



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 25.02.2016**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Cary Buchanan	BRE Garston
Jennifer Dudley	BRE Garston
Suzanne Watts	Individual
Chris Ridley	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Norman Jones	DEF
Cllr Janice Marshall	DBC Environment Portfolio Holder
Cllr Phil Hills	Tring Town Council
Cllr Paul Harris	Great Gaddesden PC and DEF
Siva Niranjana	West Herts. Action Group and DEF
Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	HCC/DBC
John Bennett	Individual

Apologies

Adrian Whyle	PlasticsEurope
Paul Davies	Individual
Dennis Harvey	DEF/ Population Matters
Cllr Fiona Guest	DBC
Susie Mercer	Ashridge Estate (scheduled presenter)
Cllr Garrick Stevens (arrived after end)	Berkhamsted Town Council

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. Apologies

See above. GE had failed to send a mobile number with the agenda to enable late attendees to get in. Instead, SN kindly posted a yellow sticker on the door.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 12/11/15

No corrections suggested.

3. Matters arising (*Paragraph numbers from the previous minutes are in Italics*)

3 *Reducing Litter in Dacorum*

GE, CR and MR had attended a “Christmas Bash” at the Civic Centre on Monday 14th of December at the invitation of Neighbourhood Support Lead Officer Nigel Brant –Wilcock. Though Nigel was not at the Bash (sick) GE spoke to Neighbourhood Support Officer Robert Smith, who offered to field and respond to E-mails from Street Champions (robert.smith@dacorum.gov.uk)

GE had E-mailed Robert Smith (9/1/16)

“one or two members of DEF including myself are registered as Street Champions, and we are on the look out for channels of communication with Clean Safe and Green regarding reporting larger instances of dumping and fly-tipping, so that we can get responses to such reports and be kept updated, something that we find the online system consistently fails to do.”

The E-mail also included the text of an online report that GE had made last August: (8/8/15 Ref 451906 - Wood/boarded panels on ground under yew tree just within perimeter fence of Northridge Park, almost opposite junction of Green End Lane and St. Nicholas Mount – that was still outstanding. The dump has subsequently been cleared, and GE wrote to thank Robert Smith.

CR said that she had posted a number of reports of dumping via the “Fix My Street” site, and that the dumps had subsequently been removed, though there was no way of knowing whether this had been the result of her report or whether they would have been cleared anyway. She said that the whole of the pathway (“Clover Way”) starting near Halsey Drive and leading to Cavendish School was littered, and that she would try an E-mail to Robert Smith. Nigel Brant –Wilcock tried to organise a litter clearance of Clover Way on Sunday February 7th, but this was postponed because not enough people had pledged to participate. He has kindly agreed to attend the next DEF meeting on May 12th to explain the changes that have taken place to the Street Champions project recently and to answer any questions members may have, and to attend subsequent meetings if possible.

3 *LA3 Housing*

SN had reported that the West Hemel Action Group (WHAG) submitted questions relating to Transport and Health and Safety, challenging the viability of the LA3 Green Belt development at Dacorum Borough Council’s (DBC) full Council meeting on 20th January to consider approving the Site Allocations Development Plan Document. There were eight other questions raised by residents, on topics ranging from the rationale behind the number of dwellings to the travellers’ site, transport infrastructure, developer corporation taxes, the expansion of Hemel Hempstead, drainage, flooding and the possibility of using of commercial land in lieu of LA3. Despite all the challenging questions, and although a number of councillors either voted against approval or abstained, DBC approved the Development Plan Document and on 5th February submitted it to the Planning Inspectorate (acting on behalf of the Department for Community and Local Government) for public examination. Hearing sessions venue and timetable are yet to be published, but are expected to be this spring or summer.

3. *Solar power, heat pumps etc.*

PH said that he had approached 3C Energy, proposers of the Solar Farm at Ashley Green, suggesting sites in Great Gaddesden for such a scheme, but that they had confirmed the latest

response to GE from Tom Raftery of 3C Energy, who had sought support from DEF at the August meeting, which was that they were not currently pursuing such schemes, following Government cuts to subsidies which had made them uneconomical.

3 *Hatfield Incinerator Refusal*

DEF had received (7th Feb.) a request from John Webb of HertsWoW (Herts. Without Waste) [john.webb2@gmx.com] to let Herts. County Council know what people think of a new proposal for a central incinerator to dispose of Hertfordshire's municipal waste.

What was proposed and eventually rejected for New Barnfield, Hatfield, was an RERF, where the first R stands for Recycling. What is now being offered is just an ERF (energy recovery facility) that would destroy all of the materials that were put into it, since there is no room for recycling on the proposed site, which was previously rejected by Veolia. The site now selected is at Rye House, Hoddesdon. WoW's aim is to persuade the Council to reject that proposal in favour of more sustainable, local and flexible approaches. All are welcome to call John 07960 825668 and discuss tailoring their response. (See also "Any Other Business" below.)

