



Elstree & Borehamwood Residents Association

Minutes of Meeting for 19th July 2016

Date : 19th July 2016

Held at: St Theresa's Church Centre, Shenley Road, Borehamwood WD6 1TG

Committee Members Present : Andy Lewis (Chair), Lawrence Stack (Vice-Chair), Suzanne Alford (Treasurer), Clare Newton (Membership Secretary) and John Fort (Committee Member)

June Update:

- Following on from updating those present about any updates since the June meeting.
- Andy Lewis (Chair) said he was carrying out a survey of EBRA members, to find out how satisfied they were with the format, frequency and location of our EBRA meetings. He said he would leave the survey to continue running until the end of July.
- Andy Lewis (Chair) also put out another survey regarding gathering residents' views about the busy Station Road roundabout (Allum Lane / Theobald Street and Shenley Road) outside the Elstree and Borehamwood Station. This survey will run for a month and Andy Lewis will submit the results to Hertfordshire County Council.

Police Update:

- No Police attended.

Transport forum Update:

Sue Alford informed those present about the following key bullet points raised in the Transport Forum meeting on 13th July 2016:

Trains:

- Govia acknowledge their performance is below standard.
- Revenue collected by Govia is given to the Farebox Revenue Collector who pay Govia a regular amount, can give them more if needed but they are also penalised if do not meet targets.
- The Southeast of the UK, including this area, has experienced phenomenal population growth over the last 5 years and massive growth in this area. This population growth has had a big impact on the rail system and caused many capacity issues.
- Govia are trying to find a way to get funding from network rail to get us a larger station building (which will be the fourth station we have had).

- Success of the train infrastructure has meant more people have moved into these areas and the train system cannot cope with this increase of users. It is like trying to put a 'gallon into a pint pot'!
- London Bridge's station will be complete in May 2018 and by December 2018 there should be 24 trains an hour going through the centre of London.
- South Eastern Trains policy: They had too many trains on their system to deal with capacity effectively, which in turn has created other problems effecting train systems efficiency, hence they are now taking these trains back out of the system.
- Govia's policy on the other hand is to have as many trains as possible to cope with demand.
- Oyster card usage should become available to Luton and Gatwick stations.
- Station Hosts will be able to produce any train ticket next year. This year they can produce about 95% of required tickets.
- New trains: Class 700 trains – these will have visual and audio announcements and indicate where there is any space on the train so commuters can move around the train plus there will be no closed doors between the carriages, just one long corridor running the length of the train.
- Car parking at the station: The seven parking spaces allocated to the new station taxi service were apparently agreed by a Govia transport rail representative who did not consult with the station users or Station Manager!
- Due to the ongoing car parking and the congestion situation at Elstree and Borehamwood Train station roundabout (Allum Lane/Theobald Street / Shenley Road), Cllr Butchins had a meeting with Sullivan buses and three PCSO's and as a result of this AECOM who are traffic consultants will be taken on to unscramble the situation.
- Currently anyone picking up a passenger can park in any car parking space in the station forecourt, as long as they stay in their car whilst waiting to pick up their passenger. However drivers must NOT park in premier bays as they are bought by users. The 20 minutes parking bay signs were removed recently and not put back up, but they should have been relocated within the car park. There is also no time limit for anyone parking there with a disabled badge.

Police update:

- PCSO John Hainsworth has been very good in taking our queries and getting back to us all.
- The police are aware of the nuisance children on their bikes who are behaving dangerously on the road. PCSO Clare Morris, is a specialist ASB officer and is on their case. Potentially these children could have their bikes taken away by the police.
- PCSO Hainsworth is going to look at Leeming Road parking and will be looking into cars who park in the tiny half parking bays but end up with their car sticking out into the road and will get back to me in due course as to whether anything can be done.
- The police are aware of the Scratchwood off road motorcyclists who ride on the road on unlicensed vehicles which are not to be driven on the road. They have put measures and traps in place and all the known motorcyclists have now been issued with a first warning so the police already have all their details.

Buses:

- As per handout.

