

Graven Hill Residents' Meeting



ALL RESIDENTS MEETING – MAY 2025

07-May-2025 / 19:30 / Wine Valley

MEETING NOTES

Please see the accompanying slides for the necessary context for the following meeting notes.

1. Welcome from the Chair – Paul Davis

- *GHRA Secretary*
Thank you to Fred Goldie who recently stood down from the committee and existing member Cathy Scarrott who stepped into the secretary role.
- *Graven Hill occupancies*
We now have a full mix of households across site and 621 occupations.
- *Road Surfacing works*
If you find road surfacing defects, please post on 'Give My View' (N.B. There is only one image allowed per post)
- *Defibrillator* – Now stationed at the bottom of Edmunds Drive. Thanks to Chris Grasby for getting this across the line. As the site expands, the GHRA will be looking at adding other defibrillators to ensure we have full coverage.
- Thank you to Verissimo Toste and Susan Weston for the relaunch of the *Graven Hill Newsletter – The Village Voice*. Please email the GHRA if you have any content that you would like to see in it.
committee@gravenhillra.com
- *Working Groups*
You don't have to join the GHRA committee to contribute to community efforts. The GHRA is expanding the use of working groups to broaden the engagement from the community. Special thanks to Claire El Mouden (CEM) for work in bringing the Community Centre forward! Please let the GHRA know if you would like to get involved with any of our working groups.

- *Resident Survey*

A very brief survey asking what we can be working on to make our community better will be released soon. Any and all thoughts are welcomed.

- *General Updates*

- We are expecting a May inspection date with CDC which should see the conclusion of the long-running issue related to handrails in Gateway Park.
- Block A (opposite current apartments and Wine Valley) would house the convenience store at ground level, believed to be a Co-Op.
- Co-Op have also bought the Nursery land, but no progress and may be waiting for more numbers on GH currently for it to be viable.
- No progress from CDC on affordable extra care facility on site between Tancred Grove and school.

- *Planning*

- Iska Garbachkova, an architect with a lot of experience working with Planning Applications, has reviewed the recent Planning Application for 64 homes between Anniversary Avenue and Demuth Street. Based on its content, she would be very surprised if the application is not passed.
- For those residents that wish to comment, there are a very specific set of criteria that are considered and unfortunately, a number of the objections posted so far will not be considered because they are not considered to be valid objections
- Post Meeting clarification - please see <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/115/planning-process/308/planning-application-consultation> .

2. Community Centre/Sport Pitches – Working Group, represented by John McCormack (JMC) and Claire El Mouden (CEM)

- The Working Group driving this comprises JMC, an architect by profession, CEM, PD and Paul Troop. The Working Group is liaising with Nicola Riley, Senior Director at CDC for its delivery.
- The location for the Community Centre is at the front of the site, on the other side of Anniversary Avenue to the school and its playing fields.
- There is a deadline in July to determine the boundaries and conditions of the land to be handed over from GHVDC to CDC. Once concluded, the S106 funds are handed over and GHVDC is completely removed from the process.
- The Working Group has made significant improvements to the overall plan for the Community Centre in the current location.
 - The plan shows access from the centre of the plot. There were significant access concerns with such an entrance and GHVDC agreed to change the location to the eastern side of the plot.
 - An additional portion of land has been agreed to be handed over, which will increase the amount of space available to the Community Centre.
- The current thinking of JMC and the Working Group is to provide a two-storey option, with the lower storey reserved for the changing rooms and the upper floor housing the Community Centre itself.
- The building looks small on the plans but the footprint of the building is actually bigger than that originally set aside before it was moved to this location. Unfortunately, current funds won't allow us to build to this footprint, it will be available for future expansion.
- There remains an outstanding issue with respect to levels. To best facilitate a two-storey building, the Working Group would like the land handed over at a slightly lower level. GHVDC's Planners maintain that this is not possible due to the need to provide a 1:100 fall for drainage purposes. Using separate funding, Nicola Riley is in the process of engaging an independent consultant to provide a second opinion.
- Once the land has been handed over to CDC, JMC will produce a design for the Community Centre and for the whole community to approve.
- CEM acknowledged that the complaint with CDC pursued by Clare Lowe has helped maintain the urgency level within the council. If anybody feels like putting in a complaint, please speak to Clare, who would be willing to help.

- *A few questions and comments were received during this section of the meeting:*
 - Do you have any idea when we are likely to get a Community Centre?
 - Not yet, but there should be better visibility once the land has been handed over to CDC and this is working towards the July date (which is likely to slip a little because of the outstanding levels question).
 - Can we petition for a temporary building?
 - A temporary solution had already been explored with CDC but that this would be funded out of existing funds. No incremental funds would be made available.
 - Both CEM & PD & urged caution on this front given the support and advocacy of Nicola Riley from CDC.
 - There are agencies that let you lease temporary land and repurpose buildings but unfortunately that does not help us at Graven Hill. Should a portakabin be donated to the community that might be a different story.
 - With the ground being lower, would there be a risk of flooding?
 - There will be drainage into the natural brook that flows behind it as well as other mitigation measures designed in.
 - Haven't we been here before?
 - CEM explained that the situation is different this time for a number of reasons. The main reason is that the GHRA were previously dealing with more junior personnel. This time, the Working Group is supported by someone on the CDC Senior Management team. Furthermore, discussions are more advanced, with CDC actually having a contractor lined up, Alliance Leisure, to deliver the Community Centre.
 - We have also just reached the 600 occupancies which was the milestone set in the S106 agreement for delivery of a Community Centre. As a result, there is internal pressure between CDC departments (helped by the complaint raised by Clare Lowe) to press forward with the provision of the Community Centre.
 - There is also a compelling event on the horizon for CDC which all are mindful of. This is the upcoming changes which might see a break-up of CDC into some form of unitary council(s) with Oxfordshire County Council.

