

**THE PARISH COUNCIL OF ST MARGARETS AT CLIFFE**

Minutes of the Ordinary Monthly Meeting of the above Parish Council held on Monday 8th March 2021 at 7pm.

**Given the current lockdown situation with Covid19 virus, this meeting was undertaken by Councillors and Clerk via Google Meet.**

Present on Meet : Cllrs Rebecca Simcox (in the chair), A Newton, C Smith, J Harris, C Smith, T Gilham, S Creed, George Simcox, P Blake. District Cllr Oliver Richardson in attendance until 7.30.

Public questions:-

None raised for this meeting.

<p>1. <b><u>Confirmation of Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held 8th February 2021</u></b> The minutes, having been circulated to all members, were duly confirmed as a true record.</p>	
<p>2. <b><u>Declarations of interest</u></b> - Cllr Creed declared an interest in the grant application from the St Margarets Players, as a member.</p>	
<p>3. <b><u>Reports from County and District Councillors</u></b></p> <p>District Councillor Richardson:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● General update re Covid update/Government roadmap - all school children to return to school from today; 2 people will be able to meet outside for recreation; there are new rules for visiting care homes; currently vaccinations are being undertaken for those aged 65-69 - also those aged 60-64 with underlying health conditions.</li><li>● Local Plan - initial consultation period ends 20th March, with second consultation stage likely in September.</li><li>● District Council element of Council tax will rise 2.57%.</li><li>● Council re climate emergency - aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions; electric charging points to be put in place, with Government grant received for decarbonising public offices,</li><li>● Inland Border facility - this is progressing - land purchased and approval given with conditions. The conditions would see a border of 140m from homes, a land bund and landscaping/sound buffers. The facility is likely to be operational from first quarter next year.</li><li>● Cllr Simcox raised question of encroaching hedging in car park - Cllr Richardson will refer to Darren Solly.</li><li>● Re application for "Larkspur" - "DDC are on the case".</li><li>● Reach Road - continuing flooding near holiday park - will refer to County Council.</li></ul>	

- Cllr Newton - the boundary wall from the Church is encroaching into neighbouring property and is in a very poor / dangerous stage. Cllr Richardson will liaise with relevant officer. This is DDC responsibility given that this is a closed churchyard.

#### 4. Clerk Report

- Litter bin request for The Bay - Daniel Walsh confirms that DDC are not installing any at present, pending new budget in April. If PC were to purchase, this would cost £230 per bin with £90 for installation and £94.23 for yearly emptying - this would be recharged every year. It was agreed that PC would await new budget to see if a bin can be provided, with possibility of asking for a matched funding agreement with DDC, with PC paying for one. Cllr Richardson will speak to Roger Wragg in this respect. Clerk to deal
- Telephone kiosk in Reach Road - Clerk contacted BT Payphones who confirmed they have a backlog of work but removal of telephony equipment is on list of works. Emma Rosen advised. Clerk to monitor
- Grazing rights for Old Bottom Freedown - as a goodwill gesture, Parish Council agreed to a reduction to £1,000 from £1,000 for Braeside Stables. Clerk to deal
- DDC have chased an invoice re public toilets in error - Clerk dealing.
- No reply received from Bay Trust or the agent.
- All Chromebooks now insured under current policy - this will mean an extra £10 premium on the policy at renewal. Clerk to note
- Re contract for Idverde - PC only agreed to meet line-marking for remainder of last season. Season now commencing - Clerk to liaise with Clubs to check re requirements for marking pitches/payment. Clerk to deal
- Re request for memorial bench (Mr Ashton) - he had asked if other sites might be available for a bench. Suggestion made that a bench would be of value in the South Foreland Valley. Cllr Blake will liaise
- Re trees removed at Bay Hill - reported to Conservation at DDC but no information received.
- The hand-dryers in the Alexander Pavilion are to be installed shortly, with invoice to come to the Council.
- Ian Miller is liaising with Vurley Fencing re new gate to be installed at Cemetery.
- Insulation at King George V Pavilion is scheduled towards the end of March, with invoice to come to Council.
- Re telephone kiosk at Dover Transport Museum - this in fact relates to just a kiosk door. Clerk will contact them in case of need.
- David Hart has confirmed he is happy to liaise re the proposed 2022 model plane Channel crossing.
- PC agreed to the planting of a rose bush alongside the Hulks memorial bench in the King George V Field.
- Planning decisions folder now in shared drive.



Following advised:-

Submitted for Appeal: Shalimar , Well Lane - Certificate of Lawfulness (existing) for the continued use of land as garden land

Appeal Decision - dismissed - 1 and 2 St Margarets Road

(b) Re: applications DOV/20/01567 and DOV/20/01566 in respect of The White Cliffs Hotel - strong objections to both applications sent (attached to these minutes as appendix). IT WAS RESOLVED not to pursue the question of identifying the building as an Asset of Community Value as there is no value in it.

(b) Discussion surrounding formation of Planning Committee - it was agreed as an initial point, that Councillors Smith, Fielding and Harris would form a planning group - this to report to full Council where any proposals would be ratified. Clerk will check the position re holding such meetings by video link.

Clerk to check

#### 6. Local Plan

Cllr Fielding had prepared a response to the current consultation which had been circulated to all Councillors. IT WAS RESOLVED to accept the proposed response and Clerk to submit this to Dover District Council.

(Cllr George Simcox raised the issue of insufficient provision of electric charging points in residential properties given Central Government aims).

(Copy of the response attached to these minutes)

Clerk to deal

#### 7. Finance

The following payments were approved:-

Mrs S Ford - materials for nativity scene	£150.00
Pegasus Playscheme - S.137 grant	£500.00
GR and LM Winter - Spirit of St Margarets - S.137 grant	£500.00
St Margarets Nursery and After School Club - S.137 grant	£2,000.00
G Simcox - repayment of expenses	£31.39
Castle Water - water rates	£119.00
Mrs R Simcox - final Microsoft licence (repayment)	£59.99
Jane Cook - Land Registry fees	£42.69
NEST - Clerk/Council pension payment	£180.83
Mr D A Hart - expenses re South Foreland Valley	£37.17
Mr R Purchase - Feb 2021 invoice	£1,000.00
Jane Cook - Feb 2021 salary	£1,219.19
Jane Cook - phone/internet etc	£37.43
H M Revenue and Customs	£239.19
	-----
	£6,116.88

#### Receipts:-

VAT refund	£5,602.09
Credit interest	£0.62 (Feb)
Google Ireland	£0.77 (checking credit)

Cllr Newton advised that the cost of a single collapsible bollard for one end of ER40 (with National Trust to pay for second bollard) is £640 + VAT. IT WAS RESOLVED that this could be taken forward. Cllr Newton also advised that the cost of the steel door previously discussed had risen due to the increase in the cost of steel - this would now be £4,126 + VAT through Harmers Fabricators. IT WAS RESOLVED that this could be taken forward.

Cllr Newton to take forward

Re EKJIRP Parish Quadrennial Review - IT WAS RESOLVED that the payment of Basic Allowances, recommended at £150 for Councillors and £300 for the Chair, would not be taken forward, but that travelling costs in relation to PC business would continue to be made at suggested levels.

Clerk to note

#### 8. Further Grants

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve a S.137 grant to St Margarets Players in the sum of £500.

Clerk to deal

IT WAS RESOLVED, after further consideration, to provide a S.137 grant of £1,000 to the Jackie Claringbould Inspiring People through Horses charity.

Clerk to deal

IT WAS RESOLVED to provide a grant of £100 to the churchyard volunteers.

Clerk to deal

#### 9. Civic Cemetery

The fees were last raised in 2019. Councillors felt that in the current climate, it is not the right time to increase any fees. IT WAS RESOLVED that the charges remain as they are, with a view in 2021. IT WAS RESOLVED that the retainer fee paid to Registrar Mr Miller be increased by £100 to £400.

Clerk to advise

#### 10. Village Maintenance Contracts

IT WAS RESOLVED that the contracts for both Mr Purchase and Mr Miller be renewed for a further 3 years with effect from April 2021, with the proviso that there are break clauses annually, when any cost increases could allow the Parish Council to trigger the tender process undertaken at inception.

Cllr Blake will liaise

Cllr Smith voted against the proposal as he believes this position would not stand up to scrutiny.

It was agreed that Mr Purchase be asked to paint the interior of the bus stop at the top of Bay Hill and also clean the telephone kiosk earmarked for removal by BT. If Mr Purchase is to undertake any weed clearance using herbicides he must seek a suitable licence on his own behalf. For this year the path from the village to Westcliffe is to be cut by Idverde, but this may be looked at again next year with a view to being included for Mr Purchase. It was also agreed that Mr Purchase undertake re-felting of the bus shelter outside the Old Chapel.

11. **Footpaths**

Cllr Creed advised that although reports have been provided to Kent Public Rights of Way re damaged/missing signs, it is likely to be some time before any of this is remedied. Question raised as to whether the Parish Council could undertake some of this work on their own behalf - is it possible that PROW would be able to supply the post? Clerk will check with PROW in this respect. Cllr Fielding advised that the website of the Kent Downs AONB has a style guide for signs.

Clerk to contact

12. **Correspondence**

- Mr R Waters re wooded area near Oxney, Hill Top Farm.
- Kent Highways re temporary closure of The Droveaway 1-5 March
- Mr Owen Ashton re request for memorial bench - Cllr Blake will liaise in this respect
- Mr E Gee re snow/ice clearance of paths - Mr Miller had not undertaken path near school previously but Mr Purchase had undertaken this.
- DDC re invitation to meeting re Local Plan 25 Feb
- Frances Hutley re Dover Patrol Memorial event - Clerk had advised that PC would not be able to provide refreshments on this occasion.
- Mr M Thompson re St Margarets Bay Green - reply already sent
- Cllr Bates re South Eastern train changes
- Sandy Liggins re Parish magazine - now back in print.
- KALC re Dover Area Committee meeting 24th Feb.
- Sue Carr, Corporate Services Officer re PC complaint letter for White Cliffs Hotel.
- Andrzej Kluczynski re Public Space Protection Orders.
- Daniel Walsh DDC re litter bin request for The Bay.
- David Parratt re palm oil deposits.
- KALC re holding of remote meetings.
- Thank you letter re grant from Spirit of St Margarets - Mr Winter.
- Mr S Hare - re damage from Church boundary wall - District Cllr Richardson taking forward.
- Dr M Madine - request for allotment - Clerk had responded.
- Email alleging damage to SSI land.
- KALC re Operation London Bridge.
- Further email from Mr M Thompson re Bay Green - reply already sent.
- Mr M Cooper - re removal of trees/anti social parking - Community Warden had been in contact in this regard.
- Carl Dewhirst DDC re 2021 Census.
- Mr R Stone re parking charges in the Bay - now apply from 1 March.
- Mr J Thorn re land status for land off The Droveaway/The Rise.
- KALC re Crowdfund Kent.

