



## Great Denham Parish Council

# Great Denham Newsletter

Feb 2014

Great Denham Parish Council was created in 2007 to serve the needs of the local community. The initial 249 houses will gradually be increased by another 1500 over the coming years. We aim to represent your views and concerns as the community grows. This council exists to ensure that as developments in Great Denham progress everybody in the community has the opportunity to keep themselves up to date with the latest news – have your say, sound off, give your views, express your concerns become interactive and have some impact! Members of the Parish Council want to change the way traditional councils work. We want to truly act for all the parishioners and give honest and best judgment by being informed and in touch with all views.

### Great Denham Parish Council - Update on District Centre & s106 agreements

#### Background

We are all acutely aware of the lack of facilities in our community. We have been in discussions for over 12 months with DWH regarding a shop as the most basic of the community's needs. We have plans that are passed (June 2013) to build a combined community hall and library. The parish council submitted a 10 year fully costed business plan to run the community hall in August last year. At the same time that this was going on the PC was informed that all issues relating to the community hall would be put on hold. The reason for this was due to a central government edict that allowed developers to submit a "viability plan". These plans were allowed due to the economic downturn and the state of the economy.

How does this affect Great Denham? It means that all the s106 agreed facility's earmarked in the "master plan" and "design brief" are under threat. The PC was told at the time that these "viability" discussions were taking place and the outcome would not be known until March 2014.

In the interim the PC received planning requests for the building of a pharmacy and vets practice outside the district centre contrary to the design brief. The PC also received plans which showed changes to the master plan and district centre. They were also informed of proposals for a 60 bed care home over three floors which would sit opposite the district centre. All these items were discussed at PC meetings.

Given our dissatisfaction of the proposals and the way we felt this was all going – favouring the developer and ignoring the community – Jim Weir wrote to our constituency MP Alistair Burt. He requested a meeting with Alistair Burt and Mark Smith our Borough Councillor. This meeting took place in January where all the information was discussed and concerns by the community made clear to both Alistair and Mark. Alistair suggested that we invite the MD of DWH the Head of Planning BBC along with him and Mark to a meeting to thrash out were the community stood and what options were available. The PC then drew up an agenda covering the major points it wanted to discuss, both Chris Hatfield MD DWH and Paul Rowland Head of Planning BBC indicated they would attend and the meeting was set for 14<sup>th</sup> February. The PC gathered their evidence of plans and maps and included some video footage and still photos of areas of concern.

The meeting duly took place and Jim Weir along with Alan Davies and Roz Buchanan representing the PC asked Alistair Burt to chair the meeting so that the PC representatives were free to put the case on behalf of the community.

### **Summary of Outcomes – (Detail Below)**

- **Shop** – Deal with national chain in due diligence and legal process. Should be provided within 12 months.
- **Community Hall & Library** – Viability study submitted by DWH to Borough still in discussion. It could mean we get the Community hall & library as planned, it could mean we don't get anything or it could mean we get some form of compromise. We are waiting to be updated on timescales for decisions.
- **Sports Pavilion** – DWH are only obliged to provide Sport England type changing rooms for the country park. Over time these plans were changed to include a ranger office and accommodation and a café etc. The same threat to this facility is the same as the community hall & library under the viability proposals.
- **District Centre** – DWH have stated that it is difficult to attract any retail/commercial business to the development. Planners have passed plans for commercial and retail buildings outside the district centre, the PC have challenged this but have been overruled. The outcome will be that the community gets a much scaled down district centre. Proposals are also being put forward to build a 60 bed care home opposite the district centre.
- **Communication with DWH & Borough** – The PC has asked that the communication channels agreed in 2007 are brought back into line and that meaningful dialogue with detailed proposals and information is reinstated.

The agenda was then engaged and in discussion the following points/statements emerged;

#### **Item 1**

Chris Hatfield gave an overview from the perspective of DWH. He stated that "when the plans for development were put together and the rationale for the whole scheme was looked at, it would return the sort of profits worthy of the investment". "Following the dramatic downturn in the economy and the housing slump the business suffered a severe blow to its return on investment". He further stated that "This impacted on most businesses and retailers weren't pushing at the door to take land in the development".

**Shop** – Chris Hatfield stated that DWH had been trying to get retailers interested in coming to the GD site for over 2 years. 18 months ago they thought they had Waitrose lined up but they then pulled out and opened the larger store in Bedford. The current situation is that a deal is in the due diligence and legal stages with a national organisation and as soon as these commercially sensitive processes are complete he will let the PC know and we can ensure that the community knows as soon as possible. Jim Weir stated that as residents constantly sought clarification and assurance that the community was actually going to get a shop the PC contacted all the major supermarket chains and invited them to come to Great Denham. One of the national chains was able to confirm that they were in legal processes with DWH and anticipated that a shop will be in situ in about a year's time. The PC was asked to keep the identity confidential but as soon as the legal process was over they would gladly come and spend time in the community and meet the residents.

**Community Hall & Pavilion** – The plans for the community hall went to consultation in 2011 and a design was agreed, plans drawn up and passed in June 2013. The Borough declined to operate the community hall, DWH stated that they didn't want to operate the community hall. The PC stated that through a community led trustee status the PC and community would run the hall for the benefit of all residents. The PC then drew up a fully costed 10 year business plan and submitted this to the Borough in August 2013. DWH explained that as the viability study was still being considered and that at present they could not commit to any of the s106 agreements including the sports pavilion. Jim Weir asked if this meant that we would not get either and the response was to reiterate the statement that until the viability study was completed and responded to by the Borough he couldn't say anything further. Jim Weir asked Paul Rowland – Head of Planning when would the viability proposals be responded to by the Borough? He stated that "once we have received the detail of proposed changes/requests from DWH the Borough and its experts/consultants will assess the impact on the Borough's plans and respond. Once this is back with DWH they may wish to amend or add other options dependent on the Borough's response. This is an ongoing exercise and a specific date on when it will be finalised cannot be given at this

stage". Alistair Burt asked that both Chris Hatfield and Paul Rowland write to the Great Denham PC and set out where they are in the process in order for the PC to be able to keep the community apprised.

**Youth Facility** – This facility should have been delivered after 100 new homes were occupied. As the youth facility was to be set at the bottom of the development site in the country park we got the kick-about area instead. As this is another s106 facility we don't yet know how this will be treated.

**Play Equipment** – Jim Weir showed a video he had taken of the play facility at Wixams. He then showed a video of the four play sites in Great Denham and asked why had GD got such inferior play equipment than other similar developments in Bedford. DWH stated that they received instructions as to what was to be provided by the Borough and that's what they have provided. Paul Rowland stated that the design and shape of the Great Denham development meant that smaller areas of play be dotted amongst the houses so that children didn't have to be too far away from home. The equivalent of Wixams play equipment would be built in the country park in due course – viability issues permitting.

## **Item 2**

**District Centre** – Jim Weir referred to the design brief which outlined the purpose of the district centre. The centre was planned to contain; Community Hall, Library, Nursery, Convenience Store, Ecumenical Centre, Pub, Commercial Properties, Recycling Centre, Youth Facility and a number of other retail units. The brief also describes the district centre as a "focus for the community" & "a meeting place". Given the difficulty in attracting retail and commercial offerings to the district centre why did planners at the Borough grant planning permission for a pharmacy and vets practice outside the district centre? Paul Rowland stated that "there was already planning permission for a pharmacy in existence opposite the medical centre". Jim Weir challenged this by stating that existing permission was for a single storey building not a two storey building that would sit opposite residential properties. Paul Rowland asked "what was wrong with a two storey retail building sitting opposite a two storey residential property"? Chris Hatfield also stated that "the problem in attracting retailers into Great Denham was that it would have no visibility as it was tucked away inside the development. The same problems were not encountered at the Kempston end of the development as all was visible from the bypass and passing traffic would increase footfall for any retailer and thus was more attractive". Alistair Burt pointed out that in his view "the facilities set out in the design brief bore no resemblance of what would eventually be delivered. A more realistic approach to what was to be provided would have been more sensible and would not have raised false expectations within the community".