- To improve bus timetable and bus running times etc, Sullivans buses will have an Inspector out looking at bus times at the bus stop at Tesco. Sullivans have now got technological communication systems in place so they can see at any time where buses are etc.
- The Transport Forum ran out of time to discuss the Bus Service Bill but we do want to know what HCC's intentions are regarding it. Plus it will need funding and we need to know what HCC will commit to. It appears to be a political/optional bill!

Traffic Flow:

- Urban Transport Plan 2013:
An HCC officer apologised but said they would get details of the progress with this plan by the next Transport Forum meeting in October.

Borehamwood Football Club Expansion:

- Cllr Michelle Vince very kindly agreed to talk to us about the Borehamwood Football club's (BWFC) expansion plan. Basically BWFC want to i) increase their astro-turf pitches and ii) BWFC make no money for BWFC and so need to generate more revenue from their PACE football skills programme which will go back into the Club..

BWFC have firstly, been promoted up a division and secondly, need to create more revenue as they run a community education and football skills programme called PACE for 16-19 year old teenagers who may have issues being taught in mainstream schools, but this scheme helps keep them in education. They are taught in a number of porta-cabins which are located in BWFC's car park. Danny Hunter, the owner has been told by HBC that he needs to find an alternative location for these porta-cabins. HBC have given BWFC two years to find an alternative location. This would entail the need for £1.5m to build such a facility. So BWFC needed a new funding scheme.

Regarding the proposed new astro-turf pitches, which would be hired out when the astro-turfs were not in use, to the community for a fee, Cllr Vince explained that although BWFC plans were to cover one third of Meadow Park, the extra land required was effectively a box in the middle of the park, rendering the remainder of Meadow Park (i.e. makes it inaccessible and unusable for public functions) as useless to the community for its large key annual events of Firework night and Family Day. The remaining area of Meadow Park may just about be alright for a small family day event but it would not be suitable for Firework night which needs much more space for safety reasons and attracts very large crowds.

- Rachel James (PACE Rep) asked why BWFC were doing this when such facilities were included in the Rowley Lane Centre of Sporting Excellence plan. It was also questioned why HBC, who own the Old Haberdashers sports ground in Croxdale Road, could not sell that land to Danny Hunter of BWFC, instead so he could use the sports grounds there, rather than them be turned into another 170 housing development scheme. HBC own the land and could lease them that land.
- Cllr Vince mentioned that there's a Policy CS19 that covers loss of public amenity space. This may be able to be used against such a development and also the plan does not meet the criteria.

- Cllr Vince explained that the current status of this BWFC planning application will be going in for Planning Permission for August's or possibly September's meeting. The relevant documents and agenda will be released in two weeks' time (from the date of the EBRA meeting).
- Cllr Vince confirmed that there is a covenant in place and it says it is for public land. However 'astro-turf' could be included under that use. She also added that even if they get Planning Permission, it doesn't mean they will get permission to buy that land.
- Meadow Park is our showground and it is centrally placed. Unless move to outskirts of Borehamwood which then creates accessibility issues for many residents
- It was mentioned that in fact the Hertswood Centre is much cheaper for children to attend and hire out to play football and that the users only need to pay £2-3 to hire a pitch rather than a £30 hour fee elsewhere.
- Local residents had complained that BWFC presented them with problems with bright stadium lighting on until 11pm on some occasions during the darker evenings and crowd and player noise, including abusive language.
- BWFC do not want to move anywhere else. They also do not want to use astro-turf as Arsenal Ladies Football Club use grass in their league. It was also interesting to note that HBC had asked Danny Hunter not to put in a Planning Application for this BWFC expansion.
- Cllr Vince also raised some other good points in that whilst the community did not want to lose Meadow Park as a community asset, it was only used for two days a year for Family Day and Firework night where the size of the park was of importance. Therefore it was important for the local council to make better use of the current area of the park to encourage greater all year round use, using S106 money. Currently there are ground, soil and flooding issues, but she explained the Council did have money that could be used for such a drainage scheme.
- Cllr Vince added that community facilities in general really did need to be used, such as the Bowls club near the football club and that it was a case of 'use it or lose it'. There was also a 'rumour' that the Bowls Club is under threat as it is under used and she believed HBC pay rent on that building and that it was seen as a community asset but if it was not used then it was possible we could lose it – so the message is clear – 'use it'. Plus we cannot afford to lose this park.
- Cllr Vince said that there was a large 'Community Benefits' document, stating what BWFC do for the community, produced by BWFC for HBC – Cllr Vince was given a copy, but as it's a private document she was told it was not allowed to be shared. There is a 'Child UK' evening on a Friday night but few people know about it. She also felt that BWFC should work more within the local community and get more involved e.g. participate in Family Day and the Carnival Parade etc and she feels they should offer more to the community.
- Cllr Vince added that even if BWFC got planning permission for this expansion they still had to buy the land.
- Cllr Vince said it's important that residents get behind their own campaigns to protect Meadow Park as both herself and Cllr Richard Butler were compromised as some residents wanted to see BWFC expand and others wanted to protect the park.
- Lastly Cllr Vince confirmed that the 2016 Firework night was still planned to be held in Meadow Park for this year.

