

**Minutes of the Nuts To The Walnuts Annual General Meeting**  
**22 May 2025, 19:30**  
**Orpington Liberal Club, 7 Station Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 0RZ**

1. Attendance

Present: Steve Wehrle (Chair), Andrew Stotesbury (Treasurer), Stella Geddes, Julia Burton.

Apologies for absence: Committee members Karen Dungate, Elaine Mackay and John Pead. Group member Sheila Brown.

Signed in as attending: Roger Sheil, Norman Warner, Graeme Casey (Lib Dem candidate at the last General Election), Steve Sollitt (Lib Dem candidate in Local Council Elections 2026), Rachel Sollitt, George Jacobs, Michael Fowler, Gillian Berthol, Michael Pitkin. Approximately another 12 people attended, including Tony Owen (Cons), Councillor for Petts Wood and Knoll, Caroline Jeffrey, Peitra Napier, Martyn Longstaff, Chris Thompson and Paul Green.

2. Minutes from the previous AGM on 11 April 2024 were accepted.

3. Chair's Report

Steve Wehrle (Chair) summarised the activities of the group since the last AGM.

The Chair expressed regret that Orpington Ward Councillors Pauline Tunnicliffe and Kim Bottling were unable to attend the AGM and reassured the meeting that invitations had been sent to both in March this year.

Invitations were also sent to Gareth Bacon MP, Petts Wood and Knoll Councillors Simon Fawthrop and Tony Owen. We were happy to welcome Tony Owen later to the meeting and appreciate the effort he made to come, after attending a previous engagement.

Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> which represents the business community in Orpington had appointed Tyler Smith as its new BID Manager. Members of the Committee have met Tyler, and we look forward to having a positive and collaborative relationship with him regarding the future of Orpington Town Centre.

The Committee had a further meeting with Redcliff/Walnuts Project Team in March, just after the second round of public consultations. We raised a number of members' concerns, including the height of one of buildings, (19 storeys), the density, design, the lack of green space at ground level and lack of natural light on the lower/ground levels.

We understand that Redcliff are currently negotiating with Bromley Council about extending the short lease on the Walnuts shopping centre or purchasing

the freehold. We believe that unless an agreement is reached, Redcliff will not invest in more detailed plans or construction surveys.

Work on the refurbishment of the Walnuts Leisure Centre is well underway and looks to be completed on target early next year. We understand that currently asbestos is being removed.

Membership of NttW continues to increase and we now have around 2,700 members. We remain an active campaign group and encourage anyone with an interest in the future of Orpington High Street to join our Facebook Group, *Nuts To The Walnuts*. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nutstothewalnuts> . Please add notification alerts so you get the latest news and posts. We also have a website, *Nuts4Orpington*. <https://nuts4orpington.co.uk/> .

We are aware of the planning proposals in the Derry Downs area for homes on green belt land and the proposals for a warehouse to store the Bromley Historic Collections archive in Priory Gardens. We watch progress on these with close interest and are happy to offer any advice or support requested by local campaigners. However, the focus of our campaign remains the future of Orpington High Street and the Leisure Centre.

#### 4. Treasurer's Report

Andrew Stotesbury (Treasurer) updated the meeting on the group's financial position.

The true balance at the time of the AGM was £37.78. Monies spent during the year included maintenance payments for the website and printing. There is no need for a call for funds but should funding be required we may put out a crowdsourcing appeal to members.

#### 5. Election of the Committee

A show of hands was called for and members of the existing Committee were unanimously re-elected.

#### 6. Any Other Business/Open Floor

Graeme Casey, Lib Dem, asked if there was a consensus in the group as what we do want to see in the town centre.

We said that most of our members favour development which is low-rise and in keeping the character of the town, with no building being taller than the top floor of Orpington College. NttWs asked members for feedback on Bromley Council's draft consultation on the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Based on this the group's response was sent to Bromley Council in June 2022. It is a comprehensive document, and we encourage anyone with an interest in the

town centre to read it. It is on our Facebook site under Files tab, Orpington SPD NttW response - Updated Final (1).pdf and our website under the Resources and Information tab, then under the NttW heading.

Bromley Council captured our feedback in *Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document Regulation 12(a) Consultation Statement June 2023* . <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/2283/orpington-town-centre-spd-regulation-12a-consultation-statement>

The SPD was finalised in July 2023: *Orpington Town Centre, Supplementary Planning, Document Adopted July 2023*:  
<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/2281/orpington-town-centre-spd>

Additionally, NttWs sent members' feedback on the Bromley Local Plan to Bromley Council in May 2023. This is also available on our Facebook page under the Files tab.

Caroline Jeffrey asked whether Bromley Council could enforce the guidance in the SPD. For example, the SPD states:

- 6.4 Any development proposal which comes forward on this site should accord with the following key parameters:
- Taking into account the local context, which is characterised by low-rise development, the Council considers that higher density development, predominantly 3 to 9 storeys, would be appropriate in this location. Heights should graduate from 3-4 storeys at the edges of the site, to respond sensitively to the existing low-rise scale of the predominantly 2 storey residential properties to the north, east, and south.
  - The higher end of the 3-9 storey threshold should be located towards the centre of the site in order to mediate between the surrounding contrasting scales. Subject to detailed justification which addresses relevant policy requirements, **a single taller element with a maximum height of up to 15 storeys, taking reference from the height of the nearby Orpington College tower, may be suitable.** Any taller element should be located centrally within the site to minimise the impact on the surrounding low-rise context. The Council considers an **elegant slender** building to be more appropriate than a larger slab block, in order to reduce the appearance of bulk and to create a more distinctive and positive contribution to the skyline.

However, Redcliff's latest public consultation included a 19-storey building which is neither elegant nor slender and is 11m taller than the college building. We await Redcliff's planning application to see if this has been modified.

So, although developers may submit plans which do not adhere to the SPD, the guidance does give the Council a basis on which to reject proposals and likewise gives residents reference points for raising formal objections.

Councillor Tony Owen asked the Chair if he could address the meeting to build on previous advice given to NttWs.

Tony said the planning environment had changed due to amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a significant increase in building targets for Bromley borough from the GLA, which had increased from 774 homes

per year to 2,805. Tony added that the Council had to demonstrate a 5 year supply of homes otherwise Commissioners could intervene and takeover. The Orpington SPD provides important guidance but is subservient to the Bromley Local Plan, which is subservient to the London Plan, which in turn needs to chime with the NPPF. In summary, Councillors and Officers have to balance many competing voices and comply with legislation.

Tony made us aware that the Council's Development Control Committee (DCC) is due to hold a **Special Meeting on Tuesday 27 May 2025 7.30 pm** at Bromley Civic Centre, entitled *Bromley Local Plan Review Direction Of Travel Consultation*. This is to discuss a public consultation for 8 weeks from early/mid-July this year on the draft Bromley Local Plan. Following this consultation, it is likely a draft Local Plan for consultation will be drawn up in summer 2026. A Local Plan is due to be submitted in time to meet the Government's December 2026 deadline.

Tony suggested we take a look at the documentation:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=8185&Ver=4>

A reminder that NttWs is a non-political organisation. When candidates are finalised for the Local elections next year, we will ask them for a statement on what they want to see in Orpington Town centre. All responses received will be published on our Facebook page for our members' information.

Thank you to everyone who attended. The meeting ended around 21:30.