



Elsenham Parish Council Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting with Bloor Homes

**Land east of Elsenham, to the north of the B1051,
Henham Road, Elsenham**

**350 New Dwellings
and
'Phase 2', up to 200 new dwellings**

**Held on Thursday 27 April 2023
at 7.00pm
in the Memorial Hall, Playing Field, Leigh Drive, Elsenham**

Present:

Elsenham Parish Council (EPC)

Cllr. G Mott (Chairman, GM), Cllr. G Bentley (GB), Cllr. P Jarvis (PJ),
Cllr. F Lambert (FL), Cllr. B Ogilvie (BO) and Cllr. S Waite (SW)

Representing Bloor Homes (BH)

Mr A Clark, (Design and Technical Director, AC).

Members of the public: 8

In the absence of the Parish Clerk, the minutes were taken by GM.

1. Apologies for absence. Cllr R Franklin, Cllr P Johnson, Mrs. L Johnson (Parish Clerk)
2. Declaration of Interests. None

UTT/21/3269/DFO 350 new dwellings

3. Report by Bloor Homes on progress.

AC said that the work under the S278 provisions is 95%+ complete, and is under review. ECC will compile a list of actions. Road safety audit 3 is under way, and audit 4 will be in a year's time. The access road is complete - the PRoW was kept open, with closure limited to a single day, or thereabouts.

The show homes are open. The first occupation is expected to be at the end of May, and that acts as the trigger for some S106 contributions, £70,000 for health etc.

The next stage will include the football pitches and changing rooms and the NEAP. The designs will be shared with EPC and signed off by UDC. The start will be in September or thereabouts, with construction expected to take 9 to 12 months. BH will discuss with UDC concerning handover to the parish; BH will take responsibility for the pitches until they can be played on.

It is intended that there should be a steady rate of completion at 8 per month from June, with a Red and Blue team under the Contracts Manager, Terry Byrne.

4. ***Elsenham News* funding crisis.**

Allan Hathaway (AH) spoke as Chairman of Elsenham Community Association, which has overall responsibility for the village magazine, *Elsenham News*, published monthly apart from January.

The magazine faces a funding crisis on account of the volume of new housing. On AH's figures, in 2013 there were about 920 households in the parish. The figure now is 1,600 and is projected to rise to 2,385 taking account of all agreed developments. The income from advertisements remains roughly static, while production costs increase with the number of copies. There is currently a shortfall of c. £100/month, and the cost per print run is c. £1,000. The only expenditure is on print costs - editorial work and distribution is undertaken by volunteers.

AC was generally sympathetic to the plight which the magazine finds itself in, and undertook to consider the question of whether BH could offer financial assistance.

AH left two copies of a recent edition of *Elsenham News* with AC.

5. **Crocuses.**

The minutes for the meeting with BH on 23 September 2022 note that the bulbs will be planted early in 2023.

AC expressed regret that this had not happened, and undertook that they will be planted in Autumn 2023, and will therefore be flowering in Spring 2024.

6. **Boundary with cricket field.**

GM expressed thanks for the prompt action which was taken when police reports suggested that unauthorised access to the cricket field might be gained via the BH access road - a small earthen bund was rapidly erected. GM suggested that a determined effort could be made to gain access at both ends of the bund. At the northern end, the dropped kerb in place for the crossing of the PRoW could be used to gain access north of the pond; at the southern end, access might be gained across the pavement, since the bund stops short of the southern boundary. AC undertook to look at both areas, with a view to making good any gaps in the bund.

GM pointed out that it is not at all clear what is intended by way of a permanent boundary between the access road and the cricket field. For instance, nothing is shown on the *Additional Site Landscaping NEAP and Sport Facilities* plan. AC undertook to consider the matter.

7. Gapping up the hedge south of Henham PRow 15

Condition 23. See the Parish Council's response to UTT/23/0418/DOC.

GM explained that EPC's response had been heavily redacted, owing to the extensive activity of a protected species within the PRow. A little to the east of this area, a section of the PRow of about 50m has not been cut for many years, and is now totally impassable through a thicket of bramble and other growth. Walkers therefore divert through a gap in the hedge into the field to the south, and then divert back again. Many walkers gain access via an informal track around the station car park. If the gapping up was to be truly effective, the PRow would be rendered impassable. The gapping up is a Condition within the first Bloor development for 350 dwellings. UDC have discharged the Condition on the basis that a satisfactory scheme has been proposed, although the work has not in fact been done. The Inspector into the proposal for the 'Phase 2' scheme expressed severe scepticism as to the usefulness of the Condition (see his Decision, paragraph 58). EPC's preference is heavily in favour of matters being left as they are.

AC took note of EPC's view. The land immediately to the south of the PRow is not in the control of BH.

8. Fencing around football pitches and pavilion

Email to Craig Attmere, 6 April 2023.

AC had taken note of EPC's email. He undertook to increase the height of the fence around the northern and western boundaries to 4.5m, in view of the adjacent areas of housing and an attenuation pond. BH will not agree, however, to increase boundary fences elsewhere beyond the specification, and will not agree to a fence on the eastern side of the pitches between the pitches and the changing rooms and car park.

9. Henham Road flower box.

GM referred to the commitment to provide a second flower box, as noted in the minutes of the meeting on 23 September 2022. AC confirmed that the commitment remains to install a flower box to match the one on the other side of the road.

10. Moving of 30 mph limit to the east of the development.

GM stated that now that the new access road is completed, the junction is as dangerous as feared. The access road meets Henham Road at what is described as a 'T' junction - but as the junction is on the inside of a considerable bend, it resembles more of an arrowhead: ↗. Most of the traffic leaving the development will turn right towards Elsenham. To the left, adequate visibility is only obtained by the driver turning through more than a right angle, and looking through the front of the back window. A passenger is a further impediment, as is the pillar between the front window and the back. The difficulty must be particularly acute where vehicles have no rear windows, such as vans or lorries.

There is provision in the S106 for BH to make a contribution towards moving the 30 mph limit further to the east. GM said that it should be moved quickly in order to reduce the danger during the construction period, and that the junction should be

monitored by speed cameras. ECC have been asked for early action, but without success.

AC replied that the contribution as stipulated in the S106 has been paid. Road safety audits have been carried out. BH would support EPC's pressure for early action from ECC to move the 30 mph speed limit.

11. Questions by members of the Parish Council.

FL stated that she has evidence from her Speedwatch activities of habitual speeding along Henham Road.

GB said that construction traffic degrades roads. S106 agreements are legal documents which specify the financial contributions which are to be made to infrastructure. Developers should be expected to make a contribution to the maintenance of the roads. AC replied that the maintenance of the road network is the responsibility of ECC. All road users pay into a central pot, and large vehicles pay more.

FL said that S106 agreements specify, for instance, a contribution to the NHS. AC agreed that developers do not control how the money is spent.

PJ said that there had been complaints from Haileswood residents about the volume of noise, and about working on Sundays. AC replied that the *Construction Environment Management Plan* gives the hours of working: Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings, with no work on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Working outside those hours should be reported to Terry Byrne, Site Manager, in the first instance, and if that fails to AC himself. Strategies are in place to avoid the reversing manoeuvres with the warning sound which people often find intrusive. The compound will be moved beyond the limits of the current development, onto land allocated for 'Phase 2', which should move much of the noise further away from existing residents.

In answer to FL, AC stated that about 19 houses have been sold to date.

12. Questions by members of the public.

A resident pointed out that £1million is to go to Essex for improvements to the bus service. The contract is now out to tender, and it is to be hoped that the extra funds will be included. AC agreed that BH have no say in how the money is spent.

A resident asked about the surfaces of the perimeter walk. AC replied that there will be different surfaces, typically hoggin.

