



**Dacorum Environmental Forum  
Full Meeting Thursday 24.08.2017**

MINUTES

**Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Cllr Paul Harris	DEF/Great Gaddesden Parish Council
Cllr. Janice Marshall	DBC Environment Portfolio Holder
Chris Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Mike Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Adrian Whyle	PlasticsEurope
Siva Niranjana	DEF and West Hemel Action Group
John Mawer	Bourne End Village Association
Alison Somek	Bourne End Village Association
David Bacon	(Bourne End)
Anne Bacon	(Bourne End)

**Apologies**

Cllr Phil Hills	Tring Town Council
Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	DBC and HCC
Cllr Ron Tindall	DBC
Cllr Tina Howard	DBC and HCC
Chris Mabley	Bourne End Village Association
Dennis Harvey	DEF

Meeting started at 7:30pm

**1. Apologies**

See above.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 11/05/17**

No corrections suggested.

**3. Matters arising**

**JMaw** said that he disagreed with the suggestion (which had arisen from comments received on the draft minutes) that the term "Mobile Living Site" would be preferable to "Gypsy & Traveller" Site. **GE** recalled that the minutes also quoted from the Housing Act 2004, which used the latter, and **JMar** confirmed that this was the terminology that DBC would continue to use.

## Halsey Field

**CR** reported as follows:

It has been a busy spring and summer on the Halsey field and the Friends of the field have been involved in the following activities:

- a dawn chorus walk in the spring, to ascertain which birds are nesting in the field
- a visit to College Lake nature reserve in June, to learn more about grassland management
- three moth surveys, in consecutive months, so that we have an idea of the moth population on the field, to aid our management programme. Altogether 114 different species have been found so far, including one species never before recorded in Hertfordshire. The caterpillar of this micro moth (*Cochylidia heydeniana*) feeds on a plant called Blue Fleabane which grows in abundance on Halsey Field.
- a weekly butterfly transect has been walked every week over the summer months
- an invertebrate survey, carried out over several months by Steve Lings (naturalist advisor) who has kept records of all he has found in the field, including 877 invertebrates so far.
- A grand opening of the Wildlife Site in July by the Mayor Councillor Collins. At this event our guests were involved in various activities, including several wildflower walks, the Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly count, and a children's bug hunt and poster competition.

More details about these events can be found on the DEF website, and on the Halsey Field Facebook page.

We have also installed an information board bought with money from the Box Moor Trust, to show the relationships between some of the flora and fauna living on the field, and a notice board made by Mike Ridley, so that we can advise local residents of upcoming events on the field and provide extra information about flora and fauna living there.

The next planned events include a management work party on 13<sup>th</sup> September from 10am – 1pm, when we will be helped by the CSHCV (Chilterns Society Hertfordshire Conservation Volunteers). We will continue to cut back invasive scrub on the field, and begin to mow and rake some of the grassy areas. All help is very welcome at these events as there is a lot of scrub to keep in check.

A small mammal survey on 7<sup>th</sup> October from 8am – 10am. Humane traps will be set on the previous evening, and these traps need to be checked as soon as possible the following morning to prevent the mammals experiencing stress, hence the early start.

## DBC's Street Champions project

**GE** reported that there had been personnel changes at DBC affecting the Street Champions Scheme. Robert Smith, Neighbourhood Support Officer, had moved to another department and had in consequence forwarded **GE**'s E-mail report (12<sup>th</sup> June) of dumped items, as detailed below, by the flats at the top of Northridge Park to Sandra Mogen, "Lead Officer – Active Communities Neighbourhood Delivery" who had said she would ask the NSO's (Neighbourhood Support/Safety/Specialist? Officers) to take a look and report for clearance

(Facing the left-hand block of flats from the Northridge Park side)

1. Near the wheelie bins between the two blocks, parts of (apparently) a dismantled settee.
2. By the left-hand wall of the block, (apparently) settee base, onto which **GE** had placed an aerial, a black plastic recycling basket, and a crushed supermarket basket, found nearby.

By 25<sup>th</sup> August all items except the settee base had disappeared. **GE** to report the outstanding item.

