



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 11.05.2017**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Cllr Phil Hills	Tring Town Council
Matthew Heron	DBC Case Officer for LA3
Cllr Colette Wyatt-Lowe	DBC and HCC
Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	DBC and HCC
Chris Ridley	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Dennis Harvey	DEF
Chris Mabley	Bourne End Village Association
John Mawer	Bourne End Village Association
Cllr Ron Tindall	DBC
Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Lee Royal	West Hemel Action Group
Anne Lyne	West Hemel Action Group
Henry Wallis	West Hemel Action Group
Carolyn Wallis	West Hemel Action Group
Chris Irwin	Taylor Wimpey
Giuseppe Zanre	Barratt Homes
Daniel Hayman	Meeting Place Communications
Jamie Woollam (Ecology)	CSA Environmental
Glenn Charles (Transport)	C & A Consulting
Roger Smith (Planning)	Savills
Cllr Tina Howard	DBC and HCC
Cllr Adrian England	DBC
Cllr Fiona Guest	DBC and HCC

Although the attendance , which is higher than the recent normal, can be explained by the interest in LA3, GE (chair since May 2013) is pleased to note that it is similar to that last experienced regularly in 2007. Key factors since then were the changes of venue to Boxmoor Trust (Feb. 2014) and then to the Fire Station (May 2015).

Apologies

Siva Niranjana	West Herts. Action Group and DEF
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Cllr Paul Harris	Great Gaddesden PC and DEF
Janice Marshall	Environment Portfolio Holder, DBC

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. Apologies

See above.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 23/02/17

No corrections suggested.

3. Matters arising

Halsey Field

A very attractive metal information board was installed on March 14th. Work continues on a separate notice board, which it is hoped will be in place by early summer.

On Sunday 26th March there was a further management session on Halsey Field from with the help of CSHCV members, which was a last push to cut some more scrub and mow and rake the grass, before spring got truly underway.

On Tuesday 28th March: the first AGM was held at Gadebridge Community Centre when events for the coming year were be planned, and a new constitution was proposed.

Other past and planned (subject to finalisation) events in Halsey Field:-

- Monday 15 May 5 am Dawn Chorus Walk
- Monday 29 May 9 pm Moth Trapping session
- Sunday 16th July 10.30am - 4 pm Open Day

To complement its Facebook presence, there is now (again) an area devoted to Halsey Field on the DEF Website.

DBC's Street Champions project

Just after the February DEF meeting Janice Marshall had suggested to **CR** to cast the net wider in her online search for local initiatives under the "Great British Springclean" banner. This, together with information from others present had identified groups in Leverstock Green, Adeyfield and George Street School.

Update on Friends Gadebridge Park projects and funding.

SW said that at recent Friends of Gadebridge Park meeting(s) Nancy Bourne of the Environment Agency had said that EA were worried about the extra forecast water demand from LA1 /2/3 leading to more extraction from the Piccotts End pumping station, where a reduction in rates of water extraction had only recently been agreed in order to spare the Gade aquifers.

Proposed waste incinerator at Ratty's Lane in Hoddesdon, Herts.

GE had responded to the consultation (end date March 31st) as Chair of DEF, as had **MR** and **CR**.

4. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

GE and **SR** had declared their willingness to continue in posts for a further year. No other nominations were received. **GE** was nominated by **CR** and seconded by **CM**. **SW** was nominated by **CR** and seconded by **MR**.

5. LA3 Master Plan: Presentation and Questions

SW took the chair for the item. A presentation with illustrations was given by the guest speakers from Barratt / David Wilson, Taylor Wimpey and their consultants:-

MH provided an opening background from DBC's perspective. He said that the assessment of Gypsy and Traveller needs across the district (7 pitches are being provided on LA3) had contributed to bringing LA3 forward for development before 2021 was based on the need identified in a study (the "Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment") *Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004, "Duties of local housing authorities: accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers" refers.*) and had taken note of the revised Government Policy issued in 2015 (PPTS 2015) that was referred to in the minutes of DEF's February meeting. PPTS 2015 had influenced the way in which traveller sites were integrated into larger Local Allocations. LA3 had been designated for removal from the Green Belt via DBC's Core Strategy, which had been approved by the Council. The 900 housing figure of the Core Strategy would no longer be a maximum figure, and this would be reflected in a revised Development Plan Document to appear on June 27th. Detail of the first 300 units will be considered as part of the hybrid formal planning application (part detailed for 300 units and the remainder in outline form), which will be submitted by the developers.

