

## **Whinfield Residents Association**

(inc. The Friends of Beech Wood)

[www.whinfieldresidents.co.uk](http://www.whinfieldresidents.co.uk)

### **Minutes of the meeting of 18th July 2018 at Oban Court**

**Attendees:** David Milner (Chair), Alan Hutchinson (Secretary), Judith Murray (Treasurer), Graham Foster (Vice-chair), Simon Bainbridge, Ralph Bradley, David Clark, James Eddy, Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, Jean Foster, Fred Greenhow, Andrew Keir, Ruby Keir, Alan Macnab, Chris McEwan (part-time), Carol Milner, Pat Newton, Tyler Nixon, Allannah Robinson, Joan Thompson, Tom Medhurst, Janine Lee, Andrew Ward, Terry Sowerby, Rosamund Sowerby, Carole Dixon, John Dixon, Stephen Tarren

**Apologies:** Peter Voss, Cllr Tom Nutt, Cllr Helen Crumbie, John Thompson

**Approval of the Minutes:** It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 16/05/2018 be signed by the Chair as a correct record, proposed by Alan Macnab and seconded by James Eddy.

#### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

**Asda trolleys:** Cllr Helen Crumbie had sent a written report to say that our councillors are still looking into the ongoing issues of Asda abandoned supermarket trolleys along with a staff member at our MP's office. This is not a straightforward issue and residents continue to be urged to report abandoned trolleys. An update will be sent with any relevant information. Judith Murray said that she had spoken to the Asda manager, who has approached Head Office to bid for technology to prevent trolleys to be taken away and WRA was asked to write to Head Office to support the business case. Judith will do this and urged residents to continue to report abandoned trolleys.

**Damage to grassy areas:** Chris McEwan had not yet fed back information about plastic stakes.

**Yellow Lines, Oban Court:** These have now been done and the ones which had been removed in Sparrowhall Drive. Cllr Tom Nutt had sent a written report on a message from Ron Hogg re. parking on footways, which Tom had clarified with him last week because of past inquiries on this issue: *"Parking on the footway is a vexed issue and must be addressed proportionately, with an officer examining the location, the reason the vehicle is parked there (safer than on the road) and the disruption caused to road users. If pedestrians can pass the pushchair or wheelchair test, then there is little the Police can do because obstruction is a very subjective issue and each incident must be dealt with individually. What would constitute obstruction on one occasion may not on another simply by the vehicle being in a slightly different position. If a clear offence of obstruction is made out the police will take enforcement action."* Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier disputed Ron Hogg's statement and pointed out that the police website says not to park on paths. Graham Foster observed that the police are failing to respond to the offences of parking on the footpath and driving on the path. Ralph Bradley said that it was necessary to park on the path on Barmpton Lane to let traffic past, because even though residential it is used as a through road. Graham Foster said that if people park properly on Barmpton Lane traffic flow will not function, especially when more houses are built, and that developers should provide an adequate number of parking spaces. Judith Murray said that when walking on Barmpton Lane it is sometimes not possible to pass. Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier was concerned at the cost of damage caused by parking on the grass on Sparrowhall Drive. Jean Foster said that people 'plough through' pinch points, unlike years ago. The Chair suggested that people should ring the police when in an obstruction situation.

## **Chair's report**

David Milner commented as follows:

- It was very disappointing that our ward councillors were not present again because people would like to talk to them. After the last meeting we were challenged whether their reports were being read out and recorded, the Secretary had responded in detail to confirm that this was the case and had received a thankyou note.
- A lot of time has been spent preparing the WRA response to the Draft Local Plan. Meetings had been attended at the Town Hall with a planning officer; and with the Barmpton & Skerningham Preservation Group to discuss common ground.
- Two excellent fundraising events had taken place.
- Thanks were given to Judith Murray and Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier for their hard work in planting all the seeds in Beech Wood.

## **Secretary's report**

Alan Hutchinson reported that:

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is now in force. 20 members who did not respond to the request for consent have been deleted. We now have 76 confirmed members.
- The website has been brought up to date, with a detailed new webpage about the Local Plan and guidance on the procedure for responding to the consultation, and routine maintenance.
- Members have been kept informed about forthcoming events and the Local Plan Consultation.
- Facebook has been used to convey information more widely but the creation of a WRA Facebook page has been deferred because of the time needed to devote to it, and resources are currently stretched because of the sheer volume of other work being undertaken.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Judith Murray reported that the car boot sale raised £55, the coffee & cake morning raised £63.75, extra wildflower seeds cost £20 and leaflets about the Local Plan £50, leaving a balance of £1271.

## **Local Plan**

The Chair reminded the meeting of the motion passed at last meeting and as a result the WRA Committee had formulated, but not yet sent in, our response to the Local Plan consultation, which is on the website. The Secretary was thanked for the work he put in on this. A leaflet drop had been done throughout the ward to encourage people to take part and for their opinions to carry more weight individually, and Judith Murray was thanked for organising this, and the people who made it happen. Cllr Tom Nutt had sent a written report that no applications had been received for Elm Tree Farm or Muscar House Farm and that the Local Plan is currently out for consultation until 2nd August. The Secretary had received emails from residents with queries or copies of comments, which he had dealt with, and CPRE notes on their possible response from Simon Bainbridge.

Tom Medhurst asked whether it was acceptable for residents to cut and paste from our response but it was agreed that it was best not to do this. Judith Murray explained that themes can be used to put ideas in their own words. Chris McEwan said that it was important that individuals put things in their own context e.g. infrastructure; housing, green space, and the Secretary agreed. Judith Murray noted that the National Planning Policy Framework prevents some personal statements as being invalid and Graham Foster said that it was most important to not mention property values, views, overlooking etc. or the comments will be discarded, and Chris McEwan agreed.

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## **Local Plan** (continued)

Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier observed that not everybody is in a position to respond and Andy Keir suggested they could be supplied with categories of response. Fred Greenhow suggested that it was best to use the correct structure or main headings of the Plan, use the words "I object" where appropriate and maybe agree with other parts, and he asked about the next step. Chris McEwan said that DBC will look at whether the Plan needs amending and this would be work in progress. Jean Foster pointed out that there is a timeline on the DBC website.

Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier noted that there are only certain things DBC can include and queried whether it mattered how residents letters are put together as long as they submit something. Graham Foster suggested that the words "I object" or "I agree" are key. Alan Macnab queried what weight the developers views will have and Chris McEwan responded that this is DBC's masterplan approved through the governance procedures of the council, not so much a negotiation, but part of the process is to consider concerns and respond; DBC are seeking to understand the impact of additional traffic and determine if the system can take it. Alan Macnab asked what would happen if a developer like Theakstons put in a planning application while this process is ongoing and Chris McEwan replied that this is a 5 year supply plan so it would be refused. Judith Murray queried what would happen if another developer submits an application for Elm Tree Farm or Muscar House Farm, which include DBC land, and Chris McEwan responded that no plans had come forward and he could not comment. Graham Foster suggested that once the Local Plan reaches a certain stage, until the land in the Plan is approved, then no applications can be accepted. Chris McEwan said that the draft of the Local Plan is for feedback, that Elm Tree Farm and Muscar House Farm came earlier but there are no applications yet.

Ralph Bradley asked how objections are viewed and Fred Greenhow asked whether the council would regard a low return of objections as unimportant views. Chris McEwan replied that they are viewed on merit; DBC sought to provide alternative methods of making submissions; DBC will accept the validity of comments or say why the evidence rejects the objection; DBC is happy with the housing need figures. Tyler Nixon asked where this evidence comes from, to inspect it, and Chris McEwan replied that it is estimated from various sources and reviewed every 5 years; the Local Plan allocates land, not individual planning applications. Andrew Ward asked why the ONS figures are supposedly flawed and Chris McEwan briefly mentioned the last census in 2011; ONS using national data applied locally and administrative data such as GP surgery figures.

The Chair then put to the meeting the question as to whether WRA wishes to formally make our submission to DBC. Chris McEwan abstained, there were no objections and the meeting then overwhelmingly agreed that the Secretary should submit our response to the Draft Local Plan to DBC forthwith.

## **Northern Bypass**

Cllr Tom Nutt had reported that there was no change from the last meeting report. Judith Murray queried from his report at the last meeting whether there are only 3 scenarios; because a 4<sup>th</sup> scenario is to also have link road constructed by Theakstons if the Local Plan is approved. Fred Greenhow thought it odd that there appeared to have been no real progress in 7 months.

## **Beech Wood**

Judith Murray reported that the council had prepared the land and WRA planted the seeds on 7th June. Growth is now coming through but lack of rain is a problem.

## **Springfield Park**

Alan Macnab reported that last autumn the developers were going to put a road through the middle of the Park, but it is now going up the east side. WRA applied for Local Green Space designation in the Local Plan but this was turned down because of the masterplan and we are appealing. DBC is hoping to enhance the play equipment facilities and the Park is an Asset Of Community Value which gives a measure of protection. Chris McEwan replied that there is no intention to sell or build on the Park and that the Local Plan extends the green space. David Clark queried if DBC had stated there would be no development.

The Chair explained that our application to make Green Lane an Asset Of Community Value has been rejected because we refused to supply the names and addresses of 21 WRA members, on data protection grounds. The Chair asked the meeting if members wanted WRA to pursue the application by supplying DBC with our Constitution and extracts from the minutes confirming the size of our membership and a decision made by members to proceed, and this was agreed with no objections.

Alan Macnab had been in touch with the Church Commissioners who say they had signed the Green Lane bridleway over to Theakstons in 2001; and he asked why residents were not told but there was no answer. Chris McEwan suggested it might be helpful to get written confirmation and he knew that Theakstons placed a caution at the land registry around that time. Alan Hutchinson explained that legally the surface of such a highway belongs to DBC as highway authority, and they maintain it, but not necessarily the land beneath the surface.

Fred Greenhow commented that if there is to be more traffic then the road by the Park will just add to the problem. Graham Foster suggested that this may go ahead whether a bypass is built or not, but that cars will fill the void if the lorries go. Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier asked if the views of our councillors about all of these big ward issues are known, to mixed responses from the floor.

## **Litter**

Judith Murray reported that she is organising another litter pick on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 19th September 2018, at 7pm in Oban Court.  
[This later had to be changed to Wed 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018.]

## **Any Other Business**

The Chair mentioned that **Barmpton Lane Allotments Society** are holding an Open Day on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018, 10am-2pm.

Chris McEwan reported that the **Haughton Matters** councillors group is holding a drop-in session in the chapel in Haughton re. the Local Plan, 6- 7.30pm, on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.

The Chair noted that Sparrowhall Drive and the grassy areas have become a racetrack for **motorbikes**. Chris McEwan said that this was hard to stop but residents and employees are being asked to anonymously inform the police if they see where the bikes go to be stored.

Graham Foster noted that Darlington Police have started their annual campaign re. **anti-social behaviour** to coincide with the school holidays.

The Chair concluded by explaining that the **Local Plan** is the most significant thing to happen to our area for a while and residents need to make their views known.

The meeting closed at 8.19 pm.