

News from Maidstone council

Council calls for action

Maidstone Borough Council is calling for action to get work done to complete the Oakwood Hospital housing development.

Cllr Julia Batt asked the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the developers' failures to complete works on the site. Only the Queen's House part of the site has been completed and fully adopted for upkeep by the local authorities and other services.

The last houses were completed more than four years ago but many works in the Tarragon Road/Marigold Way area are outstanding and the St. Andrews site remains un-adopted. A community centre was completed more than 18 months ago but is still not in public use. The public open space is unfinished and cannot be adopted or maintained by the council in its current condition. Many areas are not kept tidy by the developer, Persimmon Homes.

Some of the works are subject to a formal section 106 legal agreement. Juliet Stringer, Maidstone council's s.106 officer reported at the meeting that a number of works were outstanding, including seeding of the open space, hard landscaping outside a substation, a bollard light on Coriander Drive, tidying up of the school area.

Committee Chairman, Ben Sherreard, said: "This was a great example of the Councillor Call for Action, possibly one of the first in the country. The committee supported Cllr Batt's call for action and is recommending a number of urgent actions to improve the area. Persimmon Homes has said it will put everything right by 24 July. If it doesn't we want the council to start legal proceedings to force it to do so."

"The other developer on the site, Linden Homes, has completed its works and is continuing to maintain its part of the site."

Linden Homes presented the committee with a cheque for £15,000 as an ex-gratia contribution towards the maintenance of the pavilions and the ragstone boundary walls.

The committee's recommendations included:

- 1) The Licensing Department be made aware of the issues around the theft of alcohol from Oakwood Park Tesco Express on the Oakwood Hospital Site and the lack of action by Tesco on this;
- 2) Linden Homes repair the lights around the St Andrew's park and pavilion and consider replacing vandalised lights with hardwearing and CCTV compliant lighting;
- 3) The evidence provided to the council on anti social behaviour around all areas of the Oakwood Hospital site development be provided to the Borough Commander to support a request for an alcohol restriction zone on this site;
- 4) The council start emptying the bin on the playground prior to the adoption of the Persimmons section of the Oakwood Hospital site;

- 5) The issue of the St Andrews Park Pavilions be raised again with English Heritage in light of the anti social behaviour issues and evidence of this;
- 6) If Persimmon Homes has not completed all works within their section of the Oakwood Hospital site to an acceptable standard by 24 July 2009 and paid the commuted sums owed by 29 July 2009, the deadline set by Linden Homes, the council begin legal action to bring the Section 106 Agreement to its completion;
- 7) Bonds be applied to Persimmon Homes developments in the future;
- 8) The council initiate a three way liaison team comprising of Maidstone Borough Council, Linden Homes and the Police to tackle the issues of anti social behaviour relating to the Oakwood Hospital site, including immediate action on the environmental health issues;
- 9) Maidstone Borough Council create a single point of contact for resident's concerns to be made to with regard to the Oakwood Hospital Section 106 Agreement;
- 10) The Local Government Association be lobbied with regard to highlighting the difficulties, across the Country, Councils are experiencing in getting developers to comply with existing S106 planning agreements, and to request the assistances of the LGA in addressing this issue.

The committee's recommendations, including the question of legal action, will now be considered by council officers and cabinet members for appropriate action.

Ends