RS said that the principle of LA3 going for housing was set in the Core Strategy, which had passed through public consultation, and had obtained approval by the Inspector. Increasing the 900 figure (e.g. to the 1100 advertised on the current Master Plan consultation website) would take place if it can be justified through technical work. In his view it made sense to make full and effective use of the land. This could save land being released for 200 houses elsewhere. The Developers now intended to deliver the start of development before 2021. The Consortium's technical studies in 2016 had re-assessed the Council's draft Masterplan areas in respect of developable area. The existing gas main route (now defining a Wildlife Corridor) had been discussed with the Health and Safety Executive and with National Grid. This had clarified in more detail the developable constraints. The highest density of development would be around the Community Hub (Local Centre).

JW said that he and colleagues had carried out a full suite of ecological survey work on the whole of LA3. A design principle was to keep Shrubhill Common as connected to the wider landscape as possible. LA3 as a whole was of relatively low ecological importance and the aim was to retain habitats (such as hedgerows etc) within the development and to have no net loss of biodiversity.

CI said that in general the physical constraints of the existing field network and hedgerow/tree corridors were viewed as design opportunities.

GC said he and colleagues were aware of the present and potential future problems of surface water flooding, albeit he confirmed that the site was in Flood Zone 1 with no potential for fluvial flooding from rivers or streams. It was proposed to enhance the ditch along the western hedge line boundary of H1, H2, H7, improving the existing wetland at its southern end adjacent to Long Chaulden. Thames Water had agreed to maintain the outfall from this into its network, as it already does. He said that the land was underlain by chalk – at depth in the north and closer to the surface in the south. Some locations would be deep bored soakaways as the point of outfall and the southern most land parcels would utilise traditional shallow soakaways.

JW said that along the gas main route there were opportunities to incorporate more wetlands, wildflowers, drainage ponds and shallow play areas.

GC said that agreement had been reached with Hertfordshire County Council Highways on which junctions on the local highway network should be reviewed. Commissioned traffic surveys and analysis had shown the effect of LA3 (taking account of the predicted background increase in traffic) and where required mitigation will be provided.

A loop bus route was envisaged by improving the existing bus service. There would be emergency, pedestrian and cycle access to the site at its SE corner. Rights of Way would be preserved and enhanced by new on-site leisure routes and some off-highway routes for cyclists and walkers.

RS said that an objective was to make provision for building a community. Two important elements of this would be the Community Centre and the Primary School, although it was up to HCC as to how and when the school would be delivered. There would also be a convenience store, a number of small retail units and play equipment. There was an investigation into the possibility of having a care home. Submission to DBC of a more detailed plan for the first 300-400 dwellings, comprising a mixture of ownership types, was due to take place this summer. The adjacent local centre square would not be part of this initial detailed application. The 900 overall figure of the Core Strategy had been re-assessed for possible increase by a process involving the analysis of technical and environmental constraints. Building could start next year, with first occupancies from the end of 2018, subject to the behaviour of the economy.

GZ said that this was not a case of a speculative application, this was a site allocated for new homes, promoted by two leading housebuilders, both focused on delivery.

Da.H said that there would be a further exhibition in June 2017.

SW then invited questions:-

JM referred to the previous DBC Master Plan which stated that "Landscaping must create a soft edge" to the development, but as far as one could tell from the previous and current outline maps, this soft edge had been reduced. Was this the way that the now-proposed extra 200 houses had been fitted in? **DaH** said that environmental criteria such as this were part of the re-assessment process that would be needed to justify the extra 200. **RS** said that a considerable amount of re-assessment had been undertaken in the gas main area.

DeH asked whether there had been an Archaeological survey. **CI** said that there had, including a magnetic survey and that intrusive investigation (around 120 trenches) had been carried out last autumn (2016). The results of this would support the application. The investigation had identified some limited activity "hotspots" in the northern area and in the gas main area. He advised that it was anticipated that a planning permission would "condition" a level of further investigation in these areas.

