

MEETING AT HARROGATE SPRING WATER PREMISES 22ND JANUARY 2020

ATTENDEES:

HSW: James Cain, Nicky Cain, Other HSW Management plus Stuart Natkus (SN) from Barton Willmore (Building Consultants)

PCG: Neil Hind (NH) and Carolyn Rothwell (CR)

Rotary: Eric Mitchell (Current President) and Terry Knowles (Chairman of the Harrogate Rotary Club Environmental Committee for 10 years, oversaw the planting and development of the Rotary Centenary Wood. Founder and first Chairman of the PCG)

Harrogate Civic Society: Angela Fahy (observer and notetaker).

NOTE: these notes are not a word for word record of what was said but are agreed as broadly covering the main points discussed. Where any clarification was necessary this is recorded below as **(After meeting)**.

HSW, PCG or Rotary may also, in any subsequent communication, wish to expand on/clarify points discussed at the meeting.

Specific actions highlighted in bold.

James Cain (JC) opened the meeting (which HSW had requested) expressing concern that the relationship with PCG had broken down, that the relationship had been good, HSW had attended the PCG AGM in March 2017.

Neil (N. H): concern since 2017 is the further increase in size, and no contact from HSW to PCG re these plans. Agreed that HSW had tried to contact PCG but it had been at the last minute.

(After meeting) NH: Contact was only made via Barton Willmore the Monday before the 2nd consultation on Friday 8th Nov.

Stuart (S.N): as Reserved matters had to be applied for by May 2020 this amended application, for a larger building, was a recent change. It has some flexibility still, the eventual development may not be as large as the new application.

Carolyn (C.R): HSW should have come to PCG well before the Dec public consultation.

T.K: in 2017 HSW said that PCG and Rotary would be consulted about the next stage of plans. Rotary only heard about the plans from PCG. Also the aerial photo shown in the 2016 consultation (and on display in the Boardroom today) shows the site before any trees were planted (or at least none are visible in the photo) so is misleading.

S.N. : the photo was the most up to date Google Earth image in 2016. Lots of the public and some PCG members attended the Dec 2019 consultation and commented, HSW assumed that further PCG consultation would be after that (ie from time application was put in onwards)

N.H. : when will that consultation with PCG be?

S.N. April (after March decision). March decision will set out the parameters.

N.H. can it be before?

S.N. Yes , there can be a working group to (without prejudice) to discuss a scheme, with a full public consultation in April.

C.R.:the proposal still involves cutting down 4 acres of trees.

J.C.: “but 2.5 acres will be given back”.

S.N. 2.5 acres will be developed, whether trees are cut down or moved is not yet decided.

E.K. can we be reassured that HSW will not behave like other developers (i.e. removing a large amount of protected hedgerow as part of their housing development and were fined for doing so). Hope HSW would not just remove Rotary Wood and pay a fine.

N.C. Absolutely, HSW is a business that always operates within established protocols.

N.H. To clarify Iron gate Field and Rotary Wood are part of the “Pinewoods” (as shown in the charitable objects of the PCG, and recognised officially as such by HBC).

N.C.: Disagree, PCG are misleading people in saying they are, the public perception is that they are not Pinewoods, so wrong for PCG to say that HSW is cutting down “the Pinewoods”.

N.H.: reiterated his point above.

(After meeting): NC acknowledges the technicalities of administrative ownership. Though questions if this does perhaps allow for misunderstanding.

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS TABLED IN ADVANCE BY HSW :

Q1. Why has the size of the extension been extended from the original outline planning application?

J.C. expansion is needed due to growth of the brand, which is now global.

N.H. : If not approved?

J.C.: will implement what was approved in 2017.

Q2. It has been suggested that no extension would be needed if the admin functions moved elsewhere. Has this been considered?

J.C.: business has won many awards, is growing. As many sales/admin workers as possible work from home/remotely. Moving any more off site would not release enough space for expanded production. Production has to be here (requirement of being spa water), the additional space will be mostly production/loading/circulation.

Q3. What will the extension be used for and how does that relate to the proposed new jobs that will be 53% office based and 47% factory floor?

N.C.:most of the new jobs (over and above 2017 permission) will be operational. **Agreed with N.H. request to provide more detailed breakdown, as local employment created is part of the planning considerations.**

Q4. There is a condition on the outline planning of 2 for 1 replacement trees. What are the plans to accomplish this, where will this be and which organisations are you working with?

S.N. Yes it is a condition of the 2017 PP. Not yet know how/where this will be accomplished as it will partly be determined by the final design. Does PCG have any ideas

N.H. Problem is that HSW is asking PCG to endorse a plan when we don't know where the planting will be. Will it be adjacent to site (e.g. Duchy land to North, Clarke's to West).

S.N. We can discuss that.

Discussion that followed highlighted (T.K. and E.M. from Rotary) disappointment that Rotary had not been consulted despite the wood being planted with their support and in recognition of 100th anniversary of Rotary movement, children involved in planting. This history must be respected. This is an emotional issue too and a genuine response is needed from HSW. N.C. acknowledged this, understand the strong feelings and assured Rotary that nothing underhand was intended or would be done.. J.C. acknowledges that, regrettably, the relationships had broken down.

S.N.. next stage is to engage with each other, next stage is to give some certainty and reassurance. what if the most important trees could be kept on site, the Rotary commemorative Plaque kept, land nearby obtained and a new Rotary Wood (to commemorate Harrogate Rotary 100th anniversary in 2020) planted. Recognised also that it isn't just about "planting", it is about creating a landscape.

N.H. reiterated that "this is a massive issue for our members".

Q5. When is the final full planning application expected?

S.N. If PP is granted at end March ,reserved matters application would be end April. Discussion with interested parties in the meantime.