Cllr Blake to deal

13. **Reports from Councillors**

- Cllr Newton provided a report of the South Foreland Valley, including the alleged "land grab" reported to the PC. It seems that the correspondent is wrong in terms of boundary of the SFV and therefore any encroachment, although there is a tree house-type construction which has been built on SSSI land which needs removing. It was agreed that the Community Warden be asked to liaise in this respect.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● With regard to the “turning circle” previously created on one side of The Front, following barriers being put up, there is now a further turning circle which has been created on the other side. Suggestion was made that perhaps the only way of stopping this damage to the land is to install gates at either end - Cllr Newton will liaise with Natural England in this respect to see if permission would be granted.</li><li>● She advised that the Valley is looking really good, with WCCP still working through lockdown and volunteers undertaking some tasks. Some of the wooden bollards have been painted, with task ongoing by Mr purchase.</li><li>● Cllr Simcox had investigated digital editing but felt this was not required at present by the PC.</li><li>● Cllr R Simcox advised that she had only received around 43 responses from her article placed re fibre broadband for the village - a lot more would be needed to take this forward but she will pursue. Cllr Blake had received comments that the removal of telegraph wires in the event of this provision might sway people.</li><li>● Cllr Blake has measured the distance/width required for a suggested path around the King George V Field and will continue to investigate costs for this.</li><li>● Cllr Gilham advised that clearance work had started on Reach Road Pond and hopefully next step will be to install liner.</li><li>● Cllr Harris reported on recent KALC Dover Area Committee meeting -<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Virtual meetings - advice will be given re continuance of these.</li><li>○ Track and trace data re Covid is only kept for 21 days.</li><li>○ 80% of residents now use Facebook for comments.</li><li>○ New PCSO's in place and hope to meet with people soon.</li><li>○ New courses being introduced - Clerk asked if virtual training could be a continuing feature in the future.</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>Cllr Newton to take forward</p> <p>Cllr R Simcox to take forward</p> <p>Cllr Blake will take forward</p>
<p>14. <b><u>Village Maintenance</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Playing field inspection had been undertaken by Cllr Blake and sent to Councillors. Most repairs identified by ROSPA report have been undertaken, with swing framework yet to be done.</li><li>● Re bench at Alexander Field - Mr Purchase will look to clear and see if repair can be undertaken. Cllr Blake would like to investigate the provision of benches (with recycled materials) at the Alexander Field.</li><li>● After discussion, it was agreed that live video of Council meetings would not be taken forward. The link for joining virtual meetings has been put in the Parish magazine and on the website but idea of adding this to Facebook mooted.</li><li>● Weedkiller - if this is to be used, licence must be held by contractor.</li><li>● Book of condolence - this would be virtual through Government / Buckingham Palace.</li><li>● No reply received from correspondence with Bay Trust / the agent and Clerk asked to write again inviting a response.</li><li>● Clerk to add an agenda item each month for planning decisions from DDC).</li></ul>	<p>Clerk to deal</p> <p>Clerk to deal</p>

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Re: White Cliffs Hotel planning applications:-**

Two applications have been made by the owners:

1. 20/01566 Change of Use from hotel to residential
2. 20/01567 Alterations to the building facilitate conversion to 3 residential units.

#### **1.1 Overdevelopment**

Taken in conjunction with a 2020 application (19/01112) , this adds a total of seven new dwellings to the historic, already crowded centre of the village, which is a Conservation Area. Cripps Lane is a narrow historic lane from which entry onto the High Street is already problematic. The High Street itself is narrow at this point. The proposed conversions of the hotel provide small houses and tiny gardens which are obviously designed to maximise profit does not enhance the appearance of this historic building.

#### **1.2 Housing need**

The application claims it will provide 'much needed housing' but without any evidence of the specific needs in the village or a review of what is actually needed. The last Village Housing Needs survey (2011) identified a need for 39 affordable homes as 'high property prices and a predominance of privately owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish' Since 2011, nine affordable rented units in the village have been sold by the Bay Trust, removing them from the affordable rented sector. Two previous pub conversions in the village centre remain unsold. What is the evidence of need for houses of the size and type proposed in the application?

#### **1.3 Conservation issues**

The Hotel is a grade 2 listed building in a Conservation Area. Its appearance has largely remained unchanged since at least the mid 19 th century and probably earlier. It sits in an important cluster of key historic buildings in the heart of the village, including Cliffe House, Holly Lodge, The Cottage and the 12th Century Church immediately opposite. The proposed changes will dramatically alter the hotel's original appearance and fabric. Subdividing one building into three requires the creation of new entrance doors which fundamentally change the front and rear aspects and break up its integrity as a single function building. The proposed designs will also make a considerable alteration to the right-hand side of the building, adding an additional floor to accommodate one of three dwellings proposed for the conversion. There is also a proposal to remove a chimney stack.

The overall impression is one of trying to push as many dwellings as possible into the footprint of this historic building, resulting in tiny gardens and small living spaces. Claims are made in the application that the conversion will secure its maintenance as a historic building, but how this will be achieved when it is subdivided between three individual owners is not explained. A great degree of cooperation will be needed to maintain anything like its original appearance and is probably setting up problems for its future care.

#### **1.4 Viability of the business**

Unsubstantiated claims are made in the application that the hotel business is no longer viable, although the hotel has survived two World Wars and a number of major recessions in its 136-year history. Prior to its purchase by the current owners, it was a thriving business whose restaurant had a turnover of £120k and an annual profit of £37k (information provided by the former restaurateur). This did not include income from rooms or the bar. Recently, similar



establishments in the District such as the 'Dog at Wingham', have been immensely popular, offering a mix of good food and good service with rooms in a historic building, also in a small village setting. This tends to disprove the assertion in the application that 'there is dying demand for a hotel of this scale within the local village'.

No one doubts that the current pandemic is very challenging, but unlike many others the White Cliffs Hotel shut its doors as a restaurant and pub in March 2020 and has not reopened. The covering letter for the application dated 23 December 2020 inaccurately states that the hotel side not reopened at all 'Since March 2020 these rooms have not been able to be let' 'and has left the building standing empty', when it has in fact been regularly let to key workers and others since March and been advertised on Air B&B with customer reviews dated as late as September 2020.

Meanwhile, since March, many other similar businesses within the District and the village such as The Smugglers Inn and The Coastguard pub, have vigorously sought new income streams, such as takeaways, socially distanced interior and garden service and, when allowed, reopened with enthusiasm. The successful 'Eat Out to Help Out' offer was not made at the Hotel and during the summer when Covid regulations were relaxed, the village was full of visitors and people were actively seeking staycation venues and hospitality.

It is hoped that a very thorough review of the viability of the business will be made before allowing change of use and note should also be taken of the example of the history of The Coastguard Pub in St Margaret's Bay whose application for change of use to a residential property some years ago was rejected by DDC on the grounds that it did have a future, and so this has proved, as it is now one of the most popular pubs in the district.

### **1.5 Effect on the District Tourism economy and relation to DDC Policies**

In recent years, the overall provision of tourist bed spaces in the village has been reduced to the detriment of the village and district's tourism economy (e.g., closure of Wallets Court Hotel and Holm Oaks B&B) DDC's own 2020-2030 tourism strategy states that its aim for the tourist accommodation provision is to Increase the quantity, quality and range of the district's visitor accommodation stock; with a focus on supporting improvements, rural/farming diversification of business use and new large 5\*/4\* hotel developments.

This application and indeed the previous 2020 application seems at odds with this strategy. We would also refer to the draft local plan and DM Policy 24 Tourism and tourist/visitor accommodation in particular 'We will seek to retain and evolve a broad range of high quality serviced tourist accommodation'

### **1.6 Errors in the Heritage Statement**

The applicant's Heritage Statement has obviously utilised parts of the Parish Council and St Margaret's History websites but without a full understanding of the subject, leading to important errors which seriously misrepresent the historic environment around the White Cliffs Hotel and the history of the building itself.

For example, under 2.1.2, page 6 'Aesthetic Significance' there is the statement:

'St Margaret's at Cliffe, as previously mentioned, experienced extensive damage to its buildings during the Second World war. Houses were rebuilt and built new meaning that few are older than 70 years.'

This is patently untrue, and implies a village consisting of mainly 1950's housing, whilst the reality is that most of the properties in the central part of the village range from early to late 19th Century with a sprinkling of 18th Century properties and an important cluster of key

historic buildings including, Cliffe House, Holly Lodge, The Cottage and the 12th Century Church immediately adjacent to the White Cliffs Hotel.

The historical background to the White Cliffs Hotel itself, as provided in the Heritage Statement, which should be a key piece of evidence, is also thin and inaccurate, although the history of the building is very well known and recorded, and a written comprehensive history was for many years on display in the bar area of the Hotel.

Under 2.1.1 Historic Significance, (page 4) the Statement suggests that 'In the 1880s the Earl of Granville proposed development on the fields overlooking the sea and so hotels and private residences were consequently built, perhaps including the White Cliffs hotel and Cliff Tavern (located next door]'

This is a hugely inaccurate. In brief, the current White Cliffs Hotel was built originally to provide school classrooms and accommodation as a part of the adjacent Cliffe House School, which was active from 1745-1881, before becoming a hotel. The main boarding part of the school was in Cliffe House, accessed across Cripps Lane by the walkway at first floor level which still exists. From 1885 both buildings became a hotel, before the Cliffe House side was sold in the 1970's, the remaining rooms were enhanced by the use of annexes to one side. It has continuously functioned as a hotel since 1885, even during WW2, when it also acted as the ARP HQ for the village. The village archive has over 100 views and documents about the building which can be seen at <https://www.stmargaretshistory.org.uk/subject/cliffe-house-school-cliffe-hotel-cliffe-Tavern-white-cliffs-hotel>

