

Stoughton Action Group

Update 3/02

December 2002

Chairman's Comment

Nigel Horton STAG Acting Chairman

This is the first STAG Newsletter since I took over the reins temporarily after John Allford gave up the Chair. For this I apologise but have to say that it was for no other reason than pressure over Queen Elizabeth Park Phase 3 and the Local Centre Planning Applications. Additionally, the Surrey County Council Draft Spatial Plan was introduced in which 6000 houses were proposed for North Guildford and South Woking.

Is Apathy rife in Stoughton?

This simple question is of concern to me as it has been mentioned on a few occasions. Since the initial application for Queen Elizabeth Park was submitted, a lot of people have complained, some have attended meetings organised by the developers and shouted down the speakers. Others have taken the attitude that it does not matter what STAG or anyone else writes, the estate will be built and we will have to put up with the inconvenience and traffic problems.

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£300,000 Planning Gain to spend on Environmental Improvements, have your say.

Councillor Pauline Searle gives you an invitation

As part of the planning permission for the Queen Elizabeth Park development, the community will benefit from £300,000 of environmental improvements mainly in the Stoughton area.

A Public Meeting will take place on the 16th December from 07.00 - 09.00pm in Stoughton Youth & Community Centre (in Stoughton Rec Park) Worplesdon Road.

Your local Councillors and Guildford Borough Officers will be on hand to present some ideas, listen to your suggestions on how and where the local community would like to see the money spent so please try to come along.

If you do not identify where Stoughton needs money spent, someone else will grab it. Go to the meeting and make your views known. Put the date in your diary or mark the calendar now! [NH]

May we take this opportunity to wish you a pleasant and peaceful Christmas.

Some refer to the local Councillors, stating that "we voted for them to look after our interests, why do we need STAG to do anything or why should we have to do anything?"

It even gets to the point where I wonder whether there is a future role for STAG in Stoughton? Is it right that a few of us try to make life a little better for all Stoughton residents? Some examples for you to consider:

Linden Homes produce plans for traffic calming and environmental improvements to Tylehost and Johnston Walk for every residence in Tilehouse and seek comments from residents. Linden received about 10 responses.

We are all given the opportunity to comment/object to every stage of the QEP development. The Local Centre Application had comments from 184 residents. This last application finalised the traffic and bus provisions for the site, factors that affect the whole of Stoughton, not just Grange Road and Johnston Walk. Why then were there only representatives from three Stoughton homes at the Planning Committee meeting?

So, do we in Stoughton tend to let things happen around us? Is this a feature unique to Stoughton or common throughout Guildford? Do we all go home, shut our front doors and leave it to someone else to look after our individual interests. If this is you, the next section will be of no interest although you might be interested in the prospect of a new Community Centre.

Next STAG Meeting 19 December

This will be at 7:30pm at Northmead School in Grange Road and will be open to all. However, I would like to see residents attending this meeting who genuinely want to be active within this group for the benefit of the whole of Stoughton. STAG is now at a decision point and we need to know what residents require and your ideas for the future.

If you wish to be more active within the community and cannot make this meeting, please e-mail or telephone me. (Contact details are on page 4)

Community Centre Steering Committee Report

Maureen Bell CCSC Chair

We have some good news and some that is not so good! The good news is that it has been confirmed with the approval for planning permission for the Commercial Sector of the development that a two-storey Community Centre, of a maximum size of 390 sq. m., will be built. The not so good news is that it will not be sited in the heart of the local Centre, as hoped, but will be across the road from there, on the village green, and the finished building will be extremely basic.

The building will have a basic kitchen and toilet facilities, heating and lighting but will not have a lift, there will not be a sprung floor for the main hall, floors will be screed or chip board – no finishes. There will be no flexible partitioning walls, no bar facilities and so on.

The developers will want to erect this building relatively quickly, so if we want to see the building completed to a satisfactory standard, we need your help as we are going to have to do some extremely effective and immediate fund raising. All of your ideas will be greeted enthusiastically. Please make yourselves and your ideas known to me on 01483 233 937 or mdhbell@talk21.com

Since Maureen wrote this, we have learned that legally none of the £300,000 for environmental improvements can be used to improve the "environment" of the Community Centre.

If you are good at raising money, have experience of successfully obtaining grants for charities then please contact Maureen. Even if you do not want to take an active role, if you have information that could be of use, the Steering Committee would be grateful.

In fact all of your ideas on any aspect of the Community Centre will be greeted enthusiastically to build on those received at the inaugural meeting on May 22nd. [NH]

STAG's History

John Allford

Nigel has asked me to write a short history of STAG. I think this may be some kind of revenge for my having stepped down as Chairman and left Nigel to take over, just as everything became a little manic (see Chairman's Comments above)

So how did STAG get started?

I was not around at the very beginning so will rely on information gleaned from Maureen Bell and our three Borough Councillors. With the imminent development of Queen Elizabeth Barracks our Councillors were looking to consult with residents and produced a questionnaire, which was distributed locally. This attracted Maureen's interest, she contacted the Councillors and the result was the birth of Stoughton Action Group. Being 'ladies of a certain age' (their words not mine) the Councillors were not happy with the acronym SAG hence STAG was named. I trust you do not mind me repeating this ladies. Several meetings were called, at various local venues, during which residents were able to discuss their hopes and fears for the future of Stoughton, with particular reference to the QEP development. Following a number of these meetings, a larger Public Meeting was held at Emmanuel Church Hall in May 2000, which was attended by over eighty local people. A few more meetings took place but with nothing apparently happening, interest began to wane. The Councillors and a few residents were however determined that STAG should continue. It was thought a good idea for STAG to become independent of politicians. I was asked to take on the position of Chairman and so a hectic two-year spell began.

