

MINUTES

Daws Hill Reference Group

26 March 2012

Gill Gowing (Chairman)
Richard White WDC
Ian Manktelow WDC
Marcus Rogers BCC Place
Chris Colbourn BCC Place
Ian Marshall BCC Place

Cllr Lesley Clarke
Cllr David Johncock
Cllr Trevor Snaith
Cllr Jean Teesdale
Barbara Wallis LMPC
Paula Campbell-Balcombe
BCC Education

Stuart Armstrong DHRA
Simon Peacock DHRA
Ken Tyson SCRAL
Arthur Winning DHRA
Tony Fooks HWS
Stephen Chainani
BCC Education

Wimpey Team (TW)

Geoff Armstrong DPP
Sarah Matthews PBA
Lynsey Rigg DPP

David Peycke TW
Andy Moore TW

Bill Luck TW
Andrew Sturla TW

Apologies: Councillor John Savage, Cllr Paula Lee, Chris Steuart WDC

Notes:

At various points in the meeting the discussion turned to whether it was possible and/or desirable to provide handouts and hardcopies for the meeting and/or copy documents with the minutes (as opposed to web links). It was agreed that whenever possible anyone giving a presentation should provide hand outs of the slides on the night to assist with note taking. (Typically, the best format is 3 slides per page with space for notes.) Opinions on copy documents vs. hyperlinks were more mixed and a suggestion was made that individual members of the group should identify their preferences. On reflection this is considered too unwieldy to administer and as such we will continue to rely on hyperlinks for background documents etc. If however any member of the group would like to request copies of particular documents at any point (or they require assistance with using hyperlinks etc) they are welcome to approach members of the planning team at WDC (Richard White, Chris Steuart, Jonathan Crowhurst) about this.

Before commencing the meeting the group agreed to deal with Item 4 immediately after Item 1

It was also clarified at the meeting that the new BCC Place service encompassed the full range of the former County Planning functions and Transport for Bucks / County Highway Authority functions.

1 Minutes and Matters Arising

Richard White issued a correction and apology in relation to item 3, where Chris Watson's name is wrongly given as Chris Green.

Matters arising:

In response to the request at the previous meeting officers from the County Education department were attending to give a presentation on schools provision in relation to new development. (See item 4 below.)

Efforts had been made (and will continue to be made) to secure a similar input from the Health authorities in future.

Web site page: <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-buildings/planning-news/daws-hill-area.aspx>

A short position statement had been received from the High Wycombe Society clarifying their previous comments (copy attached).

4 Education Requirements

Gil Gowing reminded the group of where things had been left in the previous meeting and introduced Stephen Chainani and Paula Campbell-Balcombe from the Education Service at Bucks CC to give a presentation on how education needs arising from new development can be met. Stephen Chainani led the presentation and set out in his introduction the statutory duty on BCC to ensure sufficient provision for school places, demographic projections and their 2010 Policy Statement:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/education_planning_obligations.page

Stephen then explained the ongoing work to develop Local Area Plans for both primary and secondary school provision. He acknowledged there had been some delays for a variety of reasons including changes in education policy nationally and competing priorities for resources in BCC. The intention is to publish the draft plans for key stakeholder consultation in the post-Easter school term (May to July). The group would welcome sight of the draft plan for this area when it is available. Further information on these plans is available at:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/school_place_area_plans.page

Stephen then set out the basic methodology for assessing projected pupil yield rates from new development and common issues relating to the timing of increasing demand (pupil yield rates from new development tend to build slowly, peak, then drop back over time.) The challenge is timing provision of new places to this.

He explained the current situation and forecast position with regards to both primary and secondary age groups. There is limited capacity for further increases to existing primary schools in the area (and faith schools aside, no general primary school close by the site) and there is a projected deficit across the area in the future. The indicative housing mix for DH (550 dwellings – 67 existing) would give rise to circa 150 primary age children which equates to 'not quite' a one-form entry primary school. As such, the development would need to provide a new primary school (future proofed in layout and design) to meet the needs arising from the development.

In terms of secondary education he noted that whilst there is a current short term surplus of places, population data indicates that this surplus is already shrinking and that it will become a deficit in the medium term. He noted the difficulties in modelling the demand for secondary school places at any particular school arising from overlapping catchments and wide parental choice. Nonetheless, he concluded that additional provision for secondary places will also be required and that this would be provided by expanding existing facilities. The group discussed his suggestion that this might be at Cressex School (which was designed to allow for future extensions) and expressed some misgivings. Ultimately however Stephen concluded that the commissioning of new provision needs to be done in consultation with the schools concerned and as such it was not possible to be absolutely certain at this stage as to how contributions arising from this development would be spent.

[Questions from the group about this presentation were largely on the subject of transport issues related to schools.]

