



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

**Minutes of the Highways Committee Meeting held on Monday 21st October 2024
in the parish council office at Langton Green Recreation Ground, Langton Green**

MEMBERS PRESENT Cllrs Norton (Chair), Turner (Vice-Chair), Cleaver and Ellery with Mrs Dooley and Mr Langridge.

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS PRESENT: There were none.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were 2 members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs C Barrett, Assistant Clerk.

1. **To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting** – The Assistant Clerk recorded the meeting for administrative purposes.
2. **To receive and approve apologies and reason for absence** – apologies were received from Cllr Muress (holiday), together with Borough Cllrs Britcher-Allan, Sankey and Sharratt, and County Cllr James McInroy (prior commitments).
3. **Disclosure of Interests**
Cllr Ellery declared a potential interest in the issue raised at item 4 & 10d below.
4. **Declarations of Lobbying**
Cllr Ellery had been lobbied by a neighbour who could not safely exit their driveway on Barden Road. This was due to dangerously parked cars making it impossible to see vehicles approaching from the direction of Speldhurst Shop and Post Office.
5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 19th August 2024 – RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Highways Committee meeting dated 19th August 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
6. **Public Open Session**
Mr Trevor and Mrs Marina Myles attended the meeting to speak about road safety issues in Old Groombridge. Mr Myles had met with Mike Martin MP to discuss the following issues:
 - HGV traffic using Bird in Hand Street as a shortcut, causing damage to residents' properties and putting pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders at risk. Residents were keen to see a weight and width

restriction implemented, and Mike Martin supported this. On hearing about Go Green Waste, whose 8-wheel HGVs used the road increasingly frequently, he wrote a letter asking them to find an alternative route. Go Green Waste replied to say they would do so.

- Speeding vehicles through Old Groombridge, especially to/from Groombridge Hill (B2110), creating hazardous conditions for pedestrians and other road users.

The narrow bridge over the River Grom had no pavement making it dangerous for pedestrians, especially when passing vehicles went at high speed with no time to slow down. Mr Myles said he had also been in contact with the Development Officer; it seemed they were broadly supportive of his idea to build a bridge on their side so that pedestrians did not have to walk on the road.

Mr Myles was interested to know what the Design Engineer from Kent County Council (KCC) had said about traffic-calming in Old Groombridge at a meeting with Cllr Norton and the Clerk on 2nd October. He added that he would like to join the Highways Committee as a Member of Public.

Cllr Norton brought forward agenda item 10b relating to the Old Groombridge Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). He advised Mr and Mrs Myles that the KCC Engineer said the signs on Bird in Hand Street to warn HGV drivers needed improvement. There was no sign at the top of the road at the junction with the Ashurst Road, either; KCC also took this as an action point. However, a weight/width restriction was unlikely to be implemented as the KCC Engineer said this was difficult to enforce and would not apply to HGVs with access rights.

It was noted that KCC had committed to better signage on Groombridge Hill and Bird in Hand Street, including new 30mph repeater signs on Groombridge Hill and at the entrance to Groombridge Place. They would also clear vegetation around obscured road signs and investigate a possible additional SID location, and extra roundels.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the committee should continue to push KCC to:

- Implement further ways to reduce average speeds in the village centre, including red textured road bandings and a 20mph zone. KCC had previously pushed back on a 20mph zone, but Cllr Norton said they should keep pressing.
- Complete improvements to 30 mph signage.
- Implement a weight/width restriction on Bird in Hand Street. Mr Myles said that Mike Martin could help with this.

An action point was set for the Clerk and Cllr Norton to liaise with Withyham Parish Council about how to progress the proposal for a bridge at Groombridge Place.

Cllr Norton said that the committee would continue to monitor development activities at Burrswood and Groombridge Place to be ready to take advantage of any developer contributions from both. He added that the main contact at Burrswood had changed and had told Cllr Norton that he would meet with the local community when there was news to share about development plans.

An action point was set for Cllr Norton to make a fresh appeal to Old Groombridge residents to volunteer for Speedwatch.

Cllr Norton thanked Mr Myles for volunteering to join the Highways Committee and would contact him once the committee had discussed this.

