



**Dacorum Environmental Forum  
Full Meeting Thursday 7/11/2019**

MINUTES

**Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Cllr Nigel Taylor	Berkhamsted Town Council and DBC
Steven Godwin	Tring Rural Parish Council
Mike Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Chris Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Chris Mabley	Bourne End Village Association
John Mawer	Bourne End Village Association
Paul de Hoest	Berkhamsted Town Council
Brian Patterson	Tring Town Council
Cllr Jane Timmis	DBC (Watling Ward)
Paul Harris	DEF
Susan Holmes	Berkhamsted T.C. Habitat Working Group
Peter Ablett	Boxmoor Trust
Cllr Ron Tindall	DBC and HCC
Cllr Alan Anderson	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder DBC

Meeting started at 7:30pm

**1. Apologies**

Siva Niranjana            West Hemel Action Group  
 Cllr Liz Uttley            DBC  
 Brian Worrell            DEF  
 Michael Nidd            Piccotts End Residents' Association and CPRE Herts.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> Sept**

No corrections suggested.

**3. Matters arising**

**Halsey Field Update**

**CR** gave an illustrated talk highlighting the diversity insect, bird and plant species that had been found on the Wildlife Site, and describing the planting and other work that had been done and was continuing to be done in order to maintain and enhance this diversity.

These and other matters were reported as follows:

The monthly autumn/ winter work parties were well underway, and already several channels and scallops in the meadow areas had been brush cut and raked, and some of the scrub had been cut down or tree popped. This work would continue throughout the winter months, and Friends of Halsey Field (FoHF) now enjoyed the support of the North Chilterns Conservation group who had organised a work party on the site in September and who were going to help FoHF again this month. The Osborne Property group had also offered to help FoHF for a day in November.

FoHF had begun to plant more plug plants of Kidney Vetch in the meadow this autumn, in the hope of attracting the Small Blue butterfly to breed there. There was a colony of this species already breeding near the Bourne End junction of the A41, and Malcolm Hull, chairman of the Herts and Middlesex Butterfly conservation group, was keen for this plant to be established in the wider local area, to enable the butterfly to spread further into Hertfordshire.

Meanwhile a Clouded Yellow butterfly was spotted in the field in October, and this was another first for the site, bringing the total number of butterfly species seen there to 24. A September moth survey also revealed 6 moth species which had not yet been found on the site, including an Autumn Rustic, which was quite a rare moth.

Unfortunately, an attempt had been made last month to steal the bench which FoHF installed three years ago at the top of the slope. The thieves broke up the paving slabs into which tamper-proof bolts had been sunk, and removed the bench completely. Luckily it had been spotted in the middle of a bush by a local resident who contacted FoHF immediately, and the bench had now been retrieved and safely stored. This bench was extremely popular with the local residents as it gave a superb view across the valley, so FoHF did plan to reinstall it. **CR** had asked the Osborne group for some advice about how to fix it more securely.

### **LA3 Master Plan and Sustainability**

**GE** said that On Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> DEF were notified that a second amended planning application for LA3 containing additional plans/ and information had been submitted. An objection to the latest application was prepared on behalf of DEF by those members who had expressed an interest in contributing to the original (February) objection, and this was sent to Planning Officers Local Councillors and relevant Cabinet members on October 11<sup>th</sup>, and a few days later posted on the DBC website. It is viewable on DEF's Website under "Consultations etc."

In addition, **GE** had written (most recently on Oct 12<sup>th</sup>) to DBC Portfolio Holder Graham Sutton (Planning & Infrastructure) seeking answers to two letters concerning Building Standards and on-site Wildlife measures respectively. These letters, addressed to one of the developers, had accompanied DEF's objection to the first version of the Master Plan in February this year, and had elicited no meaningful response. They may be viewed on DEF's Website under "Consultations etc.". Follow-ups after the 20<sup>th</sup> May meeting with developers, emphasising the growing political importance of climate change and biodiversity had been sent to the planning officer who said only that they should (again) be addressed to the developers. To date there had been no response from Cllr Sutton.

On Sept 25<sup>th</sup> John Mawer of Bourne End Village Association (BEVA) had written to DEF and West Hemel Action Group (WHAG) to suggest a joint press release about their shared concerns about the LA3 Master Plan. He provided a draft statement that raised the general issues and left spaces where each group could highlight their special concerns. Contributors to the DEF objection agreed to this and provided John with the bullet points of their main concerns. On Oct 4<sup>th</sup> John Mawer and Chris Mabley of BEVA had a meeting with Ben Raza from the Hemel Gazette to discuss the resultant press release, and this appeared as

an article in the October 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. Disappointingly, the article did not include any mention of the Wildlife Corridor for Shrubhill Common Nature Reserve.