On July 14<sup>th</sup> GE (and presumably other Street Champions) had received an introductory E-mail from Nicky McIntyre, Active Communities Officer, saying that she had taken back the Street Champions scheme from Nigel Brant Wilcock.

#### **Update on Friends Gadebridge Park projects and funding.**

**SW** said that the Friends of Gadebridge Park were still awaiting notification of a further meeting with DBC and Affinity, and in the meantime were continuing with routine activities such as cleaning the river and banks. **PH** reminded those present of the ground damage in the Park from last autumn's "Scarenation 2016 - Dr Carnevil and the Circus of Fear" along with the hope that similar would not occur this autumn (see minutes of DEF February 2017 meeting).

#### **4. LA3 Master Plan: follow-up**

**SW** took the chair for this item, which he explained was a follow-up of the 11th May meeting on the subject of Master Plans for the Local Allocations. Cllr Graham Sutton, DBC Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration had been invited to come and speak, and though unable to do so because of other commitments had promised to attend the November meeting. Similarly, Ross Herbert of the DBC Planning Department, who has recently become the Case Officer for the planning application for LA3, was also invited but unable to attend. **SW** said that he hoped that the meeting would help clarify:

1. The powers of DBC and any constraints on those powers in influencing the Master Plans (principally LA3) from this point onwards.
2. The current timetable for consultation on the Master Plans, and the most effective types of response to consultation from bodies such as DEF. (Ross Herbert's predecessor Matt Heron who attended and spoke at the May meeting has told us (late July) that "The emerging masterplan ... (anticipated next month) ... will be submitted with the formal application" and that "In terms of the most effective types of response from DEF, I would advise providing a response which may be used to inform the developers with regards to your key areas of specialist knowledge . . . any knowledge DEF have which you feel may beneficially assist the masterplan will be welcomed. "
3. DEF's priorities regarding responding to the Master Plan.

Regarding (1) above **JMar** said the DBC's aim was to arrive at a Plan that would on the one hand satisfy the external inspector, and on the other hand minimise the environmental impact of the development. Regarding (2) **JMar** referred to "Planning Application" 4/01623/16 which was made in May and had had a "Decision Issued" (Reply sent - Pre-App Advice Request) on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**JMar** subsequently clarified that this was a reference relating to a document and pre-application advice request 4/01623/16/SCO. On the DBC website the only document attached was an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report by Savills. There were some "Consultee Comments" with it, including one from the Chiltern Society, but no "Public Comments".

**AS** sought assurances that voluntary bodies such as DEF would be notified when there was a significant Planning Application for LA3 involving public consultation. **GE** said that this was normally the case in his experience.

The following topics were then discussed:

#### **"Flagship Development" - zero emissions etc.**

**PH** said that he was disappointed by the developers' attitude (see May Minutes) towards DEF's suggestion for solar panels to be incorporated into all homes.

**SN** said that many of the Core Strategy's policies in this and other regards were laudable, but that they were not being adhered to.

**PH** said that Great Gaddesden had recently built social housing, all with solar panelling and to Passive House standards.

**MR** said that LA3 would be visible by train passengers, and therefore had the potential to promote Hemel Hempstead as a progressive, eye-catching "solar city". With the anticipated replacement of diesel and petrol cars by electric cars, householders would have a ready use for surplus power, by charging their vehicles. Energy storage technology was steadily improving. With solar at 6p per unit and nuclear at 9p, this is the way things would go.

**CR** said that solar tiles might be visually preferable to panels.

**AW** advocated offshore wind farms in addition.

**SN** said that the Beacon tower at Two Waters, hailed in a recent Telegraph article as 'Britain's most eco-friendly residential skyscraper' was designed to be zero carbon.

**GE** recalled DEF's 2014 response to the LA3 Master Plan, which had said that homes must be built to the highest standard of water-efficiency.

### **Numbers of homes in LA3: 900 vs. 1100**

**JM/AS** said that the importance of maintaining a "Soft Green Edge" to the development had been emphasised to planners/developers during one of the consultation open days, and increasing to 1100 should be opposed if it compromised this principle.

**DB** raised the question of garage and parking space, and whether an increased number of homes would mean inadequate provision of these. In the following lively interchanges the cross-link with electric cars was raised, together with the practicalities of having enough space to charge cars near a power source.

