



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting – 20th October 2011**

MINUTES

Attendance

Lizzy Staincliffe	Dacorum Borough Council
Laura Wood	Dacorum Borough Council
Gruff Edwards	Vice Chair – Dacorum Environment Forum
Paul Harris	Green Party / Friends of the Earth
Sheila Doyle	H H G M Action Group
Jason Williams	Hemel in Transition
Marion Baker	Transition Town Berkhamsted
Lisa Ward	Resident
Chris Ward	Resident
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Bridget Williams	Transition Town Berkhamsted
Norman Jones	Ramblers – West Herts Group
Emma Norrington	Sunnyside Rural Trust
Phil Pennington	Chair – Dacorum Environmental Forum

Apologies

Cllr Julie Laws	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Fiona Guest	Dacorum Borough Council
Sue Hardy	Home Energy Conservation Officer, DBC
Cllr Anthony Armytage	Berkhamsted Town Council
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Jean Blackman	Friends of the Earth
Cllr Alan Johnson	Parish Cllr, Great Gaddesden
Hazel Johnson	Green Party

The meeting started at 7.30pm

100. Minutes of Meeting held on 21st July 2011

These were agreed with the following corrections:

102.2 – change text to ‘her’ in relation to S Davidson;

103.2 – correct spelling of ‘Aldenham’.

101. Matters Arising

None raised.

102. Update on Dacorum Local Development Framework

102.1 Laura Wood, Team Leader for Strategic Planning at DBC gave an overview of the structure of the LDF for Dacorum; information about the content, importance and opportunities for comment on the Core Strategy; as requested Laura also provided more detailed information on the housing element of the Core Strategy.

102.2 The Core Strategy is the first of a number of documents that will form the Local Plan and has been consulted on previously. It is important as it will be able to be used to make comments on planning applications.

102.3 The pre-submission Core Strategy is published for comment for a six week period from 26th October to 7th December. Forms were handed out to the meeting and area also available on-line. This is not a consultation process but an opportunity to make comments that relate to either its legal process or the soundness of the plan. Laura advised that submissions include proactive comments with proposals for improvement and also that if a group is to make a submission that it clearly states who the group is, its membership and how the response was agreed.

102.4 Laura explained the reasoning behind the choice of Option 2 in terms of the housing development following the last round of consultation (full meeting notes on this are available on request). She stressed that DBC is bound by the increasingly stringent rules of the Planning Inspectorate in terms of demonstrating that the Core Strategy and its housing numbers are deemed sound and acceptable by them and in line with their national calculations. Option 2 is already below the numbers suggested by the Planning Inspectorate and as such DBC commissioned a Strategic Infrastructure Study by independent consultants which identified a range of issues to support their choice for reduced development.

102.5 If no significant changes are required to the Core Strategy then it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination by late summer 2012 with adoption expected late 2012/early 2013. (these dates are not fixed just estimated)

For a full copy of the presentation please visit the DEF website - <http://www.dacenvforum.org.uk/minutes.php>

Discussions & Questions

102.6 Paul Harris expressed his concern that the process has not been truly democratic with many consultation responses in support for Option 1 not being paid heed to by DBC. Laura reiterated the need for DBC to take national planning policy and guidance into account as well as other statistics and local consultation.

102.7 Gruff Edwards asked why Option 1 was included in the last consultation draft is it was never regarded by DBC as a real option. Laura explained that there had been a change in national emphasis with household growth projections rising to

13,500, which is more than proposed by Option 2. At the time Option 1 had been a valid alternative but it has since become increasingly difficult to justify reduced figures to the Planning Inspectorate.

- 102.8 Jason Williams asked whether Housing Needs Survey 2003 figures had been considered as these had since been proved not to be correct. Laura explained that DBC drew on a range of sources including HNS 2003 (DBC is commissioning an update to this), strategic housing market assessment (not locally specific), large housing register (in need of review), Office of National Statistics (pointing to a growing need for more housing) and Housing Associations. Jason stated that CLG had expressed concern about the lack of sufficient vetting and review of housing waiting lists leading to unrealistically high figures. Laura recognised this problem but stressed that the Core Strategy had drawn on social, economic and environmental factors and had also had to keep within the rules of the Planning Inspectorate, reiterating that DBC was going to have to fight for Option 2 as it was.
- 102.9 David Nobbs asked what impact the proposed development would have on water supply. Laura explained that suppliers had been consulted and had not objected. A Water Cycle Report explored the local and wider impact of the proposals.
- 102.10 Norman Jones asked whether the DBC proposed Option 2 development was not sufficient in light of the National Policy Framework expectation to plan for 20% increase. Laura reiterated that local councils were under increasing pressure from national policy and that DBC has responded to this formally including concern that the Framework focuses on 'development' and not on 'sustainable development'. Issues like this stress the need for a local Core Strategy to be in place to avoid its replacement by a national strategy. A copy of DBC's response is available from Laura on request (laura.wood@dacorum.gov.uk).
- 102.12 Sheila Doyle asked whether renewables were included in the Core Strategy. Laura explained that there had been a significant tightening up on the Code for Sustainable Homes and design requirements which would have an impact. This level of detail is not included in the Core Strategy document but could still be the subject of comments through the current process.
- 102.11 The Chairman pointed out the importance of any DEF comment on the DBC Core Strategy being approved by the membership. The issues of a lack of responses and time available for a response were discussed. Gruff Edwards offered to coordinate a response if the Forum wished to contribute points for inclusion. Laura explained that all valid comments and planning questions would be provided to the Planning Inspectorate. The Chairman invited a vote on a) whether DEF should respond to the Core Strategy and b) if so, whether the forum would delegate the preparation of a response to the Steering Group and others who showed an interest in attending a meeting. Both questions were voted as 'yes' by the forum. It was agreed that those wishing to make comment via DEF in line with the specific requirements of the process could do so by emailing the DEF address (info@dacenvforum.org.uk) before a meeting set for 17th November where all input would be collated for submission by the 7th December deadline.

