



Bearsted  
Parish  
Council

Rob Jarman  
Head of Planning and Development  
Maidstone Borough Council  
Maidstone House,  
King St,  
Maidstone  
ME15 6JQ

18th December 2020

Dear Mr Jarman,

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW  
BEARSTED PARISH COUNCIL (BPC) RESPONSE**

**Reference:**

**A. MBC Local Plan Review Regulation 18 - Preferred Approaches Consultation dated December 2020**

1. BPC welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the LPR review (Ref A) and to work with MBC and neighbouring parishes to protect and bring benefit to our communities.
2. BPC is keen to see sensitive and appropriate local development, especially enhancements to infrastructure. We have some significant concerns but are confident that these can be alleviated through co-operation and collaboration within the Borough and the region.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Bearsted originated as a pre-Saxon 'sted', used as a location for 'moots'. From a tiny cluster of farms, the hamlet grew and was probably known as 'Burghsted', recognising the mounded earthwork near Lilk Meadow which probably served as a site for defence and for parliaments. By the late 1800s, with expansion around Windmill Heights and Roseacre, 'Bersted' village had some 800 inhabitants.
4. The village grew and by 1960 'Bearsted' had in the order of 2000 residents. Bearsted has since absorbed considerable development incorporating many hundreds of dwellings. Examples include new estates in Madginford, off The Landway, Yeoman Lane, Spot Lane and Roseacre Lane. With in-fill between the A20 and Ware Street and between many older properties, Bearsted's population has swelled five-fold to c.9500.
5. Contemporary developments, include Bearsted's Lilk Meadow (also known as Roundwell Park or Cross Keys) and the Sycamores estate at Barty Farm which have eroded much remaining green space. It is estimated that these newest developments will add 8% population increase to Bearsted, without additional public infrastructure or amenity.



6. Expansion and development of existing properties and applications for new properties within existing gardens and orchards are increasing, raising traffic, parking and infrastructure challenges. The AONB and its foreground (protected in the existing Local Plan) and vital green spaces are often threatened by inappropriate development proposals.
7. The A249, New Cut Road and Willington Street have become Maidstone's de-facto eastern by-pass. These roads are consistently 'jammed' with traffic, even away from peak-flow hours, and are acknowledged by KCC to be far beyond capacity. The wider capacity of the road and community infrastructure in and around Bearsted is overloaded and the impacts of BREXIT and associated operations have yet to be factored-in to development plans.
8. Against this background, it is clear that Bearsted is already 'built-out'. There is scant space to absorb any development without further eroding the AONB, green corridors or areas of amenity and local beauty at a time when we are striving to improve biodiversity and the environment.

## GENERAL

9. **Policies.** BPC welcomes policies that:

- 9.1. Support necessary local housing
- 9.2. Support local employment
- 9.3. Enhance Local Centres
- 9.4. Protect the countryside
- 9.5. Improve traffic flow and safety
- 9.6. Reduce commuter impact
- 9.7. Protect local aesthetics, sympathy of design, sustainability, affordability, the environment and biodiversity
- 9.8. Improve eco-friendly infrastructure (e.g. infrastructure for electric vehicles, 'zero-carbon-commuting' and eco-housing)

Specifically, BPC welcomes strengthening of protective measures within SP 17 (The Countryside) and DM 9 (Residential Extensions, Conversions and Redevelopment Within the Built-Up Area).

10. **Leeds Langley Relief Road.** BPC wishes to see the Leeds Langley Corridor and Relief Road given immediate priority to benefit the whole of Maidstone and the local area. The present road network cannot support existing traffic let alone bear additional loading. Proposed mitigation measures for key junctions will have negligible impact on traffic flow or air pollution levels.



## STRATEGIC SITE POLICIES

### 11. Edge of Maidstone Housing Allocations (Pages 202–205)

12. BPC objects most strongly to inclusions in the LPR of sites LPRSA 246 – Appletree House, Hockers Lane (previously refused, appealed and lost) and LPRSA 266 - Land to the North of Ware Street. Both sites breach extant MBC policies. The proposed sites lie in Thurnham Parish but affect Bearsted directly and disproportionately. Neither is viable in terms of infrastructure, nor permissible against the existing Local Plan. Both LPRSA 246 and 266 should be struck-out at this stage as:

- 12.1. Both threaten the setting of the AONB contrary to policy SP17.
- 12.2. Both would set dangerous precedents for further development to the north of Bearsted, potentially up to the M20.
- 12.3. Both present significant potential additional load on existing Bearsted and other local parish infrastructure including the congested Ware Street and Bearsted Road which do not have contiguous footpaths or adequate designated pedestrian crossings.
- 12.4. Significantly, both affect parish boundaries and breach MBC's Local Plan Strategic Policy No 9 "*protection will be given to the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements, including Maidstone and surrounding villages*".

**LPSA 246 (Appletree House)** Para 4.110 of the Local Plan explicitly gives special protection to this area. The proposed site sits in the foreground of the AONB, outside existing urbanisation and would conjoin separate communities. Development here has been refused in 2016 and 2017 by MBC for 10 and 7 dwellings: the latter two were also dismissed on Appeal<sup>1</sup>. A later application for 5 houses was submitted in 2019 which was refused unanimously in July 2020. There can be no logic for its reintroduction, least of all for 25 properties.

**13. LPSA 266 (Land To The North Of Ware Street)** This proposed site sits in an existing Green Corridor as set out in MBC's Local Plan and would contravene policy DM1(iv) as it fails to respect the amenities of neighbouring properties.

## POLICY SP11(A) – RETENTION OF EMPLOYMENT SITES

14. BPC supports proposals for:

- 14.1. **SP11(a)** (Page 136). the Retention of Employment sites – specifically the Bearsted Green Business Centre.

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<sup>1</sup> 16/500180/REF, Dec 2016 and 17/500136/REF, Jul 2017



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14.2. **SPC 11 (b) (Page 139)**. Retention of existing local shopping centres - including within Bearsted, the shops along Ashford Road, Egremont Road and on Bearsted Green.

#### 15. Woodcut Farm (Page 140)

15.1. Notwithstanding the loss of green space, the opportunity for local employment and business must be welcomed. With limited exceptions, notably traffic impact, BPC believes that as much as possible has been done by the developer to mitigate most effects of this development upon local communities.

15.2. However, BPC believes most strongly that the development requires further traffic smoothing and improved safety measures on the A20 (Ashford Road) together with the development of the Leeds Langley Relief Road and the proposed improvements to the A20/Willington Street junction. A roundabout entrance/exit is deemed essential.

#### CONCLUSIONS

16. BPC will continue to work with MBC and neighbouring parishes to preserve and enhance our community and we are keen to see sensitive, appropriate local development and improvement.

17. LSPA 244 and 246 must be struck out: they detract from the area, would coalesce communities and threaten the AONB. They each contravene too many policies and planning principles.

18. BPC is keen to see enhancements to relieve the overloaded local and regional infrastructure and urge most strongly that the Leeds Langley Relief Road is given extremely high priority. Measures must also be taken to ensure the safety and smooth flow of traffic at the new Woodcut Farm business park on the A20 Ashford road.

19. Looking inward, Bearsted Parish cannot support further estates or clusters of houses without merging with other settlements and losing the essential last vestiges of its identity and character.

Kind regards,

Graeme Hannington

Parish Councillor  
Chair of Planning Committee  
Bearsted Parish Council