Also, a further correction, 'The Cliffe Tavern' is just one of several names the hotel/pub has had over the years and refers to the current White Cliffs Hotel building and not Cliffe House as implied in the Heritage Statement.

|

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Dover District Local Plan 2021**

#### **Consultation Response**

##### **1. Presentation of Plan**

The draft 2021 Plan appears to be a significant improvement over the 2010 Core Strategy. The presentation is much easier to follow and the Consultants used for the task seem to have provided a much better evidence base and data analysis to inform policy construction. While the “Overarching Vision” is suitably positive and ambitious, the objectives for housing and employment growth seem much more realistic than the 2010 plan. The strategic objectives appear well chosen and the longer time frame of 2023 to 2040 should enable developmental improvement to be progressively achieved. The balance between the demand for economic growth and the need to conserve the natural environment is well struck. The District Council has produced a very good quality consultative document and those responsible for the construction of the Plan should be commended for a fine piece of work.

Two concerns remain about external pressures that are beyond the control of the District Council and which could affect the viability of the published Plan. These are:

- a) the October 2020 White Paper on changes to the planning system proposes a very different form of local district plan and in some respects completely opposite to the approach taken by DDC. It proposes replacing policies with rules, section 106 agreements with Infrastructure Levies, categorising land in 3 types different from the Local Plan, central government setting of housing targets. If the proposals in the White Paper were to be confirmed in legislation it is difficult to see how the current Local Plan could avoid a fundamental revision;
- b) the proposals for growth in business and employment in the District could be adversely affected by Brexit. If the current problems being experienced by businesses and importers/exporters are just “teething troubles” then fine, but if they turn out to be structural issues then Dover’s position as a business hub could be more difficult to realise.

##### **2. Specific Issues.**

The following comments are limited to those sections which have an effect on the Parish of St Margaret’s.

**Section 5, Climate Change**, is the first section with specific policy proposals and it is appropriate that this is given prominence in the Plan. Paragraph 5.11 draws attention to the potential conflict between sustainable design/construction and cost of building. This is a critical issue. Opposition from the building industry led to the abandonment of the Code for Sustainable Homes and has over recent years

1  
pressured the Government to restrain standards required by the Building Regulations. If proposed policies DM1, DM2 and DM3 are to be effective the District Council must be prepared to apply them rigorously. Large scale building firms are motivated to focus on quantity and profit rather than quality and sustainability. St Margaret’s Parish has recent experience that a County Council can be just as guilty of prioritising cost saving over sustainability. Five years ago KCC rebuilt Portal House Special School in the centre of the village. It was clear from the plans presented to the Parish

Council that the construction did not meet KCC's own minimum sustainability standards for public buildings. Nevertheless, KCC planning department approved the plans despite strong objections from the Parish Council and DDC planning department. At a late stage even the solar panels on the roof were lost. The largest new building in this village will continue for decades to come to have much higher energy costs than it should. We are making this point to emphasise the practical importance of applying high sustainability standards. It does appear, from viewing very many planning officer's reports over recent years, that sustainability features are given little weight by planning officers.

### **DM Policy 1 Reducing Carbon Emissions**

Agree with all objectives in this policy. The final sentence requires Energy Statements to be submitted by developers to the Council. It would be helpful to Parish Councils if all planning applications were required to provide a sustainability statement as part of a Design and Access Statement or Planning Statement.

### **DM Policy 2 Sustainable Design and Construction**

Agree with all objectives. Consideration might be given to require all new housing to incorporate underfloor heating at all levels. Traditional central heating with radiators requires a water flow temperature of 70 to 75 degrees C. Underfloor heating works well with a flow temperature of 45 degrees C. Therefore whatever the heating source it is more fuel efficient. It also leads to greater comfort in domestic dwellings. It is accepted that a Design Guide or Design Policy DM37 might be a more appropriate place for this.

### **DM Policy 3 Renewable and low carbon energy**

The policy is admirable but could be difficult to achieve. Some years ago St Margaret's community took a serious look at providing a renewable energy source for the whole Parish and at one point had identified a suitable site and a company prepared to design and build such a facility. But getting finance to support the project proved a major obstacle. Ironically it was because it was because the project was not financially ambitious enough.

### **DM Policy 4 Sustainable Travel**

The objectives are all worthwhile, particularly the aim to reduce private car usage and the provision of electric charging points in every new dwelling. The heavy increase of private car use is becoming a significant problem for many rural

communities. Traffic density has increased in St Margarets to over 440 vehicle movements per hour in the High Street for most daylight hours. An objective to support sustainable local transport options, such as an intra-village bus service, could benefit rural communities in the District.

### **DM Policy 8 Coastal Change Management.**

This policy appears to contain sufficient protection to preserve the coastal areas from inappropriate development.

### **DM Policy 9 Tree Planting and Protection**

The proposal for 2 trees to be planted for each new dwelling is welcome. The requirement for a landscape plan for all substantial developments to include tree planting can be supported. The intention to maintain tree preservation orders wherever possible is also welcome.

