

# **Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Sandyacres Clubhouse on Wednesday, 28 March 2012.**

**Attendees:** 32 members, 2 non-members  
County Councillors: Richard King and Elizabeth Tweed  
Borough Councillors: Michael Claughton, Winston Michael and David Robey  
Boughton Aluph & Eastwell representatives: Derek Anthony, Robert Oliver  
Speakers: Simon Cole, Ashford Borough Council and Nick Sandford, Godinton Estate.

The meeting was chaired by the incoming Chairman, John Hobbs.

### **Item 1: Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from:

Grahame & Shirley Mountford  
Monica Berwick MBE  
Margery Thomas  
Desmond Henley  
Joan Richards  
Don Murrell.

### **Item 2: Approval of the minutes held on 25 March 2009**

Proposed by Doug Harman and seconded by Evan Thomas. The minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

### **Item 3: Chairman's Report**

Howard Preston, retiring Chairman, presented his report. He was resigning as Chairman after 13 years in the post, but was willing to remain as a special adviser to the committee, with particular reference to planning issues.

He outlined the progress of numerous planning issues, including the re-routing of footpath AE210, several 'garden grabbing' schemes and new build proposals such as the Ashford Hockey/Cricket clubs at Ball Lane. He drew attention to a full display of planning issues at the back of the room. The association had been successful in getting KCC to give consideration to measures to improve road safety at Potters Corner. This campaign was being supported by Elizabeth Tweed.

The Chairman of the meeting thanked Howard and gave a brief summary of his exceptional service to the Association since its founding in 1983. He had worked tirelessly, including the past 13 years as Chairman. The Association welcomed Howard's offer to remain as a special adviser on planning issues.

The meeting recorded a vote of thanks to Howard Preston in recognition of his exceptional contribution to the work of the SLRA.

### **Item 4: Secretary's Report**

David Porter summarised the path taken by the Association since the previous AGM in 2009. A new committee had worked to re-launch the Association under Howard Preston, initially with the assistance of Peter Coatsworth as Secretary until his untimely death in November 2010. Peter was remembered with affection and gratitude for a job well done. The SLRA now had an active committee and a viable programme. Communication had been improved by the launch of a website and a move to email bulletins, though there was still an issue to be addressed on communication with those few members who chose not to receive emails. Monica Berwick had written to the Association drawing attention to this issue. Measures would be taken to ensure that these members received communications from the Association in future, eg by quarterly summaries.

The committee now met regularly every two months and the membership was slowly growing. Presently it stood at about 20% of residents, so further growth was very desirable in order that the Association could best represent the interests of all residents.

Following this report, Alec Vincent drew attention to traffic problems arising at the Faversham Road end of Sandyhurst Lane. Cars were being parked in the Lane in connection with the 'school run' for Towers School in the mornings and afternoons. This was causing congestion and safety concerns, which would be exacerbated by the development of the Carpenders site.

Bill Morgan congratulated the committee on the email bulletin service, which he found very useful.

#### **Item 5: Treasurer's Report**

As the Treasurer was unable to be present, the Chairman said that the Treasurer's report would be circulated by email after the meeting.

#### **Item 6: Election of Committee**

All of the existing committee members, with the exception of Howard Preston, offered themselves for re-election. A further proposal was made by John Faulkner for Tony Bartlett to be elected to the committee. All candidates were duly elected unanimously:

Tony Bartlett	Desmond Henley
Norma Devereese	Don Murrell
John Hobbs	Andy Peddle
John Faulkner	David Porter
Doug Harman	Evan Thomas

#### **Item 7: Any Other Business**

Further discussions took place in the Open Forum session, which included three interesting presentations:

#### **Richard King (Vice Chairman and Chairman Designate, Kent County Council)**

Richard praised Howard Preston and the SLRA for its many lobbying achievements, including the introduction of speed limits in Sandyhurst Lane. He also spoke of the imminent construction of Goat Lees Primary School, for which he had been fighting for a long time. The KCC was also fighting hard with the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency for the resurfacing of the concrete section of the M20 and said they would not give up until this was achieved. He thought that the SLRA had a key role to play in the future development of Ashford, particularly in the light of the previous day's announcement by Government on the emphasis on local control of planning. He thought the SLRA should pursue this through local borough councillors.