3. Community Garden – Claire El Mouden and Maria Spilker led this update with special guest, Zak (aged 9)

- Clare El Mouden and Maria Spilker led this update with special guest, Zak, aged 9).
- We are in the process of building the Graven Hill Community Garden. This will eventually have allotment and polytunnel. Thanks to DGK, Calum Miller MP, DanWood and GHVDC for funding this project.
- In a couple of weeks we will be looking for volunteers to help with the planting.
- Zak unveiled the fundraising total, which now stands at £5,450. We still need a further £1,500.
- Feel free to come and help. Every Saturday morning, family friendly.

4. Events Update – Sarah Chaplin

- Coming up we have a Community Lunch to be held at Graven Hill Primary School. Details to be confirmed.
- A Spring Clean has been arranged for Saturday June 21st. Times to be confirmed. This is effectively a Community Tip-Run. More information to follow.
- A Summer Fete will be held on Sunday 6th July. This is still in the planning process. More information to follow.
- A Table-Top Sale will be held on Saturday 26th July, 12.00pm-3.00pm. More information to follow.
- Currently we hold a Stay & Play session monthly. We are looking for more volunteers to make this session weekly. Please contact Sarah Chaplin via GHRA email (above).
- The next session will be on Saturday 17th May, 9.30am-11.00am in the Primary School Hall!
- Monica Melinsky stood up to speak about a regular Welcome event for new residents. This will start on Saturday 26th July. More details to follow.

5. Guest Speaker – Bicester Mayor, Damien Maguire

- Damien had five more days of being Bicester Mayor. He is an ex-serviceman and attended a Remembrance service in Bicester that had over 1000 attendees.
- Over the past year, he has raised £3,000 as part of the Open Doors Cafe in Bicester. A Gala Dinner was held at Littlebury Hotel. Damien was given an Oxford United shirt to auction, which he managed to get £2,000 for! Damien has done a lot of charity work for Bicester Food Bank and Nai's House, who are a local teen suicide prevention charity.
- When asked what advice would you give the next Mayor, Damien said "Seek to understand!" There are so many people with different needs that need to be understood.
- Please submit suggestions for future guest speakers to the GHRA.

6. Q&A's

- *How do residents know when planning applications go live?*
 - The GHRA now gets notified of Planning Applications related to Graven Hill and can look to let residents know when they become aware
 - Post Meeting Clarification – those in the immediate vicinity will also be notified by CDC (see Section 4:
<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/115/planning-process/206/planning-advice-and-queries/4#:~:text=We%20will%20write%20to%20neighbours,of%20a%20submitted%20planning%20application.>)
- *Why does GHVDC persist with building houses of the same design?*
 - PD suggested this was more of a question for GHVDC but nonetheless provided his understanding. The Stage 2 Design Code is still being finalised and referred to as 'emerging'. This latest planning application seems to be using elements of the 'emerging' new code, many of which are positive (such as better integration of housing types) but GHVDC are using existing house designs from Stage 1. There will be a cost element at play, but the expectation is more designs will be forthcoming as Stage 2 progresses. One to watch.

- *Why is there no plan not to extend the bus route? Could the current bus stop be moved more centrally, as it isn't currently accessible for the majority of residents on GH?*
 - PD indicated that the situation will be pursued by the GHRA and awaiting clarification from Councillor Nick Cotter about who to best contact.
 - PD stated that there was indeed funding in the S106 agreement for the developer to provide money for a bus service and that this was provided and has been used by the bus company. Whether the bus company chooses to expand or even maintain the route afterwards will be based on economics.
 - PD referred to information posted by Ian Castle, a local bus driver, who stated that because of the ongoing destinations of the bus it is unlikely the service will be discontinued.
- *Parking restrictions. How come restrictions have now been placed on Anniversary Avenue?*
 - It is the understanding of the GHRA that the restrictions placed on the far end of Anniversary Avenue temporarily came about due to a Health & Safety issue and are related. There is no expectation at present that the restrictions will be extended any further.
 - PD has liaised with one of the two residents affected and GHVDC about the matter.
- *With respect to the Community Centre, given there is no progress with the Extra Care Facility, is it worth putting pressure on Councils to 'put it where it should have been'?*
 - PD clarified that just because there are delays in CDC progressing with the Extra Care Facility, there is absolutely no indication that they are anywhere near giving up on the development of it. Additionally, this would require further planning applications and significant delays.
- *Who is the best person to speak to about the safety of Rodney House Roundabout?*
 - The GHRA held a quick poll on their Facebook group with an almost unanimous response indicating residents believed it to be unsafe.
 - Discussions with Councillor Nick Cotter are upcoming with respect to how best to proceed.

7. Meeting Close

- PD closed the meeting, thanking all those who attended, all on the committee who helped with the meeting preparation and Pradeep for the use of Wine Valley once more.