



## BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Alison Swannick – Clerk to the Council  
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24 March 2021

Mr John Slater  
Independent Examiner  
c/o Independent Examiners' Referral Service  
[npiers@rics.org](mailto:npiers@rics.org)

Dear Sir

I am writing on behalf of Biddenden Parish Council with regard to the Benenden Neighbourhood Plan, and specifically the plans for housing at East End Benenden.

We are not asking to be individually heard at a hearing as the deadline is past, but to have our views taken into consideration. To-date, Biddenden Parish Council has participated in every part of this process, sending letters and representation into Benenden Parish Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council during the consultation process. To-date the council's concerns have not been acknowledged, including the council's request that Biddenden be included in the process, contained in a letter to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council dated 7 December 2020, because the new housing at East End will most likely affect the village of Biddenden rather than Benenden. A letter from Benenden Parish Council was received, 18 March 2021, to a letter sent on 25 April 2019, but nothing has been heard from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. This has obviously been extremely disappointing. The purpose of this letter is to ensure that Biddenden's concerns are being heard and properly considered because the parish council feels very strongly that to-date this does not appear to have been the case.

The new housing is set in a completely rural area bordering an ANOB, with the exception of Benenden Hospital as a facility. There are no pavements into Benenden Village and any amenities will need to be driven to. No school can be walked to and no shops are within walking distance. A car is the only realistic mode of travel for a family. The new housing is, in fact on the border of Biddenden Parish and the main routes to get to Tenterden, nearby village facilities in Biddenden and the station in Headcorn, all go through Biddenden.

The council has voiced its concerns on a number of issues.

1. Castletons Oak Crossroads

This crossroads is at the junction of Mockbeggar Lane, Cranbrook Road and Benenden Road. It is extremely dangerous and there have been approximately 5 accidents in the last two months alone. Kent Highways are currently looking to try and improve this as the last changes made have made no difference to the dangers posed to motorists but also to those living in properties situated at the crossroads. Any increase in traffic will add to the danger at this junction. Benenden Road is the main route to Biddenden and Headcorn. This road is mainly residential but with farms so there are large, slow vehicles on it with concealed driveways and plenty of bends. The speed limit is currently 60 mph and vehicles are already travelling too fast on it making it dangerous for those people actually living on this road, especially towards the junction at Woolpack Corner onto the Tenterden Road A28.

2. There are sewage issues at Castletons Oak. There have been many occasions where sewage is dispersed onto the road. The council's understanding is that Benenden Hospital sometimes empties into the Biddenden sewerage system, a system that cannot cope with the existing pressures put upon it.

The Parish Council is already in touch with Southern Water regarding the fact that the Biddenden sewerage system cannot cope with the number of houses using it already. With each new development the problem will worsen. There have been properties with severe sewage floods, overflowing with faeces and paper into their gardens, sewage manholes overflowing onto playing fields, into roads. Biddenden cannot cope with the waste from such a large development as its system is both compromised and overwhelmed.

I am assuming that you will have been sent all the evidence sent which should include the representations made by Biddenden Parish Council to Benenden Parish Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. If this is not the case I am happy to forward you all the correspondence.

Biddenden Parish Council is asking that its objections to the East End developments are taken seriously, because to-date it would appear that absolutely no consideration to the "knock-on" effects on a neighbouring parish have been given any thought whatsoever. The Parish Council

understands that developments need to be put somewhere, but this site is not the place. There is no infrastructure outside of the fact that the hospital exists, no nearby amenities. It is a rural setting with an AONB, and with that comes the inadequacy of existing roads and systems to safely bear the additional pressures that these developments bring.

Kind regards

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison Swannick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'A' and a long, sweeping underline.

Alison Swannick (Mrs)  
Parish Clerk