Mr and Mrs Myles left the meeting at 8.05 pm.

7. How can we have a Bigger Impact?

An action point was set for Cllr Norton to liaise with the Clerk about re-sending a letter regarding parish highways issues to Mike Martin by email. He had initially been copied in a letter sent to the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways on 4th September (the Clerk had circulated this letter and the Cabinet Member's response to the Committee). At his meeting with Mr Myles, Mike Martin said he had not received the letter.

It was agreed it would be helpful to invite Mike Martin to a committee meeting or arrange for him to meet with a smaller working party to increase his awareness of all the parish council's HIP priorities.

8. Review of Action Points

The updated Action Points Table had been shared with councillors. The newly updated list of action points, incorporating the additional actions from this meeting, are shown at the end of these minutes.

9. Review of Highways Committee's Budget – to review the expenditure to-date.

There had been no expenditure since the last meeting. Cllr Norton said there would be an upcoming payment for a replacement SID post in Old Groombridge. This amount would then be reimbursed by the insurers.

10. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) (including consideration of any new issues by village taking into account correspondence, recent accidents, Speedwatch, and media)

Cllr Norton reported that he and the Clerk had held a productive meeting with KCC Highways. The meeting included visits to the parish council's HIP priority locations, and meeting notes had been circulated.

a) Ashurst

- **HIP item A3 A264 from junction with Langton Rd into Ashurst** – Multiple volunteers had now offered to participate in Speedwatch sessions. The Clerk had asked them to register with Speedwatch and complete their online training. She had connected them with Cllr Tarricone, requesting that he set up an in-person training session. After this session, volunteers would be qualified to start Speedwatch. It was agreed that Speedwatch data was important to help counter the recent KCC ATC which did not indicate a speeding problem. SID data showed consistent speeding and it was hoped that Speedwatch findings would support this.

Non-HIP Items for Information

- **Opening of School on the Ashurst and Blackham Sports Ground** – A resident had raised various concerns including highways but had been advised that this was a planning matter. Cllr Norton had assured them that KCC Highways would have been asked to look at the application as a consultee. Cllr Cleaver, Chair of the Planning Committee, informed members that the application had now been considered and the Planning Committee had voted to support it. He added that the school had successfully applied for a change of use some time ago, but as the law had changed it was now necessary for them to apply again.

b) Groombridge

- **HIP item OG5 B2110 Groombridge village entrance to River Grom Bridge / East Sussex border plus Bird in Hand Street to end of existing 30mph zone** – This item had been brought forward for discussion as part of the public open session.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve Mr Myles' request to join the committee as a Member of the Public (MoP). The Assistant Clerk would ask that this item be added to the next Full Council meeting agenda for ratification.

c) Langton Green

- **HIP Item LG9 & LG9a Speldhurst Rd & Lampington Row** – Cllr Norton had made it clear at the meeting with KCC Highways that Speldhurst Road (the stretch of road approaching Langton Green Recreation Ground/Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row in both directions) and

Lampington Row were all part of the same issue. Members discussed the following points from the Clerk's meeting notes:

Speldhurst Road proposed pedestrian crossing

- *KCC meeting note: Look at strengthening current crossing point instead of creating new crossing. A formal crossing would need lighting*
Highways Committee Members: Electricity already at car park entrance for EV chargers so could be used to power lighting too. Push KCC to specify the technical requirements needed for a formal crossing. Ask Mike Martin to support on this.
- *KCC meeting note: Courtenwell – Ownership established. SPC to consider contacting the developer and talk to residents of Courtenwell to gauge their view.*
Highways Committee Members: Noted that the developer is Western Developments (Croydon) Limited. An action point was set for the Clerk to follow up with Mr Mallett, a Courtenwell resident, with a view to speaking to other residents to get their opinion before asking the developer if some of the land outside Courtenwell could be given over to form a pedestrian crossing landing zone.
- *KCC meeting note: Formal crossing criteria focus on speeds throughout the day – so consider further measures to reduce speeds.*
Highways Committee Members: Langton Green Speedwatch was in progress at this site; the goal was to carry out 6 sessions over 2 months and this was in hand. The data would be fed back to KCC.
- *KCC: Possible double yellow lines to prevent pavement parking – SPC to carry out informal consultation first – Nigel Rowe to provide template wording.*
SPC Highways Committee: An action point was set for the Clerk to follow up on her return from annual leave if the wording template had still not been provided.

