

Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held on Wednesday, October 22nd, 2003 at Towers School

Attendance: 34 members attended, including Howard Preston (Chairman), Kevin Saunby (Vice Chairman) and David Hilliger (Treasurer). Also present were Dr. Celeste Muir (guest speaker, representing the Beechbrook Farm project), C Cllrs Richard King and Mike Angell, Cllrs Rita Hawes Mick Hubert and Noel Greaves.

Apologies: were received from Cllrs Neil Wallace and John Kemp, Tim and Jo Harley, Dennis Fricker, David and Barbara Harvey, Mr and Mrs Hall, Ron Butcher and Denzil Wood. + 13
residents on holiday.

Minutes of the last AGM: were proposed by Kevin Saunby and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Chairman's report: The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that the meeting was being held at Towers School because Sandy Acres was undergoing refurbishment and Goat Lees Community Hall was not yet in use. He then welcomed Dr Celeste Muir as the guest speaker before presenting his report.

He began by announcing his intention to step down as Chairman at the end of 2004 and asked residents to consider putting themselves forward.

Among the Association's concerns over the past year had been Highways, Planning, Footpaths and the school at Goat Lees.

Highways

Trinity Road: Adoption is late.

Sandyhurst Lane signage at Faversham Road: The finger post at Lenacre Street has been removed but although a replacement at Faversham Road had been promised for April 2003, it had been omitted from the revised schedule.

Lack of speed restrictions in Sandyhurst Lane: These had been a concern for over 25 years. Speed counts taken in May were not yet available but those from September 2001 by Sandy Acres showed that calming measures were needed. The current 40mph design is unacceptable for the safety of children using the Sports' Ground. The Association recommended a 30mph limit starting before the crossing. The lack of footpaths between 300 and 99 (where the existing 30mph limit starts) has been pointed out.

Sandyhurst Lane closure 3-9 November: The Lane will be closed to allow the construction of a sewer between 326 and 316. Concern has been expressed at the lack of notification to residents.

Road safety: Overgrown trees and hedges on Tile Lodge Hill are in need of work. In particular, need for coppicing of trees, on Sandy Acres bank, which now reach the road and prevent the use of the verge to escape road traffic. Lowering of hedge opposite Vine Cottage, 202, which obscures cars going uphill from fast downhill traffic tending to cut the bend by the 'slow' sign. Most unreported crashes/near misses occur at this point. The Association has asked if this work could be carried out during the Lane closure.

Crossing at Sandy Acres: There is a cycle track at this point to allow access from Goat Lees to Sandy Acres. Although there is a barrier to prevent cars using the track, there is no barrier on the other side to stop children running across. Lack of lighting has been raised.

Footpaths AU5/AU4 upgrade: The Association has asked for news of progress.

M20 junctions 8-9 blacktopping: The Association has pressed for updated information.

A20/Potters Corner junction: Improved lighting has been requested.

Park and ride at Drovers roundabout: This was mentioned in recent planning applications concerning 'Warrengate' and the Brewers pub/Travel Inn near Warren Lane/Maidstone Road. Details re the likely site have been requested.

It had been hoped that Alan Joynson would attend to address the meeting. He was unavailable but replies in writing were sent on his behalf, to points raised by the Chairman:

Trinity Road: Adoption will take place 12 months after completion of road works. A significant amount of work is still to be done and ABC has instructed its Solicitor to issue a default notice to the Developer. If, however, he delays then the work will be carried out by ABC using monies obtained from the Developer. It is hoped that signage from Drovers roundabout to Trinity Road; Faversham Road renumbering; and Canterbury direction to Penlee Point will be in place before the end of this current calendar year. However, this is dependent on the contractor's workload for production and installation of the signs.

Sandyhurst Lane signage: These have been added to the schedule, ref no 10261.

Speed restrictions: Data from speed counts is currently being analysed but it is hoped that recommendations will be forthcoming to SLRA and the Parish Council within 4-6 weeks.

Sandyhurst Lane closure: Advertisements are to be placed in the Kentish Express for 2 weeks prior to the works being carried out and laminated notices will be put up on site. The contractor has been asked to notify residents.

Road safety: ABC is pressing the landowner who has responsibility for cutting back the trees and hedges, but cooperation is not forthcoming. It has been ascertained that the top section is unregistered and ABC will undertake these works, ref issue nos 10260 and 10262.

Crossing at Sandy Acres: The lockable barrier at the entrance to Goat Lees was installed to prevent vehicular access but it is not felt that a barrier on the north side is necessary. The details passed a safety audit. The alignment of the cycleway means that cycles cannot be ridden straight out on to the lane. Re lighting, the crossing was installed by Goat Lees Joint Venture Company who is being chased to complete a large amount of work on Goat Lees (see Trinity Road).

