

TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT TENTERDEN TOWN HALL ON 23RD JULY 2018

Councillors Present: M. Carter, J. Crawford (Chair), Mrs. C. Curteis, H. Edwards (Vice-Chair), R. Isworth, Dr. L. Lovelidge and K. Mulholland.

Officers Present: Deputy Town Clerk Mrs. C. Gilbert.

Others Present: Cllrs. Mrs. S. Ferguson, M. Freeman and Ms. C. Walder (not members of this Committee), Cllrs. J. Link and P. Clokie (ABC) and 78 members of the public.

6820 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** Cllrs. Miss N. Gooch, M. Hickmott and J. Nelson.

6821 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** None.

6822 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS.** None.

6823 **REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.** Seven members of the public and Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson (not a member of this Committee) requested to speak on the application being considered.

6824 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS.** The Committee considered the following planning application. It was **RESOLVED** that its recommendations would be submitted.

18/00858/AS Land South and East of Tilden Gill Road.

Variation of conditions 5 (tree works) & 8 (highways improvements) on planning permission reference 14/01420/AS.

Cllr. Crawford provided an overall background on the planning application being discussed.

Cllr. P. Clokie (ABC) commented that he was attending the planning meeting to listen, but not to comment as he is a member of the ABC Planning Committee.

Variation of Condition 5 (tree works). It was **RESOLVED** that no comments would be made on the tree works variation and it was for the Tree Officer at ABC to comment.

Variation of Condition 8 (highways).

- (i) Mr. O'Neill of Ashford Road reported that his driveway would be almost on the roundabout. There are two blind bends partially blocked by hedgerows. He currently has to turn left out of his driveway due to visibility and then does a U-turn at the Beacon Oak Road junction. If traffic lights were installed, he would then be unable to do this manoeuvre.

- (ii) Mr. Smith of Ashford Road stated that the report submitted to Ashford Borough Council deals specifically with the traffic lights and not the roundabout. There are three significant errors in the report. (i) The traffic flow data over two days in April between 7am to 10am and 4pm to 7pm completely missed the Homewood School end of day congestion. (ii) The computer simulation was incorrect (Junction 10 software) and incorrectly models the present junction. (iii) The analysis had not taken into account the disruption cause by the lollypop man. If the traffic lights were installed, then they should only be turned on at peak times.
- (iii) Mr. Campbell of East Weald Drive stated that in 2015, the reports identified that a roundabout at the junction would be sufficient. The 2015 report also shows photos of the BT box and telegraph pole. Roundabouts are designed to keep traffic flowing and the Chilmington development on the A28 has installed one for 5,500 houses. Redrow want traffic lights for an additional 23 cars in 2023 according to their report. The installation of traffic lights would increase fuel costs to drivers as well air and noise pollution in the area. The report omits local houses, people and other access points. East Weald Drive, Adams Close and parts of the A28 will be subject to standing traffic. On a two-day pedestrian count at rush hour, two adults crossed the A28 on each day, well away from the junction. 24 school children came from Beacon Oak Road and all used the crossing at the school. 32 children used the north side and wouldn't use the crossing at all. There is no need for a pedestrian crossing. Local residents and businesses are not happy with the application - why should we suffer the permanent inconvenience, noise and pollution and urbanisation by a property developer who failed to do due diligence when they brought the land. The rate payers will end up with the maintenance costs and problems with the traffic lights. Mr. Campbell hoped that the recommendation the Council would pass is to reject the application and request that ABC and KCC support the original plan.
- (iv) Mr. Head of Ashford Road referred to the junction design report, which was 91 pages long, and one might assume it would be a weighty piece of work. It does not provide an objective analysis or alternatives nor any environmental or social impact assessment. To be fair to the consultants, they were simply following the developer's instructions, not commissioned to carry out a balanced review of options. It was their justification for the traffic control junction. A desk top analysis of traffic was carried out with no reference to what is actually on the ground. The traffic survey was carried out by a third party. For East Weald Drive, Mr. Head could not work out where the entrance was, nor does the plan show Adams Close, the Vets or Homewood School; did the Cambridge consultants carry out a site visit? No consideration of the impact on the Town or residents has been taken into account. If the junction does require upgrading, then a roundabout as per the original proposal should be adopted.
- (v) Mr. Pearson of High Street commented that £500,000 to move the BT box would be hard to believe and it seemed like installing traffic lights was the cheapest option for the developer. Mr. Pearson was concerned that it is not just an additional 100 houses that are being built, but very shortly there will be 250 from Tent1a and 200 houses from Tent1b, plus any that are built if Wates goes ahead; the planners at ABC should be looking at this. Mr. Pearson reminded the Committee of a one-way system that was introduced by KCC around Golden Square and East Hill, which seemed to work well at the time.

