

Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet

Residents Association

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 22nd AUGUST 2012

The Chair opened the meeting at 19.00.

Attendees

Rose Griffin (RG) Acting Chair; Gary Lee (GL); Tina Whitham (TW); Tracy Calver (TC) Acting Treasurer; Barry Groves (BG); Pam Groves (PG); Derek Twidell (DT); George Smith (GS); Eileen Davis (ED).

Apologies were received from Doreen Glibbery.

DT acted as minutes secretary

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th August were read and accepted.

2. Matters arising from the last minutes

TC said that she had contacted the Woodland Trust (to be covered in item 4.d).

RG had sent an email to her contact at Rochford with regards to how they found funding to fight building on green belt. She believed her contact was on holiday and she had yet to receive a reply.

TW had contacted the Commission for the Protection of Rural England (to be covered in item 4.d).

RG had yet to contact Bowers & Pitsea Football Club and the British Legion in Pitsea (to alert groups within Pitsea of the potential development and increase in the traffic in their area and other structural issues).

3. Election of formal committee – process

As there were a number of new attendees, the current committee introduced themselves to the floor. RG explained that this was an interim committee set up as a steering group and there will be a requirement for a formal committee election process. For the time being, we will call ourselves 'The Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Residents Association'. A date of 21st September was set for nominations to be accepted, with a General Meeting on 3rd October for the elections. Full details

would be in the Bugle, the Parish Magazine, which would be delivered to all 748 dwellings in the parish sometime during the first week of September

RG explained that DG, as a resident from Pitsea, had been co-opted on to the group as the Resident's Association draft constitution applied to residents within this parish only. DG was interested in the wildlife aspect which might be destroyed if the proposed development on the Little Chalvedon Hall Farm went ahead. It was a pity that she had been unable to attend because she had done some interesting research which no one else on the committee had the background knowledge to explain. DG would remain in the group until the formal committee was elected.

Several people from Pitsea had made contact with the Association but because of the current draft constitution and the election process it would not be possible to include them in this group, however this could be changed if the elected committee agreed to amend the draft constitution in which they were currently working. In the meantime, people from Pitsea were welcome to attend.

4. Strategy

- a) GL explained the setting up of the petition, 500 hundred signatures were given during the 2 day consultation and to date a further 300 signatures have been given. PG and BG have been knocking on doors in Highlands Road and adjacent roads asking people to sign the petition and write letters to their MP. RG had covered half of Westlake Avenue and Ifracombe Avenue. However, it was hard going because it took a lot of time explaining to people about the need to write letters and provide details of addresses. Only one volunteer (Yvonne) had come forward and she would help with Westlake and Kelly Road.

The Residents Association needed more "foot soldiers" to help with the petition and requests for residents to write letters to our MP. RG asked for volunteers to provide help and support . It was hoped to carry out letter writing workshops and at present the Association was waiting to hear back from the Chair of the Benbow to see if it could utilise the club for this purpose.

- b) RG said that as well as the petition, Stephen Metcalfe MP had emphasised the need to send him as many 'personal' letters as possible, as he felt that these would carry far more weight than a 'mass' list of names. In view of the number of letters being received in his post bag he was now providing a standard response to letters. RG read Mr. Metcalfe's standard response to the meeting. In his letter Mr. Metcalfe stated that he was asking for a meeting with the Secretary of State (Eric Pickles, MP for Brentwood) to discuss the Little Chalvedon Farm issue and the concerns raised by local residents. Mr. Metcalfe was copying letters sent to him to Basildon council planning department to make them aware of the strength of feeling against the potential development. He also requested that people sending letters to him copied them to local councillors so that they were also aware of the concerns being raised.

TW had printed out copies of our MPs address and the address of Pitsea East councillors which attendees could collect. Details would also be in the Bugle.

c) It was planned to write to the Trustees of Nottingham County Council Pension Fund trustees. Currently they may not be aware of local concern. All trustees were Nottingham County Councillors and in view of this fact RG proposed to draft a letter to all councillors. The letter would be copied to the 4 Nottingham MPs and Nottingham press. A comment from the floor advised that there were also 30+ Nottingham City Councillors.

d) Other Correspondence

Nottingham, Meridian and Audit Commission

RG explained some of the background i.e. that as there were no other outlet roads in the most recent plans that the re-routed Pound Lane could not possibly deal with the current traffic plus the additional traffic from 1300 2 and 3 storey dwellings. It was believed that Meridian or Aberdeen Asset Management held options on other land bordering London Road and behind Ilfracombe Avenue. If the new development was approved, and a precedent set to build on green belt, then the developers would probably ask for planning permission on the other land where they held options for outlet roads and then buildings.

