

# **BINFIELD VILLAGE PROTECTION SOCIETY**

## **AGM**

**11<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2014 – St Mellion Suite Blue Mountain Golf Course**

Present: Committee Members:

Simon  
Duncan Hullis  
Lis Casey  
Laura Hogevoid  
Margaret  
Sue

Also Present: Councillors Harrison, Leake and Mclean  
Adam Afriyie MP

Apologies: Councillor Brenda Wilson

### 1. Introduction

Simon outlined that the aim of the BVPS is to protect Binfield and its local environment from inappropriate developments. BVPS is a voluntary organisation and non-political. He stated that the society met on a monthly basis.

### 2. Election of Committee

The following Committee Members were proposed, seconded and duly elected:

Simon - Chairman  
Colin - Treasurer  
Colin, David, Duncan, Laura, Margaret, Sarah, Sue - Committee Members

### 3. Financial Report 2013/14

Subscriptions had been charged at £8 per annum. Expenditure was £1'400 and there was a balance of £1'700 at 31<sup>st</sup> March. The "Save Blue Mountain" campaign had generated income of £6'335 and incurred expenditure of £3'617.

### 4. Updates on Plans and Developments

The Murrell Hill Lane and Foxley Lane plans for 67 houses were being submitted to the Planning Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

The Tilehurst Lane plans for 72 houses had been taken to appeal by the Developer.

There was a plan for Farley Wood of 73 houses.

## 5. Blue Mountain

Blue Mountain was designated as a site for development 18 months previously. The vote to lift the Section 52 agreement with an amendment added to it by Councillor Leake had been passed by Bracknell Forest Council's full Council meeting in January 2014. The amendment gave protection that the Section 52 agreement would not be lifted until a satisfactory planning application had been approved. Luff (the landowners) have given notice to Crown Golf terminating their lease in Spring 2015

There was no clear answer as to why this site had been chosen over others. The Mayor had run her annual dinner at Blue Mountain.

## 6. Save Blue Mountain

Lis Casey representing Save Blue Mountain reported that there was a website up and running -

A YouTube video had been produced. The Group had a database now of 1500 people. A disco event had been run recently which had raised £2000. An e-petition was circulating to ask Eric Pickles to call-in the decision. To date 1,753 people had signed this but 100,000 were needed to ensure it was heard in the House of Commons. Message to the public: Please sign the petition. Radio Berkshire had interview Lis on the issue in general.

### The Future

The petition needed to be national to gain MP support. It would be helpful to have a celebrity on board such as Chris Evans.

### Fundraising

Ideas included:

An open photo competition to raise funds through selling a calendar.

A Design a Christmas card competition

A Children's event

A car sticker

Donation option through PayPal

The anonymous donor who had donated £1,000 was gratefully thanked.

## 7. Councillor Ian Leake

Firstly clarified a couple of points: The Mayor had held her dinner at Blue Mountain for the reason of pointing out what a good venue it was and how valuable it was to the community both of Binfield and the Borough.

Councillor Leake noted that the three Binfield Councillors had opposed the development from the outset both during the Conservative Group meetings and in the full Council

meetings where the relevant decisions were made. When the site appeared in the Site Allocations Plan it had been made clear that they would oppose it. The Councillors had not been given any dispensation to vote against the party whip.

Councillor Leake noted that he was not against all development in Binfield such as the Amen Corner but *was against* this site on the basis that it was a green space and that the S. 52 agreement had been put in place for 125 years, and he felt that this should be stuck to.

He outlined that planning process worked as follows:

A planning application would go into the planning department. This would be dealt with by delegated powers as under the Council's constitution depending upon the size, nature and whether the application complies with the planning laws unless it came under one of three categories:

- 1) If the application was outside the planning policies of the Council, then it must go to the planning committee to be determined
- 2) If it was within the Council's planning policies but if more than 3 separate objections were received on the application then it would have to be taken to Planning Committee for decision (the Parish Council objecting to a planning application would constitute one objection)
- 3) If a Councillor call it in on planning reasons

It was noted the Parish Council is a statutory consultee in the process. The planning process usually took 8 weeks unless extended.

