

**Highbarns Residents Group Meeting**  
**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012**  
**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Shane Flynn - DBC  
Jenny Young - DBC  
Mike Evans - DBC  
Sheila Potts - DBC  
Mark Skittrall – Hyder Consulting  
Dave Bowman – Hertfordshire Highways  
Jan Maddern – County Councillor  
Andy Price – East Green Resident  
Jennifer Taylor – Highbarns Resident  
Richard Taylor – Highbarns Residents  
Heidi Cutts – East Green Resident  
Rodney Berkeley – Pond Road Resident  
Michelle Berkeley – Pond Road Resident

**1. Welcome and Introductions.**

SF introduced himself and explained that he had taken over as Project Director from Steve Baker, as the project had now moved into the “works” stage.

ME apologised that he could only stay a short while as he had another meeting he needed to attend.

**2. Expected Project Timelines – *Mark Skittrall***

The current stage of the works had lapsed by 7 weeks (a total of 11 weeks for the project overall). The reasons included the procurement and mobilisation taking longer than expected, and the Environment Agency requesting additional boreholes for the purpose of water monitoring on site.

Vinci had been on site for 2 weeks so far, and expected to be finished on site by 1<sup>st</sup> June. The expected completion of remedial works was around mid-April 2013.

JM/RT/AP - had serious concerns over the delays on the project so far, and perceived that poor project management was to blame. RT felt that the information given at the Public Meeting in February was misleading, and that residents should have been informed earlier of the slippage to the predicted project dates.

CS – reported that whilst investigations were going to be happening on her shared driveway, she was not notified of this by Vinci, but via a neighbour. They had planned to be away whilst the work took place, but the changes to dates would now mean that they would be unable to avoid being at home whilst work was ongoing.

It was stressed that timely communications with residents were key, and that any change to expected dates should be reported as soon as they are known.

RT – asked for clarification of the next 5 steps that would be taken in the project.

MS -

- 1 June – start to design the scheme
- 1 August out to tender (SF to speak to Ben Hosier about getting the procurement process in place)
- Issue project plan for all to see
- November on site? – may take us up to January

RT asked how long it would take between the tenders being received and being evaluated

SF said approximately 1 month

RT – asked if the HCA had been notified of the slippage to the project so far as there would be repercussions if we did not complete by the date agreed.

MS – would wait until extent of mines were known, as it could be that time would be made up if the mines turned out to be quicker and easier to remediate than we had allowed for. Contingency had been built into the dates which we may not need.

A discussion on the particulars of the OJEU process took place, as the value of the contract may mean that we do not need to go down that route and could proceed more quickly. MS said that timescales were based on using OJEU as that is what other projects has required as they were higher value tenders.

AP – commented that it did not appear that DBC’s procurement team were fully engaged in the project yet, and that more should be being done now to explore our options and decide how we were going to proceed.

SF – committed to speaking with the procurement team this week to ensure that this was happening and that as much progress was being made as possible

### **3 & 4 – “What the Current Works Involve” and “Making Good any Damage Caused”**

Some of the work has been done without proper notice and have not received information. i.e. have contacted people who are directly affected, but not those who are more indirectly affected. This impact should not be underestimated and the Communications Plan should take account of this group.

RB asked what was happening for mid-terrace homes as access would be required though neighbouring gardens.

MA – confirmed that all of these properties had been visited and informed of the planned access routes.

RT said that he had not been informed of work that was taking place 18” from his property, when legally any work within 3 metres should be notified to residents. He also asked what the plans were for “making good” after the investigations, as no team was on site yet for this. There were holes in patios and fences down – people need to know when they will be fixed as they have children and pets to worry about.

MS - Re-instatement will happen straightaway when the work is finished and will be to a decent standard. The wet weather had churned the ground up more than would usually happen during the investigations.

SF – we would include a statement around remedial works and the position on this in the newsletter. Residents should take photos before and after work happens. We need an appeals process so that people know who to talk to if they want to complain.

AP – residents need good communications around the holes and the very different types, ie, some are for ongoing water monitoring. Complained that MS was giving very technical information on the boreholes but all the residents want is information on how they will be affected.

## **5. Communications Plans**

Discussion around the various channels that need to be used (newsletter, web, contacts lists)

RB – A proper Communications plan was needed. Need to consider the customers in terms of what information is needed.

JM - each member of the group could take on responsibility for a group of houses. Use parish notice boards – make it big and visible – include contact numbers.

MS – as the current works were over such a short period there was no point in doing anything now

JY suggested a letter to say this is where we are and what is going to happen next. Communications should be built into the contract for the next stage of works

AP said that it needs to involve knocking on doors where there are specifics to address, letters alone not always appropriate.

MS agreed to brief David Lawrence at Hyder on doing some of the customer-facing work straightaway

SF to speak with MS about the comms strategy we will need, with a draft plan by the end of next week.

## **6. AOB**

RT asked if minutes were available from the Public Meeting in February. None were taken (other than actions for DBC) as all of the information presented was on the slides, available on our website.

RT – asked if the vacant DBC property at No 2 Pond road could be used as a decant for residents whilst the work was taking place. Might be possible if this property were remediated first.

Discussion around how much notice would be given to residents who needed to leave their properties. MS said at least 2 weeks notice of the exact dates, but residents affected would be notified before this that they would need to make arrangements to move out at some point.

MB - asked if Hyder could let people know as soon as they have the results from the boreholes, which MS said he could do.

JM - What are our options regarding the properties we can use for the decant? One property (maybe private rented) that people can be moved into and out of? We can charge rent for it and they can claim it back on insurance.

JM – would chase Mike Penning on the letter he promised to write for insurance companies.

SF – would seek clarification from Fiona Williamson on what our powers are around temporary re-homing of private residents, ie, can we rent a house and lease it out, with people hopefully being able to claim the costs from their insurers?

MB – asked if the remediation contractors would need to come inside properties whilst people were away. MS said that they would need to go inside after the work in order to do the validation testing.

Discussion around damage this might cause to expensive flooring and whether the contractors would pay to put this right to the same standard. Agreed that it should be in the specification to the contractors to repair things to the same standard that they were in originally. This should be mentioned in the newsletter, as it is something that is worrying for residents.

MB – said it was important that the new contractors meet with residents prior to work starting.

Security on site was discussed – no police presence seen. JY has spoken to PCSO (Ian Martin) and they were aware of the situation and had said they were keeping an eye on the area.

RB had seen various attempts to steal things when workmen on site before – need to bear in mind that expensive equipment can be a draw for thieves, who may then look around at residents homes and cars.

Lisa Bayley's questions that she had raised by email were addressed:

1. Contact details to follow
2. Weekly e-mails to follow
3. 24 hour security will follow
4. Houses indirectly affected - Will be taken into account in future.

RT – requested additional communications be sent out to residents about the appropriate behaviour of children/teenagers on the site.

The group agreed to re-convene on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm** (subject to confirmation/room availability).

JY suggested setting up a [highbarns@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:highbarns@dacorum.gov.uk) email address to add resilience for residents in case JY was unavailable. Need to make sure that messages are getting to the right people.

**The meeting concluded at 9.30pm.**