

Hanborough Action Group

Minutes of the AGM held on the Monday 19 July 2016 (Hanborough Recreation Hall)

Present: Stuart Brooks (SB), Lucy Tritton (LT), Penny Marcus (PM), Steve Page (SP), Graham Nixey (GN), David Rischmiller (DR), Rod Fraser (RF),

Apologies: Margaret Crane, Andrew Elphick, Niels Chapman, John Corlett

In attendance – 41 members of the public.

1. **Approval of previous minutes**

The minutes of the AGM held on 13 July 2015 were approved.

2. **Summary of the year** – LT gave an overview of the activities relevant to HAG that have taken place over the past 12 months (see Appendix 1 to these minutes for the full summary).

3. **Pye Appeal and Result** – SB outlined the current planning situation and what the next steps will be in the development process – an application for full planning consent, which we will all have to examine very carefully to ensure the quality of the development is the best that can be possibly achieved in the circumstances (see Appendix 2 to these minutes for the full report).

The question was asked “What can we do as a group to get the best for Long Hanborough.” It was suggested that we all need to examine Pye’s full application when it comes and consider a collective response if appropriate.

Ken Field mentioned that Pye have promised £188,000 for the Playing Fields Association, to be delivered in 4 instalments towards the end of the development.

It was suggested that we raise the planning issue with David Cameron, now that he is free of Prime ministerial responsibilities. PM stated that she will be writing to him.

The details of the S106 agreement between Pye and WODC is available on the WODC website.

Concern was expressed about the way WODC conducted itself at the appeal – does it have a statutory duty to properly defend itself at an appeal? SB has written to the Chief Executive of WODC on this matter.

4. **Accounts** – GN. Read and Approved. The generosity of one of the committee members in covering most of the costs of publicity material used by HAG was acknowledged.

5. **What now? CEG Appeal** – PM reported on the Commercial Estates Group planning appeal (see Appendix 3 to these minutes for the full report).

The following Questions were asked from the floor:

- i) Are there any other CEG applications in the WODC area? Not known.
- ii) Are we likely to get the same inspector that we had for the Pye appeal? Not known.
- lii) What is the status of the Local Plan? WODC are busy reviewing housing numbers. It will be well into 2017, possibly autumn, before an agreed plan will be released.

Concern was expressed about school capacity which may be insufficient for the CEG development.

A suggestion was made that we consider pooling with other villages to pay for expert witnesses at appeals.

6. Elections to HAG – Standing for the HAG Committee now are: Stuart Brooks, Lucy Tritton, Penny Marcus, Steve Page, David Rischmiller, Rod Fraser, and Graham Nixey. Proposed by Kathryn Robson and seconded by Brian Johnston, all members listed were duly elected unanimously.

7. Questions/comments from the Floor

Should we try to raise some money to pay for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment? The PC should get a quote.

We should all consider writing to David Cameron now that he has time on his hands.

The PC could consider inviting DC to a PC meeting.

It was felt that DC should get involved because of government interference in the planning process; e.g. the 5 year housing supply requirement – it should be adequate to have 2 – 3 years supply. Did DC understand the consequences of this?

8. Closure of meeting – LT closed the meeting and thanked all those present for attending.

Appendix 1

HAG Second Annual Report 19 July 2016 – Lucy Tritton

The second year of HAG's existence has been no less busy than its first – it has also been an emotional one with highs and lows with planning meetings won but an appeal lost. There was also the tremendously sad loss of John Evans whose courageous fight with cancer finally ended at the end of April. John was a vital member of the group and our main strategist and gleaner of information. He battled to save this village from large-scale housing developments as much as he battled with cancer. He also became a close friend to all members of the group and we know how much he would have been saddened by the Inspector's decision on the Pye development that came through at the beginning of the month but would not have been daunted and have striven to make the decision benefit the village as much as possible and that is what we hope to do for everyone in this community.

Since July last year we were faced with the revised planning application for land south of the Witney Road (Pye II) for which we roused the village again to write letters with an aim to reach a total of 1000 in total. This we were able to do after a tremendous response from you. The reapplication was supposedly different enough from the first Pye application to be a separate proposal even though there seemed to be little noticeable difference – so we were now faced with two Pye applications. Letters were written by HAG to WODC and to David Cameron stressing ours and the village's concern about these Pye tactics. The second Pye application was unanimously refused on 1 February 2016.

In between time Pye and Blenheim put forward a planning application for a playing field remote from the school on land to the south of Riely Close to enable current ground within the school site to be used for new classrooms. By seeking this planning permission, Pye hoped to fulfil one of the objections to building 169 houses as this would allow the school to expand and provide places for the projected increase in primary-aged children. However, this planning application was refused by WODC on 4 January and HAG was involved in publicising this application and encouraging local residents and school parents to object and a good number of letters were sent in.

The appeal for Pye 1 was planned for 15 February 2016 but was postponed due Pye's barrister being unable to attend. Stuart Brooks' report on the appeal is given in another appendix to the AGM minutes.

The other planning application to be put forward and which HAG submitted an objection was CEG's proposal for 120 houses near the station. Again HAG appealed for letters to be written and to garner support from the eastern end of the village. Penny will talk more about this development, the refusal by WODC on 29th February this year and the upcoming appeal in December.

Early in the autumn of 2015 we found out that WODC Local Plan that was being examined by the Planning Inspector concluded that the housing targets in the draft plan were unsound and so was rejected. As a result WODC needed to withdraw the plan or produce a timetable for further work to address the Inspector's concerns. This did not bode well as it means West Oxfordshire remains a target for private developers suggesting sites to meet government housing targets. The revised Local Plan was not expected to be submitted until well into 2016 and still hasn't been put forward.

We have also had an eye on large-scale planning applications in neighbouring villages, in particular Freeland and North Leigh and sent letters of objection.

The HAG committee have met regularly over the year and have kept updated the Facebook page Protect Hanborough Villages, and the group's webpage Hands off Hanborough. We have also distributed leaflets to all homes in the village on many occasions plus had a stall at the Hanborough Show and the village fireworks.

We have also sent monthly updates to the Hanborough Herald and we have a discussion email HAG-discuss for people to discuss views and disseminate information. We are extremely grateful to the many villagers who have written letters and attended the planning meetings and appeals and to those who have so kindly helped us with distributing leaflets. In particular we would like to thank Kathy Kirk, Chas Simpkins, Phil Earnshaw and David and Liz Lawrence for their help and support.

I would also like to thank all the committee members who have worked so hard all year and given up so much time writing the submissions for each planning meeting (Pye 1 and 2, CEG and the playing field) – these are long and detailed reports that have been submitted to the WODC planning officers, writing letters, printing and delivering leaflets, updating all the forms of communication and attending and speaking at the planning meetings and appeals and reading and absorbing long reports and many emails. A very big thank you to Penny, Annie, Stuart, Steve, Andrew, Rod, Lidia, David and Graham.

And also a thank you to Niels, our Chair of the Parish Council who has worked very closely with us on all aspects of the planning proposals.

