

Notes from the North of Horsham development Parish Liaison Meeting

held online on Tuesday 17th November 2020 at 2pm

Planning application:- DC/16/1677 – Development on land north of Horsham

Purpose of the meeting:- to be updated on and to discuss the development north of Horsham as outlined in agreed Planning Application DC/16/1677. The planning consent is for housing (up to 2,750 dwellings), a business park (up to 46,450 m²), retail, community centre, leisure facilities, education facilities, public open space, landscaping and related infrastructure and has reserved matters except for access.

In attendance

Cllr Gary Adams – Rusper Parish Council

Quentin Andrews- OSP Architecture (Cala Homes development)

Philip Ayerst- Horsham District Cycle Forum

Georgette Ayling – Head at Bohunt School

Ron Bates – Horsham Society

Cllr Alan Britten – North Horsham Parish Councillor (Horsham District Councillor) **Chairman of the meeting.**

Robert Brown - North Horsham Parish Council (NHPC) volunteer Tree Warden

Cllr Karen Burgess – North Horsham Parish Councillor and Horsham District Council
Chairman

Cllr Peter Burgess – North Horsham Parish Councillor and Horsham District Council Cabinet
Member for Horsham Town

Simon Clavell- Bate – Head of Estates -West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Rosemary Couchman – Horsham Churches Together (HCT)

Ruth Fletcher – Horsham District Cycle Forum (HDCF)

Joseph Fowler – Devine Homes

Gemma Gallant – Community Liaison Team, Legal and General

Cllr Richie Gatt – Rusper Parish Council

Bernadette Gledhill – Principal Engineer, Highway Agreements, West Sussex County
Council

Joy Gough – North Horsham Community Land Trust Chairman and North Horsham Parish
Councillor

Jason Hawkes – Principal Planning Officer, Horsham District Council

Laurie Holt - resident

Brian Johnson - Langhurstwood Road Residents Association

Ian Johnson – Luken Beck (Cala Homes Development)

Cllr Donald Mahon – North Horsham Parish Councillor

Clare Mangan – Head of Economic Development, Horsham District Council

Hannah Nicholson – Project Manager, Department of Education

Stuart Norton- North Horsham Community Land Trust

Paul Portnoi – Earles Meadow Residents Association

Cllr Vic Saunders – Rusper Parish Council

Will Sendall – Community Liaison Team, Legal and General

Cllr John Smithurst – North Horsham Parish Council

Karen Summers – Project Director, Capital Group, Department of Education

Cllr Ray Turner – North Horsham Parish Council

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr Britten welcomed those in attendance at the first online meeting of the Parish Liaison group.

Apologies were received from Revd. Richard Coldicott (St Mark's Church) and Fr. Russell Stagg (All Saints Church).

2. Notes from the previous meeting.

The notes from the previous meeting held on 12th February 2020 had been circulated with the agenda.

3. Chairman's Update

No Chairman's update was given.

4. Update from the developer

Cllr Peter Burgess raised serious concern regarding a proposal to close Rusper Road from the Lemmington Road roundabout to the A264 for 15 weeks from 4th January 2021. This road is the only way for residents of Holbrook and parts of Roffey, approximately ten to fifteen thousand in number, to access the North, South and West of the county and the rest of the country. The alternative routes are long and already heavily backed up by traffic at peak periods. Diverted traffic will be guided south along Rusper Road where there is a busy rail crossing with more than eight trains per hour, some of which stop, causing additional waiting time. Other possible alternative routes go through the central congested areas of Horsham Town. Work is scheduled on the old Novartis site on Parsonage Road within the next few weeks, which will add to traffic congestion in and around Horsham. Whilst traffic could use Pondtail Road, the very narrow road under the railway bridge and difficulty in exiting onto Warnham Road makes that route totally unsuitable for the proposed volume of displaced traffic.

Cllr Burgess noted that when outline planning was approved, the indication was that the sewer was to cross under the A264 in a tunnel to join up with a designated manhole in Pondtail Road and queried when the plans to change this had taken place, moreover, if those amendments had received permission.

There has been no consultation with Horsham District Council, North Horsham Parish Council, other groups or local residents at any stage.

Cllr Karen Burgess noted that there is evidence that those who use this route to enter Horsham for shopping, will find it easier to travel elsewhere. Studies show that the recovery of Horsham Town as a shopping and leisure venue is very fragile and that everything must be done to assist it.