Q6. What is the position of the land lease/disposal with Harrogate Council – and when it that likely to be agreed?

S.N. As it is an Area of Community Value nothing can be done re lease/purchase until that procedure is followed. That will only start after PP is decided.

Q7. Will the proposed extension result in a further variation on the condition to restrict the number of HGVs – especially those that transport goods throughout the night?

S.N. . all warehousing is off site, so product is taken there. At full capacity (if this PP is granted) increase would be from 1.2 to 1.6 hgv movements per hour [subject to any condition on times of operation].

C.R. an increase of? 30%.

J.C. all drivers are dedicated HSW drivers on this route, they respect the area, have voluntary speed limits. Likewise incoming supplies (from Leeds warehouse, where all incoming supplies are delivered first) brought in by dedicated drivers who know the route well.

S.N. HBC will now have the opportunity in deciding this application to vary (either way) any existing traffic conditions or impose new ones.

Q8. A further planning request has been mentioned to increase the size of the car park. Can you elaborate on this and will more green space be lost?

S.N. on the southern side of the site there is an area outside the “red line” (on the planning application). The existing access is along that side and may be redesigned.

Q9. *What is the percentage of water extracted from the secondary source that is some distance away from the current bottling plant? Could this be bottled elsewhere?*

J.C. water has to be bottled at this location (to be called Harrogate Spring water), which is why HBC allowed the development here*, it can't be piped/transported elsewhere to be bottled. Any boreholes are within the area have to have water piped from them to the bottling site.

(After meeting): *AF In fact it was HBC idea to have the development on this site, they identified the water source and then asked people to tender to run the business here.

Q10 *Are there any plans to sink further bore holes and if so where?*

As above. The boreholes can only be in this area. [though this doesn't answer the “are their plans to sink more” question]

Q11 *How do these plans fit with the council's aspiration to be one of the greenest districts?*

N.C. This is really a question for HBC but do HSW have a view?

S.N. most councils are making such statements but all development have a negative effect on carbon/water run off etc. HSW is doing what it can to minimise negative environmental effects of business (working from home etc).

C.R. But will you be using more plastic bottles?.

N.C. We don't know yet, HSW bottles already use a high amount of recycled plastic, and all bottles are themselves fully recyclable.

S.N. confirmed the new building will be BREAM “excellent” in standard, as is the existing building.

Q12. *It has been quoted that “Whatever we take out will be put back and the end result for the Pinewoods area will be better than at the moment.” Can you explain how?*

J.C. Proposed development will link the laybys on Cornwall Rd to Pinewoods are RHS, HBC want more people walking to RHS. HSW committed to putting back as much locally as possible.

N.H. many people don't want more formal paths/tarmac etc,

S.N. this can all come out of discussions. One proposal might be to use the path space to plant more trees. HSW want to improve access but will listen to what the general view is as to how much and what kind of access is wanted.

Q. 13. *In what way do you see the company as “being good neighbours”?*

J.C. HSW gave the site for the electricity power station that no one else wanted on their land, provides 30% of Harrogate with electricity.

S.N. HSW certainly isn't a “bad neighbour”. No complaints about noise form site, considerate HGC drivers.

N.H. Local residents' groups would disagree.

J.C. why has this changed since 2017. The 3 local residents' groups have not voiced any concerns.

N.H. PCG objected then, this is now worse. Now the Rotary Wood is “ours” and the attitude to plastic has changed.

N.C. you are losing sight of the town’s heritage (spa water). Since a plastic bottle is at the moment the best way to get that product to consumers the bottles HSW are the greenest, HSW has had many awards for its efforts.

S.N. farms around Harrogate produce meat (one of the worst contributors to emissions) but people don’t say that is being “bad neighbour”.

C.R.It is the cutting down of the wood that is the main concern.

S.N. we need to find a middle ground.

Q.14 *In what ways do you feel you “support the Pinewoods”?*

NC HSW funds Harrogate electric buses, gives £2.2 m to clean water provision in Africa, do litter picks in Pinewoods, supports the Girl Guides building project on Penny Pot, and Harrogate in Bloom, planting of Irongate field.

Q15 *Has an updated ecology report now been completed and can that we shared so the full impact can be understood?*

S.N. The approved consent includes Condition 13 which requires an ecological study to inform the future detailed landscape scheme. We understood that Condition 13 from the original consent would be retained on the s73 if approved and therefore the matters of ecology would be dealt with as part of the landscape scheme to be submitted at the reserved matters stage.

All the base data has been obtained, he will share an executive summary with PCG in mid Feb,

N.H (PCG) ASKED IF HSW HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

S.N. How will PCG organise its response to the application

N.H. will tell members the about the meeting, won’t tell members what to say, they will make their own submissions. HBC has now replied to PCG questions. The big issues is that we can’t tell members where the lost land would be replaced.

S.N. HSW will move on with that issue, will aim to start the discussion before PCG make their submission.

E.M. Rotary have already made their strongly objecting submission to HBC, stressing the lack of consultation. He will report back to members.

S.N. PCG facebook refers to a facts/fake news document that PCG are producing. What is in it?

N.H. some of what HSW have said to the press such as “it is poor quality woodland”, that Rotary wood is not part of the Pinewoods. Agree to discuss this with HSW so that they can clarify.

This meeting has been helpful, but the problem remains the replacement wood.

S.N. we need to balance the benefit and the harm, if HSW could find local replacement land it would be a move in the right direction. Will aim to progress this in Feb.

N.H. The proposal is still a “difficult sell”, if PP is granted PCG intend to fight the land disposal and loss of public space issue.

END of meeting.

Notes by Angela Fahy (Harrogate Civic Society)