

South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council
www.swancc.org.uk

Planning and Highways Committee 16th March 2022

Minutes

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:03pm

In attendance: - Andy Rogers (AR) (Chair), Paul Bohill (PB), David Mullan (DM) Eric Parkinson (EP) Sarah Evans (SE) (Clerk).

9/22 Apologies for absence and approval

Cllr Andy Hodges – apology received and approved

Cllr J Hunt did not attend the meeting and his absence was not approved.

10/22 Declarations of pecuniary, other significant or voluntary interest

No declarations were made.

11/22 To agree minutes of the last Planning and Highways Committee meeting and sign.

Resolved: Having considered any comments made by full Council, the Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair

Proposed EM Seconded EP and agreed unanimously.

12/22 To consider responses to Planning applications: -

a) **To note neighbouring applications Brompton Bikes**

Resolved: - Agreed unanimously to enquire at the consultation and via the planning portal as to how traffic will be managed for deliveries into the SWAN Area, and that the Company is made aware of the issues of not having HGV vehicles on Newtown Road and the signage that over 7.5tonnes HGV lorries should be used from Monument Way to Newtown Road

b) **20/01594/CONG/AS, 20/01594/CONH/AS Cobalt House Orbital Park Monument Way Sevington Ashford TN24 0HB**

Discharge of condition 12 verification report surface drainage, Discharge of condition 21 external lighting

Resolved: - Agreed unanimously that this was noted.

c) **Any other applications received before the meeting.**

Resolved Agreed unanimously that it was noted that Application 22/00135/AS for 7 Mead Road has been permitted.

13/22 To consider Strategic Land Mapping Questionnaire and agree recommendations to Council

Resolved: - Proposed AR Seconded PB and agreed unanimously

Question 1 to clarify further on the teams meeting what is a broad definition of rural as defined in question 1 once clarified will be a 5 if it is subject to protected space for supporting protecting the rural feel of the area not protected space then de-protected or moved elsewhere.

Question 2 SWANCC are placing at top priority within its Community Plan to protect the rural feel of the area and it is essential that any decision made on this area are in lien with those goals which are created following thorough consultation with residents.

Question 3 Do you think that there should be a limit to the expansion of Ashford, to enable villages to retain their individual character as settlements?

Question 5 Do you think that there should be a limit to the expansion of Ashford, to enable villages to retain their individual character as settlements answer 5

Question 8 to remove the comments recommended in the draft and write 5

Question 10 Do you consider that Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, which is the most fertile land, should be maintained for food production, and not allowed to be developed?

Strong 5 there are significant reasons to protect food production particularly in the current crisis with Russia and Ukraine plus the impacts of rising costs and also to protect the character of the area.

Question 11 Are there areas in your neighbourhood that should be protected from development for other reasons, such as history or heritage aspects and what are these?

Newtown as a model village its layout, character and history as well as its amenities and services particularly conserving the design of housing services such as play parks and not changing but protecting and enhancing the character of the model village as it was originally built and intended to be which is unique and valued.

Newtown Green

SWAN Farm

Fairview Green area

Sheep Fields running along Riverbank Way and East Stour area along the railway line to Railway Bridge and underpass before ASDA at Bullied Place.

Ashford Green Corridor areas of Frog Island the playing fields the allotments and surrounding green spaces.

The Spinney along Newtown Road

The play areas on Newtown

The Field on Canterbury Road

The Field on Surtees Close

The Farm Fields abutting Fairview Drive currently used by SWAN Farm.

Recommend all SWANCC members consider any spaces they would appreciate to be marked protected.

Do you consider that further areas of ground solar development should be allowed in the Borough, provided that it is screened and not allowed to impact on views?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

Have you any thoughts on where this could be?

Alongside Dual carriageways, on top of commercial properties, on sub-station works which are taking a large amount of area but space is available within the compound such as Kings Prospect and Canterbury Road. On top of hotels and tall buildings in the area such as the Panorama Building, Hotel Hampdens and Hilton, Travel Lodge, KENT House. The station carpark roof.

Solar is much more pleasing than win for a residential area and for the maintenance and servicing would seem safer and more practical.

Do you think that some parts of your Neighbourhood, parish, community or village, might be suitable for development? 1 strongly disagree

To add SWANCC are being tasked by residents to protect green spaces and the feel and look of the area and to be able to have a voice on the style character and amount of building in the area. Particularly the lack of affordable and social housing.

The public transport infrastructure in SWANCC as of 17th April 2022 is non-existent. Residents have no route within the boundaries of the SWANCC Parish.

It had a viable and useful Bus Service which is now being cut and leaves 2000+ residents without public transport and with no means of access to travel on public transport due to the announcement Stage Coach has made that it will cut 17th April 2022. This is in conjunction with the KCC announcement that the Kent Karrier line is up for consultation which if cut would remove any option of Community transport and even Patient transport

Could the public transport infrastructure in your area, or to and from your location, especially bus routes, be improved, and, if so, how?

in our area. The Council are extremely concerned by this and are lobbying Stagecoach and KCC on this matter. ABC have not to date made any communication that they are aware of this matter and SWANCC and residents urgently hope this is also a high priority for them as much as it is for SWAN.

14/22 To delegate 2 Councillors to attend a Teams Meeting with the SLM team to discuss this and report back to Council.

Resolved: - Proposed EP Seconded PB Agreed unanimously AR & DM would attend.

15/22 To consider a proactive response to the ABC decision for investment in Newtown Works and make recommendations to Council.

Resolved: - Agreed unanimously to recommend Council to

Lobby ABC at the highest levels that SWANCC should have a voice in the deployment of the levelling up fund and to consider the residents of the area.

To again consider the need for a Community Hub with the possibility of a not for profit café

To note SWANCC is a progressive Council with an active community.

To again respond that a retail park would not be a sustainable alternative to the media and studios.

The value for education employments and commerce for the area is essential

That considering ABC is putting in such a large sum of money and has been reaching out to Parish Councils' and asking to work together it is surely important to discuss such a development with its parish council and consult.

That there is still no movement on the Parking and the issues have been raised multiple times and will significantly impacted by this development.

16/22 To consider a report of the Community Council Manager regarding Community Plan Commitments to examine the reports of disabled access and the use of pushchairs in the SWAN area and agree actions

Resolved Agreed unanimously to follow the recommendations of the report and the action of time from each Councillor. Recommendation to Council for Communications Working Committee to advertise for residents to assist with this project.

Action SE to draft timeline.

17/22 To agree the date of the next meeting as 20th April 2022 and items to be included on the agenda.

Resolved: - Agreed unanimously Date 20th April 22.

Items for Agenda

To carry forward to the next quarter to review the footpath on Bullied Place Maunsell Place access.

DM the possibility of Lighting for the small carpark on Alfred Road.

There being no further business to discuss the chair closed the meeting at 7:45pm

Signed _____

Date _____

Chair

Appendix of Reports

SLM Report

Disabled Access in SWAN report.

Report on Greater Ashford Borough - Environment & Land Mapping Commission

Recommendations

- 1) The Council uses this paper and the attached draft questionnaire responses as the basis for discussion and agreement**
- 2) The Council considers responses to Questions 11-13**
- 3) The Council authorises two members to liaise with the Commission following the submission of the questionnaire**

Background

a) Commission Objective

To create a logical classification of all the land in the Borough, which will enable appropriate housing and commercial development to take place, and maximise rural access, but in a manner that will not destroy the essential character of the Borough.

b) Expectations

The whole of Ashford Borough is broken down into “zones” with specific characteristics (These are known as Land Classifications).

c) Possible Land Classifications identified by ABC

Classifications to:

- Protect the overall rural character of the Borough, which must remain ‘rural’, on a broad definition of the term. This will involve consideration of such things as the quality and uniqueness of ‘views’, village entrances, woodland and specific types of plants and their terrain, and ensuring ‘rural gaps’ between settlements, amongst other things.
- Prevent villages being ‘absorbed’ by the expansion of urban Ashford and enable them to retain their individual character as settlements.
- Provide green spaces as ‘lungs’, including within the urban area, for exercise, walking, cycling & leisure, excluding use by any private motorised vehicles and including Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in this. The possibility of upgrading some PROWs, to provide a network of cycleways and walkways, as well as the possible provision of one or two Country

Parks (for which circa 250 acres for each would be required) should be examined as part of this.

- Enable environmentally supportive actions to be implemented:
 - Tree planting
 - Green Corridors
 - Natural wetlands for Stodmarsh amelioration
 - Other specific environmentally supportive actions
- Protect from development for other reasons, such as history or heritage aspects
- Enable the generation of renewable energy, for example from solar farms?
- Enable housing or commercial development, subject to design quality criteria and infrastructure availability

d) Timescales

The timescales for this exercise are summarised below:

- Friday 25th March - Deadline for completing an online Questionnaire
- W/C 28th March & W/C 4th April - Meetings between Commission Members & Consultees
- Friday 29th April – Draft Consultation Report available for discussion by the Commission
- May & June TBC - possible re-consultation on Draft Commission Proposals

Issues for Members to consider

Whilst the emphasis of the consultation appears to focus on preserving rural settlements and their sense of place, SWAN residents have expressed concerns about further developments in this area (Resident survey results)

Under the Theme of “A Better Feel to the Place” residents put limiting new housing in the top 4 actions for SWAN Council, hence the Community Plan commitment to explore the possibility of a Neighbourhood Plan in the future.