**GE** said that providing an adequate margin for a Green Corridor along the Chiltern Way route would be preferable to using the space for more housing. In response to the Developer's argument (see May minutes) that "it made sense to make full and effective use of the land. This could save land being released for 200 houses elsewhere " he said that those 200 would not necessarily be on Green Belt Land.

### **Wildlife Corridor(s)**

**MR** displayed a plan for a Wildlife Corridor along the Chiltern Way route, used by DEF's for the 2014 consultation.

**GE** re-affirmed that DEF should continue to press for at least a twelve metre-wide strip to the west of the existing double hedgerow as recommended in 2014 by Martin Hicks of Hertfordshire Ecology (see May minutes).

**SW** said that the Chiltern Way Route, as a credible wildlife corridor, could form part of a "Dacorum Greenway" encircling Hemel Hempstead and including the Heritage Trail and Halsey Field.

### **Surface Water Flooding/ Reduction of Water in aquifers/ Water Supply**

**SW** informed those present of the current low flow levels in the Gade, and of the continuing threat to Dacorum's chalk streams and aquifers, which would be affected by all the new housing developments, as would the problem of soil water disposal. He said that the water company Affinity however had said that they were going to reduce the rate of water extraction at Piccotts End from next year. EU habitats directive 92/43/EEC required unique habitats such as Dacorum's chalk streams to be protected and enhanced.

**GE** asked about the effectiveness of deep and shallow bored soakaways, enhancement of the ditch along the western hedge line boundary of H1, H2, H7, and Thames Water's agreement to maintain the outfall from this into its network, as stated by the developers (see May minutes). **AW** said that the soakaways would help keep the water within the site, as required. **SW** said that Thames Water would transfer the water they dealt with to Maple Cross.

**JMaw** and **AS** recalled that they had at one stage seen a proposal for a sewage pumping station near the Traveller Site, whose output would go to the small treatment works discharging into the Grand Union

Canal near Northchurch. **SW** doubted whether this was still the case, but thought that this point needed to be checked.

### **Traffic generation, Parking/garaging and Public Transport**

**PH** said that Arriva bus route 3 would soon change its route, which would include the Railway Station, and that it should also include LA3. **JMar** said that such a proposal was premature, and would be subject to finding adequate funding. **AS** said that the road layouts should be designed to allow for use by buses.

(Re Parking/garaging, see also under "Numbers of Houses in LA: 900 vs. 1100 above)

### **Cycle Routes, Footpaths**

**MR** said that because of Hemel's hills, cycle charging points for electric cycles should be provided.

**SW** said that the routes indicated for these in the last-published plan required more co-ordination and consideration as to their purpose.

### **Landscaping/Visual aspects**

See under "Numbers of homes in LA3: 900 vs. 1100" above.

### **Gypsy and Traveller site/ Protection of Pouchen End and Chaulden Lanes**

**AB** said that the G&T site should have road access to the rest of the development, because the only proposed access to and from the site, which was likely to include the heavy vehicles used in construction-type work, would be via totally unsuitable lanes (Pix Farm Lane, Chaulden Lane, Pouchen End Lane.) The route through Winkwell (a Conservation Area) and over the swing bridge would be virtually impossible, and disastrous if attempted, which it might be as was the quickest route to a two-carriageway highway.

?? had been told that passing places would be provided.

**GE** asked whether, in Bourne End Village Association's view, there should be no access from the G&T site to Chaulden Lane, and hence the other lanes.

**JMaw** said that that was indeed their view. Protection of the lanes from other potential forms of abuse would also be more likely if there was no direct access. (Bourne End Village Association's statement with regard to the G&T site is attached along with the minutes distributed by E-mail.)

## **5. Any Other Business**

**AW**, who had been unable to attend DEF meetings in recent years, said that he had been impressed by the keenness evident amongst participants.

**PH** said that at a recent meeting of representatives from Dacorum Parish Councils they had been told of the emergence of a new DBC Local Plan in which the target housing figure (2011? -2036) was 17,000 compared with the current (2006-2031) figure of 11,200.