

INTERIM COMMITTEE TO FIGHT THE PLANS TO BUILD ON BOWERS GIFFORD & NORTH BENFLEET GREEN BELT

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE

at the BENBOW CLUB on 1ST AUGUST 2012

PREAMBLE – Bowers Gifford needs to form a committee to fight the plans to build on green belt land. The Parish Council do not have the powers to campaign against building on the Little Chalvedon Hall Farm site or other areas rumoured to be in the process of being sold to developers. Therefore, a committee, elected by the residents of Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet, needs to be formed. This **interim** committee was formed by residents who came together either during the July consultation or at the Parish Council meeting. Its purpose is to serve as a focal point until a formal committee is elected and to establish an election process.

- AGENDA:**
- 1. Committee Structure**
 - 2. Communication and Strategy**
 - 3. Website**
 - 4. Any other Business**
 - 5. Date of Next Meeting**

Attendees:

Gary Lee (GL) Pound Lane; Caroline Turner (CT); Tina Whitham (TW) Highlands Road; Doreen Glibbery (Pitsea); George Smith (GS) Highlands Rd; Eileen Davis (ED) Lee Road; Barry Groves (Page Road); Pam Groves (PG) Page Road; Derek Twidell (DT) Westlake Avenue; Rose Griffin (RG) Westlake Avenue.

Apologies were received from Caroline Sanderson (CS) who has offered to be Acting Secretary to the committee and Tracy Calver (TC).

Agenda Item 1. Committee Structure

Chris Barlow, the Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Clerk, had kindly provided a draft constitution which could be amended or adjusted as agreed by the committee. The meeting attendees went through the draft constitution and the following points were noted:

Paragraph 1 – the committee required a name. Several names were put forward. Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Residents Association – however, this would eliminate other parties who did not live in the parish who were also opposed to the development on the green belt. DG, who was present, lives in Pitsea.

Other names put forward were: Committee to fight the development of Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet green belt; Committee to Fight the Development of Green Belt in the Local Area; Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Anti-Development Group; Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Development Resistance Movement.

Paragraph 3 – *“Membership of the Association would be open to all residents living in Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Council area. Associate membership can be granted with permission of the Committee/Association” (appropriate wording to be inserted).* Therefore, DG and other people outside the Parish who wished to help fight the development of our green belt could be members if agreed when the formal association/committee is set up.

Paragraph 3 – *“All members have voting rights”.* Therefore, all residents in the 748 dwellings within the parish would have the right to vote at meetings.

Paragraph 5 – *“An Association/Committee will be run by a Committee elected at an annual General Meeting.”*

“The Committee will be made up of a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and a number of other members (suggested as being between 4 and 7). The committee would therefore consist of 7 to 10 members.

Paragraph 8 – *“the committee will hold at least 3 meetings in order to involve members and hear their views.”*

In view of the fact that a formal association needed to be communicated to residents and set up; and a management committee elected, the attendees agreed the following:

- a) The present attendees plus CS and TC, with the exception of CT (who was willing to help in any way but who did not wish to be a committee member) would form **an INTERIM Committee** until such time as a formal association and management committee could be formed. All agreed to help in any way they could.
- b) RG was nominated by CT as Acting Chair. The proposal was seconded by GL and agreed by all present.
- c) CS had volunteered to be Acting Secretary and this was agreed by all present
- d) GL would contact TC, who had finance experience, to ask her if she would take on the role of Acting Treasurer.
- e) A name for the Association/Committee could not be agreed until the elected committee could be formed.
- f) Communication with all residents to advise them about the interim committee and the work it was doing until such time as a formal committee could be elected was imperative.

Agenda item 2 – Strategy

In view of the fact that swift communication with all residents was essential, it was agreed to send copies of these minutes, once agreed, to all residents and possibly those outside the parish. The Parish Clerk had offered to distribute any information along with The Bugle, the quarterly magazine delivered to all 748 dwellings in the parish. However, this would not be going out until the end of August. It was **agreed** that earlier communication was necessary and therefore the interim committee would undertake to deliver the final version of these minutes to all homes.

RG would seek advice from the Parish Clerk/Council regarding the earliest date for an AGM and an election procedure. The latest date for receiving details for the Bugle was 15th August, she would try to get some information which could go in the magazine otherwise a separate mailing would be necessary.

