

BMPC comments and KCC/TWBC decisions concerning road safety on Rydon and Fernham planning applications

17/01142/FULL, Land Between Long Leas And Pear Tree Cottage Maidstone Road Matfield Erection of 20 No Dwellings, consisting of two x 1 bedroom apartments, seven x 2 bedroom apartments + houses, six x 3 Bedroom houses, five x 4 bedroom houses and associated development (Rydon Homes)

BMPC objection:

There are serious Highways considerations pertaining to the site. In pre-application advice, Margaret Parker of Kent Highways advised the applicant that "great weight [is placed] on the provision of suitable pedestrian facilities to link the site with existing facilities". She further commented that "Of perhaps greater significance, is the possible difficulty of linking with existing footways on the northern side of Matfield (sic) Road due to possible land constraints" and she considered that, given the size of the development, linking to the southern side of the road would not "alone be an acceptable solution". The applicant's proposed solution of linking the site by a crossing to the southern side cannot in any way be considered acceptable; the footway on the southern side would require the removal of the verge (loss of rural character) and the leveling of the pavement, which is difficult because the boundary of the adjoining land is a high hedge. Much more significant, this proposal would necessitate residents crossing Maidstone Road at a point just inside the 30mph restriction where the applicant's own traffic survey recorded average speeds of 39mph. They would then have to cross the wide and busy Brenchley Road at the Standings Cross junction before crossing back again to access the butcher's shop and two of the pubs. The applicants consider this preferable to creating a northern footway because there are problems with the hedge outside Pear Tree Cottages and the car park for the Poet pub. The current proposals therefore fail the Highways Authority's test of sustainability as Mrs Parker's letter stated that "in a village setting such as this we do expect development to ensure that short journeys can be safely made on foot.

The Parish Council does not consider that the current proposal is acceptable in terms of road safety or sustainability.

If, however, the Borough were minded to grant permission for the proposal notwithstanding the foregoing, the Council would wish to see fewer four-bedroom dwellings and would wish to see conditions imposed: -

- a) To secure a proper and safe means of pedestrian access to the remaining facilities of the village
- b) To extend the 30mph limit beyond Coppers Lane to attempt to control the speed of vehicles travelling past the site

Further BMPC comments in relation to amended plans:

Following submission of amended details the PC agree amendments to house design and layout subject to drainage pond being acceptable. However, other objections are maintained and still recommend refusal. In particular the traffic report does not deal satisfactorily with road and in particular, pedestrian safety.

Proposal does not satisfy KCC Highways test of sustainability in that suitable pedestrian links from the site into the village cannot be achieved. Crossing to the south side of Maidstone Road is hazardous and with an onward route that involves crossing the wide Standing Cross junction. This also involves losing part of an existing verge. Linking along the north side of Maidstone Road involves private as well as highway land ;

Neighbour comments reported in TWBC officer report to TWBC Planning Committee:

- Dangerous access point with inadequate visibility. Traffic speeds on Maidstone Road are too high. Needs a reduction in speed limit or traffic calming to stop people speeding as they leave the village.
- Hazardous for pedestrians who will have to cross Maidstone Road in order to access the footpath and then cross again to access facilities.
- Will result in increased on-street parking.
- Visibility splays are incorrectly drawn.
- Increased traffic on Maidstone Road.
- Proximity of new access to Standings Cross junction (which is already under pressure) is a traffic hazard.
- A traffic island is required on the wider part of Brenchley Road to stop people cutting corners and speeding, and would also help school bus children to safely cross the road.

Comments in relation to the amended plans (2):

Sight lines have been improved but there is still a risk for pedestrians on this fast road and the proposals will encourage parking against the entrance (if the pub car park is full) causing highway safety issues.

KCC Highways comments (as reported to TWBC Planning Committee)

(11/09/17 and 24/10/17) – No objection to the re-alignment of the access drive subject to confirmation that the position of the access has not changed. With regard to an extension to the 30mph limit, the development is not on the edge of the settlement and whilst it may be desirable to extend the limit, the development has demonstrated that visibility splays can be provided based on the speed of traffic and therefore may be difficult to insist upon in terms of highway safety. Comments on revised plans which were provided in response to initial concerns. Highway Authority would not seek to raise objections. The footway arrangements can be delivered in principle but will require accommodating works to the footway and verge on the opposite side. This and the detailed arrangement of the crossing point can be dealt with under the Section 278 Highways Agreement. Nearby bus stops should also be provided with bus boarding kerbs. Options to provide further works to footways have been explored, but constraints of land ownership and availability of highway land have limited these options. Reference has also been made to improvements to the crossroads junction with provision of an island on the Brenchley Road leg, but this would require proper assessment which raises the issue as to whether this current scheme would be able to offer an appropriate level of contribution.

