



**Meeting of the Westcott Village Association Open Meeting
Thursday, 14th October 2021
Holy Trinity Church, Westcott and via Zoom at 7.30pm**

Present from the WVA Committee

Tim Way - in the Chair
Simon Bradley
Edwin Harland
Sally Hewetson
Sandra Ede
Paul Goddard (Via Zoom)

In attendance

Cllr James Friend
Cllr Hazel Watson

Apologies from the WVA Committee

Nick Lund
James Leaver
Hugh Broom

Attendee List

See attached – combination of those attending in person who signed in and those joining on Zoom with their identifier

OPEN MEETING AGENDA

1. Welcome and Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 5th March 2020
2. Matters Arising from the Minutes
Note that the minutes of the last Open Meeting on 5th March 2020 and of the two AGMs held subsequently in October 2020 and June 2021 are available on the WVA website
3. Request for funding for equipment on Cradhurst - presentation & discussion
4. Proposed closure of the Abinger Common site of Surrey Hills, All Saints Primary School
5. MVDC Local Plan - status & next steps
6. Open Forum - questions from residents. It is preferable if questions could be submitted in advance to Paul Goddard on prwg104@icloud.com but they are welcomed either in person at the meeting or via the Zoom chat facility for those attending remotely.
7. Proposed next Open Meeting and AGM

1. Welcome

TEW welcomed everyone to the meeting explaining that people were also joining online via zoom. This meeting format was a bit of an experiment to cater for the fact that some were still concerned about attending large meetings and also might not be physically able to attend.

2. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from previous minutes of the Open Meeting March 2020 and AGMs of October 2020 and June 2021 which were not already included on the Agenda.

3. Request for funding of Cradhurst Equipment – A football goal

Graham Berry–Collins (GBC) outlined the reasoning behind the request for a new full size football goal. He said that the goals already in place on Cradhurst were not suitable for football and it has led to some young people playing football in local streets. Some damage to cars and windows had resulted. GBC requested that the WVA and residents support installing one full size football goal to be positioned appropriately away from surrounding houses to avoid potential noise to residents.

GBC confirmed the project cost was not known at this stage and liaison with the Parks team at MVDC is still needed to confirm a suitable location on Cradhurst. The Parks team would undertake the work if the WVA supported the idea.

The meeting unanimously approved the idea which Cllr JF undertook to progress with MVDC. TEW confirmed that the WVA had funds to contribute to the cost if required.

4. Proposed Closure of the Abinger Site of the Surrey Hills All Saints Primary School

TEW explained that at the beginning of the Autumn Term, The Good Shepherd Trust (GST) had announced a formal consultation on the proposed closure of the Abinger site which currently accommodates pupils aged 4 to 6 - Reception to Year 2. The School would consolidate at the Westcott site.

GST has explained their reasoning for the closure as follows: School funding is based primarily on the number of pupils

attending the school. As a result of falling pupil numbers at both sites - Abinger currently has 43 pupils out of 90 possible places available and Westcott 132 pupils out of 210 possible see below - coupled with significant building maintenance costs at Abinger, GST now believes the financial viability of a two site school is untenable.

TEW explained that a group of parents was challenging the proposals and, supported by Councillors, the local MP, Abinger Parish Council and The WVA, had put their case to the GST Board, the Diocese (as it is a church school) and the Regional Education Commissioner. The objective of the group is primarily to find an alternative to the closure of the site, or at the very least to gain a stay of execution to allow time to urgently explore, and action, ways to increase pupil numbers, and therefore School funding.

Whatever the outcome of the consultation, the WVA feel it is imperative that parents and residents of both Abinger and Westcott come together to support the school, and work hard to increase pupil numbers so the school can regain its place as 'a school of choice' for surrounding village communities. This will ensure these local village communities can continue to attract families with school age children.

Simon Cole, (SC) Head of All Saints School was invited to speak. SC explained the falling pupil numbers were as a result of the falling birth rate (disputed by parents) and that maintaining a split site from a staffing and maintenance perspective is extremely challenging.

He noted the following:

- There are currently 43 pupils at the Abinger site and 132 at the Westcott site making a total of 175 out of a possible 300 places available
- By September 2022, 45 pupils are due to leave with only about 15 potential new entrants giving a total of around 145
- Some work would be required at the Westcott site to accommodate all pupils in years R-2.
- The transfer and consolidation at Westcott, if agreed, would be started from the May half term 2022.

- There are two main priorities before that date; the first was to complete improvements to the Westcott site, and the second is to improve the transport / journey to school / parking arrangements and particularly pupil and parent safety when coming to and leaving the Westcott site.

At this point, residents from Pointers Hill voiced their long standing concerns about the disruption and safety hazards caused by parked cars on Pointers Hill some of which – not all though - were parked there by teachers based at the Westcott site.

In addition several speakers from the floor expressed their concerns for the safety of schoolchildren when being dropped off and collected from Westcott. The speakers noted this was due to inappropriate parking by parents and a lack of adequate parking in the vicinity of the school, the dangerous speed at which traffic comes through the village and the poor signage and road markings in the vicinity of School Lane.

