ME15 6JQ

1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

Dear Sirs,

**MA/14/506738 Application for the approval of reserved matters comprising the widening of the proposed means of access and associated relocation of a boundary wall at Barty House, Roundwell, Bearsted to serve an application for 100 houses at Barty Farm, Roundwell, Bearsted.**

The Bearsted and Thurnham Society was bitterly disappointed that in May of this year, MBC resolved to grant planning permission for the erection of 100 houses at Barty Farm, especially as no means of vehicular access could be provided to the site that was acceptable in either planning or highway terms. Indeed, at the same time that the Planning Committee resolved to grant permission for the housing development, it also refused Listed Building Consent to relocate the boundary wall to Barty House whose relocation was necessary to enable a vehicular access to be provided to the housing development.

Consequently, no planning permission can be issued for the 100 houses at Barty Farm until an acceptable means of vehicular access can be provided to serve them.

The Society has already objected to the subsequent revised application for Listed Building Consent (16/506735LBC) to demolish and relocate the boundary wall to Barty House in order to provide a means of access to the housing site that is acceptable in highway and planning terms.

It is surely completely wrong of MBC to consider the concurrent application to seek planning approval for the widened access and demolition and relocation of the boundary wall simply as an application for the 'approval of reserved matters' because such 'reserved matters' can only be considered pursuant to the grant of planning permission – and no planning permission has been issued for the 100 houses at Barty Farm!

The Society, therefore, considers that it would be unlawful for MBC, if it were minded to do so, to grant planning approval for the widened access and the demolition and relocation of the boundary wall simply as 'details pursuant' to a non-existent planning permission!

Surely, the application for planning approval for the widened access and demolition and relocation of the boundary wall can only be legally determined as a fresh or revised planning application which must be advertised and processed as such.

Whatever; the Society objects strongly to planning approval being granted for the widened access and the demolition and relocation of the boundary wall because these works will create substantial demonstrable harm to:

1. the setting of Barty House because:

(i) the relocated wall will inevitably be of a 'new' reconstructed appearance; be lower in height than the existing historic wall; will introduce alien pedestrian steps which will destroy the integrity of the wall; and, most importantly, will substantially reduce the lawn and tree planting area to the front of Barty House which are so important to maintaining its historic setting and appearance; and

(j) the widened access will introduce more hard surfacing and open areas that will reduce the sense of enclosure around Barty House which are also so important to maintaining its historic setting and appearance;

2. the local historic street scene because both the widened access and the relocated boundary wall will lessen the sense of enclosure along the street scene and harm the setting of Barty House in a very attractive and historic approach road into Bearsted village.

In addition, we should like to point out again that the application for Listed Building Consent should be determined solely on its architectural and historical merits. Therefore, the argument put forward by the applicants that there are 'public benefits' flowing from the proposal because the realigned wall will enable access to be provided to another proposal to build 100 houses at Barty Farm is irrelevant and cannot be taken into account.

If, as it should, Listed Building Consent is refused for the realigned wall on purely architectural and historical criteria, it follows that planning approval for the housing scheme at Barty Farm must also be refused because a means of vehicular access to the site that is acceptable in highway and planning terms cannot be provided. If the proposal for housing at Barty Farm is to be pursued, it can only be done if an alternative means of vehicular access can be provided that is acceptable in highway and planning terms.

If, therefore, MBC is minded to grant Listed Building Consent for the realigned wall, it will need to clearly explain what material considerations have changed since it refused the previous applications for Listed Building Consent for this proposal and could, potentially, face a legal challenge if it cannot identify credible changes.

Yours sincerely,

Denis Spooner  
Chairman  
Bearsted & Thurnham Society



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Richard Timms  
Planning Officer  
Maidstone Borough Council  
Maidstone House  
King Street  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME19 6JQ

16 July 2018

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 solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Caroline Vanhecke