



April 2024

Dear Members,

I am pleased to be able to let you know of our coming meeting on **Wednesday 24th April at 7.45pm at St Peters Upper Church** when our speaker is Dr Robert Bowes, senior partner at the Kingswood Primary Care Surgery. As we know Primary Care has been changing dramatically over the last few years, and on every visit we make something seems to have changed.

Dr Bowes has spoken to us before a number of years ago, when he gave us an insight into changes being made in health care generally especially within the NHS Trusts. Now he will be sharing where Primary Care is going – ie the direction of travel in our first port of call (usually) at our local surgeries.

I'm sure that like me we do get confused about who we should see, what the processes are, and what our local surgeries or health centres will be offering in the future, and through whom. I'm sure Dr Bowes won't mind me saying he comes as a doctor with a purposeful mind and grasp of this necessary direction of travel, and we may all have our (maybe different) views on this, so I'm sure it will be an interesting evening.

As a member of the Society you will know we take an active part in watching and commenting on the wellbeing of Pembury, the progress of the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the Planning Applications that come along week by week. Many are interesting, but non-consequential. But there are some much larger and controversial developments that are likely to arise in the next year or two, mainly in the areas between the High Street/Hastings Road, and the new A21.

This process of watching and commenting on Applications, ie making representations on behalf of all of us as residents of Pembury, is important and needs to be careful and timely. You too can make representations personally, and here are some very good top tips provided by Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) when doing so:

- 1 Be clear and courteous, avoid personal issues that are not planning-related and concentrate on the facts of the case.
- 2 Use your local knowledge – this may be personal experience of traffic or flora and fauna and so on.
- 3 If you're a near neighbour, be clear about how you think the proposed development is going to impact on you.

CPRE also say:

- Look at the submitted planning application documents – you'll be able to find these on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) website.
- Familiarise yourself with the site – make sure you understand what is being planned, and where it will be.
- Decide your stance on the application – do you support or object to the scheme?
- Look at the Local Plan – has the land been allocated for development, are there any relevant planning policies against which the application needs to be assessed?
- Put your comments in writing – think about how the proposed development would impact on:
  - Residential amenity
  - Agricultural land
  - Highway safety
  - Protected landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - Legally protected wildlife sites such as Special Protection Areas
  - Heritage – conservation area/listed buildings
  - Biodiversity, hedgerows and protected species.

In our area, you will probably have heard of the withdrawal of the allocation at Tudeley village while acknowledging that this would necessitate an earlier review of the Local Plan. There were also amendments to address issues around flood risk. However, it has been noted, and CPRE have raised this, that the Council has not considered the higher density levels as at least a partial means of addressing the reduced housing numbers and to mitigate the further loss of Green Belt land. All this is work in progress relating to the housing supply position, in the context of an emerging Local Plan.

Are you interested in windmills? On our committee we have been looking at where windmills have been or where we think they were at one time around Pembury. Interestingly, Kent County Council is wishing to dispose of eight listed windmills it has owned and cared for over several decades, six of which are listed Grade 1 or Grade 2\*. It remains to be seen whether they do dispose of them, and what the outcome will be. Do you have information about any local windmills that might be of interest to others?

As I mentioned in previous Newsletters we are looking to publish Bygone Pembury No 2, and we are gathering articles and pictures for this. We are also commissioning articles where we have found gaps in the topics already published. We would welcome your input, your knowledge, and anything you think might be of interest to Pembury residents of the past. We can soon tell you if your item fills a gap, and there's room for family stories of living in Pembury's past. We'd love you to be a contributor!

I intend to stand down as Pembury Society Chairman at the next AGM in October, having served in this capacity for over 10 years. I know the Committee would like to hear from everyone who would be interested in either being on the Committee or indeed as their Chairman. It has been a great privilege to do this, and I can recommend joining the Committee for interesting bimonthly meetings, and not onerous either.

Do you have any suggestions for speakers at our two meetings a year? We would value your thoughts.

#### Other News:

The 115<sup>th</sup> Military Road Run (The original "Guards Dash" passes through Pembury on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April. This a Road Run of Veteran and Vintage Cars and Military Vehicles which depart Sevenoaks at 10am then via Tonbridge and Pembury (between 10 and

11.30am – best seen on the Village Green) to Lamberhurst, for a stop, then via the A21 to Hastings and along the seafront from St Leonards to the Stade Open Space for display between 12.00 and 15.30. It is in aid of Combat Stress, for veterans mental health.

Sadly we note the passing of Richard Nesbit on 15<sup>th</sup> March, former head of our Primary School, and notable in education in his career, being awarded an MBE. Former teachers and others gathered with the family for thanksgiving at St Peter's Upper Churchyard on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

The Annual Parish Meeting of the Parish Council takes place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April, from 7.15 to 8.30pm, in the Pembury Village Hall, when there is an invitation to “come and chat to your Parish Councillors and find out more about the work of the Parish Council at this year's informal Drop-in meeting”. The detailed Annual Report for 2023-24 is to be found in the Spring 2024 edition of Pembury Village News.

We look forward to seeing you at the Society's meeting on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April, as we look forward to hearing Dr Bowes.

Every good wish

David Hanes

#### **Planning matters - Planning Report - Spring 2024**

From what has been posted on Facebook there seems to be some misunderstanding and confusion regarding the large-scale housing developments proposed for Pembury. It is unlikely anyone actually welcomes the proposals but it is unfair to berate our hard working parish council for not putting a stop to the plans. Although they are consulted by the planning authority (TWBC) on all applications legally they have no more influence on any outcome than private individuals.

As for the large-scale proposals, this is how things stand:

1. Housing policy is directed from Westminster and, in order to try and ease the national housing shortage, every local authority in England has been issued with a quota of new housing that must be delivered over the next few years. These quotas often seem to bear little resemblance to local conditions or needs.
2. TWBC's quota is being dealt with in the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP). Finding suitable places to develop in our borough is difficult because most of the land outside the already built-up areas such as the town itself, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and the smaller villages, is Greenbelt and/or in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where development is restricted.

In the emerging LDP Pembury has been allocated something in excess of 300 new homes, mostly on three plots situated between the A21 and the village. This will increase the population by about 10%. Everyone is aware this will put a strain on the existing infrastructure but we are unlikely to be able to stop the proposed development as it is directed 'from above' and it is important that we do not come across as 'nimby'.

1. This is where the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), which Pembury residents voted to adopt, comes into play. It is a legal document that the planning authority must abide by when any planning application is considered. What the NDP can't do is override directions from 'higher authorities' that houses will be built but it should mean that we have some control over what is built.

Among other things, the NDP sets out the type of housing that Pembury needs such as

starter homes to help local young people get on the housing ladder and homes, including bungalows, that are more suitable for older residents who no longer want large, detached properties with large gardens but want to stay in the area. The NDP also requires at least 40% of the properties to be 'affordable' which may not mean much in this area, but it is a step in the right direction. Design is also important, as is retention of open spaces for recreation. The best we can do is work hard to make sure that any development in Pembury is environmentally acceptable, which can only be done when specific plans are submitted, and also fight for our infrastructure to be upgraded before it collapses due to excessive pressures.

One thing that is worrying, however, is where are all those houses going to be built that were proposed for Capel but have now been removed from the emerging LDP? TWBC has still got to fulfil its quota somehow and we don't want any more in Pembury.

As for the usual planning applications pending, apart from the domestic extensions and a significant amount of tree work, there is little to report except:

1. The latest proposal for a new block at Cornford House seems to be out of all proportion to its surroundings.
2. The proposal for 9 high end 'passive build' homes at 39 Lower Green Rd is controversial.
3. The enforcement action to remove the gypsies at Redwings Lane is proceeding, but very slowly.

Kathryn Franklin     Planning Officer

#### Current Committee

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# **SPRING MEETING**

**Wednesday 24th April 2024**

**at 7.45pm**

**St Peter's Upper Church**

**Guest Speaker**

**Dr Robert Bowes**

**The future of  
Primary Care in  
the NHS**

**Members free, Non-Members £3 on the Door**