

ORLESTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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Ashford Borough Council
Planning & Development Dept.
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11th July 2017

For the attention of Mr Simon Cole.

Dear Sir,

Re: Consultation on Ashford Local Plan. (July 2017)

Having now had an opportunity to study your proposed changes to the Draft Local Plan (June 2016) we are very disappointed that you have chosen to disregard all of our comments, concerns and suggestions in relation to Policy S31. A survey undertaken by Orlestone Parish Council in 2016 indicated that a substantial majority of those living in the Parish were against it. We would also like to see some of the new housing provided here as local needs housing to ensure that they are not all £700,000 mansions to be bought by people with no local connection moving out of expensive London homes. We note that the only change you have made to S31, is to delete the proposed phasing of implementation of the new building works. However we notice that the most significant change to the Plan is the inclusion of the omission site S57. A proposal for a further 50 houses within the village of Hamstreet. We were under the impression following our previous meetings that site S57 would be as an alternative to S31 and not an addition.

Orlestone Parish Council is of course, fully aware of the requirement for the Borough Council to provide approximately 14,000 new homes in the Borough by 2030 and is committed to assisting the Borough Council to achieve the allocation you have proposed for Hamstreet. However as the proposals are now spread across two sites it is essential that they are both treated as one overall proposal for the village of Hamstreet in order to avoid duplication of facilities and to achieve the best possible outcome for the village and the residents now and in future of the Parish.

To this end OPC has consulted with Warehorne Parish Council as all of the housing proposed for S57 is in the Parish of Warehorne although all in the village of Hamstreet.

Firstly we note that the area of land included in the Local Plan for S57 is not as was proposed and displayed by Crabtree & Crabtree at a public consultation in the Victory Hall earlier this year. (Drg.DHA/11520/01) The plans presented at that consultation showed that the whole site area stretched from Warehorne Road in the South and were bounded by the A2070 Hamstreet Bypass to the West and the North. The Ashford Road

bounds the site to the East Side above the access drive to Stumble Tree and the boundary follows around the edge of Stumble Tree Wood and to the rear of the properties to the west of Ashford Road from the railway bridge to the school. Crabtree & Crabtree have advised us that they have options on all of this land and the proposal presented by them at the public consultation included a sports field for the school and a cycle track from Warehorne Road to the Ashford Road opposite the railway station. We believe that it is essential for all of the Hamstreet proposals to work safely and effectively together and therefore that this entire area is included within this Local Plan for Ashford.

Secondly we are aware that your proposals have increased the proposed S31 allocation of 80 new homes to 130 new homes across the 2 sites. Furthermore we understand from Crabtree & Crabtree that they intend to submit a planning application within the very near future for a total of 70 new homes on site S57. This would then bring the total number of new homes in Hamstreet to 150. This will represent an increase of approximately 25% in the number of new homes in Hamstreet. In many communities this would be deemed as excessive and unreasonable. However OPC has decided to put forward a **Plan for Hamstreet**, which we believe will fulfil the ambitions of ABC whilst at the same time resolving issues both present and those generated by the new developments and accordingly being more sympathetic to Hamstreet and more acceptable to the residents of both Parishes.

Warehorne Parish Council has expressed great concern regarding increased traffic flows along the Warehorne Road to Hamstreet Village centre. They would prefer a give way system in preference to the introduction of traffic lights either side of the railway bridge in Warehorne Road. OPC suggests that as Crabtree & Crabtree have options on all of the land round to the Ashford Road above Stumble Tree then it would be possible to construct a road running northwards from Warehorne Road, through the proposed housing estate and then run parallel to the 2070 Hamstreet Bypass and joining to the Ashford Road at the existing field entrance above Stumble Tree. The proposed road would need to incorporate traffic calming measures and width restrictions but would provide an alternative access route to the already overloaded Ashford Road and avoid the area outside the school and around the station to the north of the centre of the village. It would also not be available to HGV's or create a "rat run" for through traffic.