MR asked where the water for the new houses would come from. The most obvious source would be the chalk aquifers, but these were already over-extracted and reducing water levels in the Bulbourne and the Gade to their detriment. **GC** said that consultations had taken place with the water company Affinity, who were undertaking a capacity analysis, and that it was down to them to provide the water in a way that was "hopefully" not detrimental to the environment. Water companies are required by law to provide an adequate water supply for existing and new developments, but developers may need to pay towards the extra costs. **MR** asked if this meant that if for instance water had to be shipped in from Rutland Water, would the developers pay? **GC** said yes, they would be required to pay a contribution.

Extract from DEF Minutes January 2013: "As agreed at the previous May meeting, DEF sent an E-mail to Mike Penning MP calling for Water Companies to have the power to block strategic development on the grounds of there being insufficient water resources. Mike forwarded this to Bob Neill MP, Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who responded 'The Government is not considering such a measure, . . . ' "

WW-L asked whether, during further consultation on the Plan, the percentage impacts by LA3 on key road junctions in the area would be published, together with information on any necessary mitigation measures at those junctions. **GC** said yes, the proposals would be displayed at the second public exhibition and details would support the planning application.

LR said that the request to allow an increase in the Core Strategy 900 number had originated from the developers' side, not at the instigation of the Inspector, and that we had been led astray on the issue. *(From Report to Dacorum Borough Council by Inspector Louise Crosby 06 April 2017: "Concern has been expressed through representations that many of the policies contain specific expected numbers of dwellings and this would not provide sufficient flexibility. In response to this the Council has advanced a main modification that will introduce text to explain that the net capacity figures are an estimate rather than a maximum and that final dwelling numbers will be assessed through the planning application process (MMs1, 9 & 41). This is necessary for the plan to be effective. ")*

LR also asked about the scheduling of junction improvements. **GC** said that this would depend on future traffic level "trigger points". Where improvements were required, developers would need to make Section 106 contributions towards the cost. **CI** clarified that these works and/or contributions obligations (and trigger points) would be contained in the S106 Agreement.

CR asked about future management of the wildlife corridor. **JW** said that Martin Hicks of Hertfordshire Ecology had been consulted on the issue. *In E-mails to DEF of Sept 2014 Martin Hicks said that for the wildlife corridor a strip adjacent to the GL (Chiltern Way) was preferable to the gas main route and that "the wider the strip . . . the better, given it reinforces an ancient feature of some significance" and that "agri-env buffers seem to be anything from 2 - 12 m, so a medium for one buffer could be say 6, so two together (as it's a Green Lane and with no such strip on its eastern side) make a single a strip of 12m." The now designated housing areas H1, H2 and H7 (alongside the Chiltern Way footpath to Fields End, were described in the 1996 Technical Report 3 of the Dacorum Borough Plan first review to 2011) as "Parcel B", "a natural area for open space linking with Shrub Hill Common".*

In answer to **CR**, **RS** said that the main question was who would do the managing - DBC, a Management Company or some other body, and would depend on specifying a management regime.

AE asked about the phasing of all elements of the development including schools and shops. **RS** said that these, like road junction improvements, would depend on a "trigger" level of demand, and repeated that in the case of the school it would have to be agreed with HCC. **AE** focused on the timing of the "Gypsy & Traveller" Site, which he would prefer to refer to as a "Mobile Living Site" to avoid labelling the site based on any minority group. The answer to this question revealed an early priority for this part of development and prompted questions about whether the "Mobile Living Site" ought to have been integrated with the whole site, rather than being hived off with a separate road access. **JM** asked whether the location of the Gypsy and Traveller site (G&T) was DBC's decision or the developers'. **CI** said that at this stage they were merely reserving the space and would wait for users to come forward. **JM** said that the physical separation of the G&T from the main housing areas as proposed was contrary to the Government's policy on integration and should be challenged. He asked whether, if DBC decided on a more integrated siting for the G&T would the developers change the plan. **CI** replied that it was unlikely that the plans would change.

. . . A link to the current Government policy on traveller sites can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457420/Final_planning_and_travellers_policy.pdf

RT asked when the 'bus service would start. **GC** said that the ML1 service will be improved, and that this had already been discussed with HCC. **MR** asked whether, if improved, it would include an all-day service to the railway station. **GC** Yes the intention was that it would.

