



Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents' Association (Founded 1934)

Minutes of a meeting of Thames Ditton (TD) & Weston Green (WG) Residents' Association (RA) Open Meeting held via Virtual Video Conference on 2 February 2021 at 8pm.

Present: Chairman Graham Cooke (GC), Cllr Tricia Bland (TB), Cllr Caroline James (CJ), Cllr Karen Randolph (KR), Cllr Tannia Shipley (TS), SCCllr Nick Darby (ND), Gill Coates (GCo), Peter Haynes (PHa), Libby MacIntyre (LMc), Christa Silverthorne (CS), Florian Traub (FT), Ruth Lyon (RL), Rhodri Richards (RR), Martin Wilberforce (MW), WG/HW Cllr Janet Turner and WG/HW Cllr Nigel Haig-Brown (NhB),

1. Welcome and apologies for absence: (1) GC welcomed everyone and noted that the minutes of the previous Open Meeting have been made available online at residents-association.com. GC also mentioned the vacant position of a minute secretary and asked for interested residents to join the Exec Committee. (2) No apologies were received.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting: The Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 10 November 2020 were approved as a true record thereof and signed by GC.
3. Matters Arising: None
4. Report from Association Officers
 - 4.1. Membership (PH): PH had nothing to report.
 - 4.2. Treasurer (CS): Accounts are nearly ready to go to the Hon. Auditor in readiness for AGM. CS pointed out that the RA ended up with a surplus in 2020.
 - 4.3. Thames Ditton Today (LMc): The Spring edition of Thames Ditton Today is likely to be delivered around 8 March. As always LMc is looking for interesting content and is encouraging residents to share ideas for articles.
 - 4.4. Planning (RR): (1) RR mentioned the appeal against the refusal of planning application for 16 High Street (Baker Tim) and confirmed that he submitted representations on behalf of the RA. (2) Guy Salmon site has been acquired by Aldi Supermarkets. RR mentioned that he has received several messages of concern from residents. The RA will monitor future developments closely. (3) RR also mentioned the Government's consultation on "Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure". RR raised concerns that one of the proposals is to remove the restriction for commercial properties to obtain planning permission to convert to residential property. This could be a threat to High Streets across the country and in the local community. GC encouraged residents to write to MP Dominic Raab to voice concerns and objections. RL indicated her support for concerns raised by RR and GC.
 - 4.5. Secretary: (1) FT announced that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is scheduled to take place on 23 March 2021. In light of the pandemic, the AGM will be held via Zoom. FT pointed out that in accordance with the RA's Constitution, members have to notify the Secretary no less than 14 days before the meeting, that is by 9 March 2021, if they desire to move a resolution at the meeting.
5. Reports from Association Councillors
 - 5.1. TS reported: (1) An application for a single-storey detached house with rooms in roof space, front and rear dormers and new access following demolition of existing outbuilding at 71 Grove Way was refused; the refusal is now under appeal (2019/0675). (2) An application for a two-storey side extension to provide a terrace of 4 two-storey houses following partial demolition of existing house at 70 Embercourt Road has received 14 letters of objection to date (2020/2572). (3) An application for a detached two-storey building with rooms in the roof space to create 8 flats following demolition of existing house at 8 Lime Tree is open for comments (2020/3134) (4) Blue Plaque for Sir Herbert Tripp in WG has not yet been installed. (5) Meals on wheels continue to support local residents and additional volunteers recruited; over 50,000 meals have been delivered since beginning of pandemic. Local community centres will also be made available as centres of excellence for people suffering from dementia. EBC and residents continue support for food banks. Over 30,000 welfare calls have been made since beginning of

March. Support continues, not least in respect of vaccine. Local community support has been strong. EBC's Community transport scheme also helping. Vaccines at Local Emberbrook Centre also going well. TS and KR are now Covid champions. (4) Planning application 2020/1795 - Merrywood: Committee meeting took place on 12 January (available to watch at https://elmbridge.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/536810). Public speaking was permitted. All local councillors were in support of refusal with reason, but majority of committee approved the application. Separate from the planning application process is the purchase of common land which the developer may seek for site access. Cllr JT is portfolio holder for Leisure & Culture; the commons form part of the portfolio. GC provided JT with an opportunity to comment. JT highlighted that the councillors are custodians of our commons and that any request for the purchase of common land has to follow due process. EBC is yet to be approached by developer or land owner. Councillors asked officers to be kept informed. A resident (Caron Murphy) voiced her support of TS' efforts at the committee meeting. Caron Murphy, in asking that local councillors take a proactive role in this matter, asked JT about due process and mentioned that Esher College has a covenant over land. In response, JT pointed out that any such covenant would be a private matter and that due legal process will be followed. A resident (Martin Rowlatt), who made representations at the committee meeting, expressed disappointment that more than 500 objections from residents did not carry more weight. There was also a short debate about public speaking at committee meetings which KR said she would take forward. A resident (Louise Russell) asked JT about the decision process which JT explained further.

