



**Dacorum Environmental Forum  
Full Meeting Thursday 25.08.2016**

MINUTES

**Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Executive member for Environment, Planning & Transport at Herts County Council
Paul Davies	DEF
Chris Ridley	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Cllr Phil Hills	Tring Town Council
Cllr Paul Harris	Great Gaddesden PC and DEF
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council

**Apologies**

Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	HCC/DBC
Siva Niranjana	West Herts. Action Group and DEF
Dennis Harvey (in hospital)	DEF/ Population Matters

Meeting started at 7:30pm

**1. Apologies**

See above. The meeting expressed its sympathy and wishes for a speedy recovery to Dennis Harvey.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 12/5/16**

No corrections suggested.

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

**3 LA3 Housing**

GE reminded the meeting that following the Examination in Public of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (which includes LA3) and subject to the Inspector's rulings, Master Plans for LA3 etc. would be produced for public consultation.

Further to DEF's representations in respect of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan Document, Ian Kemp the Programme Officer (PO) for the Examination had E-mailed GE informing him that Senior Planning Inspector; Louise Crosby MA MRTPI had been appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the Examination into the soundness and legal compliance of the Development Plan Document (DPD) and that Hearing Sessions would commence at 10.00am on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in the Bulbourne and Gade Rooms at the Civic Centre. Anyone wishing to take part in a hearing session should confirm their participation with the PO by 5pm on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016. If a further statement was submitted, it should be focused upon the matters, issues and questions identified by the Inspector and should be sent to the PO for receipt by 5pm on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The Guidance Notes said that "Representors should not seek to repeat comments already submitted or introduce new areas of objection to the Plan at this stage."

GE had attended a meeting on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July convened by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and DEF member Michael Nidd with planning specialists from CPRE Herts. and members of West Hemel Action Group (WHAG), and had subsequently confirmed DEF's participation with the Programme Officer as required before 19<sup>th</sup> August. As the programme stood, GE would participate on DEF's behalf on Matter 1 – 'Legal Compliance, Including Duty to Co-operate' on Tue 4 October (10:00) and Matter 9 – 'Policy LA3: West Hemel Hempstead' on Tue 11 October (14.00).

GE had also prepared draft statements which had been circulated for comment to attendees of the CPRE meeting and to DEF members who had so far expressed an interest. He was happy to forward draft statements also to DEF members who subsequently expressed an interest. According to the Guidance Notes, these "are public hearings and interested persons are welcome to attend and observe, even if not taking part." *Later Note: The DEF statements were sent electronically and posted today (05/09/16) and will in consequence appear on the Examination web page along with statements from other organisations and individuals.*

GE had received an invitation to a CPRE Hertfordshire Planning Skills Seminar with Jed Griffiths MA DipTP FRTPI on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016 10am-3pm at Knebworth Village Hall. The cost was £50 for CPRE members and £75 for non-members, with bookings required by Mon 5<sup>th</sup> September. He had received a favourable response from Transition Towns Berkhamsted regarding the possibility of re-imburement of the cost of attendance from the locality budget funding administered by them. GE (a CPRE member) was proposing to attend in order to improve his knowledge and skills for current and future consultations, and the meeting agreed to an application for funds of £50 to cover his attendance fee.

### **3 Halsey Field (Roman Snails etc.)**

CR reported the following ongoing initiatives at the Halsey Field Wildlife Site:

1. David Kirk of the Boxmoor Trust organised a moth count on the field on the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> July. This was made possible by the fact that the Friends of Halsey Field are now in possession of a key to the main gate, so that we can take heavy equipment on to the site in cars.