FG asked whether an agreement had yet been reached regarding the school. **CI** said that that the Developers were committed to seeing a Primary School delivered. Discussions were ongoing with HCC

who have the ultimate responsibility for education provision. He clarified that both Developers had experience of design and build primary school provision and that this was an option available. The space for the school was to be protected and made available for delivery at an appropriately early point.

DH asked whether parking provision was in accordance with central Government guidelines. **GC** said that standards for this had increased since the 1990s when it was Government policy to reduce parking space in order to promote other modes of transport. **DH** asked if this now meant one car per household or two. **GC** said that he would want to provide an 'appropriate' level of parking space and garaging. Discussions were ongoing with Dacorum as to the level of parking to be provided as they ultimately have the say in this matter. **DH** asked to what extent this would depend on kerb parking. **RS** said that this would be addressed at the detailed design stage. **GE** asked how the open green spaces would be defended against parking abuse (e.g. by installing raised kerbs) **CI** said that he took the point, but that design of open space needed to promote access and permeability also. He was confident that this balance could be achieved through good design.

LR said that the location of the Gypsy and Traveller site was due to the developers, driven by commercial concerns, rather than DBC. He asked if the 'low value' properties would be put around the G&T site to minimise profit loss. **GZ** said that housing densities in the Plan application had a similar mix of housing in each "parcel", as set out in a Design and Access statement. It was not the case that lower value housing would be clumped around the Gypsy and Traveller site.

GS sought assurance that the newly proposed increase in housing density would not be at the expense of providing a number of play spaces distributed across the whole of LA3. **RS** said that a number of play areas would be provided. The current trend was towards making these bigger and better. There was a possibility of sharing some play spaces with schools. **CI** said that three play areas were planned in green corridors, North, South and Central. **RS** said that the Developers were expected to make a financial contribution towards improvement of existing off site playing fields. He noted that the Council's policy had acknowledged that on site provision was impracticable as a consequence of the slope of the site – the flattest area having been reserved for the Primary School. **AL** said that her understanding was that provision of or improvements to playing fields subject to developer contributions would be offsite because of the terrain constraints on LA3.

CW asked the developers if their development plans included the field beyond Champion Road in the SE corner of LA3 currently owned by Herts CC. **CI** from the developers stated that they did not own the land and did not have any intention of buying it and that they would not be the ones who might build on it. **FG** said that she had made some enquiries about that field and had been told that Herts CC had no intention of selling it.

MR raised the principle of making LA3 a Flagship Development, as had been proposed by DEF during the 2014 public consultation. This would include building to zero emissions standards, and fitting all homes with solar panels at construction, which would be a small proportion of the building cost and cheaper than fitting them later. He asked when this principle could be discussed, and whether the planners/developers would listen to arguments raised during further consultation. **GZ** said that both development companies were considering use of fabric first and other standards set within the new Building Regulations (updated when the Code for Sustainable Homes was abolished) but that zero carbon was not achievable. Solar panels would be on offer to purchasers, but not everyone wanted them and they would not be installed on every property "from day one". House designs incorporated into the scheme would aim for the "Buildings for Life" quality mark. The Code for Sustainable Homes was no longer a planning requirement. **C W-L** challenged the reason for not providing solar panels that not everyone wanted them, and said that they should be provided anyway. **CI** said that compulsory standards on energy and sustainability within the Building Regulations had significantly increased over recent years, but that solar panels that were still not compulsory.

LR asked, re the emergency access at the southern end of the site, what were the guarantees that it would not be used for non-emergency purposes. **GC** said that the access would be three metres wide, and that it would normally allow pedestrian and cycle access only. It was highly unlikely that it would ever be accepted as a vehicular access for the development by HCC, nor was it proposed.

6. Any Other Business

GE had received (March 23rd) an E-letter from Laura Wood (DBC Strategic Planning) whose purpose was "to invite your views and opinions on a Scoping Report which sets the framework for the future Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the new Local Plan. The SA/SEA process seeks to ensure that the Council takes account of all appropriate social, economic and environmental considerations when drawing up its new development strategy, which looks ahead to 2036." The closing date for a response was May 5th 2017. **GE** invited members on the circulation list either to respond individually or to send in contributions for a DEF response. The DEF response was sent in on May 4th, and a copy will be circulated with these minutes.