

Minutes of the inaugural meeting of Bear Flat Association, on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2012, 7.30 pm at the Beechen Cliff Methodist Church Hall.

Present: Clyde Hunter (Chair), Diana Lockwood (notes), Virginia Williamson (presentation), Don Grimes , Gareth Bunn (transport group), Lesley Baker (social group), Peter Andrews (communications), and about 85 local residents and business representatives.

Item	Notes	Action
1.0	The Chair welcomed everyone, and thanked them for attending, despite the football.	
2.0	<p>The Chair introduced the evening by explaining that a group had met the previous month to explore establishing a Bear Flat Association. It was felt that our area was peripheral to the concerns of other local groups such as The Widcombe Association and Greenway ! and that recent legislation had made such an Association more necessary. A Public Meeting to air these concerns was needed. The recent Localism Act gives neighbourhoods the opportunity to have a say in the way in which the local area might develop, including transport and planning issues. Forming a neighbourhood association would also enable us to communicate more effectively inside and outside our area on all issues affecting us. If the meeting supported the proposition, the group would proceed with the formal steps of establishing the BFA and hold its first AGM in the autumn.</p> <p>A question was asked about the Bear Flat Community Association that was started about 30 years ago and whether there is an existing constitution that could be useful. Don Grimes explained that it faded about 15 years ago and was purely social.</p>	
3.0	<p><b>Presentation by Virginia Williamson:</b> Virginia thanked those who had distributed 1,300 leaflets to households in the Bear Flat area. She explained that there is currently no mechanism for the views of neighbourhoods to express their views in B&amp;NES. Although there are a number of residents' associations, these tend to be based in the more wealthy areas of Bath. The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new tier of neighbourhood planning (from 04/2012), and together with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) give neighbourhoods more say in local planning issues.</p> <p>Virginal outlined the key points in the NPPF, which means that neighbourhoods should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development.</li> <li>⤴ Plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.</li> </ul> <p>However, in the absence of a local development plan there is a presumption in favour of granting planning permission.</p> <p>The NPPF has 12 core land-use planning principles, including that</p>	

	<p>planning should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.</li> <li>⤴ Be creative in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives.</li> <li>⤴ Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas</li> <li>⤴ support the transition to a low carbon future</li> <li>⤴ actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>⤴ Support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs</li> </ul> <p>B&amp;NES conducted a consultation on their Draft Neighbourhood Planning Protocol earlier in 2012, but this was not well publicised.</p> <p>In B&amp;NES you must be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum in order to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. It can take up to 2 years to develop such a plan. The local authority stresses that plans cannot be 'restrictive', and must be 'positive'</p> <p>There are examples of neighbourhood plans in Bristol, where there is a well developed Neighbourhood Planning Network.</p>	
4.0	<p>The Chair invited questions from the floor:</p> <p><b>Q:</b> what do B&amp;NES mean by positive? [this is about neighbourhood plans not being more restrictive than local authority plans] CH explained that the presumption in the Act is in favour of development. He also pointed out that there is no obligation on local authorities to notify communities of development proposals, so neighbourhoods need to be vigilant.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> The boundaries of the proposed area were questioned. It was agreed that Egerton Road should be included. It was explained that people who live further up the Wellsway tend to gravitate towards Combe Down, however the boundaries of the community area are not set in stone and anyone who lives, works or runs a business in the area can join.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> How will the school be involved? As Widcombe does, we should include businesses and other bodies that form part of our community. It was explained that the plan is to meet with the Head Teacher, as the Alexandra Park Forum, Greenway ! and other organisations do.</p> <p>VW pointed out that the Forum would need to involve all 3 sets of councillors, because the area falls into 3 local authority wards: Lyncombe, Widcombe and Oldfield [<i>have I got this right?</i>].</p>	
5.0	<p><b>Feed back from discussion groups:</b></p> <p><b>Planning / neighbourhoods:</b> Julian David reported key issues /</p>	

ideas:

#### Open Spaces

Serve as a focal point for the protection of open spaces, such as Alexandra Park, Bloomfield Park tennis courts, triangle of land between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road, Bloomfield Road

#### Community assets

Maintain a list of community assets such as open spaces, meeting places, notice boards, etc.

