



## **Elstree & Borehamwood Residents Association**

### **Minutes of Meeting for 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**Date :** 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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

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

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#### **June Update:**

- Following on from updating those present about any updates since the July meeting.
- Andy praised Lawrence Stack, our Vice Chairman, in his absence, for all the work and effort he has put into the Defibrillator campaigns. Lawrence had been awarded a special award by the British Heart Foundation for all his hard work for this defibrillator fundraising and awareness campaign and for his previous work on other community health matters ... and he was in the Town Crier. Those present at our meeting signed a 'Get Well' card for Lawrence who has had a new kidney, followed by some complications, and who is currently slowly recovering from his operation. We wish him a speedy recovery.

#### **Police Update:**

- No Police attended. However an earlier conversation in the week with the local police has highlighted the current issue of children behaving irresponsibly on their bikes around the town. The police have asked witnesses to forward any dash cam or video or photographic evidence to them for their investigation and to phone 101 to report the incidents so that the police can build up a case against these children. They are also building up a profile on each child.
- The Police also noted that there had been some burglaries around the area and as always for the public to ensure that cars, homes and outside sheds etc were properly secured and that nothing valuable was left on show etc.

#### **Taxi Issues at Elstree and Borehamwood Train Station:**

- We welcomed two black cab drivers – Paul Waltons and Tom McCannon - who are based down at the Elstree and Borehamwood Train Station - to attend our meeting and present their case with regards the pending planning application by AAA taxi's who had been contracted to be the station's chosen taxi service, who now had an office inside the station and were operating from the station forecourt. Their aim was to drum up support to oppose the planning application.
- The black cab drivers put forward the following points:

- It wasn't about the additional competition from AAA but about the health and safety aspects of using AAA cars.
- AAA are operating without any valid planning permission, which is due to be heard mid-October, however they have been in operation since 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016.
- AAA have not only have purchased 7 parking bays – which will be used by 21 taxis (3 taxis rotating per bay) once they have got Planning Permission – in the meantime they are parking in the slip road and using Coleridge Way to wait in. AAA are also intending to increase their taxi fleet from 21 cabs to 100 cabs and may wish to purchase another 10 parking bays.
- These 7 parking bays were intended for public use and not commercial use.
- The station roundabout is dangerous – anymore traffic in or out of the station road will cause chaos.
- They were concerned that the station traffic would come to a standstill as it is so congested which has an impact on safety etc too.
- It was pointed out that AAA are not covered by insurance if the taxis are not pre-booked by a client (unless the passenger has been referred to the taxi by their station office), whereas black cabs are covered by picking passengers up.
- There was a concern amongst those present that AAA were running their business without planning permission, plus a further concern about the future of AAA in that it is believed they intend to become the biggest minicab company in Hertfordshire.
- With advancements in new technology it should be considered as to whether they need to park in the station car park at all. For example, ABA, the other taxi company who serve the station, just drive in and out of the station carpark.
- This story has already been in the local paper some time ago.
- If you wish to object the AAA planning application number is 16/1058/FUL. The email address is 'planning@hertsmere.gov.uk'. Reasons for objecting can include road safety and adding to congestion (not forgetting that 80 homes/flats are being built along the Station road on the gas holder site).

### **Buses:**

Steve Simmonds kindly gave us an update on Sullivan's buses.

- Sullivans made some changes with bus timetables in September and buses are now running better than before.
- The 107 bus was subject to timetable changes due to traffic flow problems in Borehamwood and Elstree.
- Steve Simmonds and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have had a meeting and HCC are not planning any changes to the bus subsidy over the next two years. But some bus services may need to be cut in order to support the others.
- The greatest risk is the B3 (Organ Hall – Well End). This service is not value for money and the public need to make use if it if it is to survive.
- Steve also advised us about 'intalink explorer tickets', where you can travel anywhere in Herts, but if you went on an Arriva bus you could actually go further out to Oxford or Reading. It costs £14 (family ticket) to go to Milton Keynes, Oxford or Reading. The journey can just about be done in a day!

### **Aldenham Reservoir Update:**

Claire Newton (Committee Member) updated us as follows:

Overall our EBRA campaign opposing the 150 home development on green belt land in order to 'save the reservoir' is progressing well. We have reached 1200 facebook members who have been informed about our campaign plus those on

other local facebook groups. At the time of these minutes being distributed there are 55 objections and 42 support letters from the public. We would like to raise the objections to 100 at least.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a response to the Planning Department so far. The next Planning meeting is on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016. You can submit your responses up to that date. The Planning Application reference is: 16/1302/OUT. The email address is: [planning@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:planning@hertsmere.gov.uk).

EBRA met with Tim Waygood, Director of Aldenham Country Park, with a view to sharing ideas about helping increase revenue for the overall Country Park. We also discussed our concern over the Liberty Aldenham Planning Application.

EBRA also noted that Liberty Aldenham had launched their own facebook support campaign for their proposal. It was clear from comments made by people putting their views on the Liberty Aldenham page, that all posts were screened and any posts against the proposal did not appear/were removed.

EBRA also noted that Liberty Aldenham had posted up many pretty pictures taken from other reservoirs elsewhere, in terms of what they did to enhance their reservoir experiences. These included pretty flowers, attractive swans and piers and wooden raised walkways and netted areas that people/children could lie on. Some of our members have since said on seeing these wooden pier and walkway images elsewhere, that they don't want these enhancements and just want the reservoir and its environs left as they are.

In summary this campaign is regarding Liberty Aldenham holding the reservoir effectively as a 'hostage' in exchange for what is effectively a 'planning application' to build 150 homes. This development would make Liberty Aldenham at least £20-30m net profit in exchange for buying the reservoir and green belt land for £50k and putting £5m into a CIC trust fund to on-goingly maintain the reservoir. We do not feel this is a fair exchange for the loss of our green belt land that we will never get back. Plus the negative impact it will have on the area's infrastructure which is already at and beyond capacity e.g. local GP surgery, schools, roads etc. This is a form of 'Sophie's choice'. Iris Cheung – EBRA member - offered to distribute flyers for us.

*Just to recap from the last minutes for July 2016 - 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'.

### **Planning Applications:**

- Patchetts Farm - Developers had originally put in a Planning Application for 45 homes (of which 35% needed to be affordable homes) and then they changed this to nine homes of which four were affordable homes. However they cannot make enough money from this proposal.
- South Medburn Farm will have 14 homes.
- Caldecott Farm, Bushey will have 9 homes – on going.
- Wellington Public House (Theobald Street near Sainsbury's) want to have six flats in their beer garden – however no affordable housing quotes have been put in and there is concern over the roof design.

### **Any other business:**

**Elstree Compost Site:** Elsa Reyes – new EBRA member – discussed her opposition to the Elstree Compost site. She requested that EBRA oppose the Planning Application. We at EBRA agreed there was a current ongoing problem with odours coming from the site based on feedback from local residents, however with Reviva's plan to build an enclosed compost site we felt this did change our view on this opposition and currently we are staying neutral on this matter. If any residents wish to set up their own Campaign group we will gladly host any presentation talk you may wish to give and we can advise you on how to campaign effectively should you need assistance.

**Recycling of Brown paper:** Residents are currently advised to put brown paper into their black household waste bin.

### **Our Next Meeting:**

Our next meeting is on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at 7.50pm at St Teresa's Church Hall, 291 Shenley Road, WD6 1TG.

Our future meeting dates for 2016 are:

- 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

**The End**