Lampington Row at entrance to Langton Green Primary School

- *KCC meeting note: Langton Green Primary School Travel Plan is now complete.*
Highways Committee Members: Has the Schools Travel Planner delivered a road safety assembly yet? An action point was set for the Clerk to follow up.
- *KCC meeting note: KCC to look at providing two guard rails at side entrance (one at end of path from recreation ground) as a priority.*
Highways Committee Members: Has KCC done anything further since the meeting? The lack of barriers is a major safety concern. An action point was set for the Clerk to follow up as a priority.
- *KCC meeting note: Consultation for zigzag lines covering pupil and staff entrances – school might contribute as TRO costs in the region of £3,000. Letter drop to gauge residents' support.*
Highways Committee members: Confirm with the Clerk who is responsible for this consultation.
- **HIP item LG10 Layby on Langton Road/Cyclists' Rest** – It was noted that the Clerk had written to Environmental Health and the Community Safety Unit (CSU) about the ongoing problem with vehicles from a single household parked unlawfully in the layby outside Cheyne House on the A264 Langton Road. This issue had been exacerbated by the owners of the vehicles dumping perishable food items in the woodland opposite and immediately outside their property. Residents had also reported that foul-smelling liquids from rotting food kept in the vehicles had dripped out and caused a puddle in the road. The residents were thought to run a delivery business and the food dumping involved quite large quantities of perishable goods. Despite chasing up the Clerk had not been able to make any progress with either Environmental Health or the CSU on this issue.

d) Speldhurst

- **HIP item SP7 Barden Road between The Old Post Office and the junction with Furzefield Avenue**
This was an archived HIP item, however, Cllr Ellery said he believed it was still one of the most dangerous locations in Speldhurst. An increasingly frequent issue he and others encountered when attempting to exit their driveways was that their view was blocked by logging lorries parked on the road. This made it impossible to see vehicles approaching from the direction of the community shop and post office. It was agreed to monitor this issue.

Speeding also continued to be a concern. The Assistant Clerk advised that an appeal had gone out for new Speedwatch Volunteers, especially those willing to take on the coordinator role so that Speedwatch could re-start in Speldhurst.

- **HIP item SP12 Penshurst Road, stretch of road between Langton Road and Northfields**

This continued to be an issue, especially with cars parked on the bend at school drop-off and pick-up times. The Assistant Clerk advised that Speldhurst Primary School was now formulating an updated Travel Plan. An action point was set for the Clerk to inform the Schools Travel Planner that the parish council supported this.

- **HIP item SP13 Etherington Hill leading to Speldhurst Hill approaching Speldhurst Village**

Cllr Norton had discussed this location with KCC Highways. They acknowledged that the unsuitable road surfacing contributed to road safety problems. The surfacing was being addressed by a different department. Cllr Norton reported that an ATC had been requested at either end of Etherington Hill. An action point was set for the Clerk to ask KCC Highways for a progress update.

Non-HIP Items for Information

- **Northfields** – At the last meeting, Borough Cllr Sankey had volunteered to discuss parking issues with Northfields residents. An action point was set for the Clerk to ask for an update. However, it was agreed that with households now owning multiple cars, and the road being used to park by doctor's surgery patients and recreation ground/village hall users, finding a solution was not straightforward. For example, double yellow lines on one side of the road were likely to move the problem to other roads, which were equally unsuitable for so many vehicles. It was noted that the Community Police Officer had been asked to patrol the area and speak to drivers.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Norton and Turner would incorporate all action points relating to KCC into an action plan.

11. Footpaths/Public Rights of Way (PROW) – It was agreed to defer an update until Cllr Muress was present.

12. Risk Assessment – Car Parks – It was **RESOLVED** to approve Cllr Norton's risk assessment of the car park at Langton Green Village Hall.

13. Items requiring Full Council approval

Mr Myles is to join the committee as a MOP.