Conditions are required relating to:

- Visibility splays;
- Off-site works to footways, verges and bus stops;

TWBC Officer conclusions for TWBC Planning Committee:

The traffic movements generated by the development can be accommodated without detriment to highway safety and the proposal includes adequate car parking provision. Off site highway works including a new section of footway are delivered.

The location of the new access into the site is appropriately located and at a point that provides acceptable driver visibility onto Maidstone Road. ... A short section of footway is to be provided south from the access up to the boundary of the site. From there a crossing point will need to be designed as part of the Section 278 Highways Agreement, to link to the existing footway on the opposite side of Maidstone Road, which will also require some accommodation works. Wider extensions to the footway network have been discussed with the applicant, but discounted due to constraints of available highway land and other land ownership limitations. Furthermore an improvement to the wide Brenchley Road/Maidstone Road junction to improve pedestrian facilities has been considered to constitute an inappropriate level of provision given the scale of the proposed development. Kent Highways has advised that as the visibility achievable meets the standard for the current traffic speed it would not be possible to justify requiring the development to extend the 30mph zone northwards on Maidstone Road.

19/01099/OUT, OS Plot 2912 Maidstone Road Matfield Tonbridge Kent

Outline (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale reserved): Development of the site to provide up to 47 dwellings, of which 35% would be affordable housing, including new access (Access not reserved) (Fernham Homes)

BMPC objection:

The development is not sustainable:

- b) Schools, station, shops, dental, doctors are not within safe walking or cycling distance, no pavements exist between Matfield and Brenchley, and parking at the Doctors or Dentists is already full throughout the day.
- c) 47 dwellings with 181 beds will be reliant on private vehicles as other public modes of transport (buses) are very sporadic, poorly timetabled or impractical for out of area commuters. Kent Highways have made the following statement 'During the Local Plan process the highway authority has advised the LPA that sites in Matfield would not be favoured in a plan led approach due to the lack of facilities within the village and the resultant high dependence of residents on car borne trips'. Indifferent local broadband and mobile phone connections mitigate against home working, traffic will increase
- d) Children will not be able to access Brenchley and Matfield Primary School safely walking or cycling. Heavy traffic on the narrow winding roads, particularly from the increased number of HGVs, makes local journeys by foot or bicycle hazardous.

Neighbour comments reported in TWBC's report for planning committee:

- Unsustainable location with limited facilities/public transport. No schools, playground, playgroup or jobs in village. Residents will rely on cars, causing an increase in traffic. No sustainable travel modes. Buses are sporadic, poorly timetabled and impractical for commuters. Additional car journeys will increase carbon emissions, concern re climate change. Insufficient capacity in local schools, doctors, dentists.
- Schools, station, shops, dentists, doctors are not within safe walking or cycling distance. No pavements between Matfield and Brenchley.
- Development will lead to overflow car parking raising highway safety concerns and

obscuring visibility. Regular accidents at the junction.

- The cumulative impact of proposal and development approved/proposed in Paddock Wood will have a significant impact on the traffic passing through Matfield. Further development will exacerbate the problems and be harmful to highway safety. The traffic to be generated from the approved Paddock Wood housing developments not included in calculations. Proposed vehicular movements unrealistic.

- Concerned about pedestrian safety. Development will impact school bus drop off points. New access in combination with Rydon development will create dangerous crossroads

Coppers Lane and Brenchley Road are narrow and suffer heavy traffic, negotiating parked cars.

- Large number of HGVs on Maidstone Road.

- Works to make crossing safer for pedestrians are welcome. Audit undertaken around lunchtime when vehicular traffic is lighter and pedestrians probably having lunch. More audits should be undertaken. Consideration should be given to an island in the middle of the junction to make it safer for pedestrians to cross.