We are aware that there are regularly existing traffic congestion issues on this part of the Ashford Road between the bridge and St Mary's Close and whilst refuse freighters usually manage to avoid these by collecting very early in the morning in this area, traffic conflicts are frequent at other times and encountered we believe particularly by buses which have stops at the end of St Mary's Close. Enquiries of the other essential services including ambulance and bulk gas delivery would also we believe produce evidence of regular highway obstruction that goes well beyond "traffic management" and becomes "traffic non-management." We are making further enquiries of certain essential service operators for their evidence in this connection.

However, on the basis of the prior construction of such a relief road, OPC would support the building of 70 houses on Site S57. It would be dependent on the suggested link road being constructed first, the inclusion of the sports field for the school on the western side of Ashford Road and the construction of the cycle route. This site would also leave sufficient land for the organic growth of the village for the period after the period of the Plan for 2030. Crabtree & Crabtree also indicated that they could provide a School car park above the driveway to Stumble Tree. There is sufficient area at this point to provide a car park large enough to accommodate all of the school staff cars and those of the parents when they deliver and collect pupils from the school. We would urge a car park with a minimum capacity of 150 vehicles to be accessed from the suggested link road from Ashford Road to Warehorne Road. Children and parents would then not have to cross the busy Ashford Road and encounter the through traffic coming down the hill, often at speed, into the village. The proposed drop off scheme and adult sports field suggested by Hallam Land Management and the School would then no longer be required. We have serious doubts about the effectiveness of that scheme in the mornings because of traffic congestion and clearly it would not work in the afternoons. We would point out that this is not just arising from school "drop offs" but from rail passengers choosing to travel from Ham

Street Station rather than Ashford and availing themselves of free parking around Hamstreet Station and on the highways rather than paying rail parking charges at Ashford Station and travelling from Ashford on the now very popular high speed line to London. The Site 31 scheme also requires the creation of another exit point from the school, which would also involve the removal of at least 1 oak tree thought to be over 100 years old and the loss of a large part of the school playing field. It is our understanding that the school is already under provided with playground area and therefore the provision of the suggested playing field on Site S57 will overcome this shortfall. It would be impractical and extremely dangerous for the children to be expected to use the sports field on S31 during normal break periods. Supervision issues over crossing, road safety and child protection issues must be paramount in such a situation where 4 to 11 year old children are concerned. We believe that it will be possible to acquire a strip of land to connect the school to the new playing field created as a result of Site 57 on the western side of Ashford Road avoiding the need to cross that busy road at all.

Creating a new school car park above Stumble Tree and on the same side of the road as the school would ease the peaks of traffic congestion in Ashford Road at the start and end of the school day. We would suggest that a 20 mph speed limit should also be introduced from the junction of St Marys Close to the turning into the suggested new link road. We also suggest that a residents only parking scheme be introduced that applies between the hours of 8-10 am and 2-4 pm. This would ensure that parents use the suggested new school car park and this could also prevent those using the railway station from uncontrolled free parking on the Ashford Road and in St Marys Close.

In respect of site S31 we have now shown that there is no longer a need for the proposed facilities for the school to be provided on this site. The sports field and the car parking can be provided on the same side of the road as the school and remove the need for children to be crossing the very busy Ashford Road. The safety of children is of paramount concern to all the residents of Hamstreet and has been one of the main objections to the development of site S 31. If the school wishes to provide a youth size football pitch then there is sufficient area on the proposal from Crabtree & Crabtree. It should be remembered that the maximum age of pupils at the school is 11 years. There is already a new and full sized adult FA standard pitch with changing facilities on Pound Lees and there is no need for further adult pitches in Hamstreet such as is being proposed on Site 31. That proposal displays a clear lack of knowledge of the situation currently in Hamstreet.

The pitch shown on the scheme presented by Hallam Land Management for site S31 is surrounded by a road. This in itself presents a safety risk for motorists should balls come from the pitch into the road. The pitch would need to be surrounded by a 6 ft high palisade fence for the protection of the school children.