2. CR attended a scything course on 30<sup>th</sup> July and with the help of one of our members, a new scythe has been purchased. The scythe has two blades - one which can cope with rough vegetation and one for cutting grass.
3. Steve Lings, who is very knowledgeable about conservation, came to look at the field on 4<sup>th</sup> August, to advise about grass management.
4. There was another work party on 10<sup>th</sup> August, when CSHCV (Chiltern Society Hertfordshire Conservation Volunteers) helped the Friends install a bench at the top of the slope, overlooking Halsey field. They also achieved the following day:
  - The side of the main footpath has been strimmed, to encourage the growth of flowers which prefer a shorter sward,
  - More bushes have been trimmed or cut back completely, to prevent them from shading out the flowers.
  - Some long grass has been scythed in order to weaken the grass and encourage the growth of wild flowers.
5. Osborne Property Services Ltd., who like to support local community projects, have offered a group of volunteers from their workforce to help the Friends with the management tasks for a day in November.
6. HCC has agreed to the Friends' use of herbicide on the Ash tree stumps as they cut them down, to prevent them re-growing, and turning the site into secondary woodland.

Local residents often tell CR how pleased they are about the work the Friends are putting in to the field, and that they are enjoying the results. The new bench, in particular, is already proving very popular.

An evening meeting is being planned for the Friends, possibly on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October, by which time we should know about the success or otherwise of the grant bid.

The next CSHCV assisted work party is planned for the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> December, when we will be managing the next fifth of the field – all help welcomed!

Meet at 19, Halsey Drive (HP13SE) at 9.45am, or at the Halsey Field at 10am. All tools and refreshments provided.

There had been no response to date from DBC regarding a contact for putting a link to the Friends of Halsey Field's site into the DBC website.

DA enquired to what extent was the site protected from development, saying that Herts. County were under pressure to increase capital receipts (i.e. sell the land to the highest bidder.) CR said that a modest degree of protection had been achieved by its designation as a Wildlife Site.

##### **5. *Dacorum Borough Council's Street Champions project.***

CR had not received responses to date to her E-mails to Nigel Brant-Wilcock regarding a community clean-up in the Gadebridge area, and other suggestions raised at the May meeting.

##### **6. *'Ashridge: the next five years'***

**GE** explained the absence of detailed minutes for this item, which was due to a subsequent request from the speaker. The DEF Steering Group had subsequently decided that in future:

1. Speakers should be forewarned of the nature of minutes likely to be taken and distributed.
2. Speakers should be advised not to invite questions during their talks.

#### **7. *Any Other Business***

**SW** said that Friends of Gadebridge Park (FOGB) had applied for a community award, and that although the award had gone instead to the Boxmoor Trust, the application had confirmed FOGB's recognition by DBC. Recent work by the group had succeeded in improving access to the river bank.

A number of people at the meeting were aware of other defibrillators available or planned for public use, at locations including the Civic Centre in Berkhamsted (Centenary project, subject to planning approval), the bowling club in Berkhamsted, and Tring High Street and Cricket Club.

#### **4. Transport issues - consultation on HCC transport policy up to 2050.**

In introducing Cllr. Derrick Ashley, **GE** thanked him for having come all the way from Hitchin to speak to/with DEF.

**DA** said that the Public Transport consultation was due to be launched in September, and would be open until Christmas. He said that the County had the aspiration to "break out of the mould" of building yet more roads to accommodate the ever increasing demand for vehicle trips, and to adopt more sustainable policies. The current demand was characterised by "peakiness", reflecting the high proportion of school runs. The consultation would not just be about cars. There were no proposals at present to introduce road user charging such as had been introduced in Cambridgeshire, from which Hertfordshire differed by having no single predominant town, and in Hertfordshire the problems of traffic growth needed to be considered for each of the conurbations. The "late lamented" East of England Regional Plan had envisaged the creation of a new city for the region, in which case a regional transport plan which scaled up the Cambridgeshire one could have been more appropriate. A current issue for Hertfordshire was the East to West corridors, chiefly the A414, sometimes in use as an overspill due to problems on the M25. Plans for the A414 would however need to take into account "special interest groups" such as occupiers of 35,000 dwellings near its current route.

**GS** asked whether HCC were trying to develop a "Master Plan" that Local Planning Authorities would need to accommodate. **GE** remarked that the input from DEF was likely to be "bottom up" rather than "top down", and **DA** said that both perspectives needed to be used.

**SW** asked whether Connectivity (the co-ordination of different bus and train operators' timetables to minimise long waits for connections) would ever be achieved. **DA** said that this was difficult to monitor with operators, but that currently this requirement did not even get a mention in operators' franchises, as it ought to.

**PH** gave a prepared statement in which he stressed the importance of Climate Change and Air Quality (**DA** agreed on this). He said that bus services should be cheap and should include circular routes to connect villages. **DA** responded saying that all this was possible given sufficient money. He remarked however that in one case a petition to save a rural bus route closure had been signed by thousands, a number far exceeding past users of the service. Villages had become "commuter settlements", and a similar disparity between the number of lobbyists and the number of users occurred when for instance village stores were closed.

**MR** gave a prepared presentation including local photographs, covering topics that included battery technology, parked cars and excessive car ownership, bus services, air quality, infrastructure and safety/road signage.

A combined **MR/PH** presentation will be circulated with these minutes.

In response to **MR's** proposal to revisit a suggestion that the new East-West Cross-Rail link could connect to the Euston line with West Coast services with a relatively short section of track in Willesden Junction / Old Oak Common area, which would link Hertfordshire residents with the West of England, East and West London, and reduce journey time into London Paddington, **DA** said that in 1933 Hertfordshire's transport was run by the London Regional Transport Authority, and that there was be something to be said for expanding the reach of Transport for London into Hertfordshire, as it already extended in other directions.

**MR** asked whether it would be useful for DEF to send **DA** an E-mail containing its proposals. **DA** said that while this would be welcome, it would be more important to submit input to the consultation, as DEF and/or as individual members.

**GE** said he supported the attention given to air quality, saying that for instance conditions in London Road, Apsley, already long identified as exceeding permitted levels of pollutants, had been exacerbated by recent building developments that had creating a "canyon effect". He also called for making bus services between the main Hertfordshire towns faster by cutting out the many pick-up points outside the town centres, saying that many people can walk to their town centres without too much difficulty, and would consider such services more if they did not take so long. **DA** and **PH** agreed with this.

**SW** praised the Oxford to London coach service for its frequency and sophistication, and spoke of his recent favourable experience with the Berlin travel card. **DA** pointed out that combined travel cards for Herts. were available albeit in rudimentary form (Plusbus and day tickets), and that in this regard it would be useful to consider Hertfordshire as a "city".

**GS** pointed out the huge demand placed on Hertfordshire's roads by commuting journeys starting outside the county, and said that this could in part be addressed through a more rational distribution of places of work. **DA** said that such commuting was in part the result of high house prices in Herts., which again in part was due to planning constraints.

**PH** spoke of the real time displays at bus shelters throughout Dorset, giving the expected arrival times of the next buses. **DA** said that Herts also had these to some extent.

**PD** said that some way should be found to reduce the numbers of cars, and that bus usage would increase if there were more widespread information and assurance that a bus was due.

**GE** said, in relation to multiple car ownership per household and the resultant street clogging and pavement parking, that in Japan a would-be car purchaser needed to demonstrate that they had off-street parking.

**CR** said that the only way to influence people's car-owning and usage habits was by hitting their pockets. An example of poor connectivity was at Hemel Railway Station at late evening time, when returnees from London had to use a very pricey taxi service, which was much more polluting than many people travelling in one vehicle would be. **DA** said that he preferred the word "nudge" to "hit".

**PH** said that he preferred the terms "regulation and planning". **DA** said that some regulations and plans can prove deeply unpopular and for politicians such as him ran the risk of electoral defeat. This had happened with regard to the pedestrianisation of the centre of Hitchin.

## **5. Any Other Business**

Some matters were raised that have been moved for clarity from here to under other headings.