Key concerns about future developments were that the area already has traffic, parking and transportation problems (and associated pollution) which could only be worsened by more homes. Surveys also indicated that additional housing had had a negative impact on the feel of the area, its community spirit and its semi-rural sense of place. That was especially true of Newtown, where residents bemoaned the loss of the original model village feel and the community of interest that had developed there over time.

SWAN’s proximity to key locations (Town Centre, Outlet etc) and transport infrastructure (International Station, High speed trains, M20, Coastal routes) has the potential to make it a highly desirable location.

Potential new “big ticket” developments such as the Newtown Railway Works development and Brompton Bikes proposal have the potential to raise land and property values which could not only encourage further land sales but also gentrification which could impact on the special community feel of the SWAN area.

Whilst this may be of economic benefit, there are downsides such as more traffic, more parking problems, more pollution, stretched public services and the loss of “community” which members may need to consider

SWAN residents have not benefitted substantially from developments such as the Outlet expansion or the Newtown Railway Works (NRW) development. Indeed there is an argument that they have had to endure disbenefits such as lengthy key road closures, noise, parking frustrations etc. SWAN was unable to persuade ABC planners to include new community facilities and the cost of research into a more modern, healthier transport infrastructure in the menu of community projects proposed for Section 106 funding for the NRW development.

Moreover, ABC policies on brownfield sites in the Ashford town area and a complex viability report resulted in there being no affordable housing component built in to the NRW's 300-home development.

In response to a Government consultation on Planning reform in 2021, SWAN members concluded that the current planning system was "broken" and that a major reset was required. SWAN proposed amongst other things. A different approach to housing target setting, a less parochial approach, more community involvement in decision taking and, basically, the need for only 2 land classifications – land that could be developed and land that should not.

The draft responses to the questionnaire are informed by these points

Questionnaire

Organisation:.....

Contact Details: email:.....

: phone number:.....

Contact Name:.....

Date:.....

1. Do you think that when considering development, we should try and do this in a way that protects the overall character of the Borough, allowing it to remain 'rural', on a broad definition of the term?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

2. This will involve consideration of such things as the quality and uniqueness of 'views', village entrances, woodland, green corridors, which can be areas of biodiversity or green access, cycleways or pedestrian routes, and specific types of plants and their terrain, special trees and buildings, amongst other things. Considering these factors, please describe how they apply to your area.

Relying only on tangible factors is a mistake. Intangible features also help to form the spirit of a place which in SWAN's case is its strong sense of community and semi rural feel. Ashford's market town "spirit" has disappeared over time and villages are now in danger of losing their rural spirit. SWAN's goal as a new Council is to maintain its key tangible assets whilst concurrently preserving its intangible characteristics.

3. Do you think that there should be a limit to the expansion of Ashford, to enable villages to retain their individual character as settlements?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

How do you think we should do this?

A first step would be to take the approach used in the USA for example of simply defining an urban growth boundary. In some US States the concept has developed into climate-smart growth with more funding to encourage affordable homes and mandates to develop housing close to transport, jobs and schools.

4. You will be aware of the need for more wetlands, providing short and long-term biodiversity, and to slow the rate of run-off of Phosphates & Nitrates along the Stour River valleys. What characteristics would you like to see in a wetland and are there any areas in your parish or neighbourhood that would be suitable?

The area proposed for development by Brompton Bikes abuts SWAN parish and includes wetland

5. Are there footpaths or Public Rights of Way in your neighbourhood which might be suitable for upgrading or re-surfacing, for more regular use? This could be as cycleways or pedestrian walkways, which could bring both health & climate change benefits.

Yes but little recognition in ABC's Cycle and Walking Strategy 2019-29

6. Would you like to see provision of new dedicated surfaced routes linking communities and specifically for cycling, walking, horses, pedestrians and disabled users, not for motor vehicles?

Yes – But would like to see better integration with public transport. SWAN proposed this as part of its response to the Newtown Rail Works planning application. Please cross ref with Q14 and Q15

7. Do you think that we should try and provide green spaces as 'lungs', including within the urban area, for exercise, walking, cycling & leisure?

Yes -

Do you have any such spaces in your area and would you like more?

SWAN has argued consistently that the Stour Valley Regional Park should be extended through Ashford and to the existing green lung in SWAN (Frog Island/SWAN Farm) and beyond.

8. Do you think there is a need for a dedicated country park somewhere in the Borough, with signed recreational routes, car parking and café & meeting place facilities, along the lines of Lullingstone, Shorne or Brockhill Country Parks?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

Have you any thoughts on where this could be?

Kent already has 9 country parks

There's an odd irony about promoting cycling, walking and public transport but providing a dedicated country park where the majority would probably need to travel to by car.

