

Headline

November / December 2020



News from your Local Lib Dem Team in Leybourne & Leybourne Chase



Local Plan on hold

Following the first phase of Local Plan hearings in November, the Inspectors called a halt to future hearings after deciding that there were 'serious legal compliance issues'. These seem to centre on the 'duty to co-operate' which essentially means that neighbouring Boroughs must talk to each other during the plan making process regarding their housing needs.

A full explanation from the Inspectors is awaited but the risk is that the timetable for getting the Local Plan in place is now going to be pushed back. That could have very serious implications for our part of the Borough where currently there is no Green Belt and the ordinary countryside policies within the existing Local Plan are considered to be out of date.

Rotten egg smell

The awful smells in recent weeks in parts of West Malling, Kings Hill and Leybourne have come from test runs of the new food waste treatment plant at Blaise Farm Quarry, King Hill. The plant material used to test the equipment has included maize and potatoes which have generated excess hydrogen sulphide giving off the rotten egg smell. This is not the normal material which the equipment will be dealing with.

A permit was granted in mid November for commercial operations to start. Food from household waste collected from doorstep caddies will be treated in sealed containers, producing gas, fertiliser and material which can be used in landscaping roads and land raising. No odours should escape from this process which has the snappy title of 'anaerobic digestion'.



Not such a 'Smart' Motorway?

The M20 is now running as a "Smart Motorway" with the hard shoulder removed so as to give more lanes and with the normal speed limit of 70mph.

When the concept of these changes to existing motorways was proposed, it was on the basis there would be safe refuge pull off places not more than 3/4 mile apart and 24hr monitored cameras, so that the left hand lane could be shut via overhead gantries if the lane became blocked by breakdowns or other causes.

However when our stretch of the M20 was "upgraded" as a cost saving measure, these standards were not implemented so there are fewer safe places to draw off the road and no proper system of monitoring. When this all came up in Parliament, the Government implied such motorways would be kept at 50mph but in our case after an initial period it was put back up to 70mph.

This is all most unsatisfactory and we feel the M20 should be brought up to the original standards without delay.

LIB DEMS - WORKING HARD ALL YEAR ROUND

Broadwater Farm Application expected before Christmas

Berkeley Homes who are behind the proposed Broadwater Farm development have decided to submit a planning application ahead of the Local Plan being finalised, as they are entitled to do. The application is expected to be submitted before Christmas. Ahead of that Berkeley Homes have been carrying out a pre-application consultation. Information can be found at [https:// www.berkeley-broadwater.co.uk](https://www.berkeley-broadwater.co.uk)

As part of the allocation for housing in the draft Local Plan, development had been confined largely to the area south of Pikey Lane. Berkeley Homes are now proposing that 7 hectares of playing fields for the proposed schools should be sited north of Pikey Lane and that Pikey Lane itself should be closed to traffic. They say Kent County Council require this so as to achieve a unified school site.

At present there is still no firm proposal to deliver an access road from the development directly into Kings Hill. Instead, the development would be served solely by a spine road leading from the development through the middle of the Broadwater Farm and New Barns Conservation Area, joining the A228 close to West Malling station.

Once the planning application has been submitted we will share details on our West Malling and Leybourne Matters



Can you help deliver Headline?

We deliver Headline four times a year across the whole of Leybourne, Leybourne Chase and West Malling. Let us know if you have a spare hour to help out!

Facebook page.

Please report any further problems with smells to peter.thomason@tmbc.gov.uk

Kent County Council - Elections 2021

Local Lib Dems have selected Nick Stapleton to be their candidate for Malling North in the upcoming KCC elections in May 2021. Malling North covers Addington, Birling, Leybourne, Leybourne Chase, Offham, Ryarsh, Snodland and Trottiscliffe.

Nick has been a Borough Councillor for Leybourne, Leybourne Chase and West Malling since May 2019, and a Parish Councillor in West Malling since 2017. He has an interest in Highway matters and road safety, and has been coordinating the West Malling Speedwatch scheme for over two years.

Nick says "I'm delighted to have been selected as the Lib Dem candidate in Malling North. I've really enjoyed the work I have done in both Leybourne and West Malling over the past few years, and was overjoyed to have been elected as one of your Borough Councillors last year. I want to continue to work hard for the residents of Leybourne and Leybourne Chase - please do get in contact if you have any questions, comments or suggestions".

Leybourne Linkline

During the first lockdown, Leybourne Linkline, run by Leybourne Church, assisted many families living in Leybourne and Leybourne Chase, by organising volunteers to help get shopping and prescriptions.

