

Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum

Closing Statement

The Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum (MCCF) closing statement is in two parts:

The first part relates to the Forum's opposition to the development and the second part to the importance of ensuring the site meets national design standards on active travel.

In terms of the merit of the application itself, MCCF recognises that the Active Travel provision might not be the primary consideration. We do, however believe that our contribution during the enquiry has shown strong justification for rejection for the following reasons:

The appellant agreed with MCCF that Church Road would be so unsafe that residents of the planned development would not be encouraged to walk or cycle on Church Road. This therefore proved the accuracy of the ground for rejection used by MBC that *'the proposal will result in worsening safety issues on Church Road to the south of the site which have not been addressed and due to the constraints of the road are likely to not be addressed by the application proposals and the mitigation proposed is not sufficient to overcome the safety concerns contrary to policy DM1 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 and Paragraphs 108 and 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.'*

Church Road has been agreed by many contributors, to the enquiry, on both sides of the argument, as a road which is rural in character. The historic nature of Church Road has been highlighted, as has the narrow width and its aspect bounded by mature hedgerows and ancient woodland. Normally such a rural, narrow, country road would be a natural environment for cyclists and walkers but in this case such utility is denied to the community due to the excess traffic to which this development will contribute.

The MCCF was able to cite:

- National Policy Planning Framework Para 103 *'Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.'*
- National Planning Policy Framework (para 110 a)) to *'give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas'*
- Maidstone Walking & Cycling Strategy (CD184) Objective 1 E *'Place sustainable travel options at the heart of all new developments within Maidstone, to ensure a fully integrated network that puts pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the centre of any transport proposals.'*
- Maidstone Walking & Cycling Strategy (CD184) 5.3 *'Filling in of the gaps' to create a **fully integrated urban cycle network**, with radial routes joined across the town centre. Key destinations (e.g. schools, colleges, hospitals, shopping centres, visitor*

attractions) and new housing and employment sites will be integrated into the cycle network.'

- Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (CD183) 4.20 *'Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, including seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling networks.'*

It remains our view that the above are not met by the development proposal.

The Framework Travel Plan (CD146) produced for this site proposes a 10% reduction in single occupancy car journeys. The Appellant does not show how this can in any way translate to sustainability against the backdrop of the Appellant's Proof of Evidence Part 1 showing over capacity on Ashford Rd, Willington St, Deringwood Drive and Madginford Road.

It is therefore the MCCF's view that the development will cause danger on adjacent roads which will exclude Active Travellers and that insufficient arrangements have been made to ensure the site can be transport sustainable and for these reasons it should be rejected.

As stated it is the MCCF's view that Active Travel cannot mitigate the above and therefore unless the highway grounds of congestion and safety are removed the Forum could not retract their objection to the development. That being said, the second part of the Forum's summary relates to the proposed Active Travel provision on site and the connectivity with the neighbourhood. This must be considered in the context of national and local policies that require developments to contribute to the wider community Active Travel links and not focused solely on meeting the needs of the residents within the new development.

The Appellant commented that they had a good story to tell on Active Travel and in many respects the Forum agrees with this position. There are well placed Active Travel access points, there is a north/south route through the site which aligns well with national policy in terms of its potential for shared provision. There is also a very useful connection in the north east corner and with National Cycle Route 177.

Through Conditions there is now agreement on aspects of the key access points which are a matter of record elsewhere so I will not re-state them in full:

- The ramp in the north west corner
- 3m cycle routes to national standards
- Completion requirements for all the cycle links

The only MCCF request that was not agreed by the Developer was to continue the cycle route parallel with the footpath KM86 along the full length of the northern boundary. This is considered critical for connectivity in order to comply with National Planning Policy Framework para 102 c) *'opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued'* and would add considerably to the utility of the proposed development. To any observer of the design it would not make any sense to have a connection to the highway network in the north west corner to be connected to a national cycle route with a footpath.

This condition would provide for the following:

- Residents of the proposed development to access The Beams on their way west to Greenfields School
- Residents in The Beams and Chapman Avenue to access Otham Church
- Residents in The Beams and Chapman Avenue to access the Deringwood Drive Community Centre and shops, Madginford Community Centre, shops and Madginford schools
- Residents of Madginford to access Greenfields School

To summarise the Developer has a generally good story to tell about on site Active Travel provision and its connection to some of the wider neighbourhood. The Forum has identified a number of important gaps, some of which have been closed by agreed Conditions. Should this development be approved, the Forum believes that with good will, these final gaps can be closed to give this site a fully positive story to tell on Active Travel.