## **Item 3**

**Restoring Confidence of the Community** – Jim Weir referred to a meeting in 2007 with the then Head of Planning at the Borough David Bailey. In this meeting it was agreed that a bi-monthly meeting would take place with a representative of the PC and information and progress of the development would be discussed. Information such as number of new homes occupied etc. would be given, each phase of development would be discussed and thus give the opportunity for views from the PC and residents to be considered. This process quickly broke down and meetings petered out. The PC then met with DWH representative on a regular basis to exchange information. The PC felt that whilst this was useful we still needed the perspective of the Borough. The PC met with the Mayor and CEO of the Borough and one of the principle planners was designated to meet every six weeks or so with a representative of the PC. The last of these meetings was in August last year when it was announced that the viability study was being conducted by DWH. The PC has a meeting with the CEO of the Borough in March to address this and other issues.

The meeting closed with a summary from Alistair Burt and reiterated the request to both Chris Hatfield and Paul Rowland that they write to the PC and set out how things are would be moving forward and the likely timescales associated.

## **Superfast Broadband**

The PC has been chasing BT and the Borough to find out where Great Denham sits within the Government funded BB roll-out programme. Unfortunately we have – yet again – been overlooked and we were not included in the programme. The PC then contacted BT and the Borough and organised a couple of meetings to see how we could ensure superfast BB in Great Denham. We won't bore you with the detail save to say that BT say that it isn't commercially viable for BT to upgrade the cabinets that feed Great Denham. If the parish can find £19,976 + vat then they will upgrade. This upgrade will only serve the new

development and most of the Great Portway area. Carnoustie, St Mellion and Prestwick are the subject of a further survey but they cannot be fed from the cabinets to be upgraded. The PC is talking to the developer to see what they can do on funding. Either way the PC is determined that SFBB will be delivered to Great Denham the supply will take between 7 & 9 months. More of the detail will be placed on the website and will be discussed at the next PC meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

### Riverside seats replaced

The two riverside benches of the three that the PC had installed and were stolen in August last year have now been replaced.

### Dog Fouling

Many of you are concerned about this issue and it seems that to trigger visits from the dog warden we need to be seen as a "hot spot" and this means reporting all instances of dog fouling which are witnessed. Set out below are details of what you can do if you see anyone allowing their dog to foul and not cleaning up afterwards.

All instances of dog fouling which are witnessed should be reported to 01234 718060 or emailed to [callcentre@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:callcentre@bedford.gov.uk)

The report should include

- Location, date, time frame e.g. 2-4pm, description of dog, description of person with dog

If the fouling is not witnessed, but an area is affected by it then this should also be reported as the area will be cleansed.

However, cleansing takes place when a vehicle is visiting the area rather than a specific crew being sent out to deal with the issue. Also, a single instance will not lead to immediate cleansing. If we all play our part in reporting irresponsible owners and badly affected areas it is to be hoped the situation will gradually improve.

### Great Denham Summer Festival

Working with the Resident's Association and the Friends of Great Denham, the Parish Council was pleased to be able to support this fantastic event last year. It may seem a long way off but we need to start planning our festival for 2014.

The festival presents a great opportunity to meet your neighbours and to get involved in the local community, whilst having a fun and a relaxing afternoon in the sun (hopefully)!

Many thanks to all of those who worked to ensure the success of the Festival last year and we are again seeking volunteers to help organize and run this year's. Please contact Roz Buchanan GDPC Clerk on [gdclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gdclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - COME AND HAVE YOUR SAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014

19:30 – 21:30

Great Denham Primary School

### Councillor Contacts

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