With the second lockdown, and uncertainty about the future, Linkline is still running and offering this vital service.

Should you need help getting shopping or medication, or if you're in need of a food parcel, contact Linkline on 07565 586219.

Once again, a big thank you to all those who have volunteered in the scheme.



No surgeries at present - but we are still here to help

Since March 2020, Trudy Dean and Nick Stapleton have been unable to hold their monthly residents' surgery. As we are writing this, we are in the middle of the second lockdown, and we don't know what the next few months will bring. Nick says "Whilst we can't currently meet with you in person, we are still here to help, and have been working just as we were before lockdown. If you have any issues, comments or suggestions, please do contact us using the details on the back page." (The photo above was taken in 2019, pre-pandemic).

We would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all (an early!) seasons greetings, and let's hope for a better 2021!

Dirty signs and broken posts

Nick Stapleton writes:

Over the past few weeks I have been reporting a lot of dirty or broken signs and sign posts across Leybourne and West Malling.

For example, the tilted bus stop post outside Boots on West Malling High Street, the no entry signs at the end of Birling Road and the STOP sign that is almost constantly facing the wrong way at the end of Swan Street.

If you know of any broken or dirty signs, please do let us know and we can organise a repair.



Sign at the end of Swan Street, facing the wrong way at what is a fairly precarious junction

Government propose changes to the planning system

There has been widespread alarm expressed across the political spectrum regarding changes to the planning system being consulted upon by the Government, the effect of which would be to speed up planning but at the same time would reduce the opportunity for residents to have a say on planning applications in their area. It is very much a 'top-down' approach to planning which is not in the interests of local people. We know how important it is for residents to be able to express their views when it comes to planning matters and to be able to speak at the Planning Committee on contentious applications. Under the proposals it is not clear whether there would even be a future for Planning Committees as it seems more power to determine applications would lie with Council Planning Officers. In our view, speedy planning is no substitute for good, intelligent planning with an opportunity for participation, debate and scrutiny.

The Government also propose to revise the 'standard method' for determining housing numbers for local authorities. You could be forgiven for not having a lot of confidence in algorithms and will be concerned to know that in Tonbridge & Malling's case the new method would result in the housing requirement per year increasing from 696 to a whopping 1440 which is of great concern.

Across the country there are existing planning approvals for more than 1 million homes that are waiting to be built. We think pressure should be placed on developers to deliver those homes.

There is also a concern that there would be a reduction in the amount of affordable housing being built – which seems nonsensical at a time when we hear constantly about how hard it is for people to get onto the housing ladder.

The consultation has now closed and we await the Government's response.

A year like no other

Bill Banks writes:

Looking back on 2020 its been quite a year. Few people would have predicted what was to come as they sipped their drink of choice on 31st of December 2019. When the first Lockdown started many people were in a state of shock across the land as were the good people of Leybourne. They say you only really know people in times of adversity, and this was certainly the case here.

Early in March the Church run Leybourne Linkline asked for volunteers and the result was amazing. More than a hundred residents from both the Chase and Village stepped forward. At the beginning of the Lockdown many people were in need of help with collection of shopping and prescriptions, but the numbers dropped as people became more organised. In early April, the Food Bank started and whilst there were few residents in the Chase or the Village that needed this service, donations were passed on to neighbouring

Food Banks where there was a real need. As a community we came out of the first lockdown in better shape more ready to enjoy the summer and whatever else life would throw at us.

I write this as we are hopefully halfway through the second lockdown and ponder what we have learned. The conclusion I have come to is local is good whether it is helplines or food banks. Neighbours helping neighbours is even better because a mid winter lockdown even if the rules are not quite as strict may well throw up a new set of issues. My hope is that we all talk (socially distanced) to our neighbours and friends more. Sometimes asking for help can be more difficult than giving it.

My Christmas wish is that a relaxing of the Lockdown rules allows us all get to spend Christmas with family, friends and neighbours in some form or other. However it works out I am sure the residents of Leybourne will rise to the challenge.

Do you want to sign up to our email bulletin?

We aim to get four Headline newsletters out per year, however, we also have an email bulletin which comes out more frequently. They include local news and information, events that are taking place and road closures that have been scheduled. Trudy Dean has run a very successful email bulletin over the past few years, aimed at West Malling, Larkfield and East Malling, and it has proved very popular with residents.

We are looking to start a Leybourne specific bulletin, and have already had quite a bit of interest in this.

If you would like to sign up to the email bulletin, please contact Nick Stapleton at nicholasgstapleton@gmail.com

Your local team

Get in touch!



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