UTT/22/2760/PINS; S62A/2022/0012 Phase 2, up to 200 new dwellings

13. Report by Bloor Homes on progress.

AC said that the outline application had been made to the Planning Inspectorate under the S62A procedure as BH wished to expedite the application. The detailed

application will be made to UDC for determination by the Planning Committee. The S106 provides that some dwellings will be privately discounted and will be suitable as first homes. A LAP and LEAP will be included. BH will invest into a car club. There will be electrical charging points, and an electric car which can be rented. There will be full compliance with the new water regulations.

14. S106 outstanding.

AC said that BH's obligations had already been specified by means of a Unilateral Undertaking (UU). No further action is needed, and UDC were not involved. Payments due are to be index-linked.

15. Community Hall funding.

GM pointed out that the agreed contributions for the new Community Hall total £596,154 and are to start before commencement of construction. In other words, payment could be made at any time, and BH might agree that, as no contributions were specified for the development of 350 dwellings, it would be appropriate for the contributions for Phase 2 to be made sooner rather than later, thereby helping greatly in planning the project.

AC noted that the agreed contribution will come to over £600,000 with index-linking. BH would make a calculation as to the most beneficial time to make payments, given the provision for index-linking. He will take on board EPC's comments.

16. Storey heights.

GM said that the *Parameter Plan Building Heights* is very alarming. It shows that a wide swathe of the western part of the site would be available for three-storey development. EPC has contended, with some success, against three-storey development in the village.

AC responded that the number of three-storey blocks will be limited to two, and that these will be located at the lowest part of the site. They should give some protection from noise to the remainder of the site.

17. Station car park.

'Land safeguarded for a potential extension to Elsenham Station car park' is shown (*Design and Access Statement*, 8.1, Fig 36). The jink in the northern site boundary means that in effect any extension to the car park would be limited in extent.

AC replied that he was sure that adequate provision for any extension to the car park has been made.

18. Questions by members of the Parish Council.

BO was assured by AC that bee bricks will be included.

PJ quoted from the Decision: 'The retail offer in Elsenham is limited and arguably local services have lagged behind the pace of new development there'. He asked whether the development would include additional retail provision. AC replied that it

is not for him to judge whether extra provision is needed. Any which is provided would need to be sustainable. The outline agreement is for up to 200 dwellings, with no further stipulation.

In reply to questions from FL, AC said that waste bins will be provided, in accordance with a Condition in Reserved Matters, dog waste bins will not be provided, street lighting will be provided and the roads in the development will be adopted. The detailed application to UDC will be made in four or five months' time, and will be presented to EPC. It will be subject to public consultation, as usual.

BO asked whether BH would be prepared to make a contribution to sports clubs in the village. AC replied that any requests would be considered.

FL asked whether we can expect a Phase 3 application. AC replied that there are no arrangements in hand, and that BH does not control any further land.

GM commented that the Decision says that construction is estimated to last from 2024 to 2027, but that this appears unlikely for Phase 2, given that there are 350 dwellings to be built first.

19. Questions by members of the public.

AH commented that the proposal to erect three-storey blocks of flats with the purpose of using them as a buffer against sound puts the residents of such blocks at an unfair disadvantage when compared to other residents. AC responded that he believed the strategy could be implemented in such a way that the living accommodation within the three-storey blocks would not be subject to excessive noise.

A Henham resident referred to the station car park, and said that BH had attempted to buy it, and asked whether BH was able to offer any help in providing adequate car parking - the alternative would be parking on residential roads.

A question was asked as to whether the loss of biodiversity would be redressed. AC replied that there are plans to improve biodiversity. Strategies include enhancing hedgerows, structural planting and wetlands within SuDS features. There are complicated metrics which ensure that targets are met.

In reply to a further question, AC gave an assurance that 'Hedgehog Highways' will be included.

A question was asked as to BH's environmental credentials. Why is there no provision for batteries? There is a need to show improvement under 'Fabric First' principles. Zero carbon will not be achieved by 2025 - there will only be a 75% to 80% improvement. AC replied that air source heat pumps and batteries will be phased in over time. It is not possible to purchase the requisite number with immediate effect.

AC replied to a question about homes for first-time buyers with the answer that the cost would be capped at £275,000.

20. **AOB.**

None.

GM thanked AC and members of the public for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.