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Subject: Questions for KHPC TMBC Cycling Strategy and footpaths

Hi Clerk, Chair and Councillors

Many thanks for the opportunity to speak at the council meeting last Wednesday.

As you may recall, I had a few questions, the first of which related to the TMBC Cycling Strategy 2014-2019 (attached for reference).

This strategy links Kings Hill to the roads to the North of Kings Hill, some of which are designated as Quiet Lanes and hence appropriate for leisure use.

The strategy was to link from the Kings Hill boundary through the Broadwater Road. However, I noticed that a sign was recently put up across this road indicating dogs running free, so clearly not open for public access.

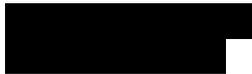
Note that the early Google Street View from the corner of Broadwater Road and Lavenders Road clearly shows open connectivity from that junction to the Kings Hill development (around Glenton Avenue), in that construction traffic is clearly visible. In addition, this is shown as a road on the 1908 OS map on the NLS web site.

In addition, the developer accepted a condition to join up to the existing public footpath network. I consider that, to the North of Kings Hill, this has not been done. For example, the continuation of Lavenders Road to around Alderman Place should be opened up. (Note that the 1950s OS map of the area shows a path from Ketrige Lane to this road; maybe the Ketrige Lane end should also be opened up!) I understand that the developers installed a high metal fence around the South end of this lane, with bamboo screening, presumably to hide the fly tipping that was going on behind it; it may be necessary to ensure that this fly tipping is cleared up; in addition, I understand that there is a caravan dumped on this lane. This would allow for improved walking access from Kings Hill to West Malling and West Malling station, and ensure that the roads around Broadwater Farm area are better used. This includes path MR144, which is clearly not much used at present, as there is little continuity of paths in the area. Note that what appears to be illegal dumping and burning of rubbish South of MR144 has resulted in vehicles damaging the path and also the Eastern end is scattered with fly tipping which makes it unpleasant; maybe the council could look into addressing these issues; it seems that there have been a number of incidents where smoke from the fires has caused discomfort to members of the community on Kings Hill. In addition, failure of the developer to meet their commitments and open up access to the North has resulted in other developers claiming that development is acceptable because the routes are not much used for walking and cycling. This is clearly not acceptable.

Note that the use of permissive routes rather than public footpaths is disappointing as it lends less legal weight to access. Also, many of the permissive routes around Kings Hill have barriers, presumably to reduce the use by motor bikes, but it does mean that they are largely inaccessible by disabled users, which may have legal implications. This also applies to routes through Country Park in Heath Farm. Can the council please review and let me know what they think. Note that other paths, such as MR260 seem to have been relabelled as a permissive route at its Eastern end. I base this on comments on social media, where it seemed to indicate that there were 'Private' signs put up on the end of Russett Way; I have not been able to verify, so this may not be correct, but I would be concerned if public footpaths are being 'lost'. I am concerned that access such as Danns Lane have been lost without replacement with formal Public Footpaths, and even Canon Lane has been built over, and we are only left with a permissive route! Just look at the Kent public footpath map, and you will see a hole around Kings Hill! Can you please let me know what can be done to rectify the situation.

I trust that you will be able to provide me with a response to my questions and comments by the next Parish Council meeting.

Many thanks

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