14. Issues for Communication to the Public – There were none.

15. Items for information

- www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem - Reminder
- Road Safety and Active Travel Quarterly Newsletter
- **Date of Next Meeting** – 16th December
- **Dates of Meetings in 2025**
 - Monday 24th February
 - Monday 23rd June
 - Monday 22nd September
 - Monday 8th December

With nothing further to discuss the meeting ended at 9.13 pm.

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
6/24	Follow up on all points relating to HIP Item LG9 – Speldhurst Rd/Winstone Scott Avenue/Lampington Row.	Clerk/Assistant Clerk	27/02	Complete
13/24	Write to KCC regarding the road surfacing in Speldhurst. <i>Cllr Sankey has actioned.</i>	Cllr Norton	19/08	Complete
14/24	Write to KCC Cabinet Member regarding a strategy for road safety.	Cllr Norton	19/08	Complete
25/24	Contact Langton Green Speedwatch team to request concentrated sessions outside the entrance to the village hall car park over the next few months.	Mr Langridge	19/08	Complete
26/24	Update Finance Committee regarding future expenditure for Highways.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
27/24	Update HIP document.	Clerk/Asst Clerk Cllr Norton	19/08	Complete
28/24	Raise results of ATC survey in Ashurst with Cllr Tarricone. <i>Speedwatch hopefully progressing.</i>	Clerk	19/08	Closed
29/24	Investigate weight restrictions of Bird in Hand Street.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
30/24	Contact Courtenwell resident for an update on issue of ownership of land. <i>They are not currently following this up as legal costs are prohibitive.</i>	Clerk	19/08	Complete
31/24	Seek update on the following items from KCC: Langton Green Primary School (LGPS) Travel Plan; Barriers and zig zag lines outside LGPS.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
32/24	Seek an update from Speldhurst Primary School on progress on their Travel Plan.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
34/24	Request ATC at bottom of Etherington Hill, Speldhurst.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
35/24	Follow up 20mph speed toolkit banner and bin stickers with KCC for Speldhurst.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
36/24	Discuss warning sign request at junction of Penshurst Road and Southfields/Northfields with resident who put in request. <i>See Matthew's email in folder.</i>	Borough Cllr Sankey	19/08	Complete
37/24	Undertake car park risk assessment.	Cllr Norton	19/08	Complete
38/24	Chase KCC regarding replacement SID post in Groombridge.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
39/24	Liaise with councillors for meeting dates in 2025.	Clerk	19/08	Complete
33/24	Discuss parking issues with residents of Northfields and Penshurst Road, Speldhurst. <i>PC Whitehead has been asked to patrol area and speak to drivers.</i>	Borough Cllr Sankey	19/08	In progress
9/24	Write to St Mary's Lane residents asking their thoughts about signage at junction with Northfields.	Clerk/Asst Clerk	27/02	In progress
40/24	Chase KCC on all action points relating to the HIP priorities, which were agreed between Cllr Norton, the Clerk, & KCC representatives at a meeting on 01/10 (refer to meeting minutes above for details).	Clerk/Assistant Clerk	21/10	TBA
41/24	Appeal to OG residents to volunteer for Speedwatch	Cllr Norton	21/10	TBA
42/24	Approach Withyham PC about an alternative bridge over River Grom	Clerk/Cllr Norton	21/10	TBA

43/24	Re-send copy of the letter regarding highways issues to Mike Martin MP as an email attachment (originally cc'd in letter to KCC Cabinet Member)	Clerk/Cllr Norton	21/10	TBA
44/24	Add item to FC agenda re. Trevor Myles joining committee as MoP	Assistant Clerk	21/10	TBA
45/24	Follow up with Mr Mallett, Courtenwell resident, about asking other residents' opinions before asking Western developments if they will allow land to be made into a pedestrian crossing landing zone.	Clerk	21/10	TBA
46/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask Schools Travel Planner if she has delivered a road safety assembly at LG school. - Ensure she knows the PC supports Speldhurst School Travel Plan. 	Clerk	21/10	TBA
47/24	Incorporate all action points relating to the HIP priorities and KCC into an action plan.	Cllr Norton and Cllr Turner	21/10	TBA