



www.dacenvforum.org.uk

**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting – 22nd August 2013
Bulbourne Room Civic Centre**

MINUTES

Attendance

Gruff Edwards	DEF Chairman
Steve Wilson	DEF Vice- Chair
Phil Pennington	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Chris Ridley	DEF
Siva Niranjana	West Hemel Residents Association
Jean Blackman	FOE
Paul Harris	Green Party
Cllr. Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Peter Thring	CPRE Hertfordshire
Michael Nidd	CPRE Herts/ Local Resident
Richard Blackburn	DBC Strategic Planning
Laura Wood	DBC Strategic Planning
Rachel Biggs	Runways Farm
Sarah Mangan	Bourne End Village Association
John Mawer	Bourne End Village Association
David Bacon	Bourne End Village Association
Anne Bacon	Bourne End Village Association
Fiona Guest	DBC Councillor
Jason Williams	DEF
David Nobbs	Chipperfield P.C.
Norman Jones	Ramblers West Herts Group

Apologies

Emma Norrington	Consultant
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Julie Laws	DBC Portfolio Holder, Environment and Sustainability

The meeting started at 7.30pm

(1, 2 Apologies and approval of Minutes of the last meeting)

3. Matters arising from Minutes

- (a) Yvonne Edwards is the case officer for the Morrisons planning application.
- (b) Emma Norrington has agreed to become Grants Researcher for DEF
- (c) Steve Wilson will act as DEF press officer.
- (d) Gruff Edwards gave an update on pavement parking and was pleased to report that a Fixed Penalty Ticket has finally been issued to the offender by the Police as a result of his perseverance in reporting of one particularly persistent case in Upper Sales.

4. West Hemel LA3 housing proposals/DBC recent policies in relation to sustainability and wildlife

(a) **Laura Wood** (DBC Strategic Planning) gave an overview of the DBC approach to sustainability in which she outlined the model used for sustainable development in which homes, economy and environment were key elements. The Core Strategy document had been subject to an independent Sustainability Assessment (by Halcrow) and it is clear that sustainable development permeates the whole of the document, and is particularly evident in twenty of the policies.

A number of tools and guidance documents were applied, including a Carbon Impact Assessment, Hertfordshire Building Futures Partnership's Sustainable Design Toolkit, Landscape Character Assessment and the Code for Sustainable Homes. The current national debate about planning and building regulations is likely to have an impact as the Core Strategy is implemented. Laura also listed the number of Local Allocation (sites within current Green Belt) homes proposed in the Borough.

(b) **Richard Blackburn** (DBC Strategic Planning) outlined the details of the West Hemel Hempstead Development, at 900 homes the largest of the Local Allocations. He referred to the development in three parts; proposals, principles and delivery. The scale of the development was to be that of a new neighbourhood. The time scale would be starting in 2020 with first homes in 2021 and completion over ten years.

The masterplan needed to consider key questions (seven were listed). The area context needed to take into account the proximity to the AONB and the adjacent Chiltern Way. The landscape context needed to consider sensitive areas. The physical infrastructure involves taking account of five surface run-off areas in which the Environment Agency will be consulted concerning any flood issues. Gas main issues will affect housing layout, sewerage is likely to go to Maple Cross and the plan currently does not involve access via the nearby rural lanes Chaulden Lane and Pouchen End Lane. Planned access from The Avenue, Fields End Estate and Long Chaulden will be further considered. Buildings will need to be built to the highest standards in order to achieve sustainability targets. District heating opportunities have been identified in Dacorum, including West Hemel.

The core strategy was found to be sound, in the Inspectors Report (July 2013), and will be considered by Cabinet (17 Sept) and Full Council (25 Sept). So far as West Hemel is concerned, the next steps will include further public consultation, liaising with landowners, finalising an archaeological survey, starting the masterplan and working on the planning requirements.

(c) Questions and issues were raised by members of the meeting.

Garrick Stevens raised the complex issue of the DBC being able to restrict future individual development rights e.g. through covenants on properties within the initially planned development. The resulting discussion was inconclusive.