- (vi) Mr. Parkin of Ashford Road commented that many pupils used the footpaths along Ashford Road at peak times and was very concerned at the higher pollution which would be generated from the increase in stationary vehicles. This goes against government desire to tackle the pollution problems. Redrow received planning permission on the basis they would install a roundabout at the junction; either they didn't investigate this thoroughly or because they didn't want to incur the higher costs. Either way to change the agreed basis for planning permission would set a precedent for future applications.
- (vii) Mr. Thornton of Beacon Oak Road thanked the Planning Committee and Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson for making the public aware of the variation application. The implications of the proposal are far broader than simply technical highways issues addressed, and the applicant has not made a full comparison of roundabout and lights in technical highways terms, nor fully detailed their proposal, so we can be clear about its implications. The proposal should be rejected because of lack of sufficient information to justify it or make a decision on the acceptability of the proposed alternative to the approved scheme.

The developer should work with ABC/KCC and TTC to look at more useful measures for pedestrian crossings and traffic calming measures with the developer that could go with a modified roundabout scheme.

Mr. Thornton commented that more highways detail was needed. The proposal for a roundabout had not been detailed to the same extent as the applicant's cheaper now preferred traffic light scheme. Further detail is needed on:

- The free running of two lanes of traffic at the approach to the traffic lights will mean imposing permanent on-street parking restrictions. For what distance along the road? This will displace street parking and have knock-on implications displacing parking along Beacon Oak Road and may necessitate imposition of 'resident only' parking on Beacon Oak Road. The Victorian terraced and terraced houses of the Conservation Area are reliant on on-street parking that is increasingly utilised by visitors to the town centre too.
- It will also mean changes in signage, street furniture, the moving of bench and historic stone marker and landscaping too, none of this has been addressed at all – these will all have significant effect on residential amenity, the character and appearance of the entry to the town and the Conservation Area.
- The Highways comments of 25/6/18 call for further lane widening for larger vehicles and state that a Stage 1 Safety Audit has yet to be submitted to identify any safety issues. Given the heavy use of the pavements to schools, narrowness of pavements and increasing traffic this will be of importance. (BOR and the junction are also well used by farm vehicles (often wider than HGVs) that need to pass this way too)
- The safe use of the highway including pavements for school pupils is critical – the scheme appears to allow inadequate waiting space on the north side of Ashford Road at the pedestrian crossings – the busiest and narrowest section of pavement. The pedestrian count conducted by Mr. Campbell shows not many people cross here.
- The traffic lights actually create the need for pedestrian crossings at this point – this is not a natural location to cross the roads.

Mr. Thornton suggests that they stay with a roundabout, but the parties look comprehensively at the town and ways of slowing the traffic which is necessary.

- (viii) Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson (not on the Planning Committee) reported that the application states it is not in a conservation area. The area at Tilden Gill is not, but the junction is, so incorrect information. Tenterden is a very rural town and consistently has a lot of farm traffic; Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson would like some studies conducted on the narrow width of the traffic lights and how wide a road needs to be for a combine harvester and equipment. Road works around this junction at any time cause chaos and quite often traffic lights have to be manually used by workers in order to keep the traffic moving. The traffic already backs up at peak times towards St Michaels in the morning and the other way in the afternoons. Cllr. Mrs. Ferguson completely supports the roundabout.

Cllr. Crawford thanked the speakers, who had put a lot of effort into their speeches and was very impressed by what they had to say. Interesting points had been made which would be taken into account. Cllr. Crawford reported that a third option could be to leave the junction as it is.

Comments from members of the Planning Committee:

- (ix) Cllr. Isworth thought it strange that Tent1 had no conditions for road changes when granted permission, but a smaller development has to install a roundabout. The traffic light system in Tenterden could not possibly be synchronised with the proposed ones due to the lights throughout the Town including pedestrian crossings. Cllr. Isworth congratulated the speakers on their presentations and agreed with their comments.
- (x) Cllr. Dr. Lovelidge thanked the speakers and agreed with their comments. Cllr. Dr. Lovelidge reported that Redrow is the second developer to obtain the land as the first one pulled out. The two meetings that have been arranged with the developer have been cancelled and Cllr. Dr. Lovelidge expressed her dissatisfaction with Redrow for not meeting with the general public. She believed that traffic lights would not work on this junction and supported the roundabout.
- (xi) Cllr. Mulholland congratulated the speakers and agreed with their comments. As a retired environmentalist, Cllr. Mulholland is against environmental pollution from standing traffic and also the energy to run traffic lights 24/7. Traffic lights are not required and a compact roundabout would not pollute the area.
- (xii) Cllr. Carter reported that if you look at the drawings for the traffic lights, the lanes would not be wide enough for lorries to turn or for farm vehicles (the lanes are showing 2.5m wide, when lorries and farm vehicles are at least 3-4m wide). There needs to be a system that's right for the long term of the Town. Professional advice is needed to get the right comments to go the ABC Planners in the right sense and right wording, especially if it goes to appeal. There is a complete lack on information in application and ABC should be writing back to applicants. The Council needs to spend money to get this right, for the benefit of the whole Town.

- (xiii) Cllr. Mrs. Curteis reiterated her thanks to all the speakers. She commented that she agrees with all the comments made and supports the roundabout. Cllr. Curteis also commented that she did not agree with the installation of traffic lights and agreed with Cllr. Carter that this needed to go back to ABC for more information to be provided by the applicant.
- (xiv) Cllr. Edwards commented that it was an interesting debate and interesting input by the public. Cllr. Edwards reported that Cllrs. J. Link and P. Clokie will remember the discussion on whether lights should be installed at the Recreation Ground many years ago. This debate went to a public referendum; traffic lights won the day over a roundabout, which was right for that location. If a roundabout had of been installed, higher level lighting would have been required by KCC of which the columns are 18m high; the light pollution would have been very intrusive. This could potentially be the case for the Beacon Oak Road junction. Standstill traffic will increase pollution and the traffic light system will impact on the current parking on Beacon Oak Road. The width of the lanes is a particular issue. Currently not many pedestrians cross near the junction, therefore, installing pedestrian crossings will attract them. Roundabouts do have disadvantages as well with stop start traffic, however, there does not seem to be a case for traffic lights.
- (xv) Cllr. Crawford summarised some of the points from the discussions.
- Due diligence at the time the of purchase by Redrow was either poorly executed or the cost implications where resolved with the original landowner. Either way it is down to Redrow to absorb the cost of the BT box relocation.
 - The application planning statement and design reports are seriously flawed.
 - Redrow refer to the originally agreed mini roundabout when it was in fact for a compact roundabout,
 - The application is very narrow in scope and has not addressed the wider issues.
 - Farm vehicles have not been taken into account traversing along the A28.
 - Access to immediate side roads has not been considered.
 - A roundabout for this junction is superior in this instance.
 - Cllr. Carter's advice of calling in an expert consultant to assess the junction should be considered.

Cllr. Crawford observed that there were three proposals on the table: traffic light system, roundabout, or ask KCC to take a look at the wider issues and what would be the best solution for Tenterden as a whole. The Woodchurch Road junction and the housing development in Rolvenden needed to be taken into consideration too.

It was **RESOLVED** to **OBJECT to the application on the following grounds:**

Tenterden Town Council's Planning Committee has not seen or heard any evidence to support a traffic light solution to replace the original proposed compact roundabout. In fact, the evidence suggests that traffic lights would be detrimental to traffic flow, safety and air pollution compared to a compact roundabout.