4 *Halsey Field (Roman Snails etc.)*

Christine Ridley had reported (Feb 24th) as follows:

"We have now had two very effective management sessions on the Halsey field, one on 13th December and one on Monday 22nd February. Both were well supported, with some members of the Chilterns Society Hertfordshire Conservation Volunteers (CSHCV) coming to bolster our numbers in December, and some new 'Friends of the Field' joining us last Monday. Barry Watson from CSHCV very kindly lent us hand tools, gloves etc. and also persuaded three acquaintances of his who were qualified to man brush-cutters, to come and help us tackle some of the scrub, and widen some of the main paths.

The result is that the top area of the field is now looking much less overgrown, although we have left sizeable areas of bushes and bramble to provide nectar for insects and shelter for birds. Many of the Ash trees have now been felled, but there are still plenty to tackle in our final work session of the winter on Sunday 20th March. Everyone who takes part in these sessions tells me they really enjoy them, so if you feel that you would like to come along and help on 20th please do join us. The sessions run from 10am until approximately 1pm, but help for just part of the morning is very much appreciated. Free tea, coffee and cakes are provided, and the local Kestrel tends to come and check us out during our break!

Email: chrisridleysen@yahoo.co.uk for further details if you'd like to come.

Halsey Field now has a Facebook page with photos and up-dates at:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Halsey-Field-Local-Wildlife-Site-Hemel-Hempstead-1106523336038066/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

This Spring we are hoping to widen our group of 'Friends of the Field' and apply for a grant to pay for some signage. An official field opening day has been suggested, but no date has been set for this, as yet."

5. *River Gade in Gadebridge Park*

SW had been invited to attend a meeting at DBC on Feb 9th to discuss the allocation of grant money to improving the river Gade in Gadebridge Park. Other participants would include the Environment Agency, Hemel Evolution and community groups. However, the meeting has been postponed. (See also “Any Other Business” below.)

6 *Climate Change*

GE had not got round to sending an Email on behalf of DEF to MPs Mike Penning and David Gauke backing up Mike Ridley’s letter to them concerning the then-forthcoming Climate Change conference in Paris.

In any case, shortly after the conference reached its conclusions GE received a request via Transition Town Berkhamsted (named petitioners John Ingleby Annie Heaton (of “Grand Union Community Energy”)) for DEF to support a letter and petition to DBC calling for specific actions and targets in responses to the international agreements reached in Paris.

Having consulted DEF’s Steering Group as far as possible in the limited time available, GE offered DEF’s support, subject to the authors’ considering some amendments (drafted by Mike Ridley) in order to make some of the targets more specific and realistic, e.g.:

Instead of simply “Dacorum will become a zero carbon Borough by 2030”, add “In particular, domestic housing, business premises, and public transport energy use will be offset by renewable energy generation within the Borough resulting in zero carbon use by 2030”

Delete “Ensuring Dacorum’s new public service quarter is an exemplar for zero carbon development” as the public service quarter is already being built, and is set to save considerable energy costs anyway.

Change “Procure all Dacorum Borough Council electricity from renewable sources” to “Procure all Dacorum Borough Council electricity from companies actively reinvesting profits into renewable sources”

However these suggestions appear to have had little if any influence on the final letter. Annie subsequently notified supporters (16th Dec) that the letter had been sent to 42 Councillors and the Chief Executive at DBC. She apologised “if the text doesn't meet your expectations in any way . . . However, since the goal is simply to open a conversation, we can refine our "asks" once that's achieved.”

Annie Heaton has recently launched an online petition in support of the letter. See <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/dacorum-zero-carbon-2030>

4 *Building Standards and Sustainability*

Cary Buchanan and Jennifer Dudley of the Building Research Establishment at Garston gave highly informative presentations to the Forum on building standards. In welcoming them, GE reminded the meeting of the several controversial plans in Dacorum to build new housing estates in the Green Belt, the largest of these being at West Hemel Hempstead, designated ‘Local Allocation 3’ (LA3), and that DEF had lobbied the Council for it to be a “Flagship Development”, acting as an exemplary model, featuring high sustainability and a low carbon footprint, such as

were already being piloted by the Council on the “Passive House” housing scheme at St. Peters Court, Gadebridge.

Cary Buchanan invited DEF members to visit the Innovation Park at BRE in order to see examples of best practice in sustainable housing. She explained the history of BREAM (BRE Assessment Method) since its inception in 1988, which comprised environmental, social and economic assessments of buildings and schemes, and had awarded 535,000 certifications internationally. The BREAM standard goes beyond UK Building Regulations, but unlike the latter is not always a requirement, except for publicly-funded schemes such as schools and hospitals. It is also required by Local Authorities in many but not in all cases. It was not part of the Housing Standards review, however CSH (see below) was. More information can be found at <https://www.bre.co.uk/housing-standards-review>

Jennifer Dudley’s presentation focused on the HQM (Home Quality Mark), BRE’s new voluntary sustainability standard for new homes which is part of the BREEAM family of quality and sustainability standards. The HQM is a consumer-focused scheme, aiming to provide consumers with information about the home they are looking to buy or rent, and to allow developers to differentiate their product in the market place by recognising performance beyond the minimum standards required by regulation. It is being phased in to replace the CSH (Code for Sustainable Homes) which was launched in 2007 and which was developed by BRE Global while remaining a UK Government-owned standard within the Department of Community and Local Government. CSH is still applicable to “legacy” schemes, which roughly means those that are already under construction. Rather than CSH’s Standards system (1 to 6), HQM awards one to five stars for a multiplicity of interrelated criteria, judged holistically, plus three overall indicators named “My Wellbeing”, “My Cost” and “My Footprint”. Each individual home assessed to the HQM will receive a scorecard representing the performance of that particular home.

Further information about the HQM can be found at: www.homequalitymark.com which features an introductory video that can be accessed by clicking ‘Introducing the new home quality mark’. The following links provide further introductory material:

- How HQM is assessed and areas it covers: <http://www.homequalitymark.com/how-is-it-assessed>
- An HQM house on the BRE innovation park: <http://www.homequalitymark.com/The-Wienerberger-E4-Brick-House>
- Supporters of the HQM: <http://www.homequalitymark.com/working-with-us>

Questions and Answers (Q(Initials): A:)

Q:SN What is the difference between BREAM and HQE (High Quality Environmental) standards?
A: HQE is most commonly applied in France, whereas BREAM is used internationally.

Q:SN Does BREAM accreditation distinguish sufficiently between Sustainability and Quality, which are not synonymous?

A: Yes, and within BREAM Sustainability includes wider social and economic aspects.

Q:PH In assessing air quality, is location taken into account, such as closeness to the M1?

A: Yes

Q: SW Does BREAM consider access from home to amenities, taking into account distance and disability access?

A: Yes

Q:MR Is there not an element of “double counting” in totting up points BREAM awards for nominally separate categories, for instance Low Energy Costs and Low Emissions?

A: Agreed there is a danger of this, but it is avoided by the assessment methodology by considering all aspects holistically and by not simply adding up. This results in a “balanced score card”.

Q: JM Why is “Low Mortgage” included in the assessment, when it has more to do with location and finance than with Quality or Sustainability?

A: (SW) There is a link between these aspects, since “Low Mortgage” reflects Lenders’ experiences of the area.

Q: SW Does “Footprint” reflect operational running or construction materials?

A: Both

Q:SN to what extent are BRE currently interacting with developers on the implementation of BREAM?

A: BRE are currently interacting with developers of around 20 major schemes.

Q: SN Are there cost comparisons for BREAM-accredited vs. non-accredited houses?

A: Not yet. There were under CSH.

Q: GE Since BREAM/HQM standards cannot be insisted on for schemes such as the LA3 housing development, is direct lobbying of the developers more effective than lobbying the Council? For instance by convincing them of the good publicity that would stem from a high rating?

A: (BRE) BRE continue to work on the publicity aspect of their awards, with the aim of emulating the star ratings that are used in on-line marketing of an increasing number of goods and services.

A: (SW) Developers would generally avoid publicity if they obtained a low score.

Q: NJ How does BREAM score gated communities, which arguably confer more benefits to the residents than to the communities in which they are set?

A: BRE are not generally in favour of gated communities.

Q: CR/MR In assessing a scheme such as LA3, would merit be awarded on the grounds of conserving ecological assets such as existing wildlife corridors?

A: Yes

Q: JM What are the timescales for implementing HQM?

A: HQM has been being developed since 2014, and a “Beta Standard” was launched in December 2015 and is now open for registrations (which are free until June 2016). “Version 1” is expected in about a year’s time. Licensed HQM assessors are able to register and complete HQM assessments.

Later Note: The HQM Beta technical manual that details the technical criteria of the standard can be found at www.homequalitymark.com/standard.

Q: MR How does the Passive House (Passivhaus) relate to BRE standards?

A: It corresponds approximately to CSH level 6.

(Later Note: For an explanation of Passivhaus see <https://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=2856>)

5 'Ashridge: the next five years'

This item was cancelled because of sickness. Susie Mercer has offered to address the next DEF meeting, and this has been gladly accepted.

6. Any Other Business

WW-L said that he had attended an HCC meeting that afternoon to discuss the County's transport policy up to 2050 (sic). There will be a public consultation on this from July to September this year. In the meantime WW-L offered to keep DEF informed as far as possible, and this offer was accepted. He also invited DEF members to send him (wyla@talktalk.net) as soon as possible their ideas for topics that should be included in the consultation.

Similarly, WW-L offered (accepted) to keep DEF informed of the proposal for a central incinerator to dispose of Hertfordshire's municipal waste in an ERF (Energy Recovery Facility) at Rye House, Hoddesdon. (See within Item 3/3 above.) JM pointed out that waste had to be disposed of somewhere.

Re 3/5 above SW said that DBC is in the process of developing a Master Plan for Gadebridge Park. As a member of the Friends of Gadebridge Park, Steve has been invited to a consultation meeting at which he will present a paper on the Upper Gade. He is happy to distribute it to DEF members. Gratefully accepted.