

The Hartley Herald

The Parish Council Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Hartley, Longfield, Kent DA3 8EL
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HARTLEY WOOD UNDER THREAT

April 2008

The Parish Council needs your help to ensure that all of Hartley Wood can continue to be enjoyed by the present and future generations of residents for walking and other activities.

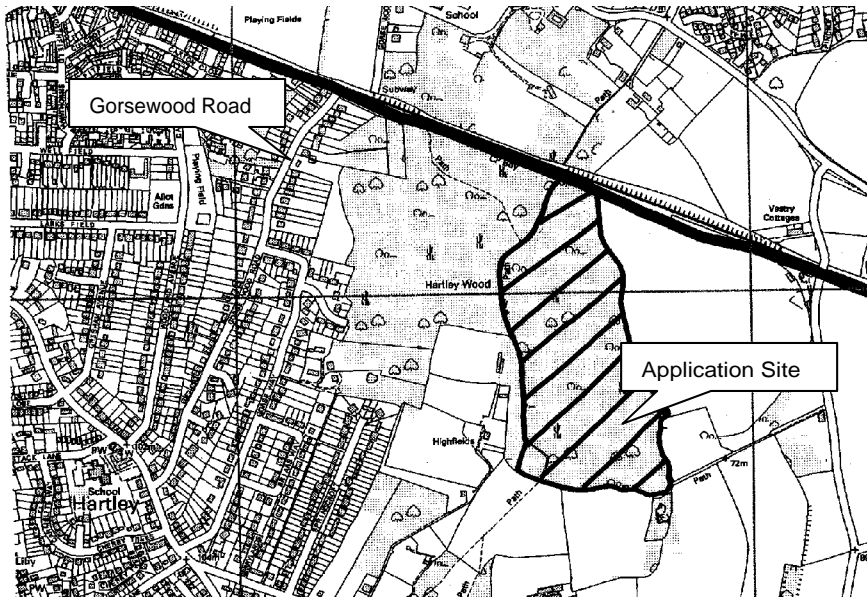
Because of the importance of the Wood to the community the Parish Council has taken steps to try to protect it, but it now needs your support. A Public Meeting has been arranged for **Wednesday 7th May 2008 at 7.30 pm at All Saints Church Centre, Ash Road** and the Council hopes that residents will take this opportunity to come and show their support.

Background

Approximately half of Hartley Wood and the adjoining land in Hartley Bottom is owned by the London Borough of Southwark. The land adjoining the Wood was used until the 1960's as a landfill site.

The Wood has been extensively used by generations of residents for walking, and by children playing, but in the past Southwark has attempted to sell the woodland, much to the concern of local residents and the Council. With local support the Woodland Trust tried to buy the woods but those negotiations fell through.

Village Green Application



The Parish Council continued to be concerned that the Wood might be sold and residents denied access. It therefore made an application to the Kent County Council (KCC), in 2005 to have the section of the Wood owned by Southwark designated as a Village Green.

A Village Green is land which is subject to the right of local people to enjoy recreational activities on it. There is no legal requirement that it should consist mainly of grass, be

situated in or in reasonable proximity to a town or village, or be suitable for use by local inhabitants for traditional recreational activities.

Village Green status would leave the Wood in the ownership of Southwark but would protect public access in perpetuity. In support of the application it was necessary to show that local residents had enjoyed "lawful sports and pastimes" continuously for a period of 20 years from 1985. A number of local residents signed affidavits confirming that they had used and continue to use in some cases, the Woods for that period.

Your Parish Councillors are: Larry Abraham, Chris Alford, Alan Barnett, Jane Burns, Penny Cole, James Gaywood, David Graeme, Steffan Granger, Malcolm Harris, Jon Minns, Anne Oxtoby, Brian Ramsay and Vince Sewell. They can be contacted via the Clerk, Julie Hoad at the Parish Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Hartley, Longfield, Kent DA3 8EL, By email: mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk or by phone: 01474 709441.

Recent Developments

The KCC Panel met on 29th November 2007 to make a decision on the Parish Council's application. At the Hearing, Counsel on behalf of Southwark, requested further time to present their case. They were given a two month extension, and the KCC Panel reconvened on 21st February 2008. After hearing from both sides again, the Panel decided that to be sure any decision they made was 'legally safe' the matter should be heard by an Independent Inspector at a Non-Statutory Public Inquiry.

Whilst the Council believes it has a strong case to present at the Public Inquiry, it wishes to strengthen its position by gathering further evidence from the residents of Hartley and from other members of the public who have used the woods "as of right" since 1985.

If you have used the Woods for all or part of those 20 years between 1985 and 2005 and are prepared to sign an evidence form, please telephone the Parish Office and one will be sent to you. Alternatively call in at the Parish Office, Hartley Library (next to the Car Sales Garage, Ash Road) or complete the form below and put it in the box at Hartley Library, Budgens Store, Cherry Trees or Hartley Post Office.

Any photographic evidence or articles that you may know about which evidences use of the land, could be useful and it would be helpful if you could bring these to the Parish Office or telephone and they can be collected from you (originals will be returned).

What can you do to help?

- 1. Attend the Public Meeting on Wednesday 7th May 2008 at 7.30p.m. at All Saints Church Centre, Ash Road.
- 2. Complete and return the reply slip below.



a) I / We strongly support / do not support* Hartley Parish Council's application for Village Green status on the section of Hartley Wood, owned by Southwark Borough Council.

b) I / We would / would not* be prepared to complete an evidence form.

* Delete as appropriate

Name:

Address:

Telephone no:

Email Address:





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