



A few of Saturday's volunteers

On 4th and 5th March a hardy band of volunteers turned out to help clear litter and fly-tipping in the village. Michelle Tatton, who co-ordinated the effort, says 'We had a brilliant few days tidying up various parts of the village including in and around the playing fields on New Road, the verge between Dickens Drive and the A20, and the area around Clare Lake. Thank you to everyone who took part - you did a terrific job!' There will be more volunteering events organised soon - if you would like to be kept up to date with events please contact Michelle who is maintaining a list of interested people.

Aylesford Newsprint

The 100 acres of Aylesford Newsprint is another site that has come forward as part of the "Call for sites" process of the Local Plan Review. The liquidators have appointed planning consultants and proposals are now emerging for a mixed commercial / housing site as liquidators must realise the assets to pay off people owed money when the site shut.

The site is not without problems such as access, contaminated land, and being crossed by Ditton Stream, to name a few. However as a brown field site, favoured by the Government for housing, if some of it was released for homes it would reduce the pressure to build on local green field sites.

UPDATE: At the time of going to print two exhibitions of provisional proposals for the site were due to take place and we understand that a further exhibition will be arranged in due course.

Maidstone BC is promoting a comprehensive network of cycle routes out of the town. The Parish was surprised to find that North Pole Road and the old Teston Road opposite North Pole Public House is a potential cycle route out from Barming, with the idea of closure of North Pole road to traffic being considered.

There appears to have been no local consultation and the Parish Council is in touch with TMBC, and KCC about it about it.

On yer bike!



Many Rivers to Cross (or maybe just the one)

Consultation has begun on the new Thames crossing and approach routes. A tunnel is proposed, described as east of Gravesend, which turns out to be just west of Rochester! Whilst traffic coastbound might be persuaded to go to M2, traffic wanting to go westward may feed directly onto A228/M20 which would impact on junction 4. If you want to know more visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lower-thames-crossing>

Stickens Lane Closure

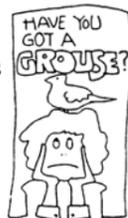
Kent Highways will shortly be carrying out major pothole repairs at Stickens Lane and this will be completed under a road closure. The precise date has not yet been confirmed but the work is expected to take place in March.

If you return this form the Liberal Democrats and their elected representatives may use the information you've given to contact you. By providing your data to us you are consenting to us making contact with you in the future by mail, email, telephone, text, website and apps, even though you may be registered with the Telephone Preference Service. You can always opt out of communications at any time by contacting us or visiting www.libdems.org.uk/optout For more information go to www.libdems.org.uk/privacy.

Grumble Sheet

If you have any grumbles, ideas, or want to give us your views on the issues in this Hotline, please use this space to get in touch.

Please return to:
Tonbridge and Malling Lib Dems
49 Betjeman Close
Larkfield, Kent,
ME20 6TQ



Name.....

Address.....

Tel Number.....

Email (Please write clearly!)

.....
CAN YOU HELP DELIVER HOTLINE
IN YOUR LOCAL ROAD? Please get
in touch if you can help.

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TMBC's Call for Sites



We have previously reported on the sites put forward by landowners and developers for housing across the Borough as part of Government procedure (we would need a whole newsletter if we were to tell you about each site!) We are waiting for TMBC's planners to consult on their response to each site.

It is clear this is very much a "numbers game" as the Borough will have to satisfy the Inspector in due course that enough land has been allocated for houses up to 2031. This includes sites such as Leybourne Grange and Peters Pit, Wouldham. It is why brownfield sites, such as Aylesford Newsprint, are important together with any smaller sites where development would not spoil the area.

We were alarmed to see the whole of East Malling Research Station on the map and were equally concerned to hear the very recent announcement that EMR had been taken over by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, saving EMR from potential administration. While NIAB say operations will continue at East Malling the future of the site remains a worry, with a likely loss of some jobs in the near future.

The other big site is Broadwater Farm which runs from Well Street to New Barns and across the bypass up to the boundaries of Manor Park and St Leonards Street. Its release for housing would remove the green wedge of countryside separating East and West Malling from Kings Hill. The Conservation Areas would also be undermined and the setting of the listed buildings within them. It is annoying and confusing that it is labelled Kings Hill on the Call for Sites map. Land should be called by its local name and not re-badged in this way. There is also local concern about the field forming part of the Malling School playing fields next to Winterfield lane, parts of Forty Acres between the A20 and Winterfield lane and Lucks Hill, and the site of the East Malling Centre/Woodland's Children's Centre in Chapman Way.

There is clearly a need nationally for more homes, including in Tonbridge and Malling, but if East and West Malling are to keep their identities local residents and amenity groups have a real fight on their hands.