## Section 6 New Homes

The Housing Topic Paper, which provides the data and evaluations underlying the Homes strategic policies and DM policies, is well presented and explains how a variety of options have been explored and how “achievable” policies have been derived. The review of housing provision in the 2010 to 2020 period indicates how the Core Strategy largely failed to meet its objectives. Although many mitigating factors can be adduced, it seems that the original assumption in the Core Strategy that a huge level of house-building could be achieved within 10 years and that this would draw in a high level of business and employment to the District, was a fundamental mistake. It is reassuring that this new Plan takes a much more focused approach to provision of homes and development of employment opportunities. The following comments refer to how the proposed policies might affect the Parish of St Margaret’s.

### Strategic Policy 3 Residential Windfall Development

The Housing Topic Paper reports that the number of dwellings actually built in the Core Strategy period fell far below the number predicted and of those built 45% were from Windfall Development, mostly in the rural areas. That is, they were outside the land allocation sites included in the Core Strategy and came from infilling and similar small developments. The 2021 Plan proposes that windfall development can make a contribution to the provision of new dwellings in the next 20 years. Given that this type of housing has already contributed significantly to the provision of new dwellings in the District there must be some reservation about the capacity of the rural areas to deliver much more.

St Margaret’s is listed as a Local Centre and suitable for more windfall development “within or immediately adjoining the settlement boundaries”.

3

**Strategic Policy 3** lists nine criteria which must be met for windfall development to be allowed. These generally provide protection against inappropriate development. **Criteria b** requires compatibility with the existing settlement. A common problem in this village is a developer buying a large property in extensive grounds and then applying for permission to demolish a serviceable house and replacing it with two or three dwellings on that site. This is most frequently seen in the Bay area of St Margaret’s and can adversely affect the character of the built environment in that location. This is a form of inappropriate densification and it would help if this term could be included in the criteria. **Criteria c** restricts development that might cause loss or harm to “green space within the confines that contributes to the character of the settlement”. The Parish Council regards this as a very important criterion and trusts it would be applied by the planning department. **Criteria i (traffic generation)** is also important to this Parish as the village road network is already suffering from an excess of vehicle movements. (2018 KCC survey reported in excess of 38000 vehicle movements per week in High Street). Inspection of planning officer reports in recent years indicates that traffic generation is rarely taken into account.

### Site Allocations Policy 1 Non Strategic Housing

The original HELAA document listed eleven sites in St Margaret’s as potential for additional housing. It is some relief that in this Local Plan that has come down to an allocation of four sites, STM003, STM 006, STM 007 and STM 008. As STM007 and 008 are on the same field it is in effect three allocated sites. STM 006 is allocated for the 2025 to 2029 period. The others are all

short term delivery in the 2021 to 2024 period!

All of these sites are adjoining the settlement boundaries and within, or partly within, the AONB. It is probable that planning applications for these sites would receive strong objections from residents who attach great value to preserving the AONB and objections from external bodies such as the Kent Downs AONB Unit and CPRE. Normally the Parish Council objects to development outside the confines.

Sites STM007 and 008 are believed to cover ground that contains archeological remains. It is likely that an archeological examination will be required and this could add significant costs to a developer of these sites. It might make them uneconomic to build on.

The Sites Allocation Policy estimates that these developments could deliver a total of 86 dwellings. STM003 (40) STM006 (10) STM007 (18) STM008 (18).

4

The application of a primary school pupil yield factor, typically 28% (DfE), suggests a demand for 24 additional primary school places would arise from this total housing. As the village primary school is currently full this could pose a significant problem.

The application of a domestic vehicle yield factor, typically 1.4 for South East of England (Statistica), suggests the total development would put at least an additional 120 cars on the village roads. As this community is already suffering from an excess of vehicle movements, and the consequent road safety and congestion issues, this would lead to worsening of the road network problem that confronts the Parish Council.

For all the above reasons, these sites might not be as achievable as the Plan proposes.

There is one potential benefit for the Parish. St Margaret's is a designated Rural Centre and Policy DM12, Affordable Housing, requires any development of 6 or more dwellings to provide not less than 30% affordable housing. The mix is recommended at 65% rentable, 35% affordable ownership. A separate response to Policies DM12 and DM13 follows in the next paragraphs but in the context of the site allocations Policy it would apply to each allocation and suggests a potential provision of 25 affordable dwellings. This would be an issue for the Parish Council to consider.

### **DM Policy 12 Affordable Housing**

### **DM Policy 13 Rural Local Needs Housing**

In 2011 an independent housing need survey of the village identified a demand for up to 39 affordable homes. As house prices have risen sharply since that date it is probable that the local need is now higher. Therefore this is a serious issue for the Parish Council. The problem here, as in many rural locations, is that there is no land available within the settlement boundaries to provide for this amount of housing. Therefore the Parish Council can welcome the statement in paragraph one of DM12 that any development of greater than 6 dwellings should incorporate 30% affordable housing.

The split of 65% rentable and 35% ownership complies with the NPPF but would not necessarily match a local needs survey. This would be a problem if the Parish Council took advantage of the potential 25 affordable dwellings delivered from the four site allocations. A further problem is that

this type of affordable housing could come outside any Parish Council control and might not benefit local residents. Therefore the Parish Council might generally favour provision of affordable housing under Policy DM13 than DM 12.