Cllr Trevor Snaith asked about traffic movements related to the suggested new primary school. This prompted a discussion around parents' preference/need to drive children to school, whether

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the school would only attract pupils from the new neighbourhood, or from farther afield. Stephen explained the key BCC policy to promote 'local schools for local children' but acknowledged that parental choice prevented BCC from guaranteeing who would use the school in future. Andrew Sturla expressed the view that this would take trips off the network by providing local facilities where none currently exist.

Although no specific conclusion was reached on this point, the key question appeared to be whether the inclusion of a new primary school on the site would be likely to generate significant additional traffic movements on the network, or whether there would be enough local use of the school to reduce or minimise the overall number of trips generated by the development if a school was not included.

Cllr Clarke questioned the assumed figures Stephen was using. Ian Manktelow confirmed that Stephen was using the agreed figures provided by WDC for forecast purposes. It was re-emphasised that these figures are simply an estimate to allow discussions of likely requirements and that they do not indicate any kind of decision as to the capacity of the site or the acceptability of this level of development.

Tony Fooks asked for clarification on the class size figure that BCC work to. This was stated as 30 per class for both primary and secondary ages.

Cllrs Johncock and Clarke questioned the discount basis for the existing development. This was felt by officers to be correct (given the more recent pattern of use) but it will be re-checked in due course.

Cllr Snaith suggested one solution would be to provide for parents' drop-off within the school site. This prompted a discussion about the relative safety of different approaches to school drop-off.

Marcus Rogers stressed that the BCC Transport Policy for Schools is to promote non-car choices and that there are *some* real success stories in the County notwithstanding that not *every* school travel plan has proven effective.

Throughout this item, the group also touched on issues such as parental choice and academy status, admissions policy and the extent of BCC control under current and /or future regulations. Paula Campbell-Balcombe advised that the new primary school would under present legislation be an academy and that the county council would have to commission its provision and management.

It was noted that Richard White is coordinating a joint meeting with the wider group of schools in the area, offices from WDC Planning, BCC Place, BCC Education and Taylor Wimpey to review all of these issues.

Gill Gowing sought clarification on a statement at the last meeting re whether contributions could be spent at grammar schools. Stephen confirmed that contributions could be spent at any secondary school, grammar or otherwise.

Ken Tyson reiterated the desire of the group to understand where and how contributions would actually be spent by BCC to meet the secondary age needs arising from the development. Paula Campbell-Balcombe reiterated the potential for expanding Cressex School and the need to properly work through the options with the schools before any decisions are made.

[Stephen and Paula left the meeting at this point]

2 Workshops

Richard White reminded the group of where Workshop 1 fits in the wider Development Brief and Community Engagement programme. He stressed that the lack of one clear outcome was not a failure, as the baton would now pass to BCC Place (with WDC Planning). Marcus Rogers outlined the work underway picking up the threads of previous assessments and the workshop comments to develop an overall strategy package. Richard reiterated a point made at the workshops by Jeff Bishop that this sort of work was cyclical in nature and that after the officers had developed a draft Transport Strategy for the area this would come back again to the community for further consideration and consultation. The aim is to consult on a draft strategy in June.

Cllr Johncock and Richard White both commented that they had found the workshop a positive experience which had generated some genuinely innovative thinking.

Cllr Johncock indicated that the WDC Improvement and Review committee were considering a possible Task and Finish Group on "congestion in the town"

Cllr Clarke queried when the results from workshop 5 would be available. Richard White apologised for the delay and promised these would be available ASAP

Cllr Clarke queried whether BCC would be open minded about the options being considered. Marcus Rogers confirmed that there was nothing ruled in / nothing ruled out.

Richard White outlined our intentions for Workshop 2, which would jump tracks from the strategic transport questions to the on-site layout issues such as the mix of uses, the location of different uses, the type and location of public open space, etc etc. The workshop would also broaden out the degree of community engagement to something between the workshop 1 group (which was the named reference group members) and a full public event. Options we are considering include for example inviting all of the committee members of the 3 residents associations. We would also be drawing on further officer support in terms of education, arboriculture etc

The group agreed that a Health authority representative would be valuable but that this could not be guaranteed.

Cllr Clarke and Tony Fooks raised the issue of whether we would be requiring the scheme to follow Garden City/Suburb principles as would be required in the NPPF (and whether this would be discussed at workshop 2. The site planning issues related to this will be on the table at Workshop 2 but finer grain issues of detailed design and individual plot layouts would not be.

Note: the NPPF had not yet been published at the time of the meeting, but is now available and includes the statement that:

"52 The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development."

The government does not set out what it considers to be "Garden City principles" but there is a useful paper from the Town and Country Planning Association discussing the lessons of the Garden Cities movement for modern planning which can be found at;

Web site page: <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-buildings/planning-news/daws-hill-area.aspx>

3 Taylor Wimpey Presentation – Transport Update

Geoff Armstrong introduced this item by explaining that this represented their initial assessment of what transport mitigation was required to make the development acceptable. He noted that this had not been discussed or agreed with the Councils and that the ideas might still evolve further.