Possible Boundary Changes

Kings Hill Parish Council have proposed boundary changes upon which TMBC are now consulting. One proposal would see a section of the golf course transferring from Wateringbury to Kings Hill but this is not supported by TMBC officers as it is said not to meet the legal criteria, KHPC also proposed that the whole of what was Heath Farm be transferred to them except the existing houses in The Heath and Wateringbury Road. They argue that they now administer the new allotment gardens and sports area and in effect the whole of the land owned by Rouse Kent should go into Kings Hill. Our Parish Council feel that transfer of this whole area also is not justified and that if any extra houses are built in either road they would end up in Kings Hill while the existing houses would be in East Malling. TMBC agree but are consulting on all three areas, suggesting the sports area and allotments be transferred but the rest should stay in East Malling. TMBC have circulated a booklet to nearby residents with maps and are seeking comments by 9th May by email to voting@tmbc.gov.uk or to Julie Beilby, The Chief Executive, TMBC, Gibson building, Gibson drive, Kings hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4LZ.

UPDATE: At the time of going to print a residents' meeting was due to take place at which Parish Council Chairman, David Thornewell, would explain the implications of the Call for Sites and Boundary Review. If you missed the meeting and have any concerns contact one of your Lib Dem Team.

KCC U-TURN ON STREET LIGHTING

KCC has been forced to admit that turning off street lights after midnight was a mistake. A total of 64% of replies to the consultation chose a return to all night lighting. So over the next 14 months KCC teams will continue to convert street lights to LED.



Trudy with Tina Brooker celebrating the success of the 'Right to Light' campaign

These will be connected to a central point which will control each light remotely. This allows for more flexibility to meet the needs of each street and means that the level of light emitted for each lamp may vary. Contractors will be assessing all areas to ensure the lighting levels will be right at all times for pedestrians to feel safe and be able to see kerbs, faces, hedges and dog mess! Trudy welcomes the return to all night lighting as a 'victory for common sense'.

We think 'East Malling Matters!'

If you are on social media you may have spotted the pages 'East Malling Matters'. Michelle explains, 'I receive so much community information in my role as a local Parish Council Clerk that I felt I needed to find an outlet for it so I set up facebook and twitter page called 'East Malling Matters'. It's my personal page but run for the community. Much of the information is fast-flowing so well suited to social media. The focus is on promoting our village, local events, sharing information coming out of our local councils etc., plus some updates on what the local Lib Dems are doing. The information on both sites is not always the same so you can follow both without always seeing everything twice! I do hope it's of some use.' Both pages are open pages. Go to facebook and twitter and simply search for:

East Malling Matters



Rocks Farm Development Approval

Plans for 4 detached houses at Rocks Farm, on land owned by East Malling Research Station, have been passed after a request for a site inspection was voted down by TMBC's Area Planning Committee. The plans had been amended to reduce the number of houses from 5 to 4 and delete the previously proposed new access out to Rocks Road beyond the current line of houses. The 4 houses will replace the existing bungalow and the barn. A factor in the decision was that, although under the existing Local Plan the site was outside the village, the Government have since relaxed planning rules to allow such barns to be converted in some cases without the need for planning approval. This is all part of the Government's drive to have more houses built and to relax what they see as "red tape". There were objections from local residents over access but KCC, who deal with the highway aspects, of planning applications raised no objection. Planning officers advised that some other issues, such as private rights of way, were outside of the planning system. Parish Council Chairman David Thornewell says: "This is the first time in my memory that a site inspection has been refused by Area 3. As this was private land we felt a site inspection could have demonstrated to committee members the very detailed points causing local concern and might have led to an improved application. We accepted that if the application went to appeal it may well have been passed anyway, given current national policies, but I feel an opportunity was lost to give greater consideration to local detailed views."

Caravan Storage Facility Refused

An application for a change of use of land for storage of up to 100 caravans on land at Watringbury Road, adjacent to Woodside, has been refused unanimously by TMBC's Area 3 Planning Committee. We think you'll agree this is good news!



Pesky Potholes

The pothole problem is never ending! Your Lib Dem team has reported a number of potholes, and other highway issues, on Kent Highways during the last few months, including potholes on Watringbury Road. We expect there to be a flurry of infilling before the end of the financial year. There will be no repair at present to the sunken red brick road paving on New Road north of the King & Queen as the defect does not yet meet criteria for repair. Generally potholes and depressions must be 2.5cm or more in depth before action will be taken. We will continue to monitor and report again if the defect worsens.



