

Oak Tree Drive Development

Consultation at Meeting of Emsworth Community Board

Richard Jannaway

Havant Borough Council's (HBC) Planning Department are showing genuine commitment to public consultation by seeking the views of the community through the Community Board. They are also inviting the ERA and ECB to consultation exercises and workshops.

The presentation by HBC planning officer Daphne Haywood on the proposed development on land off Oak Tree Drive attracted a crowd of around 60 to the Emsworth Community Board (ECB) meeting in June.

After a brief description of the proposals submitted by George Wimpey Southern Counties and expressing the Planning Department's doubts about the application, Daphne Haywood listened carefully to extensive comments and questions from the public many of whom are extremely well informed residents of Oak Tree Drive and the surrounding area.

The points, which emerged from the meeting, many of which were taken onboard by the Planning Department, were broadly similar to those set out by Peter Rayment in the April issue of The EMS.

Density

Daphne Haywood said that the Planning Department agreed that an overall density of 40 housing units to the hectare was far too high for a site on the rural edge of a settlement and they are thinking more along the lines of 30/hectare as the Inspector proposed.

Traffic

Traffic from the new housing estate into Hollybank Lane would be excessive and parking inadequate, e.g. one space for a one-bed flat which would often be occupied by a couple each with car – especially with inadequate public transport.

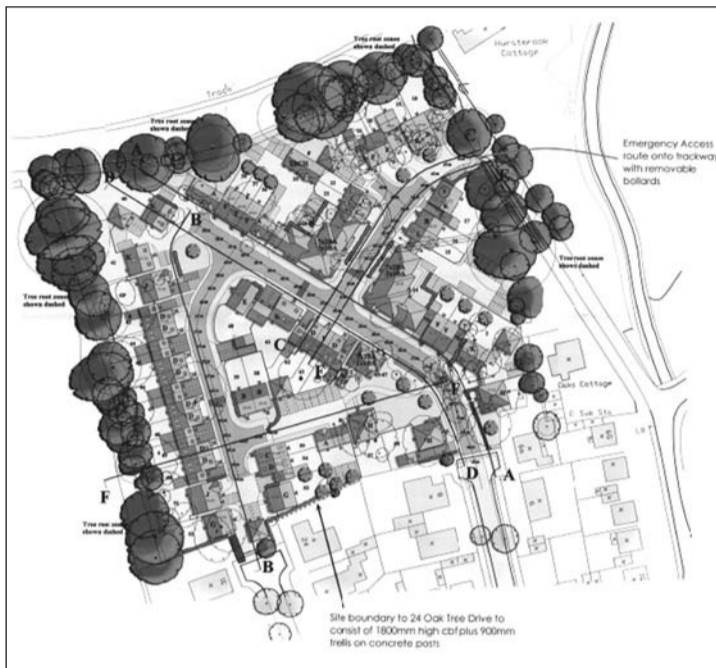
A resident of Long Copse Lane raised the issue of increased traffic down this very narrow rural lane into West Sussex. The meeting was astounded to learn that Westbourne Parish Council had raised no objections to this matter.

Flats and Affordable Housing

Many people at the meeting felt that flats were not appropriate in a development in such a position. Daphne Haywood said there was nothing in the Local Plan to say that they could prevent the building of flats. The flats are to be managed by the Hermitage Housing Association as affordable housing.

Doubts about the proposed affordable housing emerged at the meeting. 10 out of the 18 affordable units, are 2-bedroom flats. According to HBC's allocation policy, two bedroom residences go to families with one child or two children under 10. This makes for a minimum of 10 and as many as 20 young children living in flats with no gardens or suitable outside play provision.

The point was made that a contribution from the developer to the budget for maintenance and improvement of existing play space, is not a satisfactory alternative to 'watched' play space nearby. It is current HBC policy to consolidate play space into more economic units. There was a concern that HBC is taking the easy option regarding play areas in large developments. Is it really right for councils to prioritise maintenance cost savings over the well-being and safety of children?



Steve Pearce, Chairman of the Emsworth Community Board felt this was an issue the ECB should pursue further with the Council.

Small Gardens and Large Trees

The Tree Officer noted that there were a large number of significant trees around the edges of the site which would provide screening for the development. However, there is considerable concern that because these lovely mature trees would be shading the very small and cramped gardens, they might then be under threat.

Design Quality

There was also concern from the audience shared by the Planning Department that the design quality was poor and of a mass produced nature without any real inspiration or respect for the location. One resident pointed out that in their Design Statement, Wimpey had misrepresented the nature of the area. For example, by picking on the one or two three-storey houses adjacent to the site when nearly all the other properties are bungalows or chalet bungalows. Similarly the 'street scene' elevations were very misleading.

Appeals

Considerable concern was expressed about the appeals procedure as so often applications, which are rejected by the local authority are later upheld on appeal. Daphne Hayward assured the meeting that the appeals inspectors were working from the same guidelines, however, these were often open to more than one interpretation.

