

WPC NEWS

I have been asked by the editorial team to include some comments on the ongoing saga at St Georges Court and Borough Green Garden City and I concur as follows.

Since WPC overturned Clarion's first planning application at St Georges Court and stopped the removal of the covenant 8 years ago, little has happened apart from empty buildings, wasted opportunity and severe vandalism and this cannot go on! Given our previous record it goes without saying that WPC is in favour of the over 55 years of age covenant, but we are legally advised it is now difficult to enforce. Much more information can be found on our website <https://wrothampc.org/>

BGGC is a proposed development of 3,000 houses spread across our Greenbelt from H+H Celcon in Ightham to Nepicar in Wrotham Heath on the A20. If TMBC progress the development, then it will urbanise local villages into a conurbation similar to Tonbridge.

When the previous 2018 Local Plan was dismissed by Inspectors at an early stage, the ruling Conservative Administration of TMBC voted to make BGGC a 'Saved Policy' for the new 2022 Local Plan to examine. Since then, there has been a Reg 18 Consultation and we have a new set of national planning policies also being consulted on. Currently it is too early to determine whether these developments will materially change this situation. What is note worthy is that there is an election in March 23 and the final decision on site selection will be published in late summer, carefully timed to be months after the decision on BGGC!

Following on from the successful repaving of Wrotham High Street, WPC want to make Wrotham Square more attractive, adding trees with ornamental iron tree guards and attractive seating with matching litter bins. There is more information on our website.

Last year WPC formed a new sub committee to look at Climate Change issues with a view to reduce green house gasses. Part of the strategy is to plant trees and most noticeably are four multi stem silver birch on the Whitehill roundabout and two mallus fruit trees along Bull Lane. In addition, the bank near the pavilion has been planted with fifty

cotoneaster shrubs that are bee friendly in the spring and provide plentiful red berries for wild birds in autumn.

The High Street boundary with the cricket field had been allowed to grow upwards and become overgrown with ivy. Kevin and Pete have been working hard to reduce the general level of the hedge while keeping the best standing trees. The briar and much of the ivy has been dug out and they are in the process of planting 75 native mixed tree whips to regenerate a thriving indigenous hedgerow.

WPC has signed an agreement with St Clere for parishioners to use the Battlefield area for dog walking as a permissive path. St Clere will still use the field for agriculture, but the public may officially walk the field which has a very pleasant aspect below the chalk scarp with elevated views across the valley. We are getting signs made to show where the agreed areas are. We thank Eliza Ecclestone and the Trustees of St Clere Estate for their work and support in creating the Permissive Path.

WPC is very aware of the problem of speeding throughout the village. And there is more on our website on what we are doing to persuade KCC Highways to reduce and enforce speed limits..

The Nepicar Layby on the A20 has been the scene of anti-social behaviour for many years culminating in a near death motorcycle accident between two speeding bikes doing wheelies, that resulted in the temporary closure of the layby with bollards. WPC has worked tirelessly to get the layby permanently removed and offered to purchase the layby and return it to soft landscape with a grass bund. However, KCC decided not to sell the land but have carried out the works themselves with the layby soon becoming green with shrubbery planting. This has deterred the motorbike stunt riding that was so dangerous previously.

First Moto and now the proposed Panattoni development of the Marley site has been dropped and the land is currently with agents for letting. WPCs appointed legal and planning team were awaiting the threatened planning application, following the public meeting, which never came!

Cllr Pete Gillin