



The Bearsted & Thurnham Society

The Residents Association for the Civil Parishes of Bearsted and Thurnham



Caroline Vanhecke: Chairman
92 Ashford Road, Bearsted Kent ME15 8PQ
Tel: 01622 737574

Francis Amekor
Senior Planning Officer
Maidstone Borough Council
King Street
Maidstone
Kent ME15 6JQ

6th December 2019

Dear Mr Amekor,

19/504734/FULL - Erection of 5 no. detached dwellings with new access road and associated parking - 127 Hockers Lane, Thurnham, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5JY

This site has repeatedly been refused planning permission as follows:-

16/500159/FULL – Erection of 10 detached dwellings – refused
Appeal dismissed 7th March 2017

16/506899/FULL – Erection of 7 detached dwellings – refused
Appeal dismissed on 3rd January 2018

The current application, 19/504734/FULL, albeit for five houses, does not and cannot address the reasons for refusal and the reasons for the appeals' dismissals.

In particular, the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the setting of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is unchanged. Policy SP17 (Countryside) still applies.

Policies ENV 28 (Development in the Countryside), ENV 33 (Kent Downs AONB) and ENV34 (Special Landscape Areas) of the 2000 Plan were saved and therefore form part of the current Local Plan.

The location remains backland development. Policy DM1 of the current plan (Principles of Good Design) still applies, in particular section iv

“Respect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties and uses and provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers of the development by ensuring that development does not result in excessive noise, vibration, odour, and pollution, activity of vehicular

movements, overlooking or visual intrusion, and that the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy or light enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties”.

The general impact on Hockers Lane residents, especially 127, is unchanged.

The loss of amenity for 123, 127 and 129 Hockers Lane, together with 5 Pope’s Wood, is much worse as the proposed access passes these properties. On the refused schemes access was to have been from Ware Street.

The proposal is still unsustainable.

We would comment in particular on the Design & Access Statement as follows:-

1. The document is, at best, misleading from the start. The address given for the site is “127 Hockers Lane, Bearsted, Kent”. The site is in Thurnham Parish, NOT Bearsted and the postal address is 127 Hockers Lane, Weaving, Maidstone, Kent.

2. The section headed Design includes the following two paragraphs. The inclusion of such fanciful, and frankly irrelevant language is disingenuous.

“The combination of vernacular with contemporary design is in our opinion simply stunning. A home which is at once cutting-edge, design-conscious, energy efficient and which has the capacity to sit well within its direct environment is really rather special.

For its creator, maker and inhabitants, it provides an understanding of the land, of the environment. Just as vernacular is language, a method for communication, it only makes sense that we create habitats that speak the language of the landscapes we put them in”.

3. The section headed **ACCESSIBILITY / PARKING. TRANSPORT ROUTES** features four statements:

“Within the Village of Bearsted there is an existing area consisting of local shops and amenities, which is within walking distance”.

The walking distance from the development to the nearest shops is 1.7km.

It is unlikely that anyone living in a 5 or 6 bedroom house with four parking spaces would walk 3.4km to go shopping. In fact, all such journeys from this unsustainable development will involve car travel.

“The nearest bus stop is 500 yards from the site”.

This appears to have been included only in anticipation that no one will check its voracity and relevance.

The satellite image which accompanies this section shows that the bus stops to which this statement refers are at the entrance to the station, and that they provide access to Bus Routes 9 and 11.

In reality the walking distance from the development to the station is 1.5km.

Bus Route 9 links Grove Green to Maidstone, travelling along Bearsted Road and New Cut Road, except for two services in the early morning westbound, and one in the afternoon eastbound on school days only. Those particular services do pass the station but they are of limited value to those who would occupy the proposed development.

Bus Route 11 runs between the Cross Keys housing estate at the eastern end of Bearsted village and Maidstone town centre. There are eight services on weekdays from 0900 until early afternoon and seven on Saturdays from 1100 to 1700. There are no buses on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

From the station, Bus Route 11 eastbound serves only The Green and Cross Keys (a distance of 750m, which is hardly worthwhile if you have already walked twice that distance to get to the stop). There is no bus stop sign for westbound buses at the station, although it may be possible to indicate to a driver that someone wishes to board.

The nearest bus stop to the development is actually 1.4km from the site, on Birling Avenue, however that involves walking along Sandy Lane, which is 200m long with no lighting and no footway.

“The nearest shops are in Bearsted Village”.

See above...

“The nearest train station is in Bearsted, which is 10min walk and is a main link to London”.

As stated above, the walking distance to the station is 1.5km and this would take a fit adult some 20 minutes as they would have to cross Ware Street multiple times - the footway is discontinuous and traffic ever-increasing due to over-development in the area.

Conclusion

It is for all these reasons we urge you to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Vanhecke
Chairman