

# Great Langborough Residents' Association

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Salvation Army Hall, Sturges Road

22nd June 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

### Attendees

#### Committee Members:

Pat Smith *Chairman*; Andrew Pearce *Treasurer*; David Nash *Secretary*; Robin Cops, Lucy Herd, Anita McPhilimey, Phillip Robinson

#### Residents (those who signed the attendance list):

Melanie Allen	Bridget Harris	Ken Smith
Michael Andrews	Stanley Harris	Pam Smith
John Blest	Thelma Hawke	Malcolm Smith
Sue Blest	Elizabeth Manley	Barbara Thompson
Elaine Brimmer	David Matthews	Barrie Thompson
Richard Brimmer	Pat McIntyre	Johan Vries
Frank Clisby	Elizabeth Ramsay	Lena Webb
Mildred Clisby	Nick Ravinet	Melanie Williams
Geoff Cook	Philip Roleinem	Barbara Young
Rosemary Cook	Christina Roper	Rory Young
Keith Crump	Sophie Scott	
Gwyn Garrod	Diana Singleton	

#### Councillors (including Guest Speakers and those who are residents):

Philip Mirfin, Chris Singleton, Bob Wyatt

#### Apologies:

Colm Lennon

#### Introduction:

Pat Smith opened the meeting and welcomed residents, councillors and guest speaker Philip Mirfin. She explained that a standard Association AGM format would precede Philip Mirfin's presentation and Q&A on the Town Centre Regeneration Plan.

## Annual General Meeting Business

### Chairman's Report

Pat Smith summarised the Association's Activities for the past year.

She also directed the meeting to the site for the 2014 Chairman's newsletter, the 2014 AGM Minutes (accepted unanimously), the 2014 Treasurer's Report and various reports on the Town Centre and South Wokingham SDL Forums from the past year.

She reported on the action from the 2014 minutes about the flooding in Gipsy Lane. Two storm drains and sinks had been installed. Wokingham BC would decide whether these were sufficient after testing with a suitable heavy downpour – which had not happened to date. Resurfacing of this section of Gipsy Lane could then follow.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT 2015**

Our committee has continued to represent our residents since the last AGM in June 2014.

We have been in regular contact with the Town and Borough Council members, discussing and challenging the developments proposed by them.

These include the Town Centre Regeneration and South Wokingham Distribution Road.

We have also liaised with other Residents' Associations and the Wokingham Society.

At the invitation of Wokingham Borough Council, members of the committee have attended stakeholder events scoping the proposals before they went to the planning committee. We have provided formal responses on behalf of the residents addressing some concerns. However, on the whole, the plans were welcomed.

It appears that some of the responses provided by residents of Wokingham have made an impact on the plans - especially those for Elm's Field. However, there was no suggestion that it should be left as a green space, as originally intended in the gift.

The plans for Peach Place are still a cause for concern; not least as there does not appear to be a formal car parking strategy.

The council has also proposed developing the Carnival Pool site, which we have generally welcomed.

David Nash and Phil Lawman have attended the South Wokingham Forum and reported back to the committee and to the AGM.

We have also challenged the council over the finances around the town centre regeneration and a meeting was planned for shortly after the AGM to allow for some exploration.

We will continue to keep a watching brief and any reports we send to the council can be seen on our website.

## **South Wokingham SDL and Distributor Road (SDR)**

David Nash showed slides of the area of the SDL with the adopted Route (B,B1,B2) for the Distributor Road. This route had drawn over 80% support of the resident input.

He informed the meeting that these routes were now subject to an engineering survey. The outcome was most likely to be a recommendation for a route that followed B, B1,B2 as closely as was practical.

A major feature of the SDR at the eastern end was to be a bridge over the Waterloo railway to Montague Park. Wokingham Borough Council had chosen a design partner for this. Agreement with Network Rail over the size of the "Shared Value" fee was edging towards resolution. A considerable benefit to Network Rail was the planned closure of the Waterloo Road level crossing.

At the western end of the SDR was the junction with Finchampstead Road at the existing Tesco roundabout. He showed the major modification to the Guildford railway line bridge to widen and deepen it. This would necessitate moving Wokingham Motors to a new site and would involve a long term closure of Finchampstead Road. The period of closure was not yet available.

A planned update on the plans to the Community Forum had been announced for June 17<sup>th</sup>. However, for reasons unknown, it had been cancelled at short notice. Chris Singleton offered to obtain both a reason for the cancellation and an update statement.

There was a resident concern over some effect on journey time of closing the Waterloo Road crossing and had it been decided after public consultation. David Nash replied that consultation had taken place during review of both the both the Strategic Development Plan and the more detailed Masterplan stages. There would be a further opportunity when a full planning application was submitted. An alternative was the planned junction of the SDR and Easthampstead Road.

A suggestion that consideration be given to a pedestrian underpass rather than a bridge to replace that from Gipsy Lane was supported by Keith Crump, who lives very close by.

In answer to a question, David Nash reported that traffic modelling estimates that peak time delays at the junction of the SDR and Finchampstead Road by 2026 would be about the same as currently experienced.

## **Election of Committee and Officers**

All committee members had indicated their willingness to serve another year. Andrew Pearce would continue to be the Association's web master. However, he had indicated that he wished to stand down as Treasurer. Phil Lawman had offered to stand as Treasurer.

It was proposed that the Committee and Officers should be re-elected *en bloc*. It was also proposed that Phil Lawman should be elected as Treasurer. In the absence of any other member offering themselves, these motions were seconded and passed by acclamation.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Andrew Pearce gave the main features of his report to be available on [www.glra.org.uk](http://www.glra.org.uk) He reminded the meeting that, in the absence of an annual membership levy, voluntary contributions were needed to support the ongoing activities of the Association. The AGM alone costs £75 to arrange – hall hire and printing. Web domain name registration took the total over £100.

*Note: There was an exit collection which raised £105.00. Other contributions would be gratefully received.*

## **Any Other Business**

There was no other business raised.

## **Presentation and Discussion: Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration**

Philip Mirfin, Executive Councillor for Regeneration and current Wokingham Town Mayor, presented the key items in the current plan.

He gave a well received and informative review of the council's plans for the three sites around the town centre.

Residents were given time for a question and answer session following Philip Mirfin's presentation.

A major concern for the expansion of Wokingham was the increased traffic volume. However, Philip Mirfin pointed out that the number of households in Wokingham Town was to be expanded by over 4,000 by 2026. Wokingham also had one of the highest car ownership per household averages in the UK at 2.4. However, he reported that traffic modelling is indicating no real change to the current flow in the Town. There was still some concern about the impact on Langborough Road. The chicane system was regarded by residents as vital to retain. Even with this management feature, peak traffic times often resulted in temporary gridlock.

Questions focused on the costs and who will pay for the scheme. Philip Mirfin stated that the overall project would be self-funding. There would be no impact on Community Charge. Planned revenue from the retail premises and hotel would cover the costs of servicing the capital loan.

On the impact on the character of Wokingham, Philip said that English Heritage was against the concept of new buildings attempting to copy the oldest buildings. The aim was to build structures acceptable today that would still be regarded as such in the future. The impression of large areas of red brick in the exhibition drawings was misleading as to the finish of the final buildings. WBC was looking for variation in brick colour, texture and rendering in the final designs.

There were concerns expressed about the height of the car park (five storeys) planned for the Carnival Pool site. Philip Mirfin was clear that this capacity is required and that the site by the railway is the least obtrusive location for such a building.

We were also concerned about the residential accommodation to be built on the Carnival Pool site. Its location opposite the multi-event space and next to a busy car park could cause high noise levels. Philip Mirfin was happy that incorporated modern sound proofing would be adequate to mitigate against this. He stressed that the Regeneration Company was forced to adopt the highest standards in such aspects because of the "in house" relationship with the WBC Planning Department.

We expressed on-going concerns about the need to occupy part of the Elms Field site with a supermarket. Philip Mirfin stated that reviews of retail studies support the capacity need. There were two supermarket groups very interested in becoming tenants. Also Premier Inns were committed to the hotel site and were planning a ground floor restaurant.

The size of the remaining green space continued to be an issue. Philip stressed that the acquisition of 'brown' land behind Denmark Street had allowed for an increase in the green space compared with previous plans. We were also told that the council are planning to open up Broad Street Walk and using the derelict garages and ground to create pedestrian access up to Broad Street and retail starter units. This was welcomed and a very positive step forward. The concern was expressed, however, that this route could draw footfall away from Denmark Street shops.

Philip mentioned that GLRA committee members have a meeting with Councillors and Officers on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to further understand the finances of the plans.

The Mayor was thanked for his presentation and he in return thanked us for our on-going interest and input to the council's plans.

**The meeting closed at about 9:15 p.m.**