Legal and General responded and explained that they understood the concern within the community, but that several options for the road closure had been considered. The other options would have meant that there would be traffic management for a period of 12 to 14 months, therefore the closure of fifteen weeks was the option that they felt offered least disruption although they acknowledged that it was not an ideal solution.

The West Sussex County Council Highways representative explained that the works on Rusper Road fall between an Ancient monument and a tree protection zone, therefore much of the work will need to be done through hand dig methods rather than using machinery.

The reason that the road has to be closed is to enable a new foul sewer, waste water pipes and petrol interceptor, new gas and water mains to be laid, BT apparatus has to be diverted and old streetlighting will be removed and replaced with new. The way that the services are aligned means that there isn't an option of using road plates. The scheduling also had to fit in with work scheduled on the Robin Hood Roundabout that starts in spring 2021. Legal and General's key priority was to get work done to allow the Bohunt School to open on the site north of Horsham within the current timetable of late 2021 as there was no room for any additional pupils at the site they currently occupy on Hurst Road.

It was agreed that the HDC Principle Planning Officer, would check the original planning application and then speak with West Sussex County Council and Legal and General to ascertain if the works were permitted and what could be done to ameliorate the situation.

Legal and General advised that their main focus at this point is the delivery of the secondary school. Work has already started on site. To facilitate safe access to the school which is a condition required as part of the planning application, it is hoped that an application for a bridge for pedestrians and wheeled transport ie cycles , pushchairs, mobility scooters, across the A264 and for the road access to the new school is submitted later this year or early next year. Work is continuing on the cycle strategy across the site.

An application from Cala Homes had been submitted for 193 residential units as part of the first phase of the development, in addition to 190 residential units being developed by Legal and General Homes. It is hoped that subject to planning permission, work on housing will start next year.

Legal and General has had constructive discussions with the West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group about a new surgery in phase one and are pleased with the progress. Both are keen to keep the positive and productive links with the parish whilst negotiations continue.

Those in attendance submitted questions and comments as follows:-

- a) It appeared that the proposed Cycle Strategy across the site fell short of National Policy guidance contained in LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.

Legal and General responded that the Cycle Strategy being developed was a condition of the planning application, that it was being reviewed by an independent body and that proposed routes will be considered under Reserved Matters. They were aware of the guidance in LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design and had referenced it within the proposed Cycle Strategy for North Horsham.

- b) Has there been any studies done to support the proposed diversion routes that will be put in place whilst Rusper Road is closed, especially through Horsham town?

There are certain criteria that has to be taken into account when considering diversion routes and they have to be agreed by WSCC. WSCC had rejected the proposed diversion along Harwood Road and Redkilyn Way submitted by Natta Building company, but WSCC would be looking at alternatives.

A suggestion to suspend parking along Rusper Road near to Littlehaven Railway Station was considered problematic by a resident who lived on that stretch of road. He felt that the

parked cars calmed traffic and reduced their speed. It was noted that those who travel from places outside Horsham park on Rusper Road and catch the train at Littlehaven Station. Removing parking would displace cars onto nearby residential roads.

- c) The proposed bridge for pedestrians and wheeled transport will land on the South East of the Rusper Road/ A264 roundabout forcing them onto the footpath that leads from the A264 to the Lemmington Way roundabout. At that point the footpath is very narrow and poses a risk to those using it.

Legal and General advised that the pavement will be widened to a minimum of 2.5 metres over a short duration to take account of the additional foot traffic and that it will be safety audited through an independent body. There will be traffic lights on the roundabout, so the speed of traffic will be significantly reduced at that point too.

- d) Originally it was suggested that there would be design competition for local architects to design the bridge across the A264. Was this still the intention?

Legal and General were exploring how a competition to design elements of the bridge could be organised and would update the group in due course.

- e) An enquiry was made regarding temporary, alternative options for the Bohunt School should the build timeline be extended and work not completed, especially in relation to having safe access to the school.

Legal and General advised that the school has to have safe access before opening. Statistics demonstrated that a large number of children attending the school would walk from Holbrook, therefore it was important to undertake the necessary work on Rusper Road as quickly as possible and provide a safe crossing on the A264 to keep on schedule.

5. Update from Horsham District Council

The Principal Planning Officer had contributed to the update from the developer and had nothing further to add.

6. Bohunt School

The Head of Bohunt School thanked the stakeholders for their support. The school has been open since 2019 and has 241 students. The Head invited stakeholders to visit the vibrant school community to see for themselves what the school was about, but noted that the existing accommodation was quite cramped and the school was oversubscribed.