9. Are there any areas where more trees could be planted in your neighbourhood? (Please refer to your answer to the recent Tree Survey)

This has already been discussed by SWAN Council

10. Do you consider that Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, which is the most fertile land, should be maintained for food production, and not allowed to be developed?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

11. Are there areas in your neighbourhood that should be protected from development for other reasons, such as history or heritage aspects and what are these?

Needs Member input for this, Q12 and 13

12. Do you consider that further areas of ground solar development should be allowed in the Borough, provided that it is screened and not allowed to impact on views?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

Have you any thoughts on where this could be?

Please answer briefly (750 character limit)

13. Do you think that some parts of your neighbourhood, parish, community or village, might be suitable for development?

Score on five - point scale from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree

If so, what type of development do you think that this should be? Please consider residential, for various types of housing, including social, affordable, local needs, accessible etc., business & commercial and leisure facilities. (Please refer to your Neighbourhood Plan, if you have one)

Please answer briefly (750 character limit)

14. Could the public transport infrastructure in your area, or to and from your location, especially bus routes, be improved, and, if so, how?

We would refer you to our response to Q6 and Q15 below

15. If there were the opportunity to have development in your area, for either housing or employment, what would you expect to see as accompanying benefits? This could, for example, include a better bus service or a new community centre or village hall.

SWAN Council expected substantial community benefits when the Newtown Railway Works Application was approved. SWAN proposed a new community facility and funds to support research in to a healthier transport scheme based on the Mini Holland scheme in London. The combination of Council policy on Brownfield sites in the urban area and questionable viability reports left our community without funded facilities or even an affordable housing component. Consequently, we have little faith in the S106 system or ABC's regeneration policies.

Are there any other comments that you would like to make about land classification, development, the environment or any other related issues?

Whilst the emphasis appears to focus on preserving rural settlements SWAN residents have expressed concerns about further developments in this area

Under the Theme of "A Better Feel to the Place" residents put limiting new housing in the top 4 actions for SWAN Council, hence SWAN's Community Plan commitment to explore the benefit of a Neighbourhood Plan in the future.

SWAN's proximity to key locations and transport infrastructure has the potential to make it a highly desirable location.

New "big ticket" developments have the potential to raise land and property values which could not only encourage further land sales but also gentrification which could impact on the special community feel of the SWAN area.

In response to a Government consultation on Planning reform in 2021, SWAN members concluded that the current planning system was "broken" and that a major reset was required. SWAN proposed amongst other things. A different approach to housing target setting, a less parochial

planning authority, more community involvement in decision-taking and a much simplified, land classification process – land that could be developed and land that should not.

South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council

Report of the Community Council Manager regarding Community Plan Commitments to examine reports of difficulties for disabled access and the use of pushchairs in the SWAN area.

Recommendations

1. **To review feedback from SWANCC Consultation and report back to Council.**
2. **Consultation in progress for Pavement Parking to made illegal and fineable and to recommend Council to comment on it.**
3. **To request Communications Working Committee to request volunteers to assist with viewing pavements from disabled and pushchair points of view**
4. **To agree an analysis and time to be given to the project and report back to Council.**
5. **To agree to an ongoing review of the project and comment and support.**

Background

As part of the Community Council plan it was agreed to review the access for pedestrians in the SWAN area particularly those with pushchairs and disability mobility aid users, such as walking frame, crutches wand walking sticks, wheelchairs and mobility scooters and to report to KCC by March 2023. It was also agreed to examine the reports received by residents to date by March 2022.

It is also worthwhile members consider in conjunction with this serious issue the consultation in progress for Pavement Parking to made illegal and fineable and to recommend Council to comment on it.

The consultations undertaken for the Community Plan gave the following feedback:-

1. **Poorly maintained footpaths and their maintenance is an issue scoring 5th in the dislikes feedback a significant scoring issue.**
2. **Unkept pavements cause delays and trip hazards**
3. **Pavements are not easily accessible for wheelchair users**
4. **Pushchair users struggle to use the pavements**

In review of this feedback therefore, it is recommended to do a thorough analysis of both South Willesborough and Newtown from the perspective of these residents being considered. Ideally through the late Spring and Summer months to have the best weather for an outside survey.

it would be helpful to walk through SWAN with users of these items and view from their perspective, to take notes and look for useful highways' improvements and modifications, as well as what is successful and useful.

To carry this out report by March 2023 a considered analysis will need to be undertaken and volunteer time given. If each Member was able to give any 2-hour slots it would significantly contribute to the success of this project. It would then be feasible to ask members of the public to assist who are faced with these issues on a day to day basis.

Slots required are detailed below for Members to consider.

14 roads in Newtown would need to covered including Samuel Peto Way	3 slots
33 road in South Willesborough	4 Slots
Orbital Park Business areas	2 Slots

Sarah Evans CCM 10/3/2