

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR STAPLEHURST

STATEMENT OF INTENT

We propose to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Staplehurst. The Plan would remain in line with the Local Plan established by Maidstone Borough Council. However, it would also take into account the powers set out in the Localism Act. The Plan would therefore enable Staplehurst proactively to engage with Maidstone Borough Council to develop a strategy which aims to ensure a sustainable, balanced and inclusive community for the future and continued improvement to the quality of life for its residents.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN

The Consultant will provide guidance and advice to facilitate extensive public consultation and enable Staplehurst to produce a Plan that fully meets the standards required by the Localism Act. The Plan will cover the geographical area defined as the Parish of Staplehurst; the consultation process required for this has now taken place. The Plan will take into account; inter alia, the following key issues and points:

1. Housing and future housing needs.
2. Community Facilities.
3. Infrastructure needed to support future development.
4. Transport.
5. Education.
6. Economic.

Key issues and points to consider are set out below:

HOUSING

- Proposals will need to be in accordance with Maidstone Borough Council's future agreed Local Plan.
- Housing development should take into account the Village Design Statement including, inter alia, use of materials and design.
- Car parking is a major problem in the Village which is now effectively full. Therefore any new development must have adequate provision for car parking to alleviate the problems caused by roadside parking.

- There must be a balance between what is considered to be affordable housing and higher end properties. The prime purpose of affordable housing must be to meet the needs of local people.
- The railway line is the natural boundary between urban and rural Staplehurst. Therefore development north of the railway line should be discouraged. There is a need to reduce urban sprawl and consideration should be given to the establishment of an urban growth boundary.
- The Consultant will need to advise on the advantages and disadvantages of having one large site as against several smaller sites. This would need to take into account possible funds from S106 and CIL.
- Ensure housing pipeline numbers have been monitored and are accurate. Numbers should not have gone beyond Spatial DPD 2014.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The following points need to be considered:

- There will be a need for a new village centre either at the existing site or elsewhere in the Parish, for example at Jubilee Field. This might include all weather sports facilities although this could be considered as a separate site.
- The Parish Council currently leases Surrenden Field on a long lease from Maidstone Borough Council. The lease will be up for renewal in the next few years. This is an important facility which occupies a key position in the Village and the possible benefits of acquiring the freehold will need to be assessed.
- The benefits to the Parish from the possible acquisition of additional green spaces will also need to be assessed.

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO SUPPORT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The drainage/sewerage systems are already under pressure and plans for any future development must ensure this issue is covered. As a result of a high water table and off field drainage some parts of the Parish suffer from regular surface water flooding. In addition the River Beult which is a tributary of the Medway and one of Kent's main east to west flowing rivers flows east of the Parish. So, possible development close or on the flood plain would need to be carefully assessed. However, in recent years there have been improvements to the river management and the risks from fluvial flooding have been considerably reduced.

TRANSPORT

The increase in houses will put further pressure on the road system and especially the A229 which is one of Kent's principal north/south trunk roads. This road runs straight through the village and the traffic lights at the Marden/Headcorn are a bottleneck at peak times. The following points will need to be considered:

- Build a bypass or Quarter Orbital's to relieve pressure on the A229.

- The need to protect existing car parking provision and allow for future needs
- Consider the need to secure the existing Bell Lane facility.
- Ensure that as a very minimum the current car parking at the railway station remains in place. Liaise with Network Rail to encourage further provision of car parking spaces at the station.
- Improve Marden Road/Headcorn junction for car users and pedestrians.
- Improve Bus Service provision.
- Encourage the development of cluster rail services/ ticketing for Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden.
- Encourage the use of alternative means of transport through the use of cycle paths.
- Ensure access is fully catered for pedestrians in particular by ensuring impermeable design and good walkability for any new development.

EDUCATION

The following points should be part of our strategy:

- Retain primary school of suitable quality and infrastructure.
- Primary school provision must be able to increase to take into account the demands emanating from major increases in housing.
- Retain school outdoor open space for physical activities/recreation and well being.
- Ensure that Staplehurst has a clearly defined catchment area for secondary education.
- Ensure adequate school transport provision to accommodate safe movement of children.

ECONOMIC

This covers retail, industrial and professional activities. The following points will need to be considered:

- Continue to support Maidstone Borough Council's core strategy as agreed in its Local Plan with regard to changing retail to residential.
- Retain and if possible enhance current mix of outlets in the High Street.
- Be proactive in ensuring the Parade is properly maintained in order to encourage use of the retail facilities.
- Support the establishment of a new supermarket.
- Ensure there are enough parking spaces to support the retail activity in the village.
- Retain and actively encourage the development of the industrial/commercial outlets in the Parish.
- Retain full range of services, retail and commercial/industrial businesses and encourage the introduction of new small to medium-size high added value

enterprises in appropriate locations to maximise opportunities for local employment, especially for the residents of Staplehurst.

- **Have a high quality digital infrastructure proportionate to the community as a facilitator for economic development and access to and delivery of services.**

SUMMARY

The above, sets out the basic framework for Staplehurst's Neighbourhood Plan, together with identified key issues and points. The Parish of Staplehurst has distinct rural and urban areas. Currently the Parade and the high street area adjacent to it represent the nominal axis of the village urban area. However, the possibility of a supermarket development at the railway station/Lodge Road area means that this axis may move northwards. This, together with the effect of new housing developments, may change the spatial balance of the village and indeed the Parish as a whole. The Neighbourhood Plan will need to address this possibility before establishing the strategy to pursue.

Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group

Staplehurst Parish Council

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