

Whinfield Residents Association

(incorporating The Friends of Beech Wood)

www.whinfieldresidents.co.uk

Minutes of the meeting of 20/09/2017 at Oban Court

Attendees: David Milner, Judith Murray, Alan Hutchinson, Graham Foster, Rosemary Adams, Kim Bainbridge, Linda Davison, James Eddy, Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, Fred Greenhow, Bev Hutchinson, Chris Jackson, Ruby Keir, Andy Keir, Carol Milner, Pat Newton, Jim Chalk, Jeanette French, Joan Thompson, John Thompson.

Apologies: Anne Rudkin, Dawn Makepeace, Peter Voss, Laura Wakeford, John Atkinson, Allanah Robinson, Jean Foster, Cllr Tom Nutt, Cllr Helen Crumbie.

It was agreed that in the absence of the Secretary, Alan Hutchinson would take the minutes.

Approval of the Minutes of 19/07/17

Re. the item on Darlington Local Plan, Judith Murray proposed 2 amendments, that: (1) it was *Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier* who had commented that we are still awaiting answers from Cllr McEwan, and not *John Atkinson*, (2) the phrase "*would Muscar House Farm be off the list for development*" should be replaced with "*why was Muscar House Farm still on the interim plan for development and why were we (as in WRA & its members) and those who participated in the original consultation not told about this?*". James Eddy seconded and the amendments were carried. It was then agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 19/07/2017, as amended, be signed by the Chair as a correct record, proposed by James Eddy and seconded by Carol Milner.

Matters arising from the Minutes

Asda: David Milner reported that Asda had confirmed to Cllr Crumbie that table top sales would not be allowed.

Gap in the hedge near Sparrowhall Drive: David Milner reported that John Atkinson had lodged a second complaint with DBC and an answer is expected by 9th October 2017.

Chair's report: David Milner commented on the successful Special General Meeting re. the Northern Bypass and an excellent litter pick. He noted with disappointment that neither of our Ward Councillors were present at this meeting at this crucial time of year. David informed the meeting that because of a change in her job Anne Rudkin would not be seeking re-election as Secretary at the AGM but it was hoped that she might consider standing for election to the Committee instead. David pointed out that a Nomination Form is now available for download from the "Meetings" page of the WRA website to propose members for the posts of officers and committee at the AGM. Alan Hutchinson explained that the form is fillable for emailing back or it can be completed by hand, and even scanned. Nomination forms should be returned to WRA no later than 7 days before the AGM.

Treasurer's Report: Judith Murray reported that little had changed financially and that there is currently £1197 in the bank. Because there will be no table top sales at Asda, we will need to review our fundraising strategy. WRA is taking part in the upcoming sale at Tees Valley Airport.

Beech Wood: David Milner reminded members that the Sub-committee co-ordinator had resigned and that there was lots going on in the background. Graham Foster reported that there had been less anti-social behaviour in the wood recently and that Pippa Smaling had drawn up a list of jobs to be done in Beech Wood and who would do them. We may be able to take advantage of membership of an over-arching 'green' body which has been set up in the Town, such as by gaining insurance cover and training for ladder work and operating certain types of machinery. In answer to a question from Bev Hutchinson, Graham explained that we have taken out our own Public Liability Insurance for now. Graham suggested that while Beech Wood is on the DBC Call-for-sites map, it will probably not be built on. Jeanette French asked about the wild flower situation and Graham explained that DBC are looking at possible new sites and what to do with the existing ones. David Milner mentioned that we have the seeds to re-flower but a disagreement meant that it had not happened. Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier stated that he hoped the wildflowers will continue, and there was general agreement with that view.

Springfield Park: John Atkinson had sent a written report to the Chair. He is communicating with Dean Scott about resurfacing of the play area, which is a trip hazard, the damage done to the railings around it and the missing swings. Anne Rudkin had conveyed a question about when the goalposts would be replaced. Graham Foster had spoken to John Atkinson about what was said at the Special General Meeting and they had concluded that the mini-roundabout on the main road would be enlarged and a road driven across Springfield Park. Bev Hutchinson reported that Nick Wallis had said that there are no firm plans to do this, but she was of the opinion that if it went ahead there would be a great deal of opposition.

Darlington Local Plan: The Chair had received an email from Cllr Tom Nutt stating that no applications have been received from developers for sites within Whinfield Ward. Judith Murray confirmed that the DBC website had no such planning notices listed for the last 4 weeks. Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier expressed the view that councillors and council officers should clearly state when such matters are not going to happen. Judith explained that the timetable re. the Local Plan is for a sustainability report to be produced before the end of September with public consultation during October and November.

Northern Bypass: David Milner explained that it was good to have had the opportunity to discuss the issue at the well-attended Special General Meeting, that there had been a unanimous show of hands against Route B and that he had conveyed that decision to TVCA. Bev Hutchinson explained in detail the activities of the Barmpton & Skerningham action group set up to particularly oppose Route B but not necessarily any new road. She mentioned the adverse effect of the route on wildlife, which should not be forced to migrate away, accessible green land, walks and rights of way and community woodland. An aim is to protect the regeneration of the Skerne, and medieval archaeology backed up by DCC and the Medieval Settlement Research Group. Other factors include noise, air and light pollution and the devaluation of existing property, and the over-provision of housing stock should be discouraged since DBC has already met its targets and the road is linked to the master plan to build over 7000 new homes. Route B cuts across many jurisdictions and the action group tries to be non-confrontational by talking to a wide group of interested parties. Jenny Chapman MP is supportive and will come over to speak to residents and walk affected routes. Cllr Nick Wallis had stated that he believed that most borough councillors are against Route B. Others contacted include Cllr Brian Jones, Sadberge Parish Council, Phil Wilson MP, DBC Highways, Cllr Bill Dixon, Cllr Tom Nutt, Cllr Helen Crumbie, a bridleways organisation and the RSPB. The action group believes that it is better to stop the road now before the formal stage is reached and there are 2 spaces on the committee for Whinfield residents. Upcoming activities include a "Children In Need" walk and a leaflet drop, for which volunteers are needed. Bev noted that Route B contravenes all sections of the National Policy Framework and Graham Foster recalled that the Brightwater Project had received £3m lottery funding to survey the Skerne Corridor. Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier queried whether DBC councillors are really as supportive of opposition as it appears. Judith Murray commented that Route A may also allow wider development and have adverse effects on wildlife, a member suggested that the pros and cons should be examined in case compromises have to be made, and Bev explained that the alternative routes already considered by the authorities will be looked at by the action group. Alan Hutchinson will put the maps on the WRA website. Other suggestions from the floor included looking at badger setts and that Theakstons plans for development are served by Route B. In response to a question put to the meeting by the Chair, a show of hands gave unanimous support to the action group in opposing Route B.

Website: Alan Hutchinson reported that he had created a new webpage re. the Northern Bypass, incorporated Muscar House Farm into a more general page about the Darlington Local Plan and brought the "Current Issues" page up to date to reflect these items. The "News & Events" page has also been updated, with earlier items transferred to the "Gallery" for continued reference as an archive. He had also devised a way to produce a fillable Nomination Form to allow members to propose people for election to the officer and committee posts at the AGM. Alan had been assisting the Secretary with communications and membership and we currently have 84 residents who receive updates, notices and minutes by email, plus a few who had come to a meeting but did not supply an email address. Alan writes to all new members to welcome them and check that their email address is correct.

PACT Meeting: David Milner had nothing to report and did not know whether PACT was still running. It was agreed that Alan Hutchinson writes to our 2 PCSOs to clarify the situation.

Litter: Judith Murray thanked those who had come along to the litter pick in Springfield Park, Green Lane and Barmpton Lane, resulting in 12 large bags of litter being collected. John & Joan Thompson reported that they pick up at least a bag per week from Whinfield Road as part of the Street Champions scheme. Alan Hutchinson reported on his concerns about lack of proper back-up by Street Scene on occasion recently.

Any other business: Alan Hutchinson commented on the ineffectiveness of LED street lighting but Chris Jackson pointed out the benefits of less light pollution. Rosemary Adams reflected on the amount of countryside which has been taken over for housing during her time in Darlington.

Date of next meeting: Annual General Meeting - Wednesday 22nd November 2017
Ordinary General Meeting - Wednesday 13th December 2017, both at 7pm in Oban Court.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm.