



The Bearsted & Thurnham Society

The Residents Association for the Civil Parishes of Bearsted and Thurnham



Caroline Vanhecke: Chairman
92 Ashford Road, Bearsted KentME15 8PQ
Tel: 01622 737574

Mr R. Timms
Principal Planning Officer
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
Kent ME15 6JQ

11th March 2020

Dear Mr Timms,

20/500697/FULL – Land South of Sutton Road, Langley

Variation of Condition 29 of Outline Application 15/509015/OUT to require junction improvements at St. Saviour's Road/Sutton Road to be carried out prior to the occupation of 300 dwellings.

The condition that the developer is seeking to vary is in two parts – (a) to submit full details of the junction improvements for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority and (b) that the approved works shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Local Highways Authority, prior to the occupation of any dwelling.

The Covering Letter from DHA seeks to allow occupation of 300 dwellings before the works at the junction of St Saviours Road with A274 Sutton Road need to be completed. It claims that the works would not be permitted to be undertaken while works at The Wheatsheaf are in progress. No evidence of the proposed improvements to the St Saviours Road junction have been supplied in support of this request, which implies that the first part of Condition 29 is yet to be discharged. No evidence has been supplied of a restriction placed on works at the junction by KCC Highways. Without an agreement on the works to be undertaken, it is unclear how KCC would be able to determine such restrictions. If the developer is so anxious to start occupation of dwellings, surely the improvement works should be ready to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

At no point in the supporting documentation does the Applicant indicate when the occupation of the 300th dwelling might be expected. It appears that it is intended to replace a fixed start point that can currently be foreseen with one that might be expected to occur at an undefined future date.

In the Technical Note it is asserted that *"the A229 / A274 'Wheatsheaf' junction improvement works are due to commence in mid-2020 and therefore the improvements to the A274 Sutton Road / St Saviour's Road junction cannot be completed in the short-term due to the availability of road space."*

The Wheatsheaf junction improvement works form part of one element of a Public Consultation document ("Keep Maidstone Moving") issued by Kent County Council. To a certain extent, the KCC proposals are intended to mitigate for some of the effects of housing developments around the town, but the consultation is open until

11 March 2020. Thereafter there will be a period of reconsideration before the final schemes are submitted for approval to proceed. The consultation document does include a draft programme of works, but that represents the most “optimistic” situation, should all the schemes be deemed suitable to proceed without modification.

Two of the proposed schemes will affect traffic on A274 Sutton Road - (a) The Loose Road Corridor (including The Wheatsheaf junction) and (b) the Willington Street junction (including that at Wallis Avenue). The Applicant concentrates on (a), which is 1.5km away from the St Saviour’s Road junction, but fails to mention (b), which is 500m away.

The draft programme in the consultation document indicates a start to works on the Loose Road Corridor in the summer of 2020 and for a start to works at the Willington Street junction in the spring of 2022. There is no indication of the anticipated construction period in either case.

The Applicant has decided that proposed works at The Wheatsheaf can be used as a reason to delay the improvements at the St Saviour’s Road junction for which it is responsible. Nonetheless, the Applicant makes no attempt to relate the timing of those improvements to the other proposed works in the vicinity. The supporting traffic predictions endeavour to show traffic movements in 2022, which implies an expectation of reaching a threshold of 300 occupied dwellings in that year. Should the Willington Street works be taking place at that time, a further request for amendment to Condition 29 may be expected.

In an attempt to “demonstrate” that the St Saviour’s Road junction will not need to be improved until 2022, the Applicant has assessed the anticipated growth in traffic arising from the new dwellings to be occupied in the interim. The method employed is mainly based on information extracted from previous applications for developments currently under construction. They, in turn will have relied on data provided for other developments along Sutton Road.

The starting point for the “new” predictions is a traffic count undertaken on a single day in November 2019. There seems to have been no attempt to return to the original Applications to compare their predicted traffic volumes for November 2019 with that which has been observed. In simple terms, if traffic flows in 2019 exceed those which were intended to include the effect of the homes occupied to date, those predictions are clearly invalid and cannot be used as a basis for yet more predictions.

Proceeding with developments while putting off any of the improvements until it is more expedient for the developers can only be interpreted as yet more pandering to those developers at the expense of existing residents – who are heartily sick of the failure of MBC to give them, and KCC Highways, any consideration when allowing over-development in the area in advance of any infrastructure improvements.

It is not difficult to interpret this Application as the first stage in a process, on completion of which the developer seeks to avoid liability for improvement works at the St Saviour’s Road junction, eventually getting Condition 29 deleted altogether.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Vanhecke
Chairman