Footpaths AU5/AU4 upgrade: There is a missing link between the sections that have been completed so far. The upgrade will be tied to planning permission for the adjacent land but no application has so far been received.

M20 junctions 8-9 blacktopping: Inter-Route are responsible for M20 maintenance, phone no 01634 385572.

A20/Potters Corner junction: There are no plans to improve the lighting.

Park and ride at Drovers roundabout: This is still under discussion.

Planning

Since last year's AGM SLRA has expressed concern at the way valid queries it raised were being handled by ABC planners. A meeting was held between SLRA, Martin Vink, Lois Jarrett and Peter Spiller to discuss this, after which it was agreed that a weekly list of planning applications received would be sent to SLRA.

Goat Lees Community Hall: A small hall is being built at Goat Lees and Sandy Acres refurbished to cater for Goat Lees residents. However, problems are foreseen as only 10 car parking spaces have been allocated at Goat Lees hall. It is unclear as to how this number was reached and ABC is not forthcoming re rationale.

Wards 4: There have been problems linking properties in Sandyhurst Lane (350-390) to the sewerage system on Goat Lees because the site levels are too high on Wards 4. It was believed that Penlee Stream, running in the ditch between Ward's Phases 3 & 4, was being contaminated with effluent from cess-pools in Sandyhurst Lane properties. A meeting organised by SLRA was held with Ted Craker (ABC), the Environment Agency and residents at which those residents north of 360 were given 6 months to rectify the situation. These properties were to be connected by a private sewer in the rear gardens to a head manhole F40 on Ward's 4 estates but Wards had begun building before site levels were agreed with ABC and F40 was then found to be 286 mm too high. It has now been agreed that a new pipe and manholes in Plot 53, 362 and 360 connected to F40 are to be put in by Wards to facilitate private sewer connection..

Warrengate: SLRA had objected to the planning application for 12 houses . It was hoped that the Warren would form part of a green corridor from Hoads Wood (now under the control of ABC) through Hoads Wood Gardens, Sandyhurst Lane to Beechbrook. The application was withdrawn and Tree Preservation Orders put on the site to protect this area of ancient woodland on the upper half of the site.

CTRL: Commercial services began on 28th September.

Goat Lees Community Hall: The hall was due for completion in September but is late and there is, as yet, no completion date. Goat Lees Community Ltd was formed in April to run the hall.

Footpaths

Hoads Wood: Transferred to ABC on 22nd October, 2002.

AE210: Bidwells have obtained diversion of this PROW south of Trinity Rd but are reluctant to discuss other footpath matters with SLRA.

The Chairman said that any problems re footpaths should be referred to Abi Mansley (KCC High Halden (01233 820 797)

Goat Lees Primary School

This was due to open in 2005 / 2006 but this could be varied depending on space available in other local schools. Site would become building land if school not commenced by 1 April 2011.

Treasurer's Report: The Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 30th September, 2003 was made available.

The Treasurer reported that the year had been satisfactory.

Income: £287.24. A decrease of £23.35 from last year. Subs were up 4 from last year at 102.

Expenditure: £201.03. A significant reduction from £317.98.

Excess of income over expenditure: £86.21

Current assets: £579.56

Outstanding liability: £6.13

Net assets up from last year by £86.21

The Treasurer said that the Association's funds were adequate to meet forthcoming expenditure and warmly thanked Victor Berwick for auditing the accounts.

Committee Changes: Jo Hanley was stepping down for family reasons. Dennis Fricker had taken over from Theresa Morgan on her move to Spain.

The current Committee was re-elected unanimously.

Any Other Business: It is hoped to extend Neighbourhood Watch along the lane. Information can be obtained from SLRA.

Open Forum: The Chairman invited Dr Muir to update the Association on the Beechbrook Project. Dr Muir informed the meeting that there was now official recognition for the steering group. A company had been formed rather than a charity: this ensured that all money could be refunded if the group failed to buy the land. Beechbrook Farm Community Trust will be set up when the land has been acquired.

Fundraising is going on in the form of the sale of shares. These are being sold in bundles of 50 shares for £1 per share.

A meeting had been held with Mark Carty (Land Cultural Services ABC) who had suggested that the group write to the Government asking that the land be given to the group. This letter was sent to John Prescott. An encouraging reply had been received from Richard West (Railway – Major Projects Dept) although he said that the land could not be gifted nor the group given preferred bidder status. At his suggestion a letter had been sent to the Minister for Transport.

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Keith Hill) was supportive as he felt that the group was aiming to create a sustainable community.

In addition a letter of support had been received from Paul Clokie (Leader ABC). This was read out at the meeting.

Dr Muir reported that the Properties Board had been telling interested parties that the site was brownfield. In fact the site is greenfield and should be returned to agriculture. The Properties Board had been informed.

C Cllr King expressed his support.

