

**Highbarns Residents Group Meeting
Wednesday 5 June 2013**

MINUTES

Attendees:

Michele Berkeley
Rodney Berkeley
Les Berry
Heidi Cutts
Andy Price
Jennifer Taylor
Richard Taylor

Geoff Doole – Dacorum Borough Council
Shane Flynn – Dacorum Borough Council
Chris Milne– Hyder Consulting
Mark Skittrall – Hyder Consulting
Andrew Morris – BAM Ritchies
Andrew O'Donovan – BAM Ritchies

Apologies

Lisa Bayley
Tracey Gill
Carly Simon

1. Welcome and Introductions (Shane Flynn, DBC)

All attendees were welcomed to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on progress to date and to answer questions from residents regarding further progress with the works.

2. Overall Progress (Mark Skittrall & Chris Milne, Hyder)

MS/CM gave an update on progress against the original programme:

- All planned bulk infilling of open voids has been completed. The amount of bulk infilling required has exceeded the anticipated amount by about 10%. New voids are still being found but this is to be expected as some of the mine works will consist of broken ground and some will be open voids
- Similarly the amount of grouting material is also considerably higher than expected. Compaction grouting has proved unsuccessful so a permeation

grouting technique is being used. This provides a more solid base but takes longer and requires much more material.

As a result the work is now expected to extend until November and there has been a significant impact on the cost of the works.

SF advised that an application has been made to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for additional funding.

3. Work to Date and Issues Arising (Andrew O'Donovan & Andrew Morris, BAM Ritchies)

AOD/AM advised on the works completed to date, which represents about 40% of the total anticipated number of holes to be drilled. A map of the site was provided, showing the areas that have been largely completed, those that will be completed within the next few weeks and those where no drilling work has yet started.

The work at the site is at full capacity with four drilling rigs in operation. The bollards in Highbarns have been removed so that access is improved for lorries and the central compound is being moved as work progresses towards East Green.

The approach now is to concentrate on completing those parts of the site that are nearing completion and to validate the works to ensure that there are no further risks to properties in those areas.

4. Questions and Answers

1. Does this mean that the mine was bigger than expected?

MS/AO'D – No it is to do with the condition of the ground. The testing work carried out in spring 2012 showed that the original survey was accurate – the mine is where it was expected to be and is roughly the same size. However, the balance between open voids and collapsed ground is different to that expected and also the nature of the ground means that the grouting material tends to permeate through it rather than compacting it: hence much higher volumes of material are needed.

2. Why did the survey work and testing not indicate that this would happen?

MS – The testing indicated that the ground was very similar to that at Briars Lane in Hatfield and at other sites. There was no indication that the treatment that worked there would not work here. More testing could have been done to work

out how much was collapsed and how much was open ground but that would have meant that the testing would have cost more, leaving less money for actual repair work. It is necessary to strike a balance and the contract was designed so that the contractors could test and fill at the same time, which is the most efficient way of working.

3. Why has the actual work turned out to be much more expensive and difficult to do than anticipated?

AO'D – It is very difficult to assess the reasons why the ground is behaving the way that it is. There is a complex mixture of open and collapsed ground, some of which may have been back-filled and disturbed during building works. The rigs are set up in such a way that they can shift easily between compaction grouting, permeation grouting and bulk infilling as needed. It is an efficient procedure but the amount of material needed is necessarily much higher and the process takes longer to complete.

4. Why are voids still being found – surely these should have been identified during the testing stage?

MS – The geophysical survey work was very accurate but it was designed to find the location and nature of the mine, not to define it in detail. New voids are found when an area of collapsed ground opens up into an uncollapsed area, and these voids vary considerably in size and length. The important thing is that they are within the expected shafts and tunnels, not outside the mine.

Andy O'D – Also there are variations in the tunnels and their intersections. Hence new voids are found as the work progresses and are treated straight away.

5. What impact has this had on the grant funding?

SF- The contractors have provided four scenarios based on how progress with the works can be expected to develop. These all indicate that the grant funding will be exceeded but by varying amounts. The Council made a formal application to the HCA for additional funding at the end of May and is currently managing the cashflows to ensure that works can continue while the application is assessed.

6. How has the HCA responded?

SF – There has been a quick response, which is a positive sign, but no commitment as yet. A response is anticipated before the end of June.

7. What will be the impact on the timetable for the works?

AO'D – Potentially the works could go on until the end of November. The best case scenario suggests September now.

8. When will residents know if they have to vacate their properties?

AM – Because progress has not been as anticipated it means that it is difficult to give any more than two weeks notice. The worst case is if notice is given to vacate but the work cannot then start for one reason or another. The contractors work to reduce the risk but it is not possible to be specific about the need for vacation until quite close to the expected start date at each property.

9. If the highest risk areas around the main mineshaft have been dealt with, can we take a risk-based approach to the remainder so that we can ensure the highest risk areas remaining are dealt with first?

AO'D – The approach has always been to focus on the high risk sites. We will continue with this approach but it is very difficult to be sure that a void near a property will not lead to collapse at the property. Hyder may be able to advise on whether a risk-based approach can be taken for the remainder of the works

MS – Yes the contract is set up in a risk-based way, but it depends very much on the condition of the mine. Basically, there is the same level of risk of collapse wherever it is. In any event the mine needs to be completely treated to lift the planning restrictions.

10. Has the Council in effect underwritten the contract to ensure that works can be completed?

SF – No. The position remains as before: the Council has no liability for the mine or its treatment; it remains a responsibility of the property owners under whose land the mine exists. The Council is co-ordinating the project on behalf of the HCA, which is the funding body, and managing it on behalf of the residents. The Council's role as far as funding is concerned, is to manage cash flows so that the work can continue. In the event that costs escalate to a point where this becomes impossible without further funding being confirmed then a decision will have to be made about how to proceed. The Council's Cabinet meets again on 25 June but it is hoped that the HCA will have responded by then.

11. What is the extent of the gap between the funding available and the likely costs of the project? Which of the scenarios will the funding cover?

SF – It is very difficult to say. The scenarios simply reflect future projections of progress based on current activity levels. If these change quickly (which is possible given the nature of the ground) then further scenarios will be developed.

12. There is a problem with blocked drains at the site that has occurred in the past few days. How is this being dealt with?

AM – Some action has been taken to reduce the problem. Thames Water have been notified and it is a matter for them to clear the blockage.

13. Of the 18 properties in progress, how many have actually been completed?

AM – 11 are done subject to internal validation. Two internal validations have been completed so far but a tool has been obtained which can help do validations without the need to enter properties. However, this will still be done if necessary. A minimal risk approach will be taken and internal validations will not be done unless unavoidable.

14. Will each property be signed off after validation?

AM – Once a section is complete then Hyder, if satisfied that the work has been completed to the right standard and there is no further risk to the properties, will sign off the whole section.

15. What is the process of making good? Will subcontractors do that?

AM & AO'D- BAM Ritchies will do reinstatement works to a sensible level but will fully reinstate as necessary. Specialist sub contractors may be used if needed. A statement of reinstatement works to be carried out will be provided to residents in advance of the completion stage.

16. Is it possible to have a map that shows progress in the public community centre? Can more information be provided so that residents can see what progress is being made and when the works are likely to affect them?

AO'D – More information can be provided but security is very important – it is not appropriate to show too much detail, particularly if properties have to be vacated.

5. AOB

Residents agreed that contractors on site are approachable and generally provide useful and accurate information.

AO'D agreed that more information could be provided and the contractors needed to ensure that the on-site teams were providing accurate information although this was sometimes difficult because the situation was often changing

The Contractors had been commended by the Considerate Contractors Scheme for the efforts they had made to keep residents informed about progress but the Group agreed that communications remains a key issue for people.

AM agreed to look at further ways of improving the information available on site

Residents requested that a public meeting be held towards the end of June or early July to advise on progress to date, on the funding decision and the likely activities that will follow from that.

SF agreed to make the arrangements.

6. Date and time of next meeting

SF to confirm