

WESTCOTT VILLAGE FORUM

Minutes of Village Forum Group meeting held at 7.30pm on 18th November 2013 at St Johns Chapel, Chapel Lane, Westcott.

Present: Tim Way (Chairman)
See list of attendees appendix (I)

1. Welcome and Apologies.

See list of apologies appendix (I)

2. Minutes from last meeting.

The minutes from the meeting 4th September 2013 were approved.

3. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

4. Funding Arrangements – JF

7.35 MB arrived.

Account balance stands at £100.

Our grant application is being completed by Patrick Salmon – currently 80% complete. Working Parties are unsure of likely expenditure, but likely to consist of wider data gathering & plan writing costs, rental charges & marketing/printing costs. MVDC will fund the referendum and independent inspection costs. Hypothetical funding limit is circa £7k-our costs are expected to be much less. Progress will be reported at the next meeting.

5. Village Survey : Initial Feedback - CS

7.40 GC arrived.

Return rate currently estimated at 66% with completed questionnaires still drifting in. MVDC recognise a 40% return as a good response, however 70% is ideal to be considered as truly representative of residents of the village.

370 responses have been processed to date, excluding the qualitative data which is yet to be processed. As this is all provisional data, we will wait until the processing has been completed before releasing any results formally. It was noted that very few collectors had had negative reactions and a refusal to complete the survey, and that there had been some confusion over the purpose of the map showing the Green Belt Boundary. The vast majority of residents had been engaged and interested in the survey

SR: How many young people answered the perceived popular youth activity question?

CS confirmed this information can be teased out in order for SR to do some follow up work. CS advised that the data input will be complete for discussion and analysis at the Jan2014 meeting.

6. Greenbelt Boundary Assessment:

a) Draft Report

TWa presented a preparatory document which was designed to provide information to stimulate discussion based on the work which had been done by members of the Forum consisting of

- i) a review of the brief discussion held at the public meeting in June 2013,
- ii) a review of how MVDC interpret the impact ratings **Significant, Moderate & Minimal**,
- iii) how other areas have interpreted **Significant, Moderate & Minimal**,
- iv) walked the Greenbelt boundary and visited areas (such as Ranmore) to get a balanced perspective of the village and its setting.

It was stressed that the document was a first attempt at describing and categorising segments of the land surrounding the village against the three criteria agreed in consultation by MVDC, for the purposes of stimulating discussion. This approach was consistent with that used in other communities.

TWa reiterated that the document was an information base to enable discussion to start, first among the forum members, and then among the wider village community about the existing Green

Belt Boundary. It was neither a suggestion that there was a need to change boundaries, nor a recommendation to change them. However, if we want to contribute to any decision making by the MVDC and ultimately the Secretary of State, then we need to have local involvement.

See Presentation attachment.

Following the presentation TWa invited Forum members to split into groups to discuss the following questions:

- Do you agree/disagree the broad principle of the isolation of the village within the Green Belt by areas W-GB-A, B, C? Any comments?
- Do you agree/disagree with Significant/Moderate/Minimal classifications of the areas? Any comments?
- Review and Comment on specific areas W-GB- D, E, F
- Any other comments?

Sarah Nelson commented that in the discussion groups you should ask yourself "What is the role of that piece of land in relation to the 3 criteria? Does it protect the community from merging with another, does it prevent the countryside from encroachment, and does it play a role in preserving the special character and setting of the village and to what degree – significant, moderate, or minimal?"

TWa commented that broadly speaking segments W-GB A, B, and C were unequivocally countryside, and segments W-GB D, E, and F differed in so far as they currently supported low-density housing.

In trying to define the criteria on preserving the setting and character of the village (the most subjective of the criteria) it was important to try to identify characteristics of the land which made it unique

Sarah Nelson advised that woodland has been omitted from the MVDC assessment as it is currently valued as Critical and Important.

b) Discussion in Groups:

Break into 4 groups, 20mins discussion time

c) Plenary Feedback:

The session prompted lively discussion and debate

In broad terms

- i) All groups agreed with the assessment of Segments W-GB- A, B, C
- ii) All groups were comfortable with the wording under each category for each segment

Different groups had different opinions on the ratings (Significant, Moderate, Minimal) on Segments W-GB-D, E, F

Specific comments include:

Segment W-GB-B was critical in preventing Westcott merging with Dorking

Segment W-GB-C, merging criteria should be moderate (not minimal) as it protects Wotton from merging with Westcott.

Segment W-GB-D is significant in respect of the character and setting of the village. This was debated at length

Some groups felt that the Moderate rating under setting and character of the village should be changed minimal in W-GB-E and W-GB-F

The housing density in W-GB-E could be increased without much impact.

Other comments:

It boils down to 'If we need more housing, should we be increasing density within the current built-up areas or should we encroach onto greenbelt'

We must engage the community fully for those not here to voice their opinions.

We must ensure that the opinions expressed in the survey results are acted upon.

Following the first part of the presentation TWa explained:

Development Sites

MVDC are keen to hear from land-owners to put forward sites for potential development. None have so far come forward from Westcott since the announcement was made last year. The Forum could not propose sites ; they had to come from land-owners. It would be important for at least some to come forward in order to have a robust NDP.

TWa sought to clarify whether these sites should be from *within the Village boundary & greenbelt land*? Sarah Nelson replied *Both – but if no changes were made to the Green Belt boundaries then any which lay within the Green Belt would be subject to restrictions..*

In answer to a question Sarah Nelson commented that compulsory purchase is not an option in seeking development land. Anyone interested in bringing land forward should contact Tim Way confidentially via email : timway.westcott@gmail.com

Consultation

TWa said the review will be a challenge for Westcott; not all residents will agree but we must reach a consensus. It is vital that we communicate effectively to residents to inform them on this subject. MB suggested we put the presentation on the Forum website. Agreed by all present.

It was also suggested that a series of different meeting on the subject should be arranged in the New Year at different venues to generate discussion and debate on the Green Belt Assessment. Agreed by all present.

Our final Green Belt review will be put to MVDC in April 2014, who then put forward their proposal to Secretary of State later in the year. If we do it correctly it will stand a better chance of not being overturned, so if we keep going we will have a say in what happens to the village.

TWa raised the subject of dealing with Vested Interests when dealing with development proposals. TWa will discuss with Sarah Nelson the correct way to record and handle conflicts of interest of Forum members and declarations of interest.

9.35pm CS left meeting.

Meeting Conclusions

TWa reported that the NDP target date is May 2015, however the Greenbelt review by MVDC will not complete until 2016. If we continue working towards our target date we will be producing the NDV in advance of the Greenbelt review.

This leaves us the choices of:

- 1) Continue NPD according to target date for the land currently within village boundary, but this boundary may change.
- 2) Put the whole NDP process on hold.
- 3) Abandon NDP.

JF suggested we carry out a brief risk assessment. There is significant momentum behind getting the Greenbelt review done speedily. If we abandon the NDP process the Forum then folds, but the Greenbelt review could be maintained through the Village Association. The main question is whether we think we will want to allocate land which is currently in greenbelt within our NDP? His suggestion is that we carry on the NDP process and re-assess in 1 year as it is possible that we may not be in a position to achieve the 2015 target in any case. JF commented that MVDC will fund the referendum for the NDP within the village at any time so the May 2015 date becomes less critical.

There was then a debate on how Greenbelt review fits in and how to get a well considered response from residents, whilst explaining that circa 80% of responses processed to date said they did not wish to see development on the Green Belt surrounding the village.

7. Any Other Business.

The request for Data Gathering members has resulted in 4 responses. More help is needed, so please offer if you do not already take an active role in other working parties. Data Gathering is looking far wider than Westcott ie utilities, local estate agents etc. Please contact Tim Way if you can possibly offer some help.

TWa, KF & GC to meet to go over the project plan together.

8. Questions and Answers

None

9. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm Monday 20th January 2014, **St John's Chapel TO BE CONFIRMED.**

This meeting closed at 10.10pm

Westcott Village Forum Meeting 18th November 2013

List of attendees:

Kevin Foo	KF
Stuart Ryland	SR
Andrea Gabb	AG
Heather Woods	HW
Graham Clarke	GC
Sue Winch	SW
Pamela Wilson	PW
James Leaver	JL
Madeline Brooks	MB
Tim Way	TWa
Mike Flower	MF
Natalie Foo	NF
Geoff Woodward	GW
James Friend	JF
Chris Smewing	CS
Alan Jonas	AJ
David McCombe	DM
Tony Winch	TWi
Terry Webber	TWe

Guests:

Sarah Nelson, MVDC

Item 1:

List of apologies

Apologies received for meeting 18th November 2013

Willy Forster
Heather Forster
Andrew Gordon
Glynis Gatenby
Rond Salter
Hazel Watson
Debbie Fenton Jones
Matthew Bazylewskyj
Laura Bazylewskyj
Ruth McBain