A grant application for the group's legal costs is being considered by David Standen of the Rail Link Countryside Initiative. The AGM of the RLICI is being held on 13th November and is to be attended by Dr Muir and Tessa Wyatt.

Ron Carden asked if the Project could be advertised more widely. Dr Muir replied that newsletters are to be circulated to interested parties, including Sandyhurst Lane. It would be going into the Ashford Advertiser, it was hoped that pictures would be published in the Kentish Express and the Project had been mentioned in Kent Life. More publicity was a good idea.

CCllr King suggested that the group contact CPRE and the Weald of Kent Preservation Society. The latter had over 1000 members.

He said that he had today met the Minister for Transport (Kim Howells) with Cllr Hubert. As a result of the meeting Cllr Hubert in his capacity as Labour leader on ABC was going to write to the Minister supporting the bid for preferred status.

Cllr Greaves offered his support and said that he would be happy to arrange for distribution of newsletters in his ward (Bockhanger). Cllr Hubert felt that Ashford itself should be targeted and suggested that the group contact Adrian Westwood.

Myrtle Butcher made available copies of leaflets on the Project.

The Chairman thanked Dr Muir for her report.

The floor was then opened for general discussion.

The Chairman raised the matter of speed restrictions and said that he felt that it should be 30mph along the length of the lane. Cllr Hawes said that there was a lot of information re traffic speeds in the lane going back several years. The speed profile was currently under consideration and speed limits being reviewed. She supported a 30mph limit, particularly near the Sandy Acres crossing.

Myrtle Butcher said that a sign to indicate the crossing was needed. Cllr Hawes replied that this was down to the developer as it was part of the Goat Lees development package.

C Cllr King said that he had raised the M20 resurfacing with the Minister of State for Transport at his meeting. Confirmation was awaited but it was likely to be within the next 3 years.

Education: The Chairman asked C Cllr Angell about the likelihood of building Goat Lees School.

C Cllr Angell said that he knew that a new secondary school was in the pipeline. However, any money available for the school was in the form of ability to borrow and not grants. The infrastructure was based on proven need. Plans for Ashford's future were being drawn up for presentation to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Kennington Community Forum: Work began in 2002 and the group was now up and running. The Chairman is Cliff Greaves, formerly a Police Area Commander. The Forum had applied for and received a grant of £7600 to build a youth shelter in Kennington.

Myrtle asked as to the aims of the Forum. C Cllr Angell replied that it was to provide a voice for Kennington, to oversee projects and to put pressure on ABC, KCC and other agencies. In time it was likely to become a Parish Council and could then raise a precept. The Forum had just produced its second newsletter, the first having been produced using a grant from Kent Community Foundation (01303 815132). He wondered if the Foundation could be of help to Beechbrook.

Planning applications: Cllr Greaves said that applications had been submitted again for Warrengate and a hotel/pub at Drovers roundabout. C Cllr Angell asked for the views of residents as to the land concerned in the latter application. All residents at the meeting wanted it to remain as open space and to be included with the Warren. Cllr Hubert felt that the area was unsafe as a play area but it was not suitable as a site for an hotel/pub because of problems re access. It was suggested that the land remain as grassland and a wildlife reserve. This would maintain the level of amenity land, particularly with the forthcoming development of the barracks site.

Cllr Greaves said that there were 2 clear objections to the hotel application: access and egress was proposed along Warren Lane which was not suitable; there was already enough hotel space in Ashford. Dr Muir suggested the land be used as a herb meadow. Kevin Saunby added that Drovers roundabout was under increasing pressure. The area was the western gateway to Ashford and needed to be an

attraction, not just another pub. Cllr Greaves agreed but pointed out that the land was owned by Whitbread which was likely to continue to submit applications. Cllr Hubert added that the previous objections could and would be brought forward and used as the last application had been withdrawn.

Marjorie Thomas said that the land was not really suitable for recreation because of noise. Given this, she asked what it could be used for. Cllr Angell suggested that a small group get together to put forward ideas. Cllr Greaves reiterated the fact that the land was owned by Whitbread and was potentially valuable. He advised that residents scrutinise all applications on merit and object if they were without merit.

Cllr Greaves then informed the meeting that a major revamp of the Bockhanger/Kennington area was planned. He felt that this would give the area a lift.

Myrtle Butcher said that having walked the footpath she was gratified to see that Hoads Wood was being cleared and that access to the Warren was now possible from Hoads Wood.

Concerns were raised by residents about unsocial bonfires and the setting off of loud fireworks late at night.

The Chairman reported that Frank Hughes of the Kentish Express had recently retired. He was thanked for all the help he had given to SLRA over the years.

The Chairman also announced the sad news of the death of Hilary Strachan and condolences were sent to her family.

Marjorie Thomas thanked the Committee and Councillors for their efforts on residents' behalf.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm