

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL
PLANNING MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2018
AT 8.00 PM IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Cllrs Weeks (DPC Chairman); Fairhurst (Planning Committee Chair); Cheesman;
Rajaratnam; Newton (DPC & MBC); Cllr Cooke (KCC) Mrs Irving – Clerk; PCSOs
Zoe Turner & Matthew Adlington (part); 28 residents.

1 APOLOGIES: Cllr Butler – unwell; Cllr Alden-Morris – holiday; Cllr Greenhead – family bereavement; Cllr Rachel Gray (Otham PC).

The apologies and reasons for absence were noted and accepted.

2 NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS – None received.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr Newton – See Item 7.

4 INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND HANDOVER TO CHAIR OF PLANNING: Cllr Weeks thanked everyone for attending and reminded those present that the meeting has specifically been called to discuss the proposed development, adjacent to Otham Church (site allocation H1(8) in the Local Plan).

It was stated that the assembled Planning Committee are only empowered to make a recommendation as to any future action to be taken. This will then need to be ratified at the full Parish Council meeting on 6 November.

Cllr Rachel Gray - chair of Otham Parish Council - was unable to attend the meeting due to a previous commitment, but assurances were given that Otham PC has also objected very strongly to all of the developments within their Parish. Any claim to the contrary is incorrect.

Cllr Weeks confirmed that he expects DPC to continue to work closely with Otham Parish for the benefit of our communities.

It was stressed that the meeting will not be discussing speed issues that exist already within Downswood, as this will be addressed by a meeting facilitated by our County Councillor on 20 November.

The chair of our Planning committee will confirm during his introduction to the meeting that Downswood unsuccessfully objected to this development being included in the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan.

5 OVERVIEW OF CHURCH ROAD DEVELOPMENT BY DPC CHAIR OF PLANNING: Cllr Fairhurst reiterated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the course of action with regards to Church Road. Decisions cannot be made this evening as a ruling will need to be made by full council.

DPC objected strongly to this development at the consultation stage and encouraged as many residents as possible to object.

An outline of the site allocation followed including:

- The allocation for the development is for approximately 440 dwellings at an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare.
- An undeveloped section of land will be retained along the eastern edge of the site in order to protect the setting of St Nicholas Church.
- The front row of houses will be a lower density from the remainder of the site.
- A 15 metres wide landscape buffer will be planted to protect ancient woodland.
- Two points of access will be taken from Church Road only.

It was explained that once a site is in the Local Plan it's extremely difficult to get it removed. If this is not deemed possible, an alternative would be to determine how we can get the best for Downswood.

It was pointed out that Deringwood Drive was not built to cope with the increased capacity of traffic.

6 COMMENTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR: KCC objected to every application on Sutton Road. However, they are just a consultee - the same as the Parish Council - and their objections were ignored.

If the development does not go ahead the Borough Council cannot meet the quota in the Local Plan.

KCC commissioned a survey with MBC to provide advice on Highway perspective. Amey concluded that South East Maidstone is amongst the most congested in the Country.

As it will be extremely difficult to successfully object, consideration could be given to moderating the proposal; reduce the size to moderate traffic or introduce traffic calming?

Cllr Cooke will support whichever decision is reached.

7 COMMENTS FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLOR: Cllr Newton confirmed to the meeting that he is a parish councillor for both Otham and Downswood and also the elected Borough Councillor for both wards.

He stated that whilst he fought every one of the stages, and did his best as Borough Councillor to defend the sites that were put forward, all objections were ignored by MBC.

KCC also did their bit to object but very little can be done about the development.

The traffic survey carried out by KCC/DPC/OPC demonstrated that there are 1.5 million vehicle movements per year, with 1 million movements through Mallards Way.

Only 13 MB Councillors out of 55 voted against the Local Plan.

The best solution is likely to come from working with developers and MBC to reduce numbers.

**ADJOURN MEETING FOR COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:
Questions were taken from members of the public for 30 minutes.**

The meeting reconvened at 9.00

8) CONCLUSION BY PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE:

In answer to the query 'will it be feasible to restrict construction traffic due to the signage that is already in situ?' i.e. stating that the road is unsuitable for HGV's. Cllr Cooke stated that a Road Traffic Order would be necessary for this.

The two options will be taken back to the full council meeting of 6 November to determine; fight all the way, or define the best options for Downswood.

Any questions or comments should be submitted to the Clerk or via DPC Facebook page.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

DATE OF NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING: 6 November 2018 at 8 pm

KCC MEETING TO DISCUSS SPEEDING IN THE PARISH: 20 November at 8 pm