DM Policy 12 includes in section 2 five options which could be applied, on a case by case basis, if there are concerns about the viability of affordable housing provision in

5

a particular project. This is to allow flexibility in practical applications of the policy. We suggest that an additional option could allow a landowner or developer to offer a proportion of land on an allocated site (or other land within the Parish) to the Parish Council in lieu of actual housing. This would enable the Parish Council to have its own affordable housing project. If the amount and location of land allocated for this is agreed by the Parish Council the landowner/developer could be released from the 30% requirement for the subsequent building project. This would allow the Parish Council to make affordable housing provision to meet local needs under Policy DM 13 and have the protection of DM13 section **d**. This would also enable policies DM 12 and DM 13 to work in tandem.

It is further suggested that DM13 section **d** includes a statement that eligibility for rented or part ownership of the affordable housing must be confirmed by the Parish Council. This would satisfy the objective of this section, that the housing provision meets the purpose for which it is intended "in perpetuity". Under current *Policy DM6* this objective is achieved by Section 106 agreements. However Section 106s set out eligibility criteria but may not specify Parish Council involvement so can be ignored by social housing associations. This circumstance has been experienced by this Parish Council in the past year in relation to its existing affordable housing estate.

### **DM Policy 16 Residential Extensions and Annexes**

Sections 6.145 and 6.14 make a sound case for allowing extensions and annexes to meet specific housing needs. Criteria a to e in the Policy provide sufficient safeguards against inappropriate development so this policy is supported.

## **Employment and the Local Economy**

The strategic issues and policies covered in this section appear to be well considered and constructed. Comments here will be restricted to policies which affect the rural economy.

### **DM Policy 21 Home Working**

A survey carried out in 2013 found that in addition to shops and pubs there were over 70 businesses operating from the village. Although there has been a loss of pubs it is probable that the number of businesses run from home has increased, particularly since Covid lockdowns. The Parish Council occasionally receives planning applications that could result in inappropriate business activity in a residential setting. Therefore the controls **a**, **b** and **c** in this policy are welcome, particularly **b** which recognises that additional traffic flow could be harmful.

## **DM Policy 22 Conversion or Rebuild of Rural Buildings for Economic Development Purposes**

**DM Policy 23 New Employment Premises in the Countryside** The criteria in these policies offer robust safeguards against inappropriate development and it is hoped these will be strictly applied to planning applications while allowing projects that could benefit the local and wider community. The problem now experienced in villages is the loss of facilities such as pubs, restaurants and accommodation and transfer of such buildings to residential use. Therefore **DM Policy 24 Tourism and Tourist/Visitor Accommodation** Is strongly welcomed. It promotes an expansion of good quality tourist facilities and contains paragraphs that deter changes that would result in a loss of services and accommodation. Since existing **DM Policy 24 Retention of Rural Shops and Pubs** appears to be discarded we suggest that these paragraphs could be strengthened to deter loss of rural services which also contribute to tourism provision. They might take a form similar to the statements in **DM Policy 27 Local Centres** which seek to protect local shops.

## **Transport and Infrastructure**

Paragraphs 9.5 and 9.6 on page 140 of the Plan address the problems of increased car use, pollution, health issues, climate change and sustainability. We can add that these problems are increasingly affecting the rural areas as weak public transport provision leads to ever greater use of private cars. Adding to this is an increase in the parking of work vehicles in residential locations. Therefore **Strategic Policies 13 and 14 and DM Policy 29 The Highway Network and Highway Safety** are welcomed.

Problems associated with parking are dealt with in **DM Policy 30 Parking Provision on New Development**. The policy states that DDC will continue to use the 2006 KCC parking standards guide to allocate parking spaces on new development. A case can be made that this KCC guide is obsolete for the rural areas. The recommendation of 1.5 car spaces for 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings is not rational and 2 car spaces for anything larger is inadequate. The substantial increase in house prices and rents in the past 10 years has given rise to the situation that offspring are often now living in the parental home well into their twenties. If each adult has to travel to work in separate places then three cars would be needed as public transport is typically too infrequent to support travel to work from rural locations. This means that many roads in the villages are becoming choked with parked cars. The Kent Guide has not evolved to take account of changes to habitation modes in the past 10 years. Therefore we suggest that any new housing in the rural areas should have a minimum of two accessible parking spaces per dwelling or one space per bedroom. This could be added to paragraph 2 in the policy where some recognition of local circumstance is made.

## **DM Policy 31 Providing Open Space**

All paragraphs in this policy are welcomed, particularly the acknowledgement that open space amenities require governance and maintenance, not just provision of land. The requirement for residential development of 10 or more dwellings to contribute to open space provision, and for developments of 40 or more dwellings to provide additional open space, is supported. Paragraphs **d** and **e** indicate how contributions to support open space can be made to Parish Councils and it is welcomed that Section 106 Agreements are proposed. This will allow Parish Councils to improve or expand existing facilities.

## **DM Policy 32 Playing Pitch Strategy**



This policy requires developments of 10 or more dwellings to support outdoor sports facilities. Again this would be through Section 106 Agreements. As this Parish Council owns a sports field which rates very low quality, according to the Open Space Assessment topic paper, this policy is strongly welcomed.

### **DM Policy 33 Protection of Open Space**

Great importance is attached to all paragraphs in this policy, particularly rules 1,2 and 3 in the final section.