Appendix 2

Report on Blenheim Estates / Pye Homes Appeal – Stuart Brooks

1. **The appeal was granted on 4 July.** Here are some key points on the current position:
2. **WODC's position on Long Hanborough:**
 - a. 5 days before the appeal began, WODC signed a Statement of Common Ground with Pye (an agreement on matters to which both parties agree). This came without warning to HAG and contained two significant clauses
 - b. The first was WODC conceding that it could not demonstrate a five year housing land supply – they had got their figures badly wrong and two Inspectors had picked up on this point
 - c. Thus WODC have had to go back to the drawing board and there is therefore no planning policy in place
 - d. The inquiry Inspector decided that he could give virtually no weight to any policies in WODC's draft policy or in its expired policy
 - e. The second point was a statement that "Long Hanborough is a suitable location for substantial residential development." This contradicted a letter sent by the Head of planning to the parish council and provides ammunition for Pye and future developers
 - f. To say that this Statement of Common Ground was less than helpful to our case is an understatement
3. **Appeal findings and the consequences:**
 - a. **The school:**
 - It will be expanded to a 1.5 year entry, subject to planning permission
 - A new playing field will be built at the back of Kents Bank/ Riely Close
 - New school classrooms will be built on the main school site
 - The Eynsham Academy did not object to this arrangement and so the Inspector ruled that it was perfectly acceptable to have a playing field 250m from the school, safe for children to walk down Riely Close and that there would be adequate space remaining on the main school site for children to play at break times, although no-one has as yet produced a site plan for the school
 - b. **The surgery:**
 - A new surgery will be built on the Witney Road at the edge of the village
 - It will be between 500m² and 740m² with 27 parking spaces
 - The doctors have signed a non-binding agreement giving them a one year option to negotiate an agreement to occupy this new surgery, transferring the old premises to Pye
 - Thus the commercial arrangements between the medical practice and Pye have yet to be finalised
 - What happens if they fail to agree was raised by HAG but no thought has been given to this situation
 - c. **Traffic on the A4095:**
 - The inspectors report showed some sympathy with community concerns but OCC withdrew their objection

- He therefore concluded that as the developer's transport studies showed no substantial impact and there was , no objection from OCC or WODC, traffic was not a problem

d. The residential site:

- The application was for outline consent but the decision means that the principle of residential development and the access point is established
- Up to 169 homes will be built, 35% affordable – a WODC concession from the standard 50%
- As regards the Witney Road scheme. The developers submitted an illustrative plan, stressing at all points that everything on this plan could be changed when they apply for full consent
- The Inspector judged that the distance between Long Hanborough and Freeland was acceptable and that any future schemes would be judged on their own merits. Any thoughts on how the site could be expanded were purely speculative
- On questioning, the developers would not rule out any further applications
- The Inspector also concluded that any urbanisation of the A4095 consequent upon this development was acceptable

4. The next steps:

- a. The new school playing field is fully consented and can be built at any time
 - b. The Witney Road site has to apply for full consent, what they have to do is to come forward with firm proposals regarding
 - Housing design
 - Site layout
 - Boundary hedging
 - Along with the civil engineering on sewers, drains, utilities, housing standards etc.
 - c. This application will appear on WODC's web-site and residents may comment on it – but within 28 days of its publication
 - d. HAG will keep everyone informed of events using the web-site, the Hanborough Herald and other means
 - e. Every indication is that Pye wants to proceed as soon as possible
 - f. In all probability the development will happen but please let us do our best to ensure that it is the best that can be possibly achieved in the circumstances
- 5.** You have all given HAG such wonderful support. When I have spoken at planning meetings and the inquiry it has meant so much that so many of you have turned up to show how much you care about our community
- 6.** Once again, thank you

Appendix 3

Report on Commercial Estates Group – Penelope Marcus

Following the rejection on 29 February 2016 by WODC Uplands Planning Committee of the CEG application, 15/03797/OUT, for 120 houses, the provision of buildings for Class D1 use, and land for 400 parking spaces on land south of the A4095 adjacent to the station, **CEG launched an Appeal, D3125/W16/3148400, on 14 April 2016, for 120 houses and buildings for Class D1 use, such as for a medical surgery. They dropped the provision of the 400 parking spaces in the Appeal.**

The Appeal is likely to be held for five days from 13 December 2016.

Hanborough residents wrote 156 letters, objecting to the Application, and subsequently 102 letters objecting to the Appeal, a total of 258 letters, none in favour.

Who Are CEG?

The following comes from their website, <http://www.ceg.co.uk/>

“ ‘We build communities, by regenerating, redeveloping, and re-imagining local areas.’

We see the world differently

To do that, we have to be creative. We pride ourselves on our visionary team. Where others see a muddy field or a dilapidated industrial site, we see homes, schools, business space – even train stations. Where competitors see an impossible task, we see potential. Where most see roadblocks for a planning application, we see a challenge – a challenge to deliver the technical solutions that will inspire local authorities, and the chance to create a strategic plan to benefit a community.