RG had written to Nottingham and Meridian asking if they held any options on other land in Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet. The request for information had been refused as it was not "in the public interest" domain. She had written to the Audit Commission, the Nottingham auditors, to ask if this was correct and received a reply stating that the auditors had no rights to intervene in the release of information. However, the response stated that the auditors would take other matters raised by RG (contingency for legal costs if the Association took the battle of the Little Chalvedon Hall Development as far as the EU and compensation to residents for the loss of rural status if the battle was lost) into account when carrying out their audit.

Meridian

Meridian had asked for a meeting. However, as the association is opposed to any building on the green belt there would be no benefit in meeting Meridian or Aberdeen Asset Management to discuss their plans to turn Little Chalvedon Hall into a building site.

Pitsea East Councillors

The Association had written to the 3 local councillors expressing concern about the proposed development. All three had said that they had received concerns from local people. Mo Larkin, one of the Conservative Pitsea East Councillors and Mayor of Basildon, had asked if she could attend this meeting and although the committee emphasised that the Association was not a political platform it was agreed by all that she should speak to the meeting under item 8 (any Other Business).

Woodland Trust

TC had been in touch with the Woodland Trust, but Little Chalvedon Farm did not appear to meet their criteria and therefore they were unable to provide any support.

Commission to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

TW had been in touch with the CPRE head office which had apologised that no reply had been received to her email to the East of England (EoE) branch. However, in the meantime the EoE branch had also replied. TW had spoken to both parties and the CPRE were willing to come and speak to us when we were ready.

5. Website

Following the last meeting Robin Walter had come forward and offered to sponsor a web designer. TW and her husband Tony Fay (TF) were liaising with the consultant.

6. Twitter, Facebook and Blogging

Twitter

Still to be researched. A volunteer to help with this would be appreciated

Facebook

It had been agreed at an informal meeting of the committee not to go ahead with Facebook as there was no control over the messages that might be put on. However, if a way of monitoring messages before they went on the main page could be found then this would be considered in the future.

Blogging

The local press had been very sympathetic to the resident's fight against plans to build on Bowers Gifford green belt. The Echo, Recorder and Essex Enquirer all had the facility for 'blogging' on their web sites, and people were asked to visit these and make as many comments as possible. Past opportunities to "blog" had been lost by blogging about other issues which had overtaken the original Little Chalvedon Hall article.

Any Other Business

Mo Larkin vehemently expressed the support for our campaign. She read an extract from an unpublished book by the late Elsie Norman, about Bowers Gifford, voicing its delights and traits. Ms. Larkin's talk was met with a round of applause.

RG said that she was trying to locate a book/pamphlet written by the uncle of Reginald Acres (the late owner of Little Chalvedon Hall) and asked for any help that could be provided. She also asked if anyone knew the date of Mr. Acres death so that his will could be checked to see if there was any covenant regarding the green belt.

An attendee from the floor stated that Mr. Acres had intended changing his will shortly before he died to leave the field at the back of Westlake Avenue to the people who lived there. (*N.b. many residents had tried to buy this field in the past to try to retain its green belt status*).

Carole Turksome (CT), a Pitsea resident, had offered to print some leaflets and deliver them in the Pitsea area. CT was in attendance and stated that Pitsea station car park and trains were already overcrowded and could not cope with more commuters.

John Handley advised the committee to carry out searches to see if any legal options had been placed on the land by developers, he stayed behind after the meeting to advise on this and offered to pay for the searches.

67 members of the public were in attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.20.

Date of Next Meetings

The next meetings will be on:

12th September at 7.00 pm. Aidan McGurran (Labour Councillor for Pitsea East) will be attending as a guest

3rd October at 7.00 pm. This will be the AGM and election of committee members. Tony Ball (Conservative Councillor and Leader of Basildon Council) will be attending as a guest.

Please advise Rose Griffin of any questions for Mr. McGurran and Mr. Ball in advance of the meeting. Questions will not be taken from the floor.

Details of questions to: Rose Griffin 01268 726475 or 0780 804 1825 or preferably email rose@rosedell31.freeseve.co.uk or in writing to 31A Westlake Avenue, Bowers Gifford.

Volunteers to help with the petition, leafleting urgently required – contact any member of the committee if you would like to help in this or any other way.