

Downshire Hill Residents' Association
Annual General Meeting Wednesday 1st June 2016

Freemasons' Arms, 7pm

Present: DHRA committee members Stephen Ainger (chair), Mark Dennis (treasurer), Bob Buhr, Andrew Neale, Patricia Morison, Redding Thompson, Fiona Neale, Margaret Rodgers, Peter Tausig, Nicola Sinclair.

The chairman welcomed all the DHRA residents. The meeting was well attended. He noted that several new residents had moved into the street and looked forward to several new households joining the association in due course.

Members are now contacted by email; Stephen has 49 email addresses. Members were encouraged to provide any missing emails.

1. Treasurer's report.

Membership fees had been raised to £20, payable every three years. There are currently 40 paid-up members with 11 membership fees outstanding. The bank balance is £946.48. The funds are used largely for the annual Garden party and the AGM plus incidental printing costs etc. Funds for any campaigns are sought on a case by case basis.

2. The Police Station/ proposed conversion for Abacus primary school

Stephen reported at length on the DHRA response to Abacus's planning application to convert the police station into a school for 420 pupils. It was felt that this application was seriously flawed on innumerable grounds and was believed to constitute a wholly unacceptable change to Downshire Hill, with serious implications for surrounding streets, and for the entire neighbourhood.

On the planning deadline of 19th May the formal objection had been submitted on behalf of DHRA, and Rosslyn Hill, Keats Grove and Hampstead Hill Mansions.

Funds contributed to make DHRA's objection to the planning application.

Mark Dennis, the DHRA treasurer, reported on the fund raising for the school campaign. Time had been short to meet the Camden planning department deadline and, at the start of the Campaign, it had been necessary to ask several residents to underwrite the likely costs by making pledges of support on the understanding that they would be refunded pro rata for donations above £1000 from any campaign funds that were not required.. This had been necessary as it had been necessary to move quickly to hire the necessary experts to address technical aspects of Abacus's proposal; planning, educational need, traffic, heritage, pollution, noise. The DHRA school subcommittee had been meeting almost weekly

Pledges of between £1,000 and £3,000 had been generously made by individuals from DH and adjacent streets with a total of £21,000 raised of which £7,500 had been donated/pledged by adjacent streets including Keats Road, Hampstead Hill Gardens and Haverstock Hill.

Committee members had undertaken door-to-door fund-raising. To date, 23 dwellings had contributed. The chairman thanked all the residents, who had yet again responded generously.

To date seven disbursements had been made for experts' fees, with some invoices still to be submitted. £11,404 had been spent. It was expected the final total would be around £14,500, inclusive of VAT. The remainder would be retained in the short term, until it was clear what further steps Abacus made or the DHRA felt was required both in the run up to the Planning meeting and post the planning discussion.

Report on the process of putting together the objection

The chairman thanked Mark for his report and all his work on Fundraising. He also thanked Tod Berman, of Hampstead Heath Mansions, for his energetic and generous involvement both on the school subcommittee and the public campaign.

The Chair then introduced Andrew Neale who had been working almost full time on the technical aspects of the planning application to summarise what had been done.

Andrew first summarised the experts' contributions, which had been independent, impartial, and uniformly of the highest quality. It should be noted that experts were expected to report independently and it was noteworthy that all the experts had concurred with a negative view on the planning application. Together they had expressed (in the appropriate technical language) serious criticisms of inadequate, ill-judged and unconvincing claims in Abacus's application. Criticisms included:

- **Traffic;** the consultants had analysed the data, and demolished the claim that the school would not generate more traffic. For example, Abacus claims many of the pupils will walk to school. Sophisticated modelling shows that for many of them, it will be a much longer journey than 20 minutes and the increase in traffic would be heavy.
- **Noise.** The applicants' own data showed that the noise will reach what is deemed a serious nuisance level for several homes.
- **Pollution.** The scheme should be turned down on this ground alone, because the pupils will also be subjected to unacceptable pollution. For example, two junior class rooms will, by government requirement, need outdoor leaning space and the only space available was the basement well

in front of the school, caged off from the street. This was just where the highest pollution would be. The consultant noted that for an existing school one could perhaps understand it but in a new build it was totally unacceptable.

- **The educational specialist** had condemned the scheme on many grounds (eg disability access, a windowless classroom)
- **No educational need** in Hampstead could be shown for a new primary school. Fleet Road Primary School had objected.
- **The school's external design** was very unsympathetic and out of keeping with the conservation area
- **English Heritage** and Historic England had told the planners about their concern about the threat to the Grade II heritage asset, in particular, the demolition of the principal staircase.

The chairman reminded the meeting that Abacus had wanted a school of 210 pupils. The Education Funding Authority had insisted that the school should be 420 pupils, hence our objection as the police station building is far too small for such a large school.

Next steps

Andrew considered the chances of the scheme being refused permission were 50/50. A 'delegated refusal' would be the best outcome. But the application could well go to committee. If so, DHRA would notify residents of the date, which could be within a few days. It would be important for people to attend the meeting to show the strength of opinion.

The chair thanked Andrew for his review and who had worked almost full-time and tirelessly for months on compiling the submission and liaising with the experts.

It was very much appreciated. He then handed over to Nigel for a political overview.

Political overview

Nigel reported that many Hampstead councillors, Labour and Conservative, had been contacted over the months. Some support for the DHRA case had been expressed. The MP, Tulip Sadiq, was aware of the opposition to the scheme. Newspaper coverage in the *H&H* and *CNJ* had been supportive.

The Heath & Hampstead Society had also strongly objected to the scheme. Nigel Reynolds, of the H&H, said the Society congratulated DHRA and the neighbouring streets for its superbly professional response to the planning application.

3. Planning application for an Eruv in Hampstead

The chairman drew attention of the meeting to the re-application for planning permission for an eruv which was a scheme to permit Orthodox members of the Jewish faith to carry on with aspects of their lives at certain times. The scheme would entail erecting 82 poles, 5.5 metres high. 40 of them would be in the village, with two in Downshire Hill.

The application in 2012 had been withdrawn because of widespread opposition on planning grounds. At that time the DHRA committee had discussed the matter, but had found that they could not make a recommendation. The Chair noted that a short note had been produced which referenced a BBC web site that put arguments for and against. The note then outlined the Heath and Hamstead objection to the scheme. Residents were encouraged to make their comments on the Camden planning committee website or to write in time for the deadline, 9 June.

Several residents commented unfavourably on the scheme and the Chair encouraged them to make their views clear on the Camden Web site.

4. Freemasons' Arms

Mark Dennis gave an update on the Pub where he chaired a sub ctte to try and ensure that the pub kept to its license condition.

One household reported disturbance by late-night noise from the staff quarters. They were encouraged to note of any such episodes, and report them to Mark Dennis (26) or John Robins (27), who are in charge of relations with the pub. It was stressed that details were needed. What date was the disturbance, what was its nature and between what times. Details were essential.

Mark reported that relations with the street were generally very good. The manager was helpful and positive.

5. Rubbish on the street

There has been no improvement in the situation, rubbish is continuously put out on the pavement at the top end of the street. The committee continues to try to encourage both residents and business to stop fly tipping. The council have confirmed that they will prosecute if evidence is available.

6. Basement policy

At last it could be reported that from June 2017 Camden will require any basement development to need planning permission. Before then, a rash of yet more

basements will probably result. As usual DHRA policy is single basements are usually ok but double will be opposed

7. Cycle super-highway in Swiss Cottage

This major scheme will have considerable impact on the street and is being fought by the Council and others. Residents were encouraged to comment when the opportunity arose.

8. Summer party

The summer party will be on 4th September, 6-8 pm, at the kind invitation of Margaret Richards of Hampstead Hill Mansions. Invitations will be issued. Margaret was thanked warmly for her unfailing hospitality.

9. DHRA committee.

Any resident who wishes to join the committee was urged to contact Stephen. Stephen noted that he would like this to be his last year as chair and any

The meeting adjourned at 8.30 pm

9th June 2016