**GE** said that he had been made aware on Oct 18<sup>th</sup> by reading the WHAG objection that on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> Herts County Council as Highway Authority had responded recommending that permission be refused. While he hoped that this recommendation would be accepted, he also expected that, even if it was, the developers would be back in a couple of months with yet another revised application. He noted in particular that one reason for HCC's recommendation was that the mitigation so far proposed for the Northridge Way/Fishery Road mini roundabout was unacceptable. However there was so little space there without demolishing properties that he could not see what they would propose next, particularly as HCC also said concerning the Boxted Road/Long Chaulden junction that the effect of proposed mitigation measures on pedestrians was unacceptable. *On Friday Nov 8<sup>th</sup> HCC Highways withdrew their recommendation to refuse LA3, subject to a list of conditions and caveats.*

On Nov 6<sup>th</sup> GE had been copied in on an E-mail from James Doe, DBC Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration, that his department would be reporting the planning application to the meeting of the Development Management Committee on Thursday 28 November, starting at 7pm. The report would be comprehensive and would address issues raised by residents and local organisations through the consultation process. His department were now in receipt of all essential outstanding information and the report would cover this. Bodies wishing to speak at the meeting must register to speak – via the DBC website at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/meetings-minutes-and-agendas/speak-at-a-committee-meeting/speak-at-a-development-control-committee-meeting>.

**AA** advised that the Officer's report and recommendation would carry a great deal of weight. Five minutes in total would be allocated for interested group to speak. **GE** said that that would only allow time to recite the bullet points from objections already submitted.

**RT** advised would-be speakers not to leave their application to the last minute, and not to include arguments that were not relevant to planning. *GE reported in the November DEF 2016 minutes a summary of what were and were not planning considerations, derived from the CPRE Hertfordshire Planning Skills Seminar at Knebworth Village Hall that he had attended in September of that year, though this was probably more relevant for smaller planning applications.*

**CM/JM** said that it was important to have sight of the Planners' report (any advice on how/ when to do this not recorded.)

## **DBC 2017 Local Plan (up to 2036) and Hemel Garden Communities**

**RT** said that the next issue of this plan would be up for consultation in May 2020. *This approximately confirms what was in the September DEF minutes.*

(Someone) said that it would be preferable to have sight of the plan in advance of this and attempt by whatever means to influence it before it became too set.

## **Climate Emergency (Dacorum)**

**PH** said that in line with DBC's declaration, DEF should point out that for instance expansion of Luton Airport was incompatible with it. **GE** asked why not also Heathrow Runway 3, HS2? **RT** said that HS2 would relieve the West Coast Main Line, allowing it to take more freight and therefore take lorries off the road.

## **4. Chalk Streams**

**SW** gave a learned and well-illustrated presentation on Dacorum's rare and internationally recognised chalk streams, including an explanation of the regional geology, the essential characteristics of a chalk stream and the challenges to maintaining them including development, over-abstraction, pollution by road run-off and mismanagement.

One example of the run-off problem was the corner of Gadebridge Park where run-off from the Galley Hill area had led to large deposits of putrescent sludge which had been exacerbated by "disconnects". *See DEF Minutes 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2018*. This had been alleviated by the creation of a settlement pond as part of the upper park Gade restoration project. However in order to continue to be effective the pond would need regular clearance, and this was the responsibility of DBC as landowner. **AA** queried whether anyone at DBC would have agreed to such a commitment. (Action **GE/SW** to find out whether/where this is recorded.) **RT** asked whether HCC had a role to play in this. **SW** thought that HCC's main focus was on flooding. *Subsequently AA informed GE that DBC did take on the surface drainage sediment pond and does manage it - the sediment is monitored and will be removed when required, as agreed with the Environment Agency and Affinity Water. The EA estimated this would be every 5 years, but DBC has site meetings with them a couple of times a year, where the whole of the River Gade including this pond is reviewed.*

**SW** said that in order to reduce the requirement to over-extract locally to the detriment of our chalk streams, there should be a national water grid, just as there was a national grid for electricity and a national strategy for major roads. The Gade through Gadebridge Park had been spared from drying up because of Affinity reducing the rate of extraction at the Piccotts End pumping station, but the balance had been recouped by extracting more from under the old Civic Centre, so the problem had only been shifted and still affected the Gade downstream.

**JT** asked whether OFWAT the Water Regulator had a role in Chalk Stream protection. **SW** said that OFWAT's prime concern was to provide value for money for consumers.

**BP** asked about the role of the Environment Agency(EA) . **AA** said that he had asked Affinity Water as to their confidence in being able to supply water to the 10,000 homes of the Hemel Garden Communities under the New Local Plan, and they had replied that they "could cover it". **SH** said she had seen an assessment that they had "a bundle of options" for dealing with this step increase in demand. **SW** had heard that they were still "looking for ideas".

**PA** cited the £100K 'Bringing Back the Bulbourne' partnership project (*see DEF minutes 10/5/18*) as a positive and successful example of river improvement. This had gone so well that water voles had recently been re-introduced. The main challenge to the project had been in accommodating to the water demands of the Canal and River Trust. **AA** reminded those present that the Bulbourne had dried out further upstream from the improved stretch, at Northchurch (*see DEF minutes 21/2/19*)

## **5. Any Other Business**

**BP** said that the Tring Allotments and Environment Committee's Climate Change Working Party's event on local sustainability and climate change in October (see minutes of September meeting) had been a great success and had attracted a lot of interest.