

Posted by Cllr Winston Michael, 3 August 2021

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT EUREKA BUSINESS PARK

The development is included in the ABC Local Plan (Policy S20), but like all new developments in Ashford and other affected surrounding towns, all have been on hold since July 2020 because the Stodmarsh Lakes located in Canterbury showed water to be in an unfavourable condition with the possibility of further deterioration through harmful nitrogen and phosphorous in the water tied to new developments in the Stodmarsh Catchment area. Stodmarsh Lakes is a European protected site. Ashford as you may know is built on a flood plain with many water courses and is within the Stodmarsh catchment. For developments to be nutrient neutral, the proposed solution is to have wetlands for all new developments in the Stodmarsh catchment area, and for them to demonstrate nutrient neutrality as part of the planning application.

Developers of Eureka Business Park Housing Estate were seeking many homes together with a retirement village but this had to be revised because of the Stodmarsh issue. A little while ago the Developer floated proposals across me before going to the Parish Council and ABC, asking that I keep quiet until they have consulted with them. Last Week ABC was given a presentation by the Developer so I believe I can now share with you the details together with my observations.

The revised plan is for 373 homes with areas of wetlands, but obviously an assessment must be made to determine whether the proposed wetlands is adequate to make the development nutrient neutral. The assessment formula I presume will be approved by Natural England and other regularity organisations and used for all developments. The proposed plan shown to me had lower density of housing with some areas being as low as 20 – 25 homes per hectare, there is also social housing. There will be no vehicular access to Sandyhurst Lane, though PROWs will be retained for walkers and cyclists. Existing wildlife areas to the west of the site appear to be retained to a large degree. New office blocks are shown to the south and west of Upper Pemberton, and to the south side of Eureka Retail Park. What the plan does not show is the existing car park which appears to be where new office blocks are planned. I made it clear to the Developer and ABC that the car park is a permanent requirement, something the Developer agreed in the presence of Richard King KCC and Gerry Clarkson ABC, when I fought on your behalf to address the affect of business employees saturating residential streets with their vehicles. This agreement was sought because the Planning Application provided for a temporary car park when a number of offices were built but to then remove on completion of the business park – ridiculous I know. I also indicated that the proposed plan did not show the PROWs AE209 AE210 AU3 and AU2A. I raised the need for a traffic assessment and that this should be on the back of the one done in 2003 as part of the Business Park Planning Application, i.e. that traffic from the housing needs to be added to that for the planned offices. I am pleased to report that at the presentation to ABC I met the person responsible for carrying out this work and able to draw their attention to this fact and the document referred to. I raised the question of improved

and up to date play facilities, and improved bus service because the children from this new development will have to travel to Repton School and the new Conningbrook school since Goat Lees Primary is one form entry, oversubscribed, cannot be expanded, and the development outside the school's catchment area. I shall look at how Section 106 monies from this development is to be used and that residents of Goat Lees Estate get their fair share since they will be shouldering the outcomes of the development.

I asked for the next iteration of the proposed development plan to show the car park and where the PROWs are.

I am led to believe the Developer will be leafletting all residents of Goat Lees Estate since they are the ones most affected. Rest assured I shall do my best to look after your interests and I would be grateful to know any observations you might feed to the Developer. The timescale for obtaining ABC Planning Permission is September, and this looks ambitious given everyone is on new and untested ground to prove the proposed wetlands will indeed make the development nutrient neutral as part of the planning application. It is important to get the infrastructure right, and time should not be of the essence, nor rushing to meet ABC annual housing number target. How the site will be monitored to prove it is nutrient neutral is another consideration.

With the kindest of regards

Winston