Consultation

Concern was expressed that developers are treating pre-application consultations as nothing more than a public relations exercise. The extensive public response to Wimpey's consultation seems to have been totally ignored. It is, however, too early to pass judgement on pre-application consultations in general. The recently introduced Development Forum meetings and the way Daphne Hayward responded at this meeting are a good indication of HBC's intent to make genuine consultation a reality.

Pub/Hotel and filling station on the A27 Site - Chris Curry

There has been a new application for the site. This is for the construction of a petrol filling station and restaurant, and an 84-bed pub/hotel with access from the A27 westbound carriageway. A three metre wide cycle/footway to Washington Road is included.

In these plans there is neither a path nor a roadway from North Street. Further development on the site is not included in the proposal but the developers are keeping their options open by leaving space for a road beside the cycleway and for 'future emergency access' to the rest of the site from the service station.

In a response sent before the full plans were available, the Emsworth Residents' Association did not oppose the principle of putting a service station, restaurant and hotel on this site with pedestrian and cycle access from Washington Road for workers at the site and for visitors to the hotel. However, they expressed the belief that certain conditions are essential for the protection of residents in the vicinity.

These are:

- Put up a 3 metre earth mound all round the buildings with shrubs on top as exists on the east bound carriageway, north side site. The drawings appear to show some trees and hedges but a bank would help to reduce sound levels to neighbouring schools and houses.

- Hide the site, as far as possible, from the A27(T) with the earth bank, trees and shrubs.
- Under no circumstances should approval for this site have any features which will allow access into Emsworth other than by the proposed cycle/footpath.
- The number of hotel rooms proposed is too high and should be reduced.
- It is essential to ensure that site drainage does not cause problems in the Westbrook.
- The drainage system built should be for this site alone and no provision made for other unspecified future development not requested in this planning application.
- Management of the SuDS drainage system must be an agreed part of the forward plan with guarantees of maintenance for the life of the site.
- The possibility of parking problems in Washington Road as a result of site visitors should be considered and possible solutions proposed.

Since this response has been sent and the plans have been made available, it is evident that the hotel will contain a pub/restaurant and therefore may attract custom from Emsworth, parking in the Washington Road area. We are preparing a response to this new information. The proposal can be viewed on the HBC website (direct link from the ERA site).

EDS
EMSWORTH DESIGN
STATEMENT

YOUR response is now needed.

David Jones

After more than four years of research, discussion, writing and revision, the Emsworth Design Statement (EDS) now exists in almost its final form. Most important in creating this document has been input from you, the people of Emsworth, as more than 20% of households completed our initial questionnaire and many people responded to our exhibition of the first version. Interpreting and incorporating these widely varying views into a coherent document has taken many hundreds of hours of painstaking voluntary work by the Core Team. Now I am asking for your help once again before the EDS is formally submitted to Havant Borough Council (HBC) for final approval. All design statements, including the EDS have to comply with the existing planning policies in the Local Plan and with later changes in planning policy both locally and nationally. To this end, we have consulted closely with the planning officers at HBC. Now it is your opportunity during a review period of four weeks to ratify the results before its final submission to the whole council prior to its adoption as a document requiring material consideration when assessing planning applications. Several copies will be placed in Emsworth Library in early July and it will also be available on the ERA and EDS websites. Feedback forms will be available in both places. Notices will be displayed on the ERA noticeboard outside the Co-Op and in many other places around the town when this has been done. We are using the term 'ratification' because we hope that you will be in broad agreement with the document and will therefore give us your approval. However, if you have a substantive comment, or spot an error of fact, please record it, together with your name and address. All such comments will be listed and acknowledged, together with the response from the Core Team. Your broad agreement with the contents of the EDS is very important to enable us to demonstrate to HBC that the EDS has the full support of our community. Therefore, please read the EDS carefully and let us have the maximum number of replies within the four-week period. Send your replies to David Jones, EDS Project Leader, 23 Queen Street, Emsworth, PO10 7BJ.

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... And lots more

Global Warming - An Inconvenient Truth

Jennifer Rye

An Inconvenient Truth: yes indeed, it rings absolutely true and it's certainly inconvenient to contemplate the end of our world as a result of our own activities. The recent showing of the Al Gore film by Hampshire Moviola at the Emsworth Community Centre was a far cry from the other entertaining films that we have been able to see this past year. And yet, what price entertainment when our whole world is threatened? A bit like fiddling while Rome burns?

I found the film utterly convincing. In style it was basically a slide lecture by Al Gore, with some inserts of real life film to illustrate his points. He made the science of global warming understandable as well as convincing, and I came out into the sunshine

of an Emsworth afternoon looking at the scene with new eyes: a precious world which we are very close to having destroyed.

Yet his whole thesis was not too dispiriting; he was at pains to demonstrate what we can do about it, individually, regionally, nationally and globally. One of the most heartening pieces of evidence for me was the account of recent initiatives by American cities to avert the looming disaster, despite the apparent inability of President Bush to accept facts and change national policy. Let's hope that the most recent news from the G8 summit shows a real change of presidential heart.

See also 'The effect of Global Warming on Hampshire' - page 2