In essence, the proposal was totally inadequate and missed out extremely important elements for a revised proposal.

Traffic lights have been shown to affect safety negatively - by giving the driver a false sense of security that they have right of way at the green light. Cars are known to accelerate away on the turn of the green light, and to accelerate through the lights to catch the green light before it changes to red. Having traffic controlled by traffic lights could, therefore, affect pedestrian safety adversely, increase collisions between vehicles and create artificial traffic flow delays.

The principal arguments against the proposal are:

1. There appears to be poor due diligence by Redrow at the time of them purchasing the site; they should bear the cost of BT cabinet relocation as they are at fault. We subsequently understand from a BT Engineer that the box by the road may not actually contain fibre optic cables.
2. There is no justification for the traffic lights vis-à-vis a compact roundabout, just a design.
3. The plan does not provide a comparison between the proposed traffic lights and the compact roundabout by any criteria. In our view a serious omission.
4. The report has a narrow view of traffic flow within the immediate vicinity. It has not recognised other junctions nor undertaken an impact assessment of East Weald Drive, Adams Close or junction intersections such as Woodchurch Road. In addition, it has ignored Homewood School morning and evening congestion due to parents parking and pupils crossing via the lollypop man.
5. Traffic lights would make it considerably harder for residents of East Weald Drive to get in/out due to standing traffic.
6. There is also a major concern for nearby residents on the Ashford Road. No markings on the proposal plan of the immediate dwellings, commercial companies (e.g. Veterinary Practice) to show how access can be achieved safely as they will be adversely impacted by the traffic light scheme.
7. The narrowness of the traffic light lanes would result in HGVs encroaching on the already narrow footways used by pupils and families with small children.
8. Parking for some residents in Beacon Oak Road near the junction would become prohibitive due to the two-lane construction of the traffic lights.
9. In fact, there is no mention in the proposal of the overall required parking restrictions nor the type of signage required.
10. There is no assessment of the impact of traffic lights on students attending Homewood School, i.e. pollution and path widths.
11. No environmental impact analysis was conducted.
12. Neither Highways nor the Town Council have seen a safety report.
13. The Town Council has not seen the C4 detailed quote for moving the BT box, so any quotes in their proposal is very subjective.
14. Traffic lights increase urbanisation of the town with its negative implications.

15. The junction location is in the Conservation area, although the Tilden Gill Development is not. The imposition of traffic lights, together with the necessary signage and road lines, neither conserves nor enhances the area.
16. Traffic lights cause the need for pedestrian crossing; a survey would show that very few people currently cross near the junction.
17. During rush hour, roundabouts provide a slow but steady and reliable flow of traffic without a significant tailback. Whereas traffic lights will create stop/go of vehicles with long tail backs of traffic and increasing pollution.
18. Outside rush hour, roundabouts support a very good flow of traffic and provide a vastly superior solution than traffic lights. Whereas with traffic lights, motorists will still be caught with red lights when in reality there is actually no traffic preventing them to proceed.
19. The traffic analysis was only on two days between 07:00 - 10:00 and 16:00 and 19:00. This is flawed as insufficient number of days and ignores traffic between 15:00 and 16:00 when it increases due to Homewood School run.
20. The report does not take into account wider farming vehicles nor lorries, whose width can exceed 3m. The proposed lanes for the traffic lights are 2.5m.
21. No other traffic calming measures have been considered, only minor kerb realignments
22. It is understood that Junction 10 software traffic analysis may not be the appropriate tool

It was **RESOLVED** that up to £3,000 should be spent on advice from a highways expert on the best solution for the junction and reported back to this Committee and ABC. The Deputy Town Clerk will approach outside consultants that are outside the Tenterden area with the aim to ensure they do not have an association with the Council or developers in the area.

6825 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.** None.

The meeting opened at 7.05pm and closed at 8.14pm

The foregoing Minutes and Report were confirmed and signed at a meeting of the Planning Committee on the 13th day of August 2018.

Chairman _____ (13.08.2018)