The impressively thorough evaluation of all open spaces in the District found in the Open Spaces Assessment topic papers is noted, and it is welcomed that all listed open spaces in St Margaret's are recommended for retention.

### **DM Policy 34 Community Facilities**

This policy for the retainment and provision of community facilities is strongly supported.

### **DM Policy 35 Digital Technology**

Provision of high speed broadband is weak in the rural areas, as admitted in paragraph 9.58, and mobile phone coverage is variable even within villages. Therefore this policy to promote Gigabit broadband provision and 5G is supported. Paragraph 9.59 indicates that BT Openreach will extend full fibre connection to the rural areas by the mid 2020s and mentions Kingsdown, Ripple and Ringwold among other settlements, but not St Margaret's. As these three villages are in St Margaret's Ward it would be strange to connect these and not the larger settlement of St Margaret's. We trust that DDC will insist that St Margaret's is included in the connection of FTTP in the near future. We also hope that DDC can put pressure on BT Openreach to bring FTTP to all parts of the District within the next two years.

## **Section 10 Design**

The key issues and options are well set out in paragraphs 10.1 to 10.19. The decision to develop a district design guide to supplement the NPPF seems well founded. Therefore the provisions in **Strategic Policy 15 Place Making, DM Policy 36 Achieving High Quality Design** and **DM Policy 37 Quality of Residential Accommodation** are all supported. It will be interesting to see how a Design Guide works out. In 2011 St Margaret's Parish Council tried to produce a Village Design Guide and received assistance from David Whittington, then head of Dover Planning Department. He pointed out that St Margaret's has three distinct areas with different types of housing so would need three guides if detailed guidance was desired. He kindly offered us a general model policy that could cover the whole village. But this added little more than was provided in the NPPF so the Parish Council did not pursue the idea. It is likely that DDC will come up against this problem at much greater scale in the effort to produce a workable design guide for the District. It will be a great achievement if it can manage it.

**DM Policy 36** section **b** indicates a typical density for new housing developments of 30 to 50 net dwellings per hectare. This could be too high for some rural areas. The other policies mention the

requirement for high quality place making in new developments, for meeting higher national standards of interior accommodation space, for including attractive public spaces and increase in biodiversity. It will be interesting to see how these requirements can avoid conflict with the density objective.

It is some concern that **DM Policy 37** does not include any sustainability measures.

## **Section 11 Natural Environment**

The Natural Environment topic paper notes that existing **DM Policies 15 Protection of the Countryside** and **16 Landscape Character** have been frequently used by planning officers and inspectors to deter inappropriate development in the countryside. The topic paper indicates that these policies will be retained but it appears DM 16 has been replaced by **DM Policy 39 Landscape Character** which sets out the conditions that must be satisfied for any proposed development. It is different from the Core Strategy policy so it is hoped that DM16 can be retained in some form.

St Margaret's is set within the Kent Downs AONB, has the South Foreland SSSI and Heritage coastline. Therefore it can strongly support **Strategic Policies 16 and 17** which seek to protect the natural environment.

9

### **DM Policy 38 Biodiversity Net Gain**

This policy demands a net biodiversity gain of 10% to be included in any development of 10 or more dwellings. As this policy intends to achieve long term environmental improvement it is strongly supported. The requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain Plans to be provided with planning applications will enable Parish Councils to monitor how well this policy is being followed. The alternative of a financial contribution towards a biodiversity offsetting scheme will work if the scheme is applied to settlement in which the planning application is located.

### **DM Policy 39 Landscape Character**

This policy is welcome for the detailed restrictions it imposes on any development which affects the character of the landscape. The second section of the policy refers to the Kent Downs AONB and it is further welcomed that any development proposal must have regard to the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan. This policy requires any development to enhance the quality of the AONB. This is important for a Parish like St Margaret's which is set within the AONB. However the final sentence in the policy appears in conflict with Sites Allocation Policy 1 which proposes four housing developments for this village, all in the AONB.

### **DM Policy 44 Designated and Non Designated Heritage Assets DM Policy 45 Conservation Areas**

St Margaret's Parish has twenty eight Grade 2 listed buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets. Therefore the protections afforded by these policies are strongly supported.

## Summary of suggestions for amendments/additions to Local Plan Policies

**DM 1** require energy statements to be included in Design and Access Statements or Planning Statements for all applications

**DM2** add recommendation for all new builds to have underfloor heating at all levels

**DM4** add support for village transport options to reduce car use

**Strategic Policy 3 Windfall Development:** suggest text for Criteria b “It is compatible with the layout, fabric and appearance of the existing settlement and *avoids inappropriate densification*”

**DM12 Affordable Housing** suggest addition to Section 2 after Criteria c “Provision of land for affordable housing to Parish Council in lieu of affordable housing provision on site”

10

**DM13 Rural Local needs Housing** suggest this addition to Criteria d “The Parish Council to determine eligibility of applicants for DM Policy 13 affordable housing within the parish and in compliance with Section 106 Agreements”

**DM30 Parking Provision** support the general policy but suggest KCC 2006 Parking Standards are out of date and do not take into account changes in habitation modes since 2006. Suggest one parking space per bedroom is more pragmatic

**DM36 Achieving High Quality Design** suggest addition to Criteria b “Lower density development may be appropriate in some rural locations”

