

MINUTES

Barden Residents Association Meeting

Wednesday 29th March 2017

In Attendance

Mark Hood (Chair), Lucy Athey (secretary), Jon Sidaway (Vice-Chair), Fran Long (treasurer), Jo Young, Megan Le Goubin, Steph Wenzel, Felix Wenzel, Greg Fox, David Hibbs, Ross Butcher, Averil Langridge, Gill Sargent, Helen Kirk, Nigel Durman, James Lilley, Louise Grayson, Robert Oliver, Matt Stabeler

Approval of Minutes & Apologies

Mark Hood (chair) called the meeting to order and the previously circulated minutes from the meeting on 31st January were approved. Apologies from Cindy Parkhurst, Warren Nel, Izzie Kerr, Mary Blossom, Glynn Rees, Molly Laughton-Zimmerman and Debbie Burkin

Save Our Boatyard Update

Jon Sidaway (Vice-Chair of the association and boatyard resident) informed us that all have now sadly received their eviction orders following their unsuccessful appearance in court, and are due to leave once East Farley Lock reopens on June 30th. He cannot currently confirm whether the residents will be appealing against the decision. He reported that for one boat to be moved it is likely that the river may need to be dredged and trees cut back. ML-G raised safety concerns over the trees on the site which are in need of maintenance by the owner (one has recently fallen over). Mr Mockford has been distributing A4 notices in the area claiming the boatyard is in fact closing for refurbishment and re-opening in October 2017 if “financially viable”. Jon advised us to treat this with caution and informed us that boats cannot get under the bridges to Tonbridge from September to April due to the high water levels therefore no new tenants would be able to move in. Those present were very concerned that this would mean the owner could claim keeping it as a boatyard was not feasible and give ammunition to any proposed planning of unsuitable houses. Mark suggested and it was agreed that BRA write to Mr Mockford and ask questions about the viability.

Conservation Area Proposal

Mark has been in discussion with TMBC planning officer Jane Peet, he explained to her the main reason we were interested in this was to protect the boatyard and prevent any new unsuitable housing in the area. In our opinion the boatyard site is prone to flooding, is unlikely to have enough parking allocation, an eyesore and would block the views of nearby housing. The council claims to have no knowledge of any plans for the site until any developers formally apply, however existing plans are in the public domain. Ms Peet is looking into whether traveller legislation can apply to boats (as well as caravans) and also if the council has any obligation to give them temporary moorings once evicted.

Mark explained that the boatyard cannot be nominated as an asset of the community as unfortunately boats are exempt, in addition becoming an “area of special character” would not protect it from planners.

RO reiterated concerns that the land is very low-lying and highly prone to flooding so not suitable for housing.

The Nelson Arms

Shepherd Neame requested a review of the decision to make the pub an “asset of the community” consequently Mark was asked by the council to provide them with a business plan outlining plans on running it as a community - after which the council ruled in our favour. The surveyors had the good news that they may have a couple who currently run a successful CAMRA (real ale) pub interested in running it – those present were in favour of this. Mark recently created a survey to canvass local opinion, there are a minority who do not want the pub to reopen but the majority of those who replied would prefer it to continue as a community pub. Local residents could still apply to run it but we would need a steering committee. The brewery have the option to appeal but the fact that they have been in touch hopefully means they would prefer a quick resolution.



River Lawn Development

Mark proposed that we hold an event to highlight the potential sale of the land (adjacent to the Teen & Twenty) by the council for housing/flats. However TMBC don't deem the land suitable for an event and have denied us permission. Concerns were raised that there has been no consultation by the council over what the public would like to see on the land. One idea was that that developers of the medical centre site could be requested to improve the seating and lighting in the area to make it a more pleasant area for locals. We are unhappy about the area possibly being used for more unsuitable flats and would like a social event to publicise this to locals who may not be aware of this. LG asked if we could research the history of the plot, if it has been used for community events in the past this could be helpful. Mark to get in touch with the Civic Society as we were informed they had a strong reaction to potential development. We will also find out what area of the council is currently responsible for the upkeep of the land as it may need to be “moved” to a different area before being sold off.

Pedestrian Cyclist Access

Fran proposed that the river pathway which links the park to Barden road be made a shared space for cyclists and pedestrians as currently it is not very safe for cyclists on Barden Road or Avebury Avenue due to the one-way system and speed of traffic. Many were in favour of this although someone raised concerns that cyclists may not use bells and be considerate to pedestrians using the path. Fran has been in touch with Sustrans (the charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport) for advice – see www.sustrans.org.uk

Speed Restrictions

Fran made us aware of non-council 20mph signage in Five Oak Green displayed on the land of the local primary school which has been purchased by locals (as KCC do not currently want to make the area 20mph). A discussion was had over whether a sign like this could be placed on private land in Barden to discourage the local speeding cars. 20mph stickers can be purchased to put on bins but this could only be effective if the bins were left on the street and not hidden in gardens. Areas near Sussex Road and Slade are 20mph as they have schools in their location, it was pointed out that most of our children travel to these schools through Barden so should still have the safer roads enabled by a 20mph speed limit.

We hope to have a fourth community noticeboard on our wildlife garden beyond the bridge, this could be a potential location for a 20mph sign.

Parking

Andrew Thistlewood created a survey for the Facebook page; of those who responded 32 would prefer to go back to the old system, 24 would like the original proposal (where D1 can park in all location) and 10 want to keep the new system. Although the voting was very split it overwhelmingly shows that the majority are not happy. D2 now houses those with business permits which has helped daytime parking but the main problem is that in D1 there have been 207 residents permits issued by the council but there are only approximately 170 spaces (counted by Mark) – meaning that it is impossible for all D1 locals to have a legal parking space. D2 has had 259 permits issued but we need to count the amount of actual spaces, the council does not have this information. Mark will publish these facts on the Facebook page.

Litter Blitz & Station Flower Beds

The next Litter Blitz & tidy up of our area will be **Sunday 14th May**. Fran has purchased and planted two fruit trees in our wildlife garden, this needs more work done on the day of the Litter Blitz if we have enough volunteers. Fran has been in touch with Tonbridge Station manager to ask if we can plant flowers in the beds behind the station. The manager is not only in favour but has also kindly offered to pay for plants and take on responsibility for watering/maintenance. The station will be having some work done soon so she has suggested we wait until this is finished in order to not damage any planting.

AOB

- Ross Butcher is to hold another charity cake sale in Gladstone Road to raise money for the brain tumour charity following the success of his one last year which raised £500 in one afternoon. We will spread the word about this using Facebook and our website.
- All were in favour of adding a page on our website to list local tradesmen.
- If anyone would like to contribute pictures or writing to our website please email majhood@sky.com
- The area near the railway bridges now has a tarmaced road in place.
- A resident raised that leaving wheelie bins outside houses can be an eyesore, however others either have trouble moving bins due to shared access or prefer to have them out of their back gardens as they can be unsightly there too.
- David Hibbs updated us on his ongoing dispute with Southern Water following the December 2013 flooding (see minutes dated January 31st for more detail). He asked if people would be prepared to contribute £100 to pay for legal action to get compensation for those flooded. Mark suggested that David put together information on this which we could share on our website and Facebook page (in addition to David doing a leaflet drop) and that he have a separate meeting for those affected by the floods.

Next Meeting

Meetings will now alternate on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to enable as many people as possible to attend. The next meeting is;

Tuesday 23rd May 2017