Our team is made up of driven people, who care about the environments they design. Because we don't just build houses, shops, schools and offices; we build communities. We make space for lives to flourish, for neighbourhoods to grow and for businesses to develop. We build the amenities that turn an area from somewhere many people simply live, to a vibrant neighbourhood. We give people a place to start their stories – or to continue them. We're not just property developers. We're place makers.”

CEG are large-scale developers, and it is unlikely that they are interested in developing only 120 houses on the land adjacent to Hanborough Station.

They are basing their appeal case on West Oxon's current housing supply and land availability.

The CEG case is driven by:

1. the absence of the West Oxon Local Plan, which is not yet in place;
2. the imminent results of Oxford City Strategic Plan, the City Deal, signed by the City and the four District Councils, which requires more houses to be provided outside Oxford's Green Belt;
3. West Oxon being unable to show any imminent large-scale developments elsewhere in West Oxon, notably in North and West Witney.

For CEG, the importance of the site is its location adjacent to the Station, which they believe will be a great hub for West Oxfordshire. They refer to GWR's vision for the line to open up commuter traffic

into the Cotswolds and as far as Worcester, but it is only a vision, but there is no financial plan for this or guarantee of when or if it would take place.

The serious further problem is that they have 'interest' in the adjacent 50 acres of land, which could allow for a further development of 400- 600 houses.

Parish Council and HAG have in their response to the Appeal made the following comments:

1. It is an outlier, one and half miles from the centre of the village.
2. The infrastructure and services of the village are therefore only accessible through use of cars.
3. The access to the site is at a dangerous place just below the ridge of a humped railway bridge.
4. It is off the A4095, which is severely congested at rush-hours.
5. There is no footpath from the village on the site side.
6. The pavement on the narrow railway bridge is only on one side, where bollards are frequently knocked over by passing trucks.
7. Traffic lights and possibly an island at the access to the site will slow up the already congested traffic.
8. It is adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
9. It would be located on raised ground in outstanding countryside, the view of which across to the ancient Pinsley Wood would be destroyed by the development.
10. The site has already been deemed unsuitable in SHLAA assessment.
11. Even under the plans envisaged by Pye Homes, the school would not be able to cater for the children for the development
12. Unsatisfactory bus service – nothing before 6.30am or after 6.30pm. Therefore residents would be totally dependent on cars.
13. Instances of bad flooding on the A4095 on either side of the railway bridge.
14. Already sufficient provision of Affordable Homes in Hanborough.
15. The development rides roughshod over and challenges many of the NPPF requirements for achieving a sustainable development.
16. Quite simply, it is not a sustainable development.

Oxfordshire County Council

OCC's response is there is no problem with the site access and that anyway they agree that the A4095 operates below capacity – an extraordinary claim by CEG, not least because it conflicts with traffic surveys produced for the Church Road and Pye Homes schemes.

They also see no problem with the school being able to provide for the children, even if in the immediate future, they would have to possibly go to other local schools.

So, there is no help whatever from OCC.

What Can We Do?

1. Keep pressing the above HPC/HAG comments
2. Focus on the landscape and the visual impact – request the Parish Council to seek a professional assessment of the landscape and visual impact. This is our countryside, and any existing development lies on the other side of the railway line, which contains it and we may say bookends the possibility of further excursion across the tracks.

There is no need for this development – it is out of place, will damage the village’s infrastructure, threatens to urbanise Hanborough totally, establishes the opportunity for housing developments from Bladon through to North Leigh and the development’s traffic will serve to split the village in half, on either side of the A4095.

Do check CEG’s website to assess their ambitions as a property company.

The Committee of HAG submitted a very detailed response to the Appeal, but has not yet decided whether it will opt for participation in the Appeal as a Rule 6 Party. Being a Rule 6 Party involves a considerable amount of work.

The Parish Council will be a Rule 6 Party, able to cross question the Applicant and their advisors, and possibly HAG would be better supporting the Parish Council in their role.

However, having submitted the response to the Appeal Inspectorate, it is likely that we would be accepted as an Interested Party, able to address the Appeal, and present the critical opposition statement that is required.