- 30mph zone should be moved further away than proposed and speed camera or indicator should be present. Double yellow lines should be applied to both sides of Maidstone Road.

Cycling to Paddock Wood for commuters is not feasible given incline and for safety reasons.

- Only access is from Maidstone Road, which is already overloaded with 50,000+ traffic movements a week, of which 70% recorded as speeding by KCC in 2015.

- Existing footpaths narrow in places

KCC Highways comments

(08/10/19): No contribution is requested at this time towards public transport, given the scale of the development, but improvements to bus stop infrastructure has been requested and can be secured by a Grampian condition.

(20/09/19) During the Local Plan process the highway authority advised the Local Planning Authority that sites in Matfield would not be favoured in a plan led approach due to the lack of key facilities within the village and the resultant high dependence on car borne trips. The highway authority remains of this view.

The proposals include creation of a new access from Maidstone Road which is supported by a Road Safety Audit Stage 1. The proposal also includes relocation of the speed limit and local improvements to footways in both directions from the site. The off-site works include a scheme to reduce the radii at the junction of Maidstone Road/Brenchley Road/Chestnut Lane with the possible introduction of parking controls, to improve the environment for pedestrians.

No objection in terms of the impact of the traffic generation associated with the development. It is noted that Highways England has not raised an objection with respect to any impact on the strategic road network.

Whilst there is no objection in principle to the proposed works at the junction, as yet there has been no confirmation that the affected frontage properties have been consulted by the developer. Therefore as part of detailed design, confirmation will be

required from the commercial premises close to the junction that their access requirement can be met within the proposed arrangements. Whilst the matter can be dealt with through the S.278 process, the Highways Officer advises that the arrangement shown on the submitted plans are only indicative at this stage. The plans do not include provision of raised bus boarding kerbs for the north bound bus stop as requested. This can be dealt with by condition, as with the site opposite.

TWBC officer report to TWBC Planning Committee:

The proposal seeks to provide a new access onto Maidstone Road. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been submitted with the application. The proposal includes improvements to footways in both directions from the site, including the width of the existing footway to 1.8m, utilising part of the existing verge. The proposal also seeks to extend the footway along the southern side of Maidstone Road for approximately 45 metres in a north-easterly direction. The current 30mph speed limit begins approximately 30m to the south-west of the site access, with a 50mph speed limit in place in the vicinity of the proposed site access and along much of the site frontage heading north. It is proposed to extend the 30mph speed limit by approximately 100m in the northbound direction, which would be sited approximately 70m north-east of the proposed access.

The off-site works include a scheme to reduce the radii at the junction of Maidstone Road/Brenchley Road/Chestnut Lane, which would include an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing, equipped with dropped kerbs and tactile paving. The applicant has also confirmed that they are happy to provide a raised bus boarding kerb for the north bound bus stop, as requested by the Highways Officer. No objections have been raised by the Highways Officer to the scheme or the proposed works at the junction, which should improve pedestrian safety and connectivity to the village. Further details of these works can be secured by condition and through the Section 278 process.

The Transport Assessment identifies that the site will generate an additional 27 vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 29 in the PM peak, with an additional 231 vehicle trips generated across the 12 hour weekday. In terms of the A21 Kipping's Cross Roundabout south of the village, approximately 20-21 trips are forecast to use the junction in the weekday AM and PM peak hours respectively, which is not considered to represent a significant or 'severe' impact. Private representatives have queried these figures, considering them to be very low for 45 dwellings. However, the Highways Officer and Highways England have raised no objection in terms of the impact of the traffic generation associated with the development on the local and strategic road network.

In respect to sustainable modes of transport, there are four bus stops in close proximity to the site on Maidstone Road. There are hourly bus services to Tunbridge Wells, Pembury, Paddock Wood, East Peckham and Maidstone. There are also school services to Hawkhurst, Cranbrook, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, and Paddock Wood and two daily services to London. The site adjoins National Cycle Route 18, which travels along Brenchley Road to the south of the site. This route provides a link between Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells, via Ashford and Tenterden.

As this proposal is outline only (with only the access not reserved), full details of the internal road layout and parking would be considered as part of a reserved matters application.... In this case, the applicant has demonstrated that an access can be provided onto Maidstone Road, with suitable visibility splays and the additional trips generated from future residents would not be harmful to the local or strategic road network. The applicant is also proposing off-site highway works to improve and extend the existing footways and improve pedestrian safety and connectivity at the crossroads. No objection is therefore raised to the development on highway grounds.

20/03306/REM | Approval of Reserved Matters (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale) following Outline Permission for 19/01099/OUT refers - Development of the site to provide up to 45 dwellings, including affordable housing and new access and off-site highway works, including details reserved by conditions 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 | OS Plot 2912 Maidstone Road Matfield (Fernham Homes)

Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (23/12/20) –

Recommend pedestrian access provided onto Coppers Lane, to connect to footpath and cycle network, particularly for children accessing local schools. Developer contribution would be welcomed. - Recommend developer contribution to improving safety at Standing Cross Junction. - Road Safety Audit required to ensure pedestrian safety and traffic flow. - Developer contributions required towards traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossing on Maidstone Road. The impact of this development on road safety should be considered in relation to the cumulative impact of traffic from neighbouring parishes, Paddock Wood and the potential garden village at Capel. - Frequent speeding in the village. Need for traffic calming measures, improvements for pedestrians and increase in bus usage. Request contribution towards improvements to bus services.

TWBC officer's delegated report

Impact on the highway 13 Vehicular access onto B2160 Maidstone Road was approved under 19/01099/OUT. The outline application considered the impact of the proposal on the local and strategic highway. It is also looked at the scheme in combination with other consented schemes in the locality and those forecast to come forward as part of the emerging Local Plan. The consented scheme includes off-site highway works, including extending the footway along the southern side of Maidstone Road, extending the 30mph speed limit, improvements to bus stop infrastructure and works to reduce the radii at the junction of Maidstone Road/Brenchley Road/Chestnut Lane to improve highway safety. The impact of the proposal on the highway has already been deemed acceptable.

21/00872/SUB Submission of Details In Relation to Condition 5 (Details of Off-Site Works) of 19/01099/OUT, OS Plot 2912 Maidstone Road Matfield

BMPC comments

One of the concerns that the Parish Council has previously expressed is the danger to pedestrians from traffic turning from Maidstone Road into Brenchley Road, particularly from traffic turning left where the visibility of the crossing will be poor. The scheme proposes the installation of one vague

'New Traffic Layout' sign on Maidstone Road, which will give drivers no warning of the possibility of pedestrians in the road. The Parish Council wishes to see specific pedestrian crossing signs installed on all approaches to the crossing, either parent and child signs or elderly person signs. Drivers turning left into Brenchley Road will have no view of the crossing until they have turned the corner and pedestrian safety is a serious concern.

TWBC Officer's delegated report

The proposed highway works have been subject to significant discussions between the Local Planning Authority, KCC Highways, Parish Council, Neighbourhood Plan Group and Applicant. A scheme has been devised that has received the support of the Local Highway Authority and provides a betterment for pedestrians crossing at the junction.

The Parish has raised highway safety concerns about the proposal; however, no objection is raised from KCC Highway and the provision of a footway around the bend on Brenchley Road and narrowing of this junction will provide a betterment for pedestrians crossing at this junction compared to the existing situation.

The Parish Council have requested additional signage to warn drivers of pedestrians crossing. The Agreements Engineer has advised that the RSA 2 did not require any additional signage, but this would be reviewed under the RSA 3, which considers the 'as built' scheme on site. A sign will warn drivers on a change in road layout. The applicant has confirmed they will be providing double yellow lines in the vicinity of the junction as part of the scheme, as requested by the Parish Council and KCC. These form part of a Traffic Regulation Order dealt with by KCC.

NOTE

When it came to the Traffic Regulation Orders for the off-site works, the Parish Council and NDP Steering Group argued strongly for the 30mph limit to be extended further than was originally planned by KCC and the developers, preferably to the junction with Pralls Lane but certainly beyond the junction with Coppers Lane, and for the double yellow lines at the crossroads by the Poet to be longer than Fernham Homes and KCC had originally proposed. The Parish Council was eventually successful in getting the double yellow lines extended beyond what was originally planned and in getting the 30mph limit moved to beyond the Coppers Lane junction. The Parish Council and NDP Steering Group had also managed to persuade the parties to extend the pavement round the bend to the Brenchley Road and to provide the crossing point (dropped kerbs) with the green barrier behind it on the Brenchley Road.