WEST MALLING CAR PARKING CHARGES

Despite a huge amount of opposition, TMBC is pushing ahead with proposals to introduce charges in the West Malling High Street car park. The whole process has been extremely unsatisfactory; the proposal fails to address West Malling's overall parking problems; and there has been no assessment by the Borough of the potential impact on local businesses. A petition opposing the charges has gathered over 3,700 signatures and West Malling PC, whose Chairman is your County Councillor Trudy Dean, and the West Malling Chamber of Commerce are continuing to resist the scheme. A final decision will be made by TMBC on 22nd March. You can find the petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/tonbridge-and-malling-borough-council-stop-tonbridge-malling-borough-council-introducing-parking-charges-in-west-malling?platform=hootsuite>

Trees please!

East Malling has many fine trees, giants in the landscape that add to the character of our village. TCV, the Community volunteering charity, is running a project to map heritage trees across Kent. Your Lib Dem Team has submitted details of a number of trees for survey which we hope will be included on the final heritage tree map. We can't claim to have recorded every tree so if you believe there are worthy trees in the village please contact Michelle so that we can add these to the list we have submitted.



Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts of a local resident, some new trees have been planted on the parish owned strip of grass at Middle Mill Road. It is hoped they will soften the impact of the new development and where trees along the boundary with Bone alley were removed. Heritage trees of the future perhaps!

Goodbye to the Blacklands Wall



Trudy on site to check she's not dreaming. After 30 years it really is coming down!

After many years of negotiation by Trudy Dean with the owners of Blacklands Footpath and Malling School the ugly concrete wall which was erected without planning permission thirty years ago has finally been demolished. It was taken down by a team of volunteers led by Gary Haffenden and John Hilden over two days in early February. It has made a vast improvement to the look of the footpath already and in the near future it is hoped to replace it with a hedge of indigenous plants so as to hide the palisade fencing which forms the school boundary.

News from Leybourne Lakes

It's ten years since Leybourne Lakes Country Park was created and while overall satisfaction is high, a survey of visitors has highlighted a wish for better play equipment and a visitor centre/café. East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council contribute towards the cost of the park and support the suggested improvements. Your local Lib Dem team is keen to see progress as soon as possible, bearing in mind TMBC is already holding £300,000 from developers for the project.



Leybourne Lakes is also now home to an adult parkrun which takes place at 9am on Saturday mornings. <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/malling/> It doesn't cost anything to join but you do need to register on-line and download a barcode so that your run can be timed. A junior parkrun for 4-14 year olds takes place on Sunday mornings at 9am at Manor Country Park West Malling <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/manorpark-juniors/>

A20 Traffic Management

Following pressure from local Parishes and TMBC, KCC have appointed consultants to examine and report upon the section of London Road between Coldharbour roundabout to the A228 junction at Leybourne to see how it could be better managed and traffic flows improved. EMLPC have suggested a yellow box at the New Hythe lane junction; a left hand turn at Ditton crossroads into Station Road; better lane markings at Coldharbour roundabout; and better phasing and co-ordination of the traffic lights. With money for road changes severely limited unless from developer contributions this exercise is only likely to produce modest proposals but if you have any other suggestions for improvements please get in touch.

Who put that fence up?

Some residents have asked about the new white fence that has appeared along the edge of the open stream in Blacklands. The land over which the stream passes belongs to the Parish Council but, as part of a "main stream", is within the functions of the Environment Agency. They call it "Ditton Stream"! The fence has been erected by the developers of the new houses nearby who have ownership of the unadopted Blacklands Road at this point. Planning permission was not needed due to its height.

Postal Problems

Several East Malling High Street residents have told us that they are experiencing problems with post and deliveries being misdirected to/from West Malling High Street. The Post Office has a formal process for reviewing problems of this nature and the Parish Council will be asking for the matter to be investigated. The solution may be for 'West Malling' to be dropped from East Malling addresses.

Surgery - East Malling Centre

Although it has only been running for a few months, our monthly surgery at the East Malling Centre Cafe has already proved popular with local residents. The surgery is held on the second Wednesday of the month 11am and 12.30pm when Roger Roud and Michelle Tatton are on hand to help resolve local problems. If you have an issue you would like to discuss why not call in for a chat? Perhaps even treat yourself to a cuppa and cake from the cafe's excellent menu!



CHANGE TO BLUEWATER BUS SERVICE

The bus service to Bluewater via Larkfield and Snodland that runs on Wednesdays and Saturdays has now been taken over by County Connect from Bromley. The nearest stop to East Malling is Larkfield Wealden Hall where it leaves at 10.04am on Wednesdays and 9.49am on Saturdays.



Following the successful launch of West Malling's Blue Plaque Scheme, East Malling is hoping to follow suit with its own scheme.

Chairman of the Parish Council, David Thornewell, has met the officer who helped West Malling with their scheme and is working with the East Malling Conservation Group and Larkfield Historical Society on details for an East Malling Scheme. Further details will be available in due course.

You can find details of the West Malling Scheme at <http://www.visitkent.co.uk/malling-blue-plaques>