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#### **Simon Cole (Planning Policy Manager, Ashford Borough Council)**

Simon spoke about five planning policy issues:

- 1. The Urban Sites Development Plan.** The hearing will start on 15 May 2012 and last for two weeks. There were few, if any issues affecting Sandyhurst Lane. The earlier proposals for Kennington had not been pursued. Eureka development was restricted within the existing site boundary. There was provision for a Park & Ride scheme and two small housing developments near Drovers Roundabout.
- 2. Development in the Local Area.** The only development in the area was the building of Goat Lees Primary School, scheduled for opening in September 2013.
- 3. Reviewing the Core Strategy.** The current Core Strategy was adopted in 2008, based on Ashford being designated a regional growth area. However, the coalition government has now scrapped the south-east plan and housing strategy; new targets are to be determined locally, not by central

government, using a bottom-up, jobs-led approach and looking ahead to 2030. So far, ABC has looked at potential job growth scenarios and demographic changes as a basis of housing requirements. The next stage will be a public consultation, starting in April, on potential jobs and housing numbers. ABC will then use its “preferred numbers” to start the process of choosing sites for development.

**4. Localism Act 2011.** This encourages communities to get involved in the planning of their areas, and confers the rights of neighbourhoods to produce their own plans. ABC is looking to understand community wishes by developing a better dialogue with communities.

**5. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).** This had been published the day before (27 March 2012) and replaced the previous 1300 pages of policy guidance with around 60 pages. The presumption was in favour of sustainable development. It was for debate whether or not this would lead to increased development; the tenor of the document being much more ‘pro growth’ than previously.

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### **Nick Sandford, Estate Manager, Godinton Estate**

Nick gave a very interesting and informative talk about the history and present situation of Godinton House and its estate.

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### **Discussion**

In answer to a question, Simon Cole assured the meeting that there were no plans for the Park and Ride scheme and adjacent housing to extend beyond the presently identified boundaries.

Derek Anthony questioned how the necessary infrastructure for electricity, gas and, in particular, water would be provided in support of future housing development. Simon Cole said that these were regional and national issues rather than local issues. He suggested that the onus was on the service providers to come up with the plans for infrastructure development, but also thought that planning for 2030 was beyond the timescales usually used by the utilities companies, so there was a mismatch to be addressed.

David Bunclark asked why there were so little shopping facilities in Ashford. Simon Cole suggested that the Park and Ride scheme, whilst not viable at present, would potentially enable the access to and development of Ashford’s shopping facilities.

Robert Oliver returned to the issue of water supply and questioned why so few properties were built with rainwater soakaways these days, the preference being for drainage to main drains, resulting in water going straight to rivers rather than supplying depleted groundwater aquifers. Simon Cole said that the management of water run-off was currently under review.

A debate followed on the building of Goat Lees school. Councillors were asked whether it was true that KCC had paid £3 million to a developer following delays in reaching the decision to go ahead. Richard King said that the £3 million was the total cost of building the school, of which a small part was compensation paid to the developer. Delays in the decision making process were inevitable in view of the need to hold consultations and ensure that there would be a sufficient number of children in the catchment to justify the school.

Nick Sandford asked, in the context of neighbourhood plans, how big was a neighbourhood? Simon Cole said it was a matter for debate, but it was likely to be small – possibly as small as the number present at this meeting.

Michael Cloughton said that nearly 20 years as a borough councillor had taught him never to make promises, but had taught him to listen. He felt there was now a real opportunity for organisations like the Sandyhurst Lane Residents’ Association to shape the future of the borough, working with the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.37 pm.