Although any development on this site has been objected to by the residents of Orlestone it would seem that ABC are intent on proceeding with this development and OPC has very reluctantly decided to support this development but with strong reservations. We have already shown that the proposed facilities for the school can be accommodated on site S57 although a small carpark in the North West corner of the site could be useful as we suggest that a cross country running circuit and a cycle track could be created in Huntbourne Wood. We would also like to see a play area for teenage children on the site located well away from residential properties. There is already a new play park proposed on the Victory Hall site for younger children and toddlers.

This development should also include a car parking area to the South East corner of the site and parallel to the railway track. This would be for the use of those wishing to use the train and park at Hamstreet. There is a corridor between the back of the up platform and the rear of the gardens to Nos. 10-13 St Marys Close. This could provide a pedestrian access from the car park to the station building. It would also remove the need for vehicles to be parked on Ashford Road. A public open space could be created to the South West corner of the site, which would provide a buffer between St Marys Close and the new housing.

This proposal would eliminate the need for the road to be constructed around the sports pitch and could be accessed by a much less costly single road as opposed to a round-a-bout. Should there still be a requirement for a nature/wetlands area then this could still be provided in the scheme. We still contend that the houses to the top North East corner of the site will be beyond normal walking distance to the village centre and that residents are more likely to use a car to get to the village centre.

We do not believe that there will be a requirement for a 60 bed Care Home but would suggest that this area could be better used by ABC to build up to six 2 bedroom bungalows for use by the whole Borough.

We believe that ABC are anxious to see an early start to building in the Borough and to this end we understand that the ecological survey has already been completed on site S57 and could see the commencement of building early in 2018 or even earlier subject to Planning Consent being obtained at an early date. We are advised that the ecological surveys have not yet been carried out on site S31 and that this could take up to 2 years before any building work could commence on the site.

OPC believes that phasing of the proposed building work would be beneficial to Hamstreet and should require that building on site S31 should not commence until site S57 is completed in order to prevent construction traffic trying to access already congested roads to both sites over the same period. There are a number of other conditions that we believe will be needed during the construction period and we will highlight these at the formal Planning Consultation stage.

Without doubt the building of 150 new homes in the village will have a serious impact on the amenity, quality of life and infrastructure of the village and we would expect developers to make significant contributions to a Hamstreet Community Fund. The increase in population will require the village to build a new Village Hall, which would be much larger than the existing Victory Hall but built adjacent to it so as to maintain a continuity of the facility. Clearly there will be a significant increase in the number of children in the village. This will involve the school being increased in size to accommodate a 2 form yearly entry. We would expect the costs of building the additional classrooms and other facilities required by the Academy to be met by the Developers. We would also urge that the views of KCC Education be sought on such expansion of Hamstreet School in the light of what we understand to be the creation of at least 5 new primary schools to the north of Hamstreet at Chilmington Green and Finberry.

We suggest that 15% of the sale price of every new home on site S31 be paid into the Hamstreet Community Fund. However the new homes on site S57 are all in Warehorne. As the Local Plan suggests, the residents will want to use the facilities provided by OPC and others in Hamstreet and we would suggest that the 15% levy on each property be shared equally between OPC and WPC. As a guide we estimate that a new Village Hall will cost in the order of £1.5 M and facilities for the Academy will be in excess of £500 K. Further sums will be required for sports and play facilities and ongoing maintenance for a period of 10 years.

We have set out a **Plan for Hamstreet** which we believe will fulfil the requirements of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 whilst endeavouring to fulfil the needs of the residents of Hamstreet and Warehorne without destroying the rural atmosphere of both Parishes. Furthermore it shows capacity for further organic growth in the village for the future.

We trust you will look upon our suggestions favourably and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the proposals fully. It may be useful to convene a meeting between all of the interested parties to include ABC, OPC, WPC, Hallam Land Management, Crabtree & Crabtree and Hamstreet Primary Academy. We would also urge inclusion of representatives from KCC Education and Highways, ABC (including delegated highways) relevant bus companies and Southern Railway.

Yours faithfully,

G. B. Sparks.