In the meantime it was agreed to continue with the petition. GL and CT who were the originators of the petition had obtained 500 signatures during the consultation at the Benbow, only a handful of people had refused to sign the petition. Our MP attended the consultation and also signed the petition.

GL had raised this issue, regarding the few people who did not wish to sign the petition with our MP. GL said that the people who did not wish to sign the petition were residents who had some land themselves but had either been refused planning permission for extensions or additional buildings and been turned down or saw no possibility in obtaining planning permission in the current green belt. They felt that if the development were successful they might also obtain planning permission. The MP said that this might be true but so might the reverse also be true, i.e. to help meet its housing targets but still retain its overall green belt policy, the council might consider granting building permission in “infill” sites.

CT said that about another 400 signatures had been obtained since the consultation. The petition was in the corner shop and the garden centre. CT had also knocked on doors in part of Pound Lane.

Members of the interim committee agreed to knock on doors to get more signatures on the petition. There was concern that some signatures came from outside the Bowes Gifford & North Benfleet parish area. However, as there would be a structural and environmental impact which would affect people from outside the parish it was not felt that this was an issue. Nevertheless, this needed to be further discussion at future meetings.

RG said that when Stephen Metcalfe, our local MP, who attended the July development consultation, had stated that although the petition was extremely useful, individual letters would provide him with a much more powerful tool to fight the development project. Therefore, as the door to door petition continued helpers and interim committee members needed to urge residents to write to the MP. Contact details are as follows:

Stephen Metcalfe, MP for South Basildon and East Thurrock. He had provided two addresses: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA; or Orsett Business Centre, Stanford Road, Orsett, Essex RM16 3BX.

RG stated that she had already written to the MP and was willing to help anyone who wished to write a letter. However, standard letters were not advisable, as they needed to be more ‘personal’.

RG gave some background as to how the situation with regard to the current development had evolved (see separate document). TW asked whether Mr Aitken, the farmer who owned Little Chalvedon Hall and who had been so opposed to building on green belt had made any clauses within his Will regarding green belt. The interim committee would need to check this (to be discussed at the next meeting).

CT said that she was willing to help organise a fete or picnic at Westlake Park to help bring residents together to discuss the green belt issue. However, it might be difficult to arrange this before the end of the summer.

ED and BG asked whether members of the former committee which had been set up to fight the building of St. Andrew's Hospital had been contacted and whether any of the funding made available to that committee remained.

PG gave the name of one former committee member who RG said she would contact.

CT said that at the parish council meeting it had been stated that it was thought that some funding remained. If TC took up the post of Interim Treasurer she would be asked to speak to the Parish Council about this funding.

TW said that she had searched various websites and found the following sites – Campaign to Protect Rural England (East of England Branch) and the Woodland Trust. TW agreed to contact these organisations to see if they could help in any way and whether any funding might be available or advice given on where to obtain funding.

RG said that funding might be difficult until such time as a formal Association/Committee could be formed but it would be very useful to get some help from outside. She had been informed that Rochford had also set up a committee which was employing consultants to fight developers. RG would ask her contact how Rochford found the funds to hire consultants.

3. Website

At the meeting on 25th July the Parish Council had advised any attendees who were thinking of forming up a committee to set up a website. GL subsequently spoke to Councillor Smillie who advised that the interim committee could ask Basildon Council to use a website within their jurisdiction similar to the Parish council website.

However, as far as could be seen the Parish Council website did not have the facility for people to input their views/blogs. This needed to be researched and discussed at the next meeting.

GL had a contact who might be able to set up a better website.

4. Any Other Business

Until such time as a formal Association and Committee could be formed the interim committee agreed to meet on a weekly basis. GL and CT who are Benbow Club committee members did not think that there would be a problem utilising the Benbow for such meetings. Benbow committee members supported the campaign to fight the development on our green belt.

GL said that it was a pity that more residents did not join the club or at least come along to the Benbow (they could easily be signed in as guests or apply for membership). This would provide an opportunity to express views on the green belt issue with other residents as well as provide a social forum.

The committee thanked CT and GL for setting up the petition and providing a focal point for residents during the consultation process.

5. Date of Next Meeting

8th August at 7.00 pm

All residents and people from outside the area, concerned about the proposed development on green belt land are welcome to attend.