

Stanford Parish Council



NEWSLETTER

Issue 15: December 2009

A report by Ken Bultitude, Chair.

Stanford Parish Council in 2009

Stanford Parish Council (SPC) has had a busy time and this edition is devoted to our main business. Those of you who log on to our website will have been able to see most of the key papers. Those of you who don't ever look at this website should try it. It's very good and we have more than 1000 'hits' every month. Older technologies are not forgotten and SPC has acquired a new notice board which we have put outside The Drum. The old one was somewhat decayed and the site was due to be sold so we looked for funding to pay for a new one. SWAG made a generous donation when it closed down and we were able to go ahead after receiving another gift. Charles Getliffe (of SWAG) and Cllr Susan Carey (Chair of SDC) joined us for the opening (see picture).



STOP24

The proposal for a lorry park to take 120 vehicles on the vacant land at the western end of the site was vigorously opposed. We wrote a long and careful case against it, (it is on our website) arguing that:

- it was not likely to take lorries away from the roadside
- it was in the wrong place
- it would prevent the use of this site for commuter use as the station becomes even more used
- it would add a burden of light, noise and air-borne pollution to the lives of our residents
- it did not offer proper facilities.

We met with the other local councils and shared our arguments with them. We were prepared to speak at the committee meeting. Alas, the site was already licensed for transport use and the SDC Development Planning committee approved the lorry park. Our case was not helped by the approval of Saltwood Parish Council (the site lies in Saltwood Parish although all the effects are upon our residents) but we did manage to get some worthwhile conditions – extra soundproof bunding, electric points for refrigerated lorries.

We have continued to press for the STOP24 management to link up with Network Rail and SouthEastern Trains to provide parking and other services for commuters, and to make a direct link between the station and the motorway services which would enable the transfer of road users to the railway. We understand that STOP24 are working behind the scenes but we have not been informed of progress, although we can be sure that nothing will be in place before the new rail timetable comes into force.

STOP24 was also the source of a potentially dangerous problem with sewage when its system began to leak and give off foul smells in Stanford South. We got all parties (STOP24, SDC Environmental Health and Southern Water) to become actively involved and the problem passed. We got assurances that SDC Environmental Health will follow-up immediately should it happen again and if residents contact the 24/7 help line while the nuisance continues.

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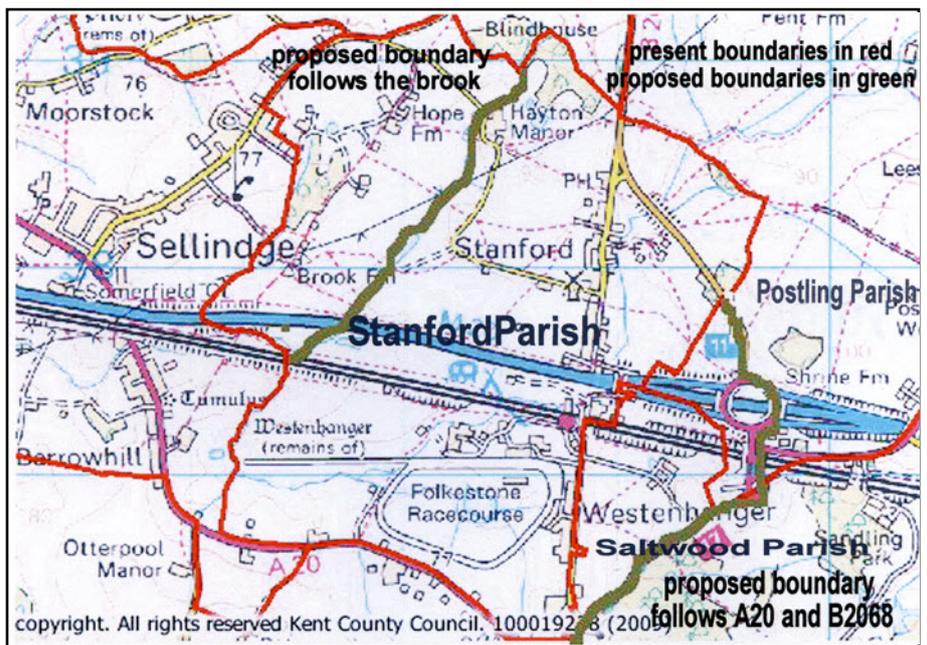


Boundary Change

The green lines on this map show our proposals, the red lines show the existing boundaries. It doesn't show well on this map but the boundary between Stanford and Saltwood parishes runs along the middle of Stone Street in Westenhangar and the Farmers' Bridge is half in our parish, a quarter is in Postling and the other quarter is in Saltwood. To travel from my home to that of the Vice Chair takes me through two other parishes. The up platform of the station is in Stanford Parish but the down platform is in Saltwood. We must make sense of this nonsense.

The transfer of Gibbins Brook to Sellindge would bring the people who live there closer to their councillors and council meetings (one of the Sellindge councillors lives in Gibbins Brook and another in Brook Lane). Some of you have fears that this will break the connection with the parish church in Stanford where members of your family - former Gibbins Brook people - are buried. This will not happen: you will stay in the church parish - which is different from the local government parish which we want to change. At present there is open country between the main part of the parish and Gibbins Brook, but Brook Lane in Sellindge runs into the hamlet of Gibbins Brook. We want to make these changes because we believe that it is in the interests of the residents of this parish. If STOP24 and the roundabouts at and near junction 11 are in this parish - where all the problems are experienced, we can do more to protect the people who live in Stanford than Postling or Saltwood would ever want to, and Sellindge can provide a better service for Gibbins Brook than we can. Parish Councils are part of local government: we want local government to be local.

We conducted an enquiry which showed that of the 35 people who live in Gibbins Brook, four didn't reply, 19 said yes and 11 said no (most of the 'nos' belong to one family with strong connections to the church parish). In Westenhangar and Stanford South there are 83 residents, 2 were 'don't knows', 23 didn't reply and 53 said 'yes' There were no 'nos'. Overall there was a 63% majority for change.



We presented our arguments and these figures to SDC and I spoke at the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 10th October where it was agreed that we have a good case and a formal review of our boundaries will be undertaken. This will be carried out by Amber Valley District Council (from Derbyshire) as an independent body with experience of conducting Community Governance Reviews. This will begin in November and a referendum will be held between 17th January and 8th February 2010. You will be able to respond by post, email, text or freephone.

It is absolutely essential for all registered electors to vote if these sensible changes are to take place.

Stanford Village Hall

As you know, the Village Hall now belongs to SPC but we have to delegate all management functions to a committee of Trustees. This committee agreed that because of the severe state of dilapidation the Hall would have to be demolished. It was not seen to be possible to raise the huge sum necessary to build a new one, and neither was it possible to see how or by whom a new hall would be used. We had got used to living

without a hall so it was agreed that the site should be sold for a dwelling and the proceeds invested in a trust for community use. This proved more difficult than expected and the process stalled. The chair of the committee resigned because of the pressures of business but, at the prompting of the SPC, the remainder of the committee are taking up the challenge again. The new Chair is Mandy Cheeseley, 3 Yew Tree Close.

Local Development Framework

In order to prepare an agreed and coherent framework for the future of Shepway, in particular to plan for housing, employment and land use for the new decade and more, SDC prepared a set of documents – the LDF – which set out their

course. The sale of this land to private developers was said to be necessary for the redevelopment and long term survival of the racecourse, and the extra homes were said to be vital for the local economy. We set out our arguments to counteract every one of the points made by SDC in the LDF. This document is on our website together with the CPRE response. All the responses to the SDC proposals are on SDC's own site.



We have met the CEO of Arena Leisure, owners of the racecourse, to consider their arguments and have seen their ideas for the way in which houses and a redesigned racecourse could fit together. We also heard arguments as to how our community might benefit from the new racecourse facilities. We remain opposed to the plans however, not being convinced that the best interests of our residents would be served by

ideas for priorities and preferences. These were available for public consultation. Many of you responded: so did we. In preparing our response we had a useful sharing of ideas with the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).

having a thousand new residents added to the 100 or so who now live in Westenhanger

We considered that the vision of providing homes and employment for another 6000 to 8000 people in the next few years was inappropriate but our main arguments were against the proposal that 400 to 800 houses should be built on the race

On the basis of their own vision and all the responses received, SDC is now writing the definitive document which will be available for comment before going on to the Government for approval (or not). The final stages were planned for June 2010 but are now likely to be delayed until the end of the year.

Westenhanger Station

The new timetable, providing a half-hourly service (in place of the present hourly service), will operate from 13th December. Full details of all train services are on the website. SPC has been in frequent contact with SouthEastern trains throughout the development of the new arrangements and to ensure that we have the best possible service.

Car parking by commuters remains a problem. The verges are badly damaged and the obstruction has prevented access of deliveries and emergency vehicles to Stanford South. We called a meeting of SDC and Kent Highways to see what can be done. Double yellow lines (and the promise of regular policing to detect offenders) will shortly be in place and should prevent obstruction. The only way to stop the parking on the verges would be to install posts. SDC and KCC will not do this – and it would have the unwelcome effect of forcing the

cars back into the residential area. The allocation of seven parking spaces in the car park to the offices in the re-developed station building will make matters worse when the office are taken into use. The extra trains may also complicate the issue. We are at a loss as to what to do next. Possible developments at STOP24 seem to be our only hope.



Non-Racing Events at the Racecourse

The Racecourse has 'Events' Licence' which enables it to hold events for up to 5000 people with alcohol, music and dancing, using the area close to the grandstand, with up to three events per year catering for up to 10,000. There are restrictions on the hours and the regulation of the noise levels. During the summer additions were made to this licence in that the hours for broadcasting music were increased (now starting at 10am rather than noon) and the use of an area in front of the grandstand is permitted for five events per year. We objected to these changes in writing and in person (as did some of you as individuals) but the SDC Licensing Subcommittee approved them.

The first event to be held under this new licence was the East Kent County Show which was a disappointment to the organisers and a noisy experience for some residents as the noise management conditions seem not to have been met. We had discussions about this with the SDC Licensing Team and it should not happen again. We were very concerned about traffic management through Westenhanger as the previous weekend, a racing event which attracted many visitors, had resulted in a terrible traffic jam, extending as far as the motorway along the A20 and completely blocking access to the village.

We made representations to the racecourse management, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Kent Police, and traffic

management for the East Kent County Show was more successful – aided no doubt by the lower-than-expected numbers. The Parish Council has now arranged to be a member of the Safety Advisory Group that must meet before every event held under the racecourse licence. We have also asked that the racecourse management should have a key to the lock on the Farmers' Bridge to provide an alternative access in emergency.

The racecourse has for many years been used by residents, to walk, jog or exercise their dogs but in recent months this informal use had been prevented. What had seemed to be innocent enjoyment was interrupted, sometimes abruptly, even rudely. We made a number of contacts with the management and recently met the CEO of the parent company. He agreed that the change had been badly handled and apologised for the offence caused but was unable to change the new policy which has arisen because of professional concerns to protect the safety of horses and jockeys, and the increasing fear of litigation from casual users who might have accidents while using the site. This is an arena for professional sport and, just as you would not expect to exercise your dog at Twickenham or jog around the courts at Wimbledon, so the racecourse needs to restrict access. Health and Safety complicates all our lives and we have had to accept the new regime.

Finally.....

SPC meets seven times a year in the function Room at The Drum and we are very grateful to the landlords for making us so welcome. We take decisions on these occasions (and every registered voter can come to listen) but much of the preparation is done between meetings. We operate on a shoestring, having a precept (annual grant) of £3700 from SDC – this is about £10 per year per resident which you pay as part of your Council Tax. We take no expenses and are not paid (the clerk has an annual salary based on 70% of the National scale for parish clerks). We hope that we provide a good service and well deserve our Quality status – we think we do.

Lastly we are very grateful again to our sponsor, **Holiday Extras**, who pay for two editions of this Newsletter per year.
Ken Bultitude Chair, 17th November 2009

Your Parish Councillors are:

Cllr Ken Bultitude (Chair)
Cllr Mrs Marian Bebbington (Vice Chair)
Cllr Martin de Wolf (Editor & Webmaster)
Cllr Bill Eggleton
Cllr Graham Goodwin

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