- 5.2. KR reported: (1) KR mentioned the potential impact on local decision making of recent Government consultations such as the recent consultation on "Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure" (now closed), and on "draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and a new draft National Model Design Code". (2) KR voiced concerns about the impact of a potential Aldi development at former Guy Salmon on Giggs Hill conservation area. A wide variety of local shops are now available, reducing the need for a supermarket at the site. Instead, the brownfield site should be considered for residential housing. (3) Draft Local Plan is being delayed due to the current lockdown. KR made reference to criticism by local Conservatives and pointed out that MP Dominic Raab was the responsible minister at the time of the standard methodology's introduction, resulting in 623 housing target (now 633) was introduced. It is this housing target which carries the risk of unwanted density in local community. EBC must follow due process in developing new Local Plan to mitigate risk of a challenge before government inspectorate. A resident (Tony Charlesworth) asked why the 633 housing target cannot be contested. In response, KR reiterated that EBC must adhere to due process. A resident (Paul Bartlett) made the point that the government inspectorate will not have the powers to compel EBC to release greenbelt. In response, KR clarified that neither she nor the RA were advocating building on greenbelt. A resident (Martin Rowlatt) voiced his support for Tony Charlesworth's comments on contesting the 633 housing target; relevant data sets need to be changed. In criticising some of the recent campaigns on planning issues, TB made the point that most planning applications originate from local residents looking to develop their own land. TB highlighted the RA's role in defending the interests of residents.
- 5.3. CJ reported: (1) An initiative by residents to erect chatting benches across the community has the councillors' full support. (2) In relation to the appeal against the refusal of planning application to convert 16 High Street to residential use, CJ mentioned that an information leaflet concerning the appeal proceedings before the inspectorate in the High Street caused many residents to engage with the process. (3) The plans for the (partial) pedestrianizing of the High Street was discussed controversially, but decision should be with local retailers. (4) Thames Ditton Junior School is now better positioned to teach pupils online during lockdown. CJ has worked with Thames Ditton Infant School, ND and SCC to replace trees that had to be felled. (5) A new planning application was submitted concerning a development of an existing dwelling on the Island. (6) A lot of efforts have gone into Almshouse charity. A flat is currently available to people in real need.
- 5.4. TB reported: (1) 44 small trees and the lime tree were illuminated during the Christmas period. A special thanks was noted to Will Bland, PH and other volunteers for helping with the Christmas lights, and to Lisa Tolley, LMc and GC for their fund raising efforts. It is hoped that the Secret Gardens event can go ahead to raise money for the Christmas lights this year (2) TB sent a letter on behalf of the High Street retailer association to the planning inspectorate with strong reasons why a business can thrive at 16 High Street. (3) TD in Bloom – despite Covid restrictions the planting went ahead in October with a reduced number of volunteers. It is hoped that planting can go ahead in May. (3) TB organised a special

Christmas fundraiser at the October and November Farmers' Markets to raise money for special festive parcels delivered by East Elmbridge Foodbank. Support for local foodbank is still high with multiple collection points; demand for support is steadily increasing. (4) Boomerang Bag initiative still going strong providing alternatives (bags, masks) to single use plastic. The team is now supplying to 10 local shops, including Budgens. EBC is going to provide re-useable mask to helpers at polling stations. When Centres for the Community are able to open again, Boomerang Bag making Clubs are scheduled for the Molesey, Walton, Hersham and Cobham Community Centres, in addition to the one in Thames Ditton (6) Tree planting campaign: All local councillors support plans for green corridors, protecting local wildlife. (7) Farmers' market: Unfortunately, the Christmas market in December had to be cancelled on short notice because of Thames Ditton went into Tier 4 lockdown. Whether the February market can go ahead is still uncertain.

5.5. ND reported (1) Flooding in Station Road – ND took up the issue with Thames Water which accepted their responsibility; some work has already been carried out. (2) Footways will be re-surfaced in spring. (3) SCC will change the contract with the provider for the community recycling centres. ND raised possibility of using local recycling centre in Kingston which would be much closer for local residents. (4) ND is engaging with "20's Plenty"-initiative on speed limits. (5) ND commented on rumours that the London Mayor is planning to introduce charges for entering Greater London. ND will monitor the situation and would oppose on behalf of local residents. (5) SCC budget for next year is proposed just over £1bn.

6. Any Other Business: none.

Date of Next Open Meeting: Tuesday, 23 March 2021 (AGM)

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 10:00 pm.

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Chairman