

HIGHBARNS RESIDENTS GROUP MEETING

6.30pm, 15th December 2011

Dacorum Room, Civic Centre

Present:

Steven Baker – Assistant Director - Legal, Democratic & Regulatory (Chair)
Dave Bowman – Hertfordshire Highways
Mike Penning MP
Cllr Geoff Doole (Dacorum Borough Council)
Cllr Dave Jackson (Nash Mills Parish Council)
Richard Taylor
Jennifer Taylor
Rodney Berkley
Michelle Berkley
Heidi Cutts
Les Berry

Apologies:

James Doe
Jenny Young

Project Update:

Steven Baker (SB) provided a brief update since the last meeting on 20 July 2011.

At the last meeting Mike Penning (MP) had reported on the successful outcome of his discussions with his colleagues in the Department of Communities and Local Government. Funding for the project would be made available by the HCA and the Derelict Land Clearance Order would be made. Following the July meeting the DLCO was made in September and came into effect on 10 October 2011. The offer of funding letter from the HCA received in October had to be rejected because it was conditional on the project being completed by the end of 2012. This was a completion date which the Council could not have achieved. The HCA agreed to send the Council a revised offer letter with a completion date which matched the revised project timetable prepared by Hyder. The revised offer letter was dated 7 November and formally accepted by the Council on 23 November after it had been approved by Cllr Andrew Williams (Leader of the Council) and Cllr Nicholas Tiley (Portfolio Holder For Finance and Resources). The total sum offered was £2,045,349.

The Council wrote to all the residents in the inner and outer zones on 25 November informing them of the outcome of the funding application and enclosed the Question and Answer sheet which had previously been circulated to the Residents Group for comments. SB also enclosed a one page project timeline of the key stages.

The Council then wrote to the residents of the inner zone on 11 December informing them of the topographical survey which would be carried out by Hyder between 15 and 23 December. The letter enclosed an information sheet prepared by Hyder.

Topographical Survey

The topographical survey was in preparation for the intrusive ground investigations which were due to start in February 2012. SB reported that the Council had only received two telephone calls from residents in response to the letters which, hopefully, indicated that most people had understood the information they had received.

Procurement of contractors/next steps

SB explained that the tender for the ground investigation works had been advertised and that the contractor should be appointed by the end of January with the work taking place in February to March. SB referred to the project timeline that he had circulated. During July to September the procurement for the contractor who will carry out the actual remedial works would take place. The works were due to start in October and completed by June 2013.

Surprise was expressed at the relatively short period for the remedial works to be carried out.

Public Meeting

The consensus was that the public meeting should be held during the half term week in February (13th – 17th). The meeting should be held in the Nash Mills School if available and start at 7.15 pm.

It was suggested that it would be helpful if photographs could be brought to the public meeting showing how the works would be carried out.

AOB

Future of the road closure

MP suggested that the local residents should start to think about what they would like to happen to the road closure once the works are finished. MP explained that the road is closed under a permanent order but once the works are finished the County Council will have no reason to keep the road closed. MP thought that local residents may want the road to remain closed as it has created a quieter area.

Dave Bowman (DB) confirmed that when the work is completed the road closure order would be revoked and the road opened up. DB explained that if there was a strong local feeling to keep the road closed the County Council may look at other options.

MP suggested that the future traffic management of the area post completion of the works should be an item on the agenda for the public meeting. MP emphasised that, if the residents wanted to keep the road closed, now was the time to say so while the opportunity was there.

Contract award criteria

Cllr Geoff Doole (GD) made a plea that the contract for the works should not just be awarded on price alone. SB explained that the contract would have to be let under the European procurement rules because of the value of the contract. This meant that the evaluation criteria could not be just based on price alone but would take into account the contractor's previous experience, professional capabilities and their capacity to do the work.

When the work was completed it would be subject to a stringent validation process through inspection before the certificates would be issued.

Road changes following the development of the Sappi site.

It was suggested that it might be helpful to have plans of the road changes resulting from the redevelopment of the Sappi site available at the public meeting.

Press release

MP asked whether it was intended to issue a press release. SB explained that he had asked the Council's Communications officer to issue a press release but that she had advised against this as it might attract negative publicity for the area.

The Group was in favour of a press release at this stage because it was felt that this was a good news story and that it would help relieve the blight over the area.

Date and time of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held after the public meeting. SB explained that the project would be led by someone else from the Council as it moved into the works phase. SB will be attending the public meeting, and would still have some involvement in the project. The Group were pleased to hear that Jenny Young would continue to be involved.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm