

Presentation to Westwell Annual Parish Meeting

26th March 2018

As this is the first time I have had an opportunity to address the Annual Parish Meeting it seems sensible for me to give you a brief overview of what the Sandyhurst Lane Resident Association is, who we are, what we do and finally why I have been invited to talk to you tonight

The SLRA was either originally founded in 1983 or re-invented in 1987 in response to an application by Trinity College to develop housing on Sandyhurst farm. Its first Chair was a Mr EJ Parker

Its stated objective was ***“to act as a voice for the residents of Sandyhurst Lane, Ashford and the adjacent area”***.

That area is now Sandyhurst Lane from the Faversham Road to Potters Corner, Maidstone Road together with the Westwell Lane behind the Hare and Hounds, Westwell Lane and Kingsland Lane, Hoads Wood Gardens, Potters Close, Watsons Close & Eastwell Grange, Lenacre Street, five properties on Faversham Road and another twelve on Maidstone Road. A total of 345 properties of which over 40% are signed up as subscribing members of the SLRA and another 3% signed up for the free NHW

Each of our 9 sub-areas has an allocated Coordinator responsible for establishing a hands-on relationship with and delivery of literature etc to his or her area.

Our Constitution clearly defines what we can and cannot do, sets out our governance rules as a voluntary, subscription based, organisation but NOT a Charity, and sets out the expectations, obligations and powers of the annually elected committee members.

So what do we do?

We Inform we advise our members through our website and email alerts to issues, events and situations that may affect them. Road and traffic restrictions both for road works or sporting events, changes to bin collections, power outages and service interruptions, relevant local consultations, local public transport changes *In other words things we learn about which we think others need to know!*

We Consult before submitting any representation to national or local bodies we share out thoughts with our members and reflect the majority view. We invite comment on issues through our website and undertake on-line and hard copy consultation with members to seek prior approval of our consultation position

We Protect through our five year old Neighbourhood Watch scheme we distribute police and NHW information and alerts (email and website)

We provide crime prevention advice, literature and signage to our residents

We supply, erect and maintain NHW road signs

And we warn of anti-social behaviour

We Represent our members by lobbying and campaigning on their issues and concerns.

We participate in relevant local and national consultations and articulate our members concerns to public and private institutions.

We have recently become a Trustee of Sandyacres Sports and Social Club

And we like to think ***We Innovate*** by encourage members to give us their ideas to improve the quality of life, safety and environmental sustainability of our area and by engaging local volunteer specialists/advisers when necessary.

Over the years we have had a number of distinguished Chairs including Myrtle Butcher, Howard Preston and John Hobbs. **All hard acts to follow**

Over the last thirty years those Chairs, and their committees, have actively campaigned on behalf of our members on numerous local issues, always within the principal aim of our Constitution - ***to protect the rural character of the area.***

Amongst early successes on **housing** was that in 1995 we got the Hoads Wood Gardens development limited to 30 properties instead of the proposed 66

As a result of our intervention numerous planning applications have been either rejected or modified

We made detailed representations during the last emerging Local Plan consultations, pushing for rejection of the Woodside site on the grounds of its proximity to the existing rural area and its proposed use of Westwell Lane and Sandyhurst Lane as its vehicle access route.

We reinforced our arguments that the Eureka Park development should include a generous landscape buffer between its development and the rear of properties in Sandyhurst Lane and only provide pedestrian and cycle access to Sandyhurst Lane.

More recently we have objected to the reintroduction of the land east of Hothfield Mill into the Main Changes to the emerging Local Plan as part of the so called A20 Corridor as we argue it breaches the established urban/rural boundary set at Sandyhurst Lane.

We have also made representations against development of Lenacare Hall Farm and the Sandpit as "windfall development sites" outside the submitted draft Local Plan on the basis they are an unnecessary urban development in an established rural area which adds additional traffic onto an unsuitable rural road.

Protecting our area against creeping urbanisation remains the main challenge for the Association

On road safety we obtained restrictions on quarry lorry movements, obtained a 30 mph speed limit on part of Sandyhurst Lane and, in 2005, got 40 mph speed limit for rest of the Lane

In 2013 the automated "slow down" signs on the A20 at Potters Corner were installed .

We are still concerned with actual or perceived speeding and the issues of road safety for pedestrians and cyclists as well as the threat of increased traffic volumes from new housing developments feeding on to our roads

We are proud of our support to our environment and whilst we cannot always claim exclusive success, we contributed our voice to getting the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) routed away from the Lane and the CTRL works returned to farmland

The SLRA provided a new public seat to mark the Millennium in 2000 and refurbished it in 2013. It has supplied and maintains a public notice board alongside the postbox in Sandyhurst Lane

Last year we successfully persuaded ABC that the Lenacre Street phone box WAS in the AONB and, as a consequence this year succeeded in getting ALL advertising removed from its kiosk doors

Through our lobbying of Damian Green we finally got a commitment from Highways England that the M20 adjacent to our area would be resurfaced with a low noise material by 2022

And finally, it is as a direct result of our efforts to protect our rural character that I am here speaking to you tonight.

From representations from members and following an overwhelming majority result in favour from our consultation of all the residents likely to be affected, we successfully petitioned ABC during its Local Governance Review that the properties in the urban Bockhanger ward should rightly be part of the rural Westwell Parish

As a consequence of this being adopted, we further lobbied that the whole of the rural parishes of both Westwell and Boughton Aluph should be part of the rural Downs West ward and the Ashford Rural West KCC division. The LGBCE concurred and from the local elections on May 2nd 2019 these changes will be enacted

So from 2019 the SLRA residents will be a larger component of the RURAL Westwell community.

An argument we can all use to prevent that creeping urbanisation

Thank you

**A C Bartlett
SLRA Chair**