The Project Director, Capital Group, Department of Education, advised that the Bohunt School is required to provide school places and that they will have no accommodation at their current site after 2021, therefore they needed the school to be completed on time. Currently the build is on programme and there are lots of co-ordination meetings to ensure that stages are kept on track. Extensive work had been done to mitigate issues that were highlighted in an ecological strategy which had to be a stand alone document from the masterplan. The mitigation measures took account of newts which used a large pond on the site as a bathing area.

7. Health provision

The Head of Estates, NHS West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) advised that the CCG meets regularly with HDC and more recently with the developer at the north Horsham site where the focus has been looking at need and increasing capacity. The CCG has to work to its national strategy of maximising size, safety and resilience for economies of scale. The CCG agree with the location having a Primary Care Service on site and has recently worked with the developer to identify a new site option in a residential area. A GP is interested in working with the CCG to have a presence on the site, although it is very early stages and the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed matters as understandably, the focus of the GP is elsewhere. At present the CCG is supporting Horsham Town Centre provision setting up clinics at the Horsham hospital site, and they are now looking at other options.

8. North Horsham Community Land Trust

The Chair of the NHCLT advised that the group recognised that HDC and Saxon Weald were working hard to provide local affordable housing, but there was still a significant shortage of genuinely affordable homes in North Horsham. The lack of affordable homes could be one of the causes of a shortage of nurses in this area. Initial funding from the Parish Council had allowed the group to register with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) as a Community Benefit Society, which enables them to apply for grant funding. The appointed directors have regular meetings and now that the administration and governance was in place, they were working towards further discussion with organisations who may be able to further their joint aims. The Chairman indicated that the NHCLT would welcome discussion with HDC.

9. Questions , comments from Rusper Parish Council

Rusper Parish Council representatives expressed concern that there was significant light pollution from the Bohunt School site that contravened the Rusper Neighbourhood Plan dark skies policy. This would be taken back to the contractor and the Principle Planning Officer at HDC would investigate and respond.

Legal and General had submitted some traffic calming proposals for the staff entrances and WSCC would follow this up as soon as possible.

10. Updates from other organisations

Cala Homes presented an overview of an application that had been validated on 28th October 2020 for 193 dwellings. The development included 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 12% affordable homes integrated throughout. There were green corridors through the network of streets which fell into two character areas. It was noted that some areas have no footway which raised concern, especially for those with young children, mobility scooters or for the elderly. It was noted that there would be 427 parking spaces provided but, that in the communal car parking only 135 car parking spaces had electric charging points. Not all of the tertiary streets would be adopted by the Council which would mean that individual home owners would be responsible for maintenance etc.

The Chairman asked Divine Homes if they had anything to update and at this stage there was nothing.

11. Any other comments

There was a plea for much more communication for residents explaining progress and forthcoming works. Legal and General explained that they had a schedule of newsletters planned.

12. Conclusion and date for next meeting

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.32pm and noted that the next meeting would be scheduled for w/c 8th February 2021 online. The actual date would be circulated in due course.

Additional information circulated following the meeting.

The Principal Planner at HDC agreed to review the original planning application to ascertain if it referred to services in Rusper Road and to speak with WSCC and Legal and General.

His comments are as follows:-

“I have discussed this through with WSCC Highways and L&G. I have also gone through the documents submitted with the original application (ref: DC/16/1677). In relation to planning, I have attached the Utilities Assessment submitted with the application (not included with these notes). In the document, reference is made to utilities connections from Rusper Road. Notwithstanding this, connection of utilities to sites is not normally considered a planning matter. Moreover, the closure of roads and provision of utilities connections does not require planning permission. The closure of roads is a consideration for the Highway Authority who have approved the closure.

The closure of the road for such a long time is undoubtedly going to cause inconvenience and raise concern with residents. However, I understand that the closure is considered the best and only realistic option. There are a number of services that would need to connect via Rusper Rd, including large 315mm diameter water pipes, 400mm diameter gas mains, BT cabling and drainage pipes. These would serve the entire North Horsham development. The road space to dig these in would be large taking over half its width. A partial closure with lights was considered, but would extend the build time to 30-40 weeks. This extended timeframe would place the timely opening of Bohunt school at jeopardy. The timing of the works also needs to factor in the works to Robin Hood roundabout which are due to start in April. Having both sets of roadworks happening at the same time would be unwelcome.

We will raise the lack of proper consultation with L&G so that further works can be better communicated to residents. You should note that Rusper Road North will not need to be closed for any length of time as an active road will be retained either on the existing or on the new road as works progress.”

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