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LOCAL NEWS

Planning Roundup

Richard Jannaway

Cycle Path welcomed

At long last, progress is being made on the Safe Routes to School cycleway between Emsworth's two primary schools. A planning application has been approved for a new cycle path in the Horndean Road recreation ground from the car park going northwards just inside the hedge to the entrance opposite St James' Primary School. Furthermore the crossing outside the school has already been moved, partly to facilitate the cycle path and partly to make it safer by moving it away from the junction with Bellevue Lane.

The ERA welcomes and supports these long needed improvements, however, the possible loss of the hedge bounding the school is of grave concern and we strongly urge that if it has to be removed it is replanted alongside the new path to preserve the green hedge line so characteristic of Horndean Road.

Parking spaces

The new apartments at 'The Grange' on New Brighton Road have insufficient parking spaces for all the cars owned by the tenants and there is a constant scramble for spaces in the parking area. Those unlucky enough not to find a space have to park in the road, either risking the heavy traffic in New Brighton Road itself or lining Westbourne Avenue outside 26 New Brighton Road where they will have to compete with the overflow from Churchill's 'Bavarian hunting lodge', should this ever be built.

77 Horndean Road

The application to build a day nursery behind 77 Horndean Road has been refused on the grounds of over development, parking, intrusion into the countryside and that it would be "out of keeping with the character of the locality and detrimental to the amenities of the area and the neighbouring dwellings".

58 Horndean Road Appeal

The application to redevelop 58 Horndean Road with a modernistic 'Hieronymus Bosch' block of 14 apartments has been rejected by HBC on multiple grounds. These include: unsuitable form and colour detracting from the amenities of the area, excessive height and bulk, several aspects of the parking arrangements, lack of play space and loss or potential damage to TPO trees. As we go to press we have just been informed that the developer has appealed against the rejection.

Interbridges East

The new owners of the site, Latham Properties Special Pension Fund, have just put in yet another application for 12 industrial units, 3 office units, open storage, commuter car park and new access onto New Brighton Road. This is well timed to coincide with the A27 site application whose junction it hopes to share!

Harebell - a rather elusive developer?

Richard Jannaway

As a direct result of objections to the current planning application submitted by the Emsworth Community Board (ECB), the developer of the A27 site, Harebell Developments Limited, circulated a hostile email, containing an unsigned 'open letter' to the ECB, claiming that the ECB's objections were inappropriate and inaccurate. The email went on to make misleading statements about the content and threatened to claim the costs of appeals against the ECB should they 'engineer a refusal' of the application. If only the ECB, or the ERA had that power! All either can do is make representations to HBC.

This rather strange email made me both curious and suspicious prompting me to do some digging to find out who Harebell Developments really are. The results are as follows:

- All planning documents are marked c/o Agent, Stephen Jupp
- They do not advertise a telephone number or have a website
- Their email address is harebell100@aol.com this could be anybody
- The postal address given in one document is a P.O. Box number in Petworth. Other documents give an address for 'Harebell Ltd' as: 41c East Street, Wimbourne, Dorset, BH21 1DX, which is the postal address of Harebell Homes Limited given by Companies House
- An internet search did not find any property development history
- Harebell Developments Limited is not registered at Companies House, the closest is Harebell Homes Limited. Are they the same?

The question is why all the secrecy? Are they part of a large development consortium? Or a local person wanting to remain anonymous?

Countryside at risk under planning changes

Ray Cobbett

Significant changes are on the way to the planning system following the Kate Barker report published in 2006. The report, *Review of Land Use Planning*, said that the present planning system must be more effective when dealing with major infrastructure projects like airport expansions, waste and water projects and major road schemes. Local council planners would be replaced by an Independent Planning Commission (IPC). The present 'Needs Test' for new and expanded supermarkets will be scrapped.

It would be easier to make improvements like extensions and conservatories where there is little impact on neighbours. Public buildings must be greener and the red tape reduced for micro generation projects. Some of the new proposals will be welcomed particularly less red tape. But there is little else to celebrate in the White Paper intended to rebalance the system in favour of economic development even though the present system is not a constraint on growth. If accepted, major infrastructure projects would minimise the involvement of local communities concerned about balancing growth with environmental impacts.

Planning must be democratically accountable, allow proper public engagement and allow for the robust testing of evidence. Current policy has been successful in promoting the viability and vitality of town centres. The White Paper ends the 'Needs Test' which would weaken town centre and urban regeneration. Engaging local communities in plan preparation is vital to achieving consensus. The White Paper could reduce these opportunities.

Prioritising economic development threatens wildlife and habitats on urban fringes. In Emsworth with its many sensitive sites, we will have to encourage wildlife to adapt to climate change and keep nature close to where people live. Reform should strengthen the potential of planning as an environmental tool and reinforce the Green Belt and not weaken it as proposed.

The Saga of the Land next to 20-22 New Brighton Road

Chris Curry

As reported last quarter, the houses on the above site were approved despite the fact that they were not built to the approved drawings. The neighbours were left with the fig leaf that various conditions were added to the planning approval, including the need to consult the neighbours about boundary planting and a restriction preventing conversion of single houses into semi-detached houses or garages into separate dwellings.

I attended a meeting at the Civic Offices to discuss the details and a scheme was put forward that will provide a three metre high hedge and some strategically positioned trees, some of them large specimens, to obscure items such as intrusive lighting. The proposal does not satisfy at least one of the neighbours since the planting is supposed to have been completed before the new houses are occupied and the hedging will not reach three metres for a few years.

At the 6 September Development Management Committee meeting the scheme was approved. There was much concern expressed by several Councillors about the monitoring of the planting scheme to ensure trees are replaced and that the grass beside the approach road is maintained in a good state. They will ask the Enforcement Officers to monitor the progress but I suggest that all those living near the site ensure that the Officers are aware of any problems. I also hope that the developer, who will be living in one of the houses, helps to ensure that this corner of Emsworth is maintained to the standard that we have come to expect in so much of the area.

Walking the Streets of Emsworth

Steve Pearce

Planning has now been completed for a comprehensive survey of the main pedestrian and cycle routes in Emsworth. Volunteers will walk each of 30 selected routes and identify problems caused by traffic, road and path layout, obstructions or lack of maintenance. The project will take about six months and will take into account the extensive work already done by parents and teachers in identifying Safe Routes to School.

The output from this work will be a comprehensive "Community Street Audit" which will be submitted to the Transport Policy groups at Hampshire County Council and Havant Borough Council who both support the survey. It is expected that they will adopt the Street Audit as the basis for planning future road improvements to make walking and cycling around Emsworth easier and safer.

This project is an initiative of Emsworth Community Board supported by the newly formed Emsworth Town Partnership. A number of volunteers have already stepped forward but we would like more to assist with the survey work. We would also like to hear the views of people who have particular problems in getting around the town on foot, cycle, wheelchair or electric buggy. If you would like to help with this project, please contact Steve Pearce by telephone 01243 431615 or email steve.pearce@btinternet.com

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