In response, covering the points above

- 1) SC said that inappropriate parking was a serious concern and needed urgent attention both from parents, who did not always follow the advice given by the school, and the school in identifying safe alternatives. SC explained that the idea of a “Walking Bus” was being investigated for pupils being dropped off / collected by car. This would have parking at the sports ground and use Milton Street, the Greensand Way footpath and the cut through to School Lane to walk to and from school. TEW commented that some work would need to be done to the path to ensure that it was suitable in all weathers. SC undertook to progress this idea with FASH and Local Governors.
- 2) Speeding vehicles was identified as the major threat and a discussion took place about ways to reduce speeds. TEW outlined the positive impact the Speedwatch trials had on speeding vehicles both immediately – with vehicles slowing down when sighting a luminous vest and the scanning gun – and hopefully subsequently as a result of the 225 letters sent by Surrey Police in August to speeding motorists. Based on this, a great opportunity exists to influence driver behaviour and aim to reduce traffic speeds at school start and finish times by having

Speed Watch patrols on duty at those times – if possible every day – so the message gets home to all drivers. To achieve this many more Volunteers are required to take on Speedwatch shifts.

Actions: SC agreed to make the case to Parents to Volunteer for regular Speedwatch duty in Westcott. The WVA would continue to invite and encourage residents to Volunteer.

Other suggestions were made - including improving signage relating to the vicinity of the school, road markings / tarmac colour, for a Lollipop Person, availability of parking, noise and speed cameras, 20mph limits - which were discussed briefly in the meeting but which the WVA will re-visit with the District and County Councillors as necessary to explore their viability. Findings and conclusions will be communicated.

5. Draft MVDC Local Plan 2020 – 2037 – Proposed Submission Version (Regulation 19)

TEW explained that the latest draft Local Plan proposal had been released by MVDC. The key points affecting Westcott being:-

- 1) That the Westcott House site on which 44 dwellings had been proposed in the previous version has now been removed
- 2) The Mill Way site on which 15 dwellings (“apartments” quoted in the plan) had been proposed is still in the current version. Note that these are planned on 2.3 hectares of land which is extremely low density compared to elsewhere in the district.
- 3) The inclusion of “windfall sites” built after April 2020 in the Westcott allocation of 68 dwellings is now confirmed.
- 4) The Sondes Place Farm and Milton Court sites with a proposed plan for around 200 dwellings on the western edge of Dorking on either side of the A25 is still in the current version

TEW explained that 21 dwellings currently under construction or in planning, and another 20 potential dwellings which the WVA was currently aware of, plus the 15 on the Mill Way site would bring us very close to the target of 68, at an average of four per year that is planned over the next 17 years.

He also noted the inclusion of the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP) as a core policy in the MVDC Local Plan as encouraging, giving the WVA the opportunity to ensure that developments met the needs of the village rather than the needs and profits of developers.

The WVA will continue to lobby for effective changes to the transport and road infrastructure before the Mill Way and Dorking sites are finally approved or otherwise as part of the Local Plan and will continue to argue that the lack of robust infrastructure provision is a major weakness for the Inspector to consider before approving these proposals as part of the Plan. The WVA letter to the Council will be published on the Web-site in the coming weeks. Residents are encouraged to submit their concerns privately and separately to Mole Valley.

In the ensuing discussion the following comments were made

- Some residents thought it naive to believe the WVA could influence the outcome of what was developed on the Mill Way site. TEW responded that the inclusion of the WNDP gave the WVA very strong leverage in this respect as had been shown in recent development proposals
- Since parking was a major issue for parts of the village, a suggestion was made by a resident to create a public car park on the Reading Room site. TEW commented that this would be for the Trustees of the Reading Room to consider in conjunction with the requirement to achieve best value for the site. Cllr JF commented that The Hut site had the greater potential to meet these requirements – again for the Trustees of The Hut to consider
- A resident noted that the Plan did not provide suitable affordable housing for local families to access to remain resident in the area. Cllr JF replied that he believed it did within the definitions in place at national level and would be happy to discuss this further with the Resident concerned.

6. Open Question Session

Elizabeth Mair asked about progress on restricting parking on the stretch of road below the new village stores. She had asked at the

AGM in October 2020 for the stretch to be designated as “no parking at any time” - double yellow lines. TEW replied that an application had been made but these things took time. An update would be requested from Surrey Council Highways

TEW announced that a Christmas tree and lights would again be put up by the WVA on the Green probably from 4th December with the tree jointly funded again by the Westcott Gardeners’ Club and the WVA. *(Following the meeting, the Westcott 100 Club generously agreed to fund 50% of the cost of the tree).* TEW confirmed that he would invite the church and the school to organise carol singing events around the tree during the run-up to Christmas. *(Following the meeting, plans were agreed for carols to be sung around the tree from 6pm on Friday 17th December)*

There being no other questions, Tim Way thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions. He confirmed the next Open Meeting would be scheduled for the New Year with the AGM in the summer. The meeting closed at 8.45pm

PRG 20/10/21

END

Attendee Lists:

Signed in at the Church:

Brenda Douglas, Rob Potter, Liz Potter, Graham Clark, Simon Coles (Head teacher SHASPS), Stuart Hunt, Sven Hughes, Ian Dunsford, Carol Morris, Paul Morris, John Davey, Elisa Davey, Janice May, J Clachan, M Clachan, Jill Roome, Alan Roome, Tim Gowing, John Gabb

Via Zoom:

Clare McMillan, Richard Packer, Margaret Harris, Gill Andreotti, Andrea Gabb, Bernd Ratzke, Alan Reif, Colin Pilbeam, Susan McIntosh, Don Rolt, Sally Croft, Gaynor, Natalie Akenzua-Sanderson, Barney Akenzua-Sanderson, H10200, Heather Shakespeare, Ruth Bergman, Jacki Moss, Madeleine Brooks, Ali Mabley, Emily, Cheryl Seymour, Debbie Aston, Vic Spooner, Geoff Crook