

Report of the WRA Chairman for the year ended 31 December 2020

Since we met at our last AGM on the 8th March, 2020, we have all had to live through conditions and experiences that none of us then could have foreseen. As a committee we hope that you and your loved ones have all managed to stay safe and well. Unlike so many, we are all blessed with having the benefit of living on this wonderful Wildernessee Estate with the luxury of space and outdoor amenities, which we hope you have been able to enjoy during lockdown.

Your committee has remained busy, meeting almost exclusively via zoom, just as we are doing now, and I would like to think that we have been no less effective. Thank you to those of you attending this evening by way of this virtual means. Our constitution dictates that we must convene and address our formal business within four months of year end. That is why we are meeting like this in what I know to be a sub-optimal manner. But we very much intend to invite our members to some form of physical, social gathering later in the year when we are able to do so and when we can discuss matters more openly and informally.

I would like to thank all of the committee for their hard work and time commitment which, I can assure you, is not insignificant. And in particular during this difficult period and in the face of other adversities including poor health. I would especially like to register thanks and enormous gratitude to Peter Calvert who left the committee during the course of

the year. He has served as Honorary Treasurer and officer of the executive committee with true aplomb, dedication and integrity adding huge value at all times. Thank you Peter.

Having re-written the constitution and re-launched the website, the committee has mostly spent its time considering planning matters in 2020. I am pleased to say that the committee represents a cross-section of views on how planning should be considered, in much the same way as there is diversity of opinion amongst our members. This ensures healthy, challenging and constructive debate and allows us to come to conclusions that we believe are well considered and a fair reflection of what our membership would want and expect consistent with our brief, as set out in our role statement and constitution. We will not always agree unanimously but we will all stand by the majority view and be open and transparent in our communication with our members.

There have been a number of individual property planning applications that have required us to think hard about how we react. There have been possible implications for covenant integrity but, I am pleased to say, no actual or foreseen covenant breaches.

One exception to this is the acquisition by Kent County Council of the parcel of land adjacent to Seal Drive and Seal Road (the A25) from the Royal Society for Blind Children. This land is governed by covenants restricting its use to residential only. The intention of KCC is to use this as grass playing fields (without floodlights) adjacent to the

development on their existing land of two artificial surface, floodlit all weather pitches. We have instructed our lawyers (Winckworth Sherwood LLP) to engage with KCC to protect the position of all estate residents as beneficiaries of the covenants. We have also met with KCC to discuss their plans and will keep you all informed as to the submission for planning to Sevenoaks Council and whatever action we might take and/or recommend.

We have also engaged with KCC on the issue of traffic, safety and pollution along the A25, at the junction with Seal Hollow Road, along Seal Hollow Road and at the Bat and Ball junction. Kent Highways is to conduct a survey of the entirety of this stretch of the A25 from Seal to Bat and Ball and we shall keep you informed as to developments to the extent that we are aware.

Wilderness House ownership changed at the end of the year with Pegasus/Lifestory selling to Elysian Residences. We have met with Elysian and have invited them to present to you all as and when we are able to all meet in person. They intend to carry out some work on the main house to better align the accommodation with the needs and desires of the target audience. They will also stick with the original plan for the 5 apartment blocks at the Dorton Drive end of the land and will commence work on these this summer. I have included in the pack of information for this AGM a note that Elysian have prepared for information on themselves and their plans with regard to Wilderness House.

We met with the head of planning at Sevenoaks District Council to discuss the approach that the planning officers and conservation officers take when considering applications on the estate, in particular with regard to the attention paid to the detail within the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP, 2010) and the houses noted within as contributing to the character of the estate. We were disappointed to learn that there is no firm date set yet for the re-draft of this supplementary planning document. They still attach considerable importance to the CAAMP and refer to the list of noted properties but recognise that it has become somewhat dated. They attach huge importance to the fact that the Wildernesse Estate is a conservation area. They will treat each application according to its own merit and continue to recommend that residents engage with them early in their potential planning deliberations, and certainly in a pre-application process, so as to ensure that all interests are aligned and to avoid disappointment potentially some way down an expensive line.

We would remind members that our role is primarily to protect the restrictive covenants on the estate and also to preserve the character and the conservation area. When considering any form of development or demolition of plots, landscapes, trees, hedges, buildings, borders and built features, residents will be aware of the need to consider the impact on the street scene and on neighbours. They will also be mindful of the content of CAAMP, whether or not their house has any particular status (listed, locally listed, contributing to character) and they will always be aware of the specific legal constraints contained within the individual

property deeds and schedule of covenants contained therein. We are always happy to try to help and to offer guidance constructively wherever we can. Further information about the CAAMP is available on the Wildernesse Estate website:

<https://www.wildernesse-estate.co.uk/caamp>

Thank you for attending and listening. Thank you again to the committee. I really look forward to seeing you all in person later in the year. I will now ask Roz to deliver the report of the Treasurer, please.

David Knox

WRA Chairman

20 March 2021