Contact was made with all who had attended previous meetings and those who left contact information at the May public meeting. We attracted around a dozen interested residents and meetings took place on a fortnightly basis alternating between Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, in order to avoid clashing with the other interest of members. The members displayed a varied and interesting amount of local knowledge. In order to discover the unbiased opinions of members I requested that the Councillors not attend

the first few meeting and this they agreed to. The meetings were held, thanks to the good will of the then landlord Gerry Pile, in the conservatory of The Cricketers public house, Rydes Hill. At this time I had no idea what sort of organisation STAG would turn out to be. It quickly became apparent that the members accepted the inevitability of development and were interested only in getting the best for Stoughton from a situation that would lead to many changes in the area.

I find it interesting that those people who had been heard at the public meeting in May, wishing to oppose all development, did not come forward, perhaps they had simply not left contact information so I had been unable to contact them.

Much of the meeting time was dedicated to producing a questionnaire for distribution throughout the ward and this was ready for publication in January 2001. Early in January I was advised to hold distribution of the questionnaire, as it was known that the MoD were about to complete the sale of the site and it was anticipated that the new owners, the developers, would be keen to talk with us. I understood that contact was expected in a few weeks, if not days. In fact I/we were left wondering if we were doing the right thing, as three months came and went. Eventually we heard that Laing Homes and Linden Homes, for it was they, did indeed wish to meet with us. Then started a series of meetings at the Forte Posthouse, (later Holiday Inn), Egerton Road, hosted by the developers. Much has been achieved for local people at these meetings and our contact with the development consortium.

When these meeting began it was decided that the questionnaire was no longer relevant, however not distributing it meant that STAG did not get known locally as much as perhaps it should have.

I will stop at this point, before I put to sleep those who are still with me, perhaps I will continue with the more recent history another time, The Chairman being willing.

I enjoyed my time in office and hope that I contributed something positive to the future of Stoughton. I was never going to be able to reconcile the differences between Tilehouse and Grange Road over the distribution of traffic, either during construction or after completion of the site, SORRY!

This has been my biggest headache, but I trust I have not made too many enemies.

I must convey my heart felt thanks to our stalwart members Maureen Bell, Peter Gunner and Ian Godfrey for their sterling contributions to the cause over the last three years and to Nigel for his, since he joined us earlier this year. Thanks are also due to others who have made valuable contributions, including, Lena Tostevin, Gordon White, Ron Pearson, our Councillors, Pauline Searle, Fiona White, Jayne Marks and John Hobarough and many others too numerous to mention.

What of the future

Nigel has taken over as Chairman and Maureen, Peter and Ian continue to make a massive contribution. I hear talk of Stoughton apathy being responsible for our lack of numbers and it is true we must increase the number of contributing members if we are to have further success. I recognise, however that with Stoughton having both the highest rate of births and the largest percentage of employed people in the Borough, many of you are very busy, but these are the very reasons we want the best possible deal. Even the smallest contribution is of great value, so may I echo Nigel's appeal for you to attend the meeting on Thursday 19th December?

Maureen and Peter, in particular, are going to be heavily involved with the Community Centre project, so will need assistance, Pauline has her council commitments and Nigel, Ian, Jonathan and myself will need help with the other concerns. If you have offered assistance in the past and I/we have not got back to you, I apologise, but this year has been hectic, what with the many planning applications and the Community Centre project making the introduction of new faces a little difficult. I hope you will forgive any apparent snub and join us now.

Thanks for this John; I now have a better understanding of STAG. Interesting that writing independently, both the past and current chairmen make comment on the need for more contributing members. [NH]

Day to day matters QEP

Nigel Horton

Construction lorries using the wrong routes still cause a problem and it is apparent that many of these infringements now go undetected or unreported. In order to ensure that all the workers comply with the conditions, STAG needs accurate reports - hearsay is not sufficient to get action.

Infringements should be reported to Samantha Thompson, Residents Liaison Officer who is based in the QEP site. Please also let STAG know, so that we can keep up to date.

Finally I would like to clear up a couple of false impressions. STAG is not the local mouthpiece for the QEP developers nor does STAG only represent the interests of Grange Road residents. STAG is for all of Stoughton and if you wish it and you support it, STAG will get an encouraging start 2003.

Happy New Year!

To CONTACT STAG:

Nigel Horton

Telephone: 01483 235811

Fax: 08701 606635

E-mail: nigel@nhbirdman.com

To CONTACT CCSC:

Maureen Bell

Telephone: 01483 233937

E-mail: mdhbell@talk21.com

FEEDBACK

Every organisation, no matter what size, requires Feedback. Criticism, suggestions for improvements, ideas on future activities etc., you will all probably have an input and both STAG and the CCSC would like to hear it.

Please use this sheet to record any comment and if you cannot bring it to either of the meetings on the 16th or the 19th December, it can be e-mailed to me.

Please provide contact details so that we can reply as necessary, an anonymous form is of no value.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Your comments or questions: