

WESTGATE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Extraordinary Committee Meeting held on 6 June 2016 at 15 Westgate.

Present:

Chair: Richard Brownfield (RB), Brian Bird (BB), Anthony Quail (AQ), Brian Raincock (BR), Paula Street (PS), and Sandi Young (SY). Colin Hicks (CH) minute taker.

Apologies:

Vince Waldron (VW)
Tony Schofield (TS)

1. AGENDA

1.1 The Chairman explained that this extraordinary meeting had been called to clarify the Association's position regarding the construction of the Southern Access Road from the Whitehouse Farm development and whether to support the proposed consultation with a barrister regarding the way the decision was made at the recent CDC planning committee and subscribe to costs in collaboration with the three other RAs concerned – Orchard St, Parklands and East Broyle.

1.2 There were only two items for consideration on the agenda:

- i. Whether the WGRA endorsed the construction of the Southern Access Road in Phase One of the Whitehouse Farm Development
- ii. Whether the consultation with a barrister was the right way to proceed

1.3 RB was also aware that the letter recently published in the Observer had been **supported** by the Committee **by e-mail** 5 votes to 1 and he had agreed to halt the process until everyone had had a chance to have their say on the WGRA response to the current situation.

2. ITEM ONE: THE SOUTHERN ACCESS ROUTE

2.1 RB reported that the WHF Masterplan had been accepted by the CDC planning committee on 27 April by casting vote of the chair. There was also the matter of the introduction and vote on a peculiar amendment from the member for Tangmere, that the SAR does not have to be built until Phase Two.

2.2 On the strength of this vote, Linden Homes have now submitted detailed plans for roads for consideration at the July CDC Planning Committee meeting. This means that by the end of that month the use and configuration of the roads around the WHF Development could be more or less decided upon as currently submitted if we do nothing.

2.3 It was RB's view that the road proposals should be seen as a whole. They would result in a large increase in traffic in Western Chichester and the SAR should be built in the first Phase if one was to avoid deterioration in the quality of life of Westgate residents.

2.4 AQ asked for clarification about what exactly was meant by the SAR. Was this a road that debouched directly onto the Westgate-Sherborne Road roundabout or were we talking about an "engineered" road that fed directly into Cathedral Way?

2.5 For clarification RB put forward two possible schemes:

- i. The local plan shows the SAR joining directly onto Westgate. Without it the northern access route would in fact be a cul-de-sac **opening onto the B2174. This would increase rat-running** into Sherborne Road of **traffic wanting to access** the A27 southwards via the Westgate-Sherborne Road roundabout.
- ii. The "engineered" solution would direct traffic directly from the SAR onto the Cathedral Way roundabout. Correspondence from Dominic Smith of WSCC Highways and to the Parklands traffic consultant Paul Wreyford stated that the link with Westgate must be broken and this seems to be the official attitude. A connection could be made into the Cathedral Way roundabout if the southern part of the 1988 WSCC Highways plan for a Western Relief road was implemented, an option reviewed as recently as 2013 and retained.

2.6 There should be a two-pronged attack:

- i. That the CDC make it a requirement that there should be an SAR in Phase One.
- ii. The local plan currently shows that the SAR connects directly with Westgate and this should be altered.

2.7 PS had real concerns that the WGRA is leading the charge on the Phase One construction of the SAR when it should not be. So-called engineered access is not guaranteed and the easier (fudged) option is the direct Westgate west connection with the link to Westgate east and Sherborne Road north severed. What might happen therefore if the public consultation on the A27 improvements is delayed to late summer? If the SAR was never built then the traffic in Westgate would be unlikely to be any worse than it now is. The WGRA was mandated to look after its residents first and should not be pressing for extra traffic to come down from the WHF development. It was not in our interests to do so. She urged that the Committee lobby for a properly engineered **solution**.

2.8 Various responses were made by committee members: Westgate is at the pinchpoint of interest. The best solution would mean including safe passage for children and cyclists. Concern was expressed that changing our tack from Phase One to Phase Two at this stage would raise the issue of the RA's credibility.