The presentation from Sarah Matthews PBA is available on the Councils website. A series of points and questions were made by members of the group following the presentation. These comments will all be considered further as part of the two Councils' work on the Development Brief.

Which schools would the proposed bus drop off serve? Is there sufficient capacity?

Would a pedestrian crossing on Daws Hill Lane cause more congestion as schoolchildren are able to interrupt traffic on demand rather than the crossing being managed by the crossing patrol?

Would a bus link to the back of the school site be a better solution?

Would a right turn for buses from Daws Hill Lane north onto Marlow Hill (downhill to town) cause significant problems for northbound traffic already on Marlow Hill?

Would the local centre provide café facilities for parents on the school run?

Parking restrictions on existing streets would only be worthwhile if they were also effectively enforced.

How would an extra lane southbound (uphill) on Marlow Hill help? What other changes to the Marlow Hill / Cressex Road junctions would be needed to improve flow of traffic from Daws Hill Lane towards Cressex?

Taylor Wimpey need to consult Highways Agency on possible impacts on M40 J4

TW have totally underestimated the area and the volumes of traffic involved

The improvements to the route and timetable for the 36 bus were welcomed

These comments will all be considered further as part of the two Councils' work on the Development Brief.

Geoff Armstrong concluded the item by sharing the latest TW masterplan (attached to these minutes). Councillor Clarke asked Geoff what the overall site area was (60 acres/23 HA) and what proportion would be developed (approximately 60%). Geoff advised there had been no decision on tree felling. Ken Tyson noted that the previous iteration of the plan included density indications, whilst this one did not. In response to a question on parking ratios / standards Geoff advised this was to be considered later. Although there was no provider involved TW had included provision of a care home in response to the first round of community consultation (December 2011 exhibition and questionnaire). The Council was asked whether a care home would satisfy their requirements for employment. Richard advised that whilst the scope of employment uses was widening out this did not necessarily mean that the Council would accept a care home as meeting the needs for employment in the area.

5 Neighbourhood Forum

Arthur Winning DHRA updated the group on the resident's work towards a neighbourhood forum. Eh advised that a draft terms of reference would be taken to their committee the following week (w/c 2 April) and that there would be more news to follow from this.

There was a discussion of Little Marlow Parish Council's possible future plans in this regards and Parish Cllr Barbara Wallis advised these were early days as yet. Where there was a Parish Council it was for the Parish Council to develop a plan for their locality not a neighbourhood forum. Note: The group agreed that this would be a standing agenda item from now.

6 Any other business

Richard White reminded the group of the upcoming Quality Counts Tour. Taylor Wimpey offered to arrange a second tour focussed on TW development aimed at the reference group and DHRA. The group welcomed the possibility of this. TW will provide further info in due course.

Richard White drew attention to the current public consultation being undertaken by the development arm of the Council re proposals for the Sports Centre Site (aka Handy Cross Hub). Geoff Armstrong asked whether the Council's development arm could be asked to attend the next reference group meeting. Gill Gowing suggested that the group might wish to consider requesting a presentation from WDC Property if this was something they felt would benefit them. The group agreed to invite a presentation from WDC Property focussed on the transport package proposed, rather than site planning issues, which were of lesser interest.

The next meeting was noted as being Wednesday 9th May with the venue to be confirmed (but likely to NOT be WDC offices)

Position Statement by the High Wycombe Society

The proposed adjacent Berkeley Group Abbey Barn South (ABS) site should not be included in the current transport assessment for the Daws Hill site.

The DHRG minutes for 21 Nov 11 record Transport for Buckinghamshire's assessment to date as being that extra traffic created by the Daws Hill site and other developments (but not ABS) can be accommodated on the existing network.

The WDC Position Statement of July 2011 indicates that the ABS site is included as a reserve site, only to be brought forward before 2021 if housing targets cannot otherwise be met. This is in line with the Imagine the Future consultation of last September in which it was stated, "... we don't need to build on any greenfield land in the foreseeable future. As a result we are not bringing forward development on ... Abbey Barn South". It would not be consistent with these statements to consider development at ABS at this stage, and if such work were undertaken, the public would consider itself as having been misled. The District currently has no additional housing need, and indeed our priority now is to solve our serious unemployment situation, not to worsen the resident/employment balance target enshrined in the WDC Community Plan.

The Plan also states the objective to preserve greenfield/AONB/greenbelt land. We should not be risking the creation of ribbon development from Daws Hill to Flackwell Heath and beyond, and we should certainly not be thinking about despoiling areas of the Rye, Wycombe Abbey, Keep Hill, Deangarden Wood, Abbey Barn Lane or the AONB south of the M40 for any extra transport infrastructure that such would require.

The High Wycombe Society's policy is to oppose any such development beyond that at Daws Hill. We are therefore restricting our own suggestions for infrastructure improvements to those made in the Daws Hill Residents Association Position Statement.

High Wycombe Society
Planning Group
10 March 2012