Phil Pennington asked if the Site Allocations would be considered as a planning application for the purposes of covenants and/or Section 106 planning agreements and this was confirmed.

Mike Ridley asked if a traffic model had been applied to the whole town, given the large increase in homes and **Siva Niranjana** asked about traffic surveys and the use of empirical data in relation to the West Hemel development, in particular the effect on Fishery Road.

Richard Blackburn said there had been traffic modelling of the town with all development assumed to 2031. He was not sure at the meeting whether there had been any traffic count on Fishery Road to help validate the traffic model, but has subsequently checked and the answer was that there had been.

Paul Harris asked about the application of solar power for housing and Laura Wood suggested that it would be explored.

Jason Williams posed a series of questions. Will a percentage target for the use of renewable energy be set? Will Chiltern-style building materials be used? Will there be a policy for having reasonable size gardens (answer...there are standards.) Will a Green (wildlife) Corridor be preserved for Shrubhill Common? In relation to the last question it was suggested that clear guidance as to what would be required should be obtained.

Steve Wilson suggested that the impact of development on the flow of underground water into Shrubhill Common should be investigated.

Gruff Edwards asked whether there was still a legal requirement to provide more Traveller sites and was told that there was a need to incorporate these plans into the development since a minimum of 17 additional pitches were needed in Dacorum.

Paul Harris asked about the issue of parkland in the development and ensuring that it was the right sort of parkland to encourage wildlife diversity.

Garrick Stevens pressed for cycleways as part of a bigger Borough-wide strategy and Jason Williams wondered if this might be supported from the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Mike Ridley was concerned about bus services which would be needed to link the new development to other key areas of town.

Siva Nirandan made the point that in his view DEF should be proactive in relation to ensuring that sustainability issues are properly considered as the masterplan is developed. A link to a letter to DEF from the West Hemel Action Group of which Siva is a member, summarising the Group's case against LA3, is on the front page of the DEF Website.

5. Lessening the impact of development on habitat and species populations

(No speaker from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust had been available to speak. Instead there was an open-floor discussion that included some of the issues reported under Item 4, with Laura Wood and Richard Blackburn leaving after speaking and answering questions.)

6. Revised DEF Terms of Reference, and matters arising therefrom

The DEF Terms of Reference as proposed by the Chairman were accepted by the meeting. The revised Terms will be uploaded to the DEF Website.

7. Any Other Business

Issues around the planning application for changes to Little Hay Golf Course and for inert waste landfill were discussed.

John Mawer of the Bourne End Village Association wanted a much more imaginative approach to any changes, regarding use and access to the area. He also said that the plan contains no detail and is full of errors.

Anne Bacon suggested that the use of Bourne End Lane by masses of heavy lorries would make the current use of the lane impossible and dangerous (walkers, cyclists and about 150 to 200 vehicles per day). There are also a lot of tree protection orders in place which would have to be considered and she asked whether the planning application was driven more by the requirement for landfill than by the need to reshape the golf course.

Gruff Edwards said that objections have been made by DBC and the Environment Agency.

Fiona Guest asked if the Village Association had contacted their local councillors to seek support.

CPRE members present said that CPRE would be objecting.

Another comment made was that, compared with LA3, relatively little publicity had been given to the planning application, and that permission for the development might have been granted by default, but that that was less likely now.

The meeting was informed that the site is owned by DBC but operated by Sportspace.

The Forum indicated its support of the Bourne End Village Association in relation to objecting to the proposals.

(Anne Bacon has subsequently sent a letter summarising the proposals and the Village Association's objections. A link to this letter is on the front page of the DEF Website.)

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be at 7:30 pm on Thursday 21st November 2013 in the Bulbourne Room at the Civic Centre.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings, together with any available supporting documents, can be found at <http://www.dacenvforum.org.uk/minutes.php>

Links to files related to these Minutes can be found on the front page of the DEF Website:

20130822West Hemel Action Group Letter.doc

20130822Little Hay Golf Course Letter.pdf