#### Shops on Bear Flat

- a. Help maintain a balance of shops on Bear Flat by
- b. raise awareness & encourage use,
- c. campaign to improve access to particular shops (e.g. chemist),
- d. defend existing shops,
- e. resist inappropriate change of use applications,
- f. encourage formation of a traders' association,
- g. develop an empty shops policy.

#### Houses in multiple occupation

Support initiatives to limit growth of multiple occupancy

#### Back lanes

Encourage better maintenance use and knowledge of the 'back lanes'

#### Trees & gardens

- a. Protect trees
- b. Encourage tree planting and better maintenance of front gardens
- c. Resist conversion of front gardens to parking

Boundary of the Association: The boundary of the association can be 'fuzzy'. If a neighbourhood Forum is set up and /or a neighbourhood plan produced, a proper boundary can be defined.

#### **Transport and parking.** Gareth Bunn reported:

1. Double yellows on junctions in Avenues, not white, to discourage parking on corners. Dangers at all junctions because of parking currently on yellows, often by residents who cannot park elsewhere.
2. Commuter parking all day and longer takes places from residents
3. Access to Alexandra for pupils and staff parking should be stopped (likewise on Avenues) - parking should be within school perimeter.
4. Parking on verges (Byron and Kipling) should be stopped.
5. Advice by local councillor to schoolchildren to use lanes to get to school to be withdrawn. (lanes are the alleys 'twixt houses)
6. schoolchildren should be dropped off on Wellsway

7. Inconsiderate and aggressive driving and parking endangers children and residents
8. short term parking for local shops needed
9. cost of bus fares a cause of commuter parking- need for improved Park and Ride.
10. Withdraw on road parking for Wellsway residents with own parking facilities
11. Queries regarding potential effect of Park cafe, and Park should be closed to cars for major events (Avenues ?!!)

There was also an insistence that the area needed improvement- Residents should be encouraged to self help( keep pavement frontages tidy, hedges cut) Council appears not to be upkeeping. Rear lanes should not be used by schoolchildren (smoking and litter) Condition of Chaucer road surface was bad, and skip use should be monitored.

Dog fouling appeared to be a problem

**Social:** Lesley Baker reported: that the collective view was they would like to have more inclusive activities and events (as opposed to single street parties) which bring the community and neighbours together irrespective of age or family situation.

Top of the list was a History Group, followed by:

Something similar to Widcombe Rising

Coach trips - gardens being the most popular destination

Gardening Club - Community Garden

Walking group

Quiz nights that are not in pubs

Film Society/Theatre group

There are currently no volunteers in the group to organise such events.

It was felt that there are already a a lot of social activities in and around Bear Flat, but some are for specific groups, and not all are well publicised.

As not everyone has access to the internet, it was felt that other methods of publicising events should be explored, and that the existing notice boards on Bear Flat needed to be updated more regularly.

It was suggested that it would be useful to get a list of planned events from local organisations e.g. Widcombe Association, the Methodist Hall, St Lukes, The Devonshire Arms, The Bear, and post them on the website. These could also be emailed out.

It was felt that the association did not need to organise more social events initially, but could actively publicise / promote those already planned.

**Communications:** Peter Andrews reported: A small discussion group, but an important topic - communications will be the public face

	<p>of the Association. We agreed to set up a website – <a href="http://www.bearflat.org.uk">www.bearflat.org.uk</a> which will include a calendar and list events and resources within the Bear Flat area. We agreed to send out our first e-newsletter in a week's time. We will set up Twitter and Facebook accounts. Not everyone in the group was sure they liked the current logo but we will stay with it for the time being because it is distinctive and has strong branding. We can always re-design it and re-brand in the future.</p> <p>We recognised the need to assist those members who do not have access to the internet, e.g. by having a 'buddy' system.</p>	
6.0	<p><b>Next steps:</b></p> <p>Group leaders to send summary of their group's discussion to Virginia as soon as possible. <a href="mailto: Bearflat.1st@gmail.com">Bearflat.1st@gmail.com</a> to be used for the time being.</p> <p>It was agreed overwhelmingly, on a show of hands, that the Steering Group should proceed with establishing a BFA and that there should be an AGM in the autumn.</p>	