Taxi and Car Parking issues at Elstree and Borehamwood Station:

- Cllr Vince informed our members that there are now no drop off bays at Elstree and Borehamwood Station car park forecourt area, as AAA taxi's now have them, albeit these AAA bays are typically empty, as the AAA taxis are often waiting in the drop-off slip bay area. These seven car parking spaces are now reserved for AAA taxi's, who had been given the contract to have their office inside the station. They have paid £11k per parking space and these are now private spaces held by them as a result. There are now no drop off spaces. However, people picking up passengers may park in any other space as long as they remain in their vehicles so they can move their cars if necessary. It was agreed that there was poor planning of the station forecourt. Also ABA cabs still use the station carpark. There was a possibility that we could lose the black cabs. AAA cabs did not get planning permission but instead tried to show the residents they were a good company. Cllr Leon Reeve added that AAA did not need licensing for their premises as it was the person/driver who needed the license and that's how they got round it. Then they submitted a retrospective Planning Application. AAA have previously used this approach elsewhere e.g. Potters Bar Cars etc. Both Cllr Vince and Cllr Reeve felt this approach was not appropriate and there were concerns raised about their transparency, health and safety and public confidence of this AAA taxi service. Cllr Vince has called for there to be a full public hearing with the Planning Committee.

Aldenham Reservoir Update:

Clare Newton (Committee member) addressed those present by explaining that Liberty Lake Leisure Ltd/Liberty Aldenham – who will be referred to as 'Liberty' on these minutes – have now finally put in a Planning Application. EBRA have had a front page local paper article about it. EBRA will be opposing the plan. EBRA is against the development, as it is not the optimum solution for the reservoir, Green Belt or the area. EBRA see the scenario as like buying an old house and then expecting to build lots of new homes in an inappropriate location to raise money to keep their old house going and getting very wealthy in the process, at the expense of upsetting the local community, but expecting the local community to be happy and grateful to them as they have kept the old house going.

EBRA will be opposing the planning application on the following grounds:

- **Green Belt Land:** It is both the Government's and Hertsmere Borough Council policy NOT to build on Green Belt land unless Liberty can demonstrate there are 'very special circumstances' (VSC). However on the grounds that the reservoir does not need any imminent repairs or work carried out, there is therefore no VSC. EBRA are very concerned that if planning permission is granted that this would set a precedent for further erosion of Green Belt land, which many of us feel is essential to protect, to give us breathing space and room between residential areas. We have no desire to become an extension of Edgware or other parts of London.
- **No need for more Housing:** HBC have stated in response to this Planning Application that no more housing is required in Hertsmere (at least for the time being). So therefore these 150 units are not part of HBC's housing plan.
- **Access to the Site:** Watford Road is a narrow road, with three semi blind bends along it, which limit visibility to traffic users. EBRA do not feel that access to a 150 unit housing development would be suitable along this road. There are also concerns for vehicles accessing and egressing from any such

estate. EBRA would need HBC to determine whether the Transport Report put forward by Liberty is realistic and whether their proposed scheme to widen Watford Road from the west going to the east just before The Fishery pub is possible. EBRA was also concerned that the report stated that approximately 39 vehicles would on average exit the new estate between the peak traffic hour of 8am to 9am and that on average only three cars at a time would ever join the traffic queue. EBRA felt that it was more realistic that more vehicles would leave the estate probably between 8am to 8.15am if they were going to work or on a school run, as the rest of Elstree and Borehamwood was already gridlocked during those times and so an earlier get away was needed by many road users.

- **Increase in traffic:** A 150 unit housing development would add to the already 'at capacity' traffic flow. Liberty have included their consultants findings in the Transport Report. Again EBRA are reliant on HBC checking this data and confirming if it is realistic or not.
- **Insufficient transport Links:** Due to the limited bus services using this road and layout of the Elstree Village, there are insufficient transport links. Liberty's Transport Report covered these points and addressed them by saying there were a number of buses using this road. EBRA would add that these buses were only useful if you wanted to go on the routes of those particular buses, which was limited. EBRA also felt that the report made assumptions that people would be willing to walk or use bicycles etc to go anywhere locally.
- **Intensity of Housing development:** EBRA felt that 150 unit housing development was fairly excessive and out of proportion for a village the size of Elstree.
- **Regeneration of Elstree Village:** 150 homes would bring in approximately 492 extra residents into the village but that would only seek to increase the population of the village rather than regenerate it, as facilities in the village are finite and the GP surgery and local schools are already at capacity. Any extra increase in population would lend itself to needing a small express supermarket, which could be to the detriment of other local shops, and even if such a store was there, this would not stop residents going elsewhere to shop or visit. Plus there are virtually no parking facilities in this shopping parade area of Elstree.
- **Drainage and flooding risk:** DEFRA have already identified Watford Road as at risk of surface water flooding. Even in July this year (2016) the road flooded badly after a heavy downpour. EBRA are still concerned that concreting over that piece of Green Belt land would compromise the 'natural soak away sponge' effect, which could be detrimental to the local environment, should we experience inclement adverse weather conditions, which the UK is experiencing more and more frequently. Liberty have produced a Flood Risk Report addressing many of these issues. EBRA are reliant on HBC analysing the data and information given and determining if the solutions and measures given would remedy and prevent any future flood risk.
- **Lack of public Consultation:** EBRA and many other residents and interested parties have been long awaiting a Public Consultation with which we were aware that Cllr Morris Bright and Cllr Harvey Cohen had offered to help Liberty, had not occurred and for some reason Liberty were now 'blaming' the council for not facilitating such an event. A Public Consultation regarding this development is very important due to these reasons:
 - This particular planning application is very complex.
 - There needs to be a public debate about i) needing such a housing estate, ii) its impact on the area, iii) how would it help the area, and iv) is a £20-30 multi-million pound (net) housing estate, a fair exchange for a £5m fund to the Community Interest Company (CIC) Trust (for

providing monies to maintain and repair the reservoir and its paths for evermore). Plus the £50k purchase cost of the reservoir and that parcel of Green belt land (the Land Registry confirmed this was the price paid).

- **Concerns:** Last but not least, EBRA have concerns over the ethics, transparency and behaviour of Liberty, both before and during their owning of the reservoir, particularly the issuing of ‘veiled threats’ that it could be fenced off or drained if they do not get planning permission. We are also waiting for details and actual alternative income stream initiatives from Liberty, in connection with the reservoir and its environs, that would actually raise appropriate levels of additional income to ensure the CIC Trust Fund is maintained and not allowed to run out and the CIC Trust Fund is future proofed. This is known as ‘enabled development’.

