

# **PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PROVISION OF A NEW DOCTORS SURGERY PREMISES, STOW-ON-THE-WOLD**

**St Edward's Church, Stow-on-the-Wold**

**30 June 2017**

## **Attendees**

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown - MP (GCB)  
Cllr Ben Eddolls, Mayor, Stow Town Council  
Cllr Nigel Moor, GCC Cllr for Stow Ward  
Cllr Mark Annett, Leader, CDC  
Cllr Dilys Neill, CD Cllr for Stow Ward  
Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Chair, Planning Committee, CDC  
Heather Siphthorp, Clerk, Stow Town Council  
Approximately 180 members of the public

1. Cllr Eddolls welcomed attendees, especially Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP.
2. GCB thanked Cllr Eddolls for making the arrangements for this meeting. He welcomed everyone, and introduced Cllrs Nigel Moor, Mark Annett, Dilys Neill and Juliet Layton. He asked speakers to introduce themselves before speaking, or state if they wished to be anonymous, noting the media were taking an interest in this meeting. GCB said the format of the meeting would be for Jenny Scarsbrook and her team to speak about the Tall Trees application, then John Nutbourne to speak about his new Gypsy Field application, followed by a civilised discussion.
3. Andrew Eastabrook, the architect for the Tall Trees proposal, spoke representing Jenny and David Scarsbrook, a local family for five generations. He said in 2014, following the failure of the first Gypsy Field proposal, the Scarsbrooks offered Tall Trees as an alternative site for the surgery. Their first application was refused on grounds of proximity to Enoch's Tower, AONB and the green wedge between Stow and Mangersbury. CDC planners encouraged the team to instead make an application for the lower/southern paddock with access from Mangersbury Road. This was done and the application was permitted with conditions. Discussions with Stow doctors ensued to fine-tune the plans. The only source of funds was to be NHS rent payable for the building. The original Tall Trees proposal anticipated economic constraints. It was made economically viable with the use of local contractors, and provision of 38 town parking spaces, some of which would have been rented out similarly to the spaces behind the library. This aspect of the application was rejected by planners, as was the pharmacy and the use of the attic floor by doctors. Reserved matters re appearance were approved in the meantime with ten conditions. Working drawings were produced in July 2016. The Scarsbrooks continued to seek finance, but nothing viable was possible. In late 2016 the doctors' advisors suggested forward funding with Assura. Since then the team had been finalising this option, and discussions with the district valuer achieved a reduction in value. The design team included twelve disciplines, and there were six pre-commencement conditions to be discharged, most significantly construction of access, which was about to be submitted. An enormous amount of work and money had gone in to the Tall Trees proposal. Doctors' confirmation that they would sign a lease had still to happen.
4. John Nutbourne stated that he lives in Mangersbury and was raising the fourth generation of Nutbournes in this area. His planning application for a doctors' surgery only on the Gypsy Field, with access directly from the A436 Oddington Road, had just been submitted. He said there was

no need for two surgeries. His application had been made because work at Tall Trees hadn't started, and no pre-construction conditions had been discharged, something developers often did in conjunction. At that stage the application didn't have doctors' support. His aim was to provide a choice, a race to see who would get funding. This year it had been reported that there was still no confirmation of funding, and the doctors' surgery confirmed that funding had not been confirmed, so he had submitted the same application as before. Design and access had already been approved and contamination tests completed, so in many ways the Gypsy Field proposal was a few steps ahead of Tall Trees in terms of planning. He said he had a funder for a project in Churchill who was also willing to fund complete construction of the surgery. He said he was confident of getting funding. He expressed hope that Council would allow the application to be heard in July, noting that, last time, the Tall Trees application was heard before public consultation was completed. He wanted to ask Council for the same level playing field that the Tall Trees application had two years ago.

5. GCB offered the Tall Trees team an opportunity to respond which was waived.
6. Cllr Eddolls invited questions/comments from the floor, and asked that speakers mention any interests before commenting.
7. Tim Healey, retired GP from Stow:  
Said he was involved with trying to acquire a new surgery for more than a decade. Had great concerns about the Tall Trees funding that had been mentioned today. When the planning application was approved in summer 2015, he had been advised that it had funding and financial security at that time and believed that this helped its passage with the planning committee. Two years later that was uncertain. He expressed doubts about the funding from Assura, noting that Assura still had to carry out due diligence on the proposal. He said Assura usually did its own design and building and would want to ensure that the proposal was viable and done to its satisfaction.  
Concerned about access, very tight on Mangersbury Road, and pedestrian access undetermined because not under their ownership.  
The surgery had been very patient, working under worsening conditions. He asked the chairman whether there was any firm evidence between funder and developers which was complete, and if not was this another ploy to procrastinate, and keep a surgery from people of Stow longer. He said if Tall Trees hadn't got the financing, they needed to hand it over to someone who could deliver it.
8. GCB noted that this meeting was not a criticism of Tim or his GP colleagues, who were the meat in the sandwich. GCB said he didn't mind which site was used as long as a surgery was built as soon as possible. Councillors here also didn't wish to prejudice themselves. He summarised the important points identified by Tim as finance, road access and pedestrian access.
9. Mr Eastabrook responded:  
Pedestrian access for the Tall Trees proposal was via the footpath on Mangersbury Road, which would be widened as requested by GCC Highways.  
Road access off Mangersbury Road had already been approved by GCC Highways.  
Financing – it was the doctors' advisors who suggested and put the team in touch with Assura, and since then Assura had been shown all the Tall Trees data, and had confirmed with the doctors advising. The funding proposal was on the table but could not be signed until pre-commencement conditions were met. They were ready, and the Tall Trees team was working to discharge the conditions, the critical one being access road construction.

10. Mr Nutbourne responded that this statement about finance didn't seem to tally with the recent announcement that funding for Tall Trees was secure. He was concerned that that announcement had been sent out as soon as his application became public knowledge, and said it could result in his application being refused in August on the basis that Tall Trees was definitely going ahead and so there was no need for a second surgery.
11. GCB asked when