To protect the village the Council founded the Neighbourhood Plan Development Group to influence the type of planning and development within the designated planning areas (as the Site Allocations Plan cannot be negated); that is to say that the style, and quality of the development can be influenced. The public's views would be taken on board as part of the planning process; and including businesses and the developer's. The Parish Council "own" the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Councillor Leake noted that the Council meeting of January 2014; had been the meeting at which it was intended to delegate the decision to lift the Section 52 agreement to the Executive Member for Planning. The agenda was published five clear days before the meeting and this was the first time the Binfield Councillors had seen the agenda. Once the agenda had been published, Councillor Leake had approached a) the Leader of the Council about Councillor Leake's concern about releasing the land with no safeguard and b) he spoke to the Conservative Group to gain support for a reworded recommendation which gave some safeguard to the release of the land. Hence the recommendation to the full Council in January 2014 was one amended at the instigation of Councillor Leake to provide community involvement in the development of the planning application at Blue Mountain in order to provide some protection for the land. The Section 52 agreement cannot now be released unless a proper planning application in line with the Planning Inspector's Plan report is approved. This is a significant change from what was originally proposed in the original recommendation as written by the Leader and the Chief Executive.

In response to questions on the Planning process Councillor Leake reiterated that once the Site Allocations Plan was in place then unless there was a legal challenge to it, then the planning development followed that plan. He noted that planning policies could be re-written but not backdated. Blue Mountain had been picked as a site by the Council when it was looking for a site for its educational village. It might have been possible to find another site but the difficulties perceived elsewhere were so great that Blue Mountain was the favoured site; with the benefit of having only one landowner.

Notice had now been given to the management company at Blue Mountain to vacate the golf club from Spring 2015.

#### 8. Adam Afriyie MP

Adam Afriyie MP noted that he was determined to protect the area from overdevelopments. He noted that any development should be in keeping with its surroundings and that “stress” was brought about by a planning “imposition” upon the residents.

He thanked the BVPS for the huge difference they were making to the area. He commended the feeling amongst the people of the area working together with the Parish Council and local Councillors who were all working very hard to help the situation. He gave particular thanks to Councillor Leake for his vigilance in bringing about the substantial change to the resolution regarding the Section 52 agreement; which he applauded for acting as a safety valve for the community. He noted that the large number of people attending the meeting acted as a strong signal to those involved in the planning process. He noted that when large numbers of people act together, change can be brought about.

He noted the national context for planning where regional targets for housing no longer applied and if a Neighbourhood Plan was in place greater control could be gained over the process. The focus should be now on brown field sites.

Adam outlined his role as an MP; he could support any campaigners; would be able to speak to Eric Pickles MP in parliament and if a petition was in place then he would be able to present it to parliament. He suggested that the people’s views should be made clear to Bracknell Forest Council and that it would be in their interests to help the people to modify their plans. He could write about the issue in his various columns so that the local voice could be heard. He committed to help however he could in Westminster.

His advice to everyone at the meeting was to continue to campaign but with clear objectives; and then it might be possible to restrain the development in some ways; such as getting the required infrastructure in place and keep the pressure up on the developer.

#### 9. Questions received from the floor:

##### 1. Will you object to this development?

You have my commitment and whatever you want to achieve, I will support.

##### 2. What is there to inspire trust in MPs?

I was devastated when I heard the section 52 might be lifted straight away. I am happy to take the petition to Westminster for you to Bracknell Forest Council and am happy to do a media interview for you.

3. How is the amendment better?

Before you had no control; and once the covenant had been lifted there would have been nothing to stop anyone from filling the site with housing. At the Planning Inquiry the site was talked about as if it had no settlement boundary within it. The Parish Council employed legal help and pointed out the issue of no planning boundary within the area, so the Planning Inspector imposed a boundary; restricting the area that could be built on.

4. Is this Central Government's fault?

It is not our policy to build on green field sites, it is up to the council to decide where development takes places. As the economy is picking up, so it is easier for developers to come forward.

5. Where has the housing target come from? Why does Bracknell Forest have to provide another 10,000 houses?

Adam Afriyie confirmed there were no top down housing figures imposed on Bracknell Forest and that it was up to the Council to decide on appropriate numbers and where they were to be located.

6. Why have the Leader of the council and the Executive Member of Planning let us down so badly?

Democracy is inconvenient! You need to send the Councillors a letter putting forward your views.

7. Why are they proposing to re-site the football club here?

While the Section 52 agreement is in place, public access to the site must remain. We are not aware if anyone else will run the site.

Comment: we already have an excellent football club here in Binfield.

8. Are there powers to keep the grass cut if vacant?

The land should remain for recreational use and should be maintained for that purpose.

Councillor Leake noted that any planning application would have to be in accordance with the principles of the Inspector's report; otherwise the planning application would not get off the ground.

Adam Afriyie drew the meeting's attention to the forums where there were similar situations. He noted that if the residents helped to control the process, then the better they could control the outcome. He would speak to Eric Pickles informally and could write a letter to him. The parliamentary question and answer session could also provide another route on the issue.

Sunday 12 to 5 pm at Jocks Lane.

The meeting concluded 21.00

Attendance estimated at 150 - 175 people