Other points in connection with Aldenham Reservoir:

- Further to EBRA’s views on this Planning Application we have now set up a facebook page entitled ‘Taking a Liberty – Say No – Aldenham Reservoir’.
- Hazel young (member) pointed out an error on the Liberty’s Transport Report in that it said Watford Road was 40mph when in fact it was ‘d’ listed and didn’t have a speed limit.
- Cllr Michelle Vince added that she thanked EBRA for bringing this whole matter to the attention of the Community and for helping people ‘open’ their eyes as to the reality of what was going on.
- Sue Alford (committee member) added more details to the conversation by bringing an email sent by Liberty to the Stakeholders that explained they, Liberty, had now had a meeting with the Planning Department. Liberty highlighted that the Planning Department had explained that no further housing was required by Hertsmere and that the reservoir was not part of the water infrastructure but was merely now a water feature. Sue Alford also briefly went through her findings of the Transport Report and Flooding Report and explained her observations, to give a balanced view, and that she felt these reports were more realistic than the reports submitted in 2015 by Liberty, but none the less HBC would need to verify the data and information given, to assess their accuracy.

Gas Holders Site:

- Andy Lewis (Chair) discussed the potential development of the Gas Works site. He explained that the land was owned by National Grid and that they plan to build up to 80 flats with 1 – 2 bedrooms. The buildings would be four to six storeys high, placed above underground parking. It is estimated that with 80 flats that potentially at least 80 vehicles could want to access and egress that development. There is only one road out of this proposed development, along station Road and onto the very busy Station Road/Theobald and Allum Lane roundabout, which is already operating at beyond capacity especially during peak traffic flow times. The housing developers were St William and Berkley and Lexington Communications are the PR company. The development area covered 1.3 acres. The gas pumps would be moved and relocated elsewhere on that site. There is a stream crossing the site, which has been hidden under concrete for many years. This stream/brook will be opened up and become a feature within the development. EBRA are concerned in case this becomes a flood risk and also have concerns about the traffic accessing and egressing from such a development. With regard to this very busy Station Road roundabout, we understand that other road layout options here are being looked into under a separate review by Cllr Butchins and AECON consultants. Our other concerns are

that consultations are taking place during the working day (and/or only being held for a day). We believe the Planning Application will be heard in Autumn 2016 and if permission is granted that work will start in the Summer of 2018. HBC are still taking consultation comments.

- Cllr Michelle Vince rightly pointed out that as per the original use of the land e.g. gas holders, that these did not require GP surgeries or schools or use cars, but an 80 unit housing development would generate 80 + new residents needing such facilities and amenities in the area. She was concerned about the impact of this development on the infrastructure, in addition to all the other developments going on in the area.
- Andy Lewis further commented on his disappointment about Patchetts Farm developers resubmitting their planning application again but now only allowing for 10% of affordable housing. This has been allowed due to recent changes in Government policy. Cllr Leon Reeve added that the term 'affordable housing' was very subjective and was variable in real financial terms and between areas of the UK. It was supposed to be 'social housing'. Currently 'affordable housing' was priced at around £350K, which all present agreed was beyond the reach of most low to middle income house buyers.

Elstree Compost Site (opposite the Centennial Business Park, Elstree):

- Andy Lewis discussed the concerns around the Elstree Compost site. 83 households had complained about unacceptable levels of odours arising from the composting storage & processes used on this site. Further to HBC serving an order on them & going to St Albans Magistrate Court, Reeve have now put out a statement that they will now resolve the issue and have offered to enclose the whole site. Reeve need to put in for planning permission by November 2016 in order to comply with the Order.

Any Other Business:

- Cllr Leon Reeve informed us about a traffic speed reducing initiative he has for Brook Road. He plans for a traffic island to be put near the 'Fairway Avenue' junction along Brook Road. The design of this island and road markings will give the illusion of a narrower road and this should help reduce the speed of cars in that area. This initiative was in response to the sad passing of a young boy called Tommy who was killed by a car along that road. Cllr Reeve's overall plan was to slow traffic down from the current average speed of 28mph to 24mph with this island in place, and then be able to implement a 20mph limit zone. He has dedicated £5k of his County Councillors local budget towards this initiative. He will also have an electronic speed indicator display installed in that area too.
- EBRA welcome any councillors who wish to discuss any local initiatives they have that they wish to share with our members and those present at our meeting.

Our Next Meetings:

Our next meeting is on 13th September 2016 at 7.50pm at St Teresa's Church Hall, 291 Shenley Road, WD6 1TG.

Our future meeting dates for 2016 are:

- 11th October ,
- 29th November 2016.

The End