

Newsletter from Maresfield Parish Council - February 2022

Another word or two about Planning

I make no apologies for reverting to “Planning” yet again as I believe once Wealden’s draft Local Plan is published this will be a main topic of discussion in Maresfield and it will prove to be very contentious for some Maresfield Village residents. Parishioners will be aware that Wealden District Council’s original draft Local Plan was withdrawn in early 2020 and consequently Wealden’s existing planning policies, including those restricting development in order to protect the Ashdown Forest, are deemed out of date. With less than a five-year housing land supply, no up to date Local Plan and Government policy favouring sustainable development Wealden is finding it difficult to repel some developers’ ambitions.

For example, the planning consent granted last Autumn for 25 homes on the southern half of the field on Straight Half Mile. New developers have taken on this development and we are in discussions with them as they do not wish to bring forward revised proposals which would not include the “Community Facility” in the form provided for in the agreed consent.

As part of the preparation of their new Local Plan Wealden recently asked landowners to submit sites for assessment for possible development; some thirty-five sites have been submitted in Maresfield Parish including substantial land holdings in Maresfield Village and also to the west of the by-pass. We had hoped Wealden’s report on these sites would be published by Christmas but it has been delayed and may not come out until the emergence of the draft Local Plan still expected in the Spring of 2022, though the Plan is unlikely to be adopted until at least eighteen months after that.

Of course, we are very anxious to know how many new homes will be allocated to Maresfield in the new Plan. Meanwhile our Neighbourhood Development Plan Site Assessment team is looking at all the sites in the Parish put forward to Wealden as candidates for consideration for the Plan. We will then have the information to formulate the appropriate policies for our NDP and have been engaging with developers and Wealden as early as possible to influence any development proposals being put together and Planning Applications which may come forward.

Wealden will be consulting widely on their draft Plan but in addition the Parish Council will organise local events to inform residents about the Plan and to hear residents’ views which will be taken into account in formulating the Parish Council’s formal response as well providing additional information for our Neighbourhood Development Plan team.

If you would like further information or contribute to the discussion at this stage please email the Parish Clerk clerk@maresfieldparish.org.uk and also see my newsletters in November 2020 and March 2021 which are available on the Parish website.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Various pandemic related restrictions are still in force so if you are quarantining, self-isolating or are otherwise vulnerable do remember that if you need assistance of a non-medical nature, you can phone the Parish Office on 714555 or contact the Wealden District Council Community Hub on 01342 443322.

Useful links are:

<https://my.wealden.gov.uk/>

<http://www.maresfieldparish.org.uk/>

<http://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk/>

<https://www.ashdownforest.org/>

And you can also follow the Parish Council on Twitter and Facebook.

Martin Craddock – Chairman Maresfield Parish Council