2.9 It was proposed that the WGRA run an active campaign to get the SAR built at Phase One but with direct access into Cathedral Way, avoiding the mini roundabout at Sherborne Road. It was counter-proposed that we actively lobby for the continuation of the SAR into Cathedral Way but remain silent on when it should be built.

2.10 Again, various responses were made by committee members: the traffic would be worse on the ring road; the big fear is that they will build the 750 houses and not the rest; regarding the ransom strip it was noted that a CPO had been suggested as was being asked for at Tangmere so this was no longer an obstacle to construction.

2.11 RB proposed that two votes be taken:

- i. That the WGRA campaign to get the SAR built with a direct exit onto the Cathedral Way roundabout. This was passed without dissent.
- ii. That the SAR should be built as part of the first Phase of the development. This was passed 5 votes to 2.

2.12 Whilst committee members understood the general gist of what had been voted on, it was agreed that care be taken over the exact wording in the recorded minutes. Committee members will review the wording as recorded in the minutes and make recommendations for such changes as clarity requires.

2.13 To bolster the view of the committee, AQ was able to inform the committee that a ChiSoc letter to the CDC would be coming, suggesting the building of the SAR after 125 completed houses.

3. ITEM TWO: THE USE OF AND PAYMENT TO A BARRISTER

3.1 BB read a prepared statement which is attached. Richard Plowman, member of the CDC planning committee, was seeking a legal opinion on planning law concerning the way the decision was made to adopt the masterplan together with the way the submission of the late Tangmere amendment was handled, that bolstered the local plan commitment not to build the SAR before Phase Two (**before** the 751st house).

3.2 The lawyer concerned was Timothy Comyn, a barrister with considerable experience of planning law. He was of the view that there was a need to address the decision in committee because it could be argued, subject to detailed examination, that there had been material changes which meant that the planning application documents no longer met the local plan requirement. Particularly that Policy 15 will not conform if the SAR is not built and that the development is therefore not sustainable over the whole site. The inspector had left the door open in her final comments on the local plan regarding the possible impact of such material changes.

3.3 The four RAs are urged to get together and table their objections. It was felt that this might stop a further stitchup such as had been experienced with the masterplan vote.

3.4 Richard Plowman was asking the four RAs concerned each to contribute a quarter of the £1000 fee. The other three had agreed to do this. The question of the lack of funds to pay the fees was raised since the WGRA had neither funds nor subs. BB was of the view that it would be hypocritical to take advantage of the advice but not contribute to the cost. If there is a legal argument the CDC will obviously take their own counsel's legal opinion. The fee quoted for the RAs is £1000 for a conference, the advice and a further conference. Each RA is asked to chip in £250.

3.5 There was some debate about the possible politicisation of the issue but RB stated that the FLAWED Committee, made up of the four RAs and with Richard Plowman as chair, was not party political. We would be doing this as an RA, not as a political gesture. The main target of our support was being able to use counsel's reference to changed circumstances to give the WGRA the possibility of getting the engineered route of the SAR built in Phase One with: there is no attempt to overturn the whole plan.

3.6 If legal counsel is favourable to a review of the whole of the traffic proposals this would give us ammunition in our talks with the CDC. It is an opportunity to present alternative evidence. The circumstances have changed as the local plan has not been adhered to, the implementation of the plan has to be reviewed, and the inspector could be in support. There would be merit in supporting Richard Plowman's initiative if it would assist in turning over the planning application or bolster the attempt to insert the building of the SAR into Phase 1.

3.7 BB suggested we vote on the following: that the WGRA is very happy to cooperate with the other RAs, with a view to obtaining counsel's opinion on the current planning issues and to contribute £250 in fees. This was passed nem con.

4. AOB

4.1 RB advised the committee that Tony Schofield wished to remain on committee as Treasurer until the next AGM in November 2016, with Vince as assistant. Agreed.

4.2 In spite of several holiday absences, the next committee meeting date and time are maintained for the 29th June at 6.30pm at no. 15 Westgate.