

BOROUGH GREEN GARDEN CITY BRIEFING NOTES

1. GREENBELT & KENT DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

There are two fundamental principles to consider when development is planned for the Greenbelt:

a) There must be "Exceptional Circumstances" that the development will offer. In this case the Relief Rd is proposed as those circumstances. But the Traffic Studies show that the road with 3000 houses will generate so much extra traffic that any reduction in traffic in Borough Green/Platt will be minimal.

b) Development in Greenbelt is not allowed if there is unconstrained land available - Greenbelt Development is always the last resort. TMBC's Call for Sites when analysed showed they had used **4400** house plots in Greenbelt, but had excluded **11,700** plots that were unconstrained and deliverable. These figures have varied over time, but the main disconnect still remains

The North Downs AONB only actually includes Ightham Sandpit, and TMBC are planning just the Relief Rd across that land, and not any housing. But they have forgotten that the **setting** of the AONB is also a Planning Constraint, and this BGGC development across the Holmesdale Valley will have a severe impact on that setting, in particular the views of the Valley from the North Downs

2. TIME CONSTRAINTS

The proposed plan has to be capable of delivery within the Plan period, before 2031. There are several problems with the land in question:

a. **Ightham Sandpit** has some 200,000 tonnes of illegally dumped toxic waste that has to be removed and/or remediated before the road can be built.

b. **Borough Green Landfill** is owned by Robert Body, but he has an overage clause that any profit made when he sells reverts to Cemex, the previous owners. He and his son are very happy with their profitable groundworks, landfill and recycling business. Why would they give that up with no prospect of any profit from future development?

c. **Borough Green Sandpits** has been breaking every rule in the book to get the sandpit filled in time for the Plan, their illegal operations have been halted (largely).

d. **Clubb's Nepicar Sandpit** estimated that the extension into Nepicar Farm would extend Sand reserves until 2028, with 2 years for restoration. They have since gained a fresh approval to deepen the pit by an extra 2 metres, which will extend the pit life past the 2031 end of the Plan Period. That 2028 date largely depended on an agreement to supply sand to H+H Celcon to replace PFA supplies (Brocks Tippers). It was discovered that the process cannot use sand.

3. KCC MINERAL PLAN

The piece of land in the extreme East of the site is in private ownership, but is crucial to the development. That land is within the Soft Sand Mineral Safeguarded Area, which means the land is protected from development that would "sterilise" those strategic sand reserves. The Local Plan requires the Relief Road to be built in its entirety before the first 450 BGGC houses can be put onto the market. If the road cannot be joined to the A20 at Nepicar, it cannot fulfil its promised role of a "Relief Rd", so the "Exceptional Circumstances" allowing Greenbelt development fail, and BGGC cannot go ahead.

Some of the predictions in the Kent Waste & Mineral Plan show a shortfall in Soft Sand delivery, with current sources calculated to be exhausted by 2023. New sites are planned at Lenham and elsewhere, but it makes no sense to open virgin sites when sand is available through existing pits and infrastructure at Park Farm, fields between BGSP and the M26, and the land between Clubbs and the A20 at Nepicar

4. AIR QUALITY AND TRAFFIC

Whilst there is no doubt that the Relief Rd **on its own** would bring about a huge drop in traffic and air pollution in Borough Green & Platt, the housing development would generate so much traffic itself that any benefit would be negated.

5. WATER the whole development sits on top of the South East Water Source Protection Zone for our local drinking water aquifer that feeds the local pumping station adjacent to the Horsefield, and onward to the purification works at Ford Lane Trottiscliffe. Parts of Borough Green Landfill and Borough Green Sandpits, and the whole of Ightham Sandpit, are historic Landfill sites with dubious contents, sitting unremediated over our water supply.

6. SEWAGE

As we know only too well, even after the recent upgrades and repairs, the BG/Ightham/Platt/Plaxtol sewage system is operating at near to its maximum capacity. So the new development will need its own dedicated sewage system. For the same reasons as the road, that has to be installed in its entirety to service the first 450 houses and cannot be achieved within the time frame.

7 FINANCE

As Harry discovered for us recently, there is still no actual draft plan or costing for the Relief Rd. Although there are reputed to be 5 members of the Barton Willmore Consortium, that does not account for all the landowners. As far as we know, the whole Consortium is just a wish, as yet there does not seem to be any legal framework to carry out the development, and that agreement is an essential part of any proposal, and needs to be in place during the Plan period to prove the viability and deliverability of the whole proposal. The three key elements any site needs to be considered in the plan are Availability, Lack of Planning Constraints, and Deliverability. TMBC's original assessment of the site before Barton Willmore came up with their cunning plan was " Severely Constrained, available but not deliverable". (And even the "available" bit was a porky)

a. H+H Celcon have no gain from housing on their land. They are going to want the Consortium to pay for the road, the contamination remediation, and some measure of financial benefit to them.

b. Robert Body Landfill. As noted above, RB will have no financial gain, and will lose a profitable business that he wants to keep in the Family.

c. Park Farm Quarry has a current Planning Approval for clay extraction, and a concurrent approval for sand extraction until 2042.

d. Clubb's pit is unlikely to be completed with the Plan period.

But none of this has deterred TMBC and they have decided to start a new Local Plan process after the last one was rejected by the Inspectors. Because their evidence was drawn up in 2016, it is now out of date, so they will start with a new Call for Sites. But they are moving BGGC around that requirement for consultation. That in itself could fatally flaw the approval of their new plan, but has received strong support at TMBC Members because if those houses are not built here, they will have to be built on other Members Wards.

We found out the hard way during the Local Development Framework, the previous Plan incarnation adopted in 2007, is that it does not matter how compelling the evidence produced by Parish Councils and individuals, their words will always be trumped at the Inquiry by Developer's Planning Advisors and Legal Teams.

So this time we have a **Parish Alliance** that is jointly funding our own Planning Legal Team.

Borough Green, Platt , Ightham, Shipbourne, Stansted and Wrotham are all unique rural villages, and if BGGC goes ahead we will become suburbs of an urban conglomeration bigger than Tonbridge itself. There is undoubted pressure for housing, but it must be proportionate, it must respect the countryside, it must address the dearth of Affordable Homes, and it must go to local people.

I have some folders of the evidence we submitted, and if anyone wants a bit of extra light reading, to see the sources of evidence that underpin every single word above, you are welcome to have a copy.

MT 21 Oct 2021