

Minutes of CCAG Open Meeting 8pm 20-Nov-2014 at St Peter's Church, Coggeshall

Attended by CCAG committee members and around 300 members of the village community

1. Introduction Martyn Lucas - ML began by welcoming everyone and introducing the CCAG committee. He also thanked Rev Chris Davey for letting us use the church and the many people who had helped deliver flyers advertising the event. He then explained the nature of the Honywood scheme and the reasons why local people object to it. The original purpose of the meeting was to give representatives from Marks Hall (Trustee Grahame Frazer Steele) and Honywood School (Deputy Head Mark Williams and Chair of Governors Dawn McIntosh) an opportunity to answer questions from local people. Both parties declined to attend and therefore CCAG decided to change the event into an update meeting.

2. Finances Paul Chapman - PL reported that CCAG have £1, 123.00 in the bank. The money has come from donations (some are sizeable) and the sale of tee shirts and car stickers. Expenses to date have only been on purchasing tee shirts and car stickers, all professional services used so far have been given free of charge. CCAG is currently setting up a Paypal account.

3. Charity Commission update Tom Walsh -TW reported that the Marks Hall estate is a registered charity and was given for the nation. CAUSE (Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex) have been in touch with the Charity Commission regarding Marks Hall's proposal to gain £30 million from the sale of land and to give £25 million of the money to the school for their new build. The latest news on this is that William Shawcross, Chair of the Charity Commission has written to CAUSE stating that he will be investigating if Marks Hall plans are contrary to their charitable status. (This letter was sent prior to the most recent news from Marks Hall, see item 4.) TW also said that we are not 'nimbies' and all in favour of education but questioned whether Coggeshall needs a development on this scale. It would also lead to other planning applications in the area.

4. Essex County Council (ECC) decision Martyn Lucas – ML reported that ECC are the freeholders of the land on which the school is build. Cllr Gooding, (Head of Education and Lifelong Learning), has endorsed the recommendations of a report he commissioned into the scheme. This was published on 4th November 2014. The recommendation is that ECC do not support the scheme or spend any more time on it for the following reasons:

- The financial plans are risky
- No direct educational benefits
- It will have an adverse effect on the local primary schools
- The school is 59th out of 77 schools on the council's maintenance priority list (as published in 2009)
- Local opposition is strong
- No costing in the plans for work by the Highways Agency and other agencies

In a press release Simon Mason the Head of Honywood has asked supporters of the scheme to email Cllr Gooding directly to try and make him reconsider. A CCAG committee member has been in contact with Cllr Gooding about this by email; his reply stated that he needs to ensure that council funds are carefully spent and that at the time of writing he had received several emails AGAINST the scheme but none in favour of it.

ML reported that the ECC decision prompted Marks Hall to drop out of the scheme. It is their intension to pursue other fundraising activities and are allegedly seeking the support of the local community in order to do this. CCAG will be watching their activities very carefully to ensure that the future development of the estate accords with the wishes of local people.

5. Honywood and Freedom of information Tom Walsh. TW reported the results of a FOI request to Honywood asking for documentation relating to the scheme. He received 2 files of information accompanied by an 'invitation to pay' over £800 in administration costs and a letter stating that his request could be considered 'vexatious.' He has been in touch with the FOI regulator regarding this; they gave him an example of a request that was vexatious (one requesting information on the, 'zombie apocalypse.')

6. Planning Application Objection Template Martyn Lucas. This is almost complete but will not be publically available until a planning application goes in (so as not to help the developer in any way and to ensure that it is current and appropriate to the application submitted.) When a planning application goes in we will be running letter writing workshops to help people write their letters in the most effective way.

7. Political support Tom Walsh. CCAG are nonpartisan however we have support from the Labour candidate standing at the general election and the Green Party. Priti Patel MP has given her support in principle and we will be meeting with her next month. It is hoped the representatives from the political parties will be able to attend the next public meeting. We have not yet made contact with the Liberal Democrats.

8. Next Steps Martyn Lucas

1. ML appealed for someone to come forward to organise newsletter distribution.
2. We are aiming to get 1, 000 signatures on the petition and requested people take a petition form.
3. We would like to help Marks Hall plan for the future and Honywood School to redevelop on a more reasonable scale.
4. CCAG committee members are still reading through the FOI information.
5. We are awaiting a response to our latest letter from the Charity Commission.

AOB questions and comments from the audience

1. It was suggested that the school could rebuild on the existing site by adding extra floors
2. It was asked who started the whole scheme, Jane Crone reported that she has been watching the school web site and that of Marks Hall carefully over the last months and at one point they were both suggesting that the other party had come up with the idea, so who knows!
3. It was asked what the involvement of the Co-op and the Potter family is. ML said that we can't be sure and it had been decided not to target a local family or a local shop used by a high proportion of the audience at the moment.
4. It was asked if there are going to be more students at the school. Jane Crone replied that Mark Williams had stated in a recent meeting with CCAG committee members that it was intended to keep pupil numbers as they are
5. It was suggested that we, the Coggeshall community develop our own plan of what we desire for our village. To that end a number of people expressed an interest in the Neighbourhood Plan recently adopted by the Parish Council.
6. It was asked if it would be possible to challenge the board of governors at the school or have someone opposed to the development on the governing body.
7. An ex Braintree District Councillor reported that BDC is under huge pressure to accept new development. He had met with Mr Mason when he was a councillor and at no point had he mentioned the need for a new school building.