

Great Horwood Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Planning Team held on Tuesday 2nd July 2013 at Old Timbers, 14 Little Horwood Road, Great Horwood.

(by kind invitation of John Gilbey)

Present:

John Gilbey (JG), Mike Hobday (MH), Rita Jenkins (RJ), Duncan Trigg (DT), David Saunders (DS), John Scholtens (Chairman) (JS),

Apologies:

All present.

JS welcomed RJ to her first meeting as a new member of the team.

To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 May 2013.

The minutes were approved without amendment.

Matters arising from the last meeting.

JS had prepared a Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement in which he had noted and summarised all the emails received from residents following the public consultation and his replies.

A PDF version of the PowerPoint presentation made at the public meeting had been lodged on the website.

JS had requested that AVDC re-examine its refusal to consider the Old Mill site suitable for development on 2 further occasions but it has continued to define it as unsuitable mainly due to its detachment from the existing built up area of the village.

JS had taken no action to engage a consultant to progress the project as he did not feel we had reached a suitable level of acceptability for the Sustainability Appraisal.

JG had identified a suitable large screen for a cost of approximately £150

An update article had been published in the July edition of Focus.

An updated version of the Workstrands Tracker had been placed on the website.

JS reviewed in some detail the responses that had been received following the public consultation and the update article in the July edition of Focus. Many of these contained inaccurate information and assumptions based on misunderstandings or lack of knowledge and some even questioned the impartiality and motives of the Team. JS expressed frustration that many of the responses showed that they had not read the wealth of information lodged in the Neighbourhood Planning area of the Great Horwood Parish Council website despite instructions in the 4-page consultation information leaflet, the public consultation meeting and the Focus article. Particularly for the benefit of the new Team member he covered all of the proposed development sites and especially the Old Mill and the rationale behind them in detail. He emphasised the fact that the NPT had proposed development of the Old Mill site dependent on suitable access but AVDC had rejected the challenges on several grounds. DS stated that if a good residential access road was made across the old airfield that there was a very real danger that it would make us liable to further development on the airfield which would not be popular or in the interest of the village. The Team agreed that this was a concern as AVDC had been unable to give any assurance that such development could be prevented. There was agreement that all of the realistic options had been explored by the Team and that it seemed impossible to get agreement across the village.

To discuss NPT member conduct.

JS stressed the absolute necessity of the team being impartial, working together and making democratic decisions to inform subsequent actions. He questioned RJ on her recent activities concerning AVDC and also in circulating a questionnaire to a large number of houses in the village. RJ then read out a lengthy written statement and apologized for her actions and agreed that in future she would work within the Team but expected to have her views assessed fairly. She also admitted that her attempts to get residents of the Spring Lane area of the village to support development on the Old Mill site had met with considerable opposition and on the basis of the discussions in the meeting accepted that the development of the site would not be in the long term interest of the community.

To review Team membership in the light of recent community feedback.

JS read a short statement about his personal position and then announced that he was resigning his position as Chairman and as a member of the team. The statement was as follows:

“It is quite clear that many of the residents at the eastern end of the village have not appreciated the fact that, in the light of the public consultation on 18 May, the NPT took forward the points made by many of the attendees. As promised at the meeting, we re-assessed the planning assumptions, proposed an additional potential development site and challenged AVDC to change their decision about the unsuitability of the Old Mill site. I am saddened by the increasingly personal attacks, admittedly from a minority of residents, on both the NPT and me. Some of the comments have been scurrilous and blatantly unfair, and I suspect that nothing we say or do will appease them. I for one have nothing personal to gain from the whole process and despite a huge investment in time over the past 18 months as the Chairman of the Team; I feel it is now time to step aside.”

MH, DT and JG also decided to resign from the Team. DS and RJ said that they were willing to continue but additional members would need to be recruited as the NPT Terms of Reference required a quorum of 3 members. Of note, the roles of Chairman and Secretary are time-consuming and were now vacant as DS and RJ had indicated that they did not wish to put themselves forward.

JS advised that he would provide an update report for the Parish Council meeting to be held on Monday 8th July.

JS thanked the Team for all their hard work and expressed his regret that they had collectively been unable to produce a proposed Plan acceptable to all in the village. At this point the meeting concluded and the following agenda items were not considered:

To re-assess potential development site options.

To discuss Sustainability Appraisal policy options following on from the meeting with Winslow Neighbourhood Planning representatives on 27 June 2013.

To decide on the engagement of the consultant to progress the project.

Any Other Business.

A date for the next meeting was not set as the NPT no longer has a quorum.

Approved

Signature

Chairman

Date