104. Herts County Council Incineration Plans

- 104.1 Gruff Edwards presented an update about the HCC's plans for an incineration facility in New Barnfield, Hatfield. Gruff had hoped for HCC to attend to explain their reasons for supporting the proposal but they declined. He had also considered inviting Herts Without Waste who object to the proposal. In their absence, Gruff put forward the different sides of the debate about whether the project would be successful and whether it should go ahead.

- 104.2 Gruff showed a diagram showing how Mechanical Biological Treatment works in dealing with waste, along with a photograph of an existing facility in Germany.
- 104.3 Gruff demonstrated the breadth of disagreement in the arguments about how much waste the facility would divert from landfill and how successful it would be in meeting the claims of the proposals.
- 104.4 The DEF Waste Group had responded to HCC's consultation on the proposals but there was no evidence that their points had been taken on board. Gruff informed the forum that an independent examination of the Herts Waste Core Strategy was currently open to responses with a deadline of 21st October.
- 104.5 The proposal for the New Barnfield site is progressing and the contract has been signed for it to go ahead. As such, the Chairman proposed that DEF could no longer contribute to the process but asked that the Waste Group keep the forum informed of any further developments as necessary.

For a full copy of the presentation please visit the DEF website - <http://www.dacenvforum.org.uk/minutes.php>

105. Dacorum Food Initiative / HCC land update

- 105.1 Marion explained that the Steering Group had been considering the list of all HCC Rural Estate sites to identify those that could be at risk of a change or use and/or sell off. The Steering Group had received a response from Cllr Nick Hollinghurst about this issue and he was clear that he was unable to give details of individual tenancies for reasons of personal and commercial confidentiality. However he explained the boundaries of the Green Belt in Dacorum and stated that while some of the Rural Estate listed by HCC is not included within it, there are other safeguards in place such as the Chilterns AONB, Rural Area policies, SSSIs and others. He admitted that 'nothing is, however, sacrosanct' and suggested the importance of the opportunity for DEF to comment on the Borough Council's Local Development Framework, as discussed earlier in the meeting. Cllr Hollinghurst supports HCC's policy to continue to hold its Rural Estates but recognises that this could change resulting in sale of land. He used the example of Tring where the need for new housing had been identified and the resulting proposal for two areas of development including HCC's Dunsley Farm. HCC responded by supplying details for the site's inclusion in consultation proposals but in the end DBC did not include the site in the final document. This shows that HCC does recognise the development value of its Rural Estate but also the impact of consultation in the planning process. John Hunt (HCC Rural Estates Manager) had also responded stating that the sites most likely to be sold for development were Balls Pond Farm (the house, not the farmland) and Dunsley Bungalow in Tring.
- 105.2 Marion Baker updated the forum on progress with planning a second workshop to progress the Dacorum Food Initiative which will be held in February at Ashridge College. The last workshop held in early 2011 was very successful and attended by a wide range of those involved and interested in local food production and supply. More information will be circulated as soon as plans were finalised.

106. Tribute to Rudolph Kirst

- 106.1 The Chairman paid a fond tribute to Rudolph Kirst, a staunch member of DEF who sadly passed away recently. Phil stressed the importance of Rudolph's work on behalf of DEF and the high levels to which he was able to raise the issues and concerns close to his heart. Marion Baker added that Rudolph was a brilliant campaigner for issues including GM and fluoride issues. Rudolph's family are inviting his friends and colleagues to attend a Memorial for his life on

30th October 2011 for which further details will be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting.

106.2 The Chairman also informed the forum that Patty Mann had recently passed away. Patty was a strong campaigner on behalf of DEF. He wished Patty be remembered as a friend and colleague and wished her family well on behalf of the forum.

107. Dacorum Partnership and DEF Action Plan Update

107.1 Emma Norrington, DEF representative on the Dacorum Partnership Board explained that the last Board meeting had been cancelled to allow the ongoing debate about the future structure and aims of the Dacorum Partnership. Emma hopes to be able to provide information on the future of the Partnership and what role DEF might be able to play at the next forum meeting.

108. Any Other Business

- Lizzy Staincliffe provided information about the opportunity for members to nominate one of 6 local parks in Dacorum to be put forward for the QEII Playing Fields challenge. Voting on line will take place over 4 weeks from 18th October.
For more information - <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6952>
- Paul Harris updated the forum that Aylesbury Vale District Council has agreed to the go ahead of the proposed Arla dairy which had been discussed at a previous forum meeting. The local MP is to approach Eric Pickles who will make the final decision on the application. DBC strongly objected to the planning application.

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be on Thursday 19th January 2012 at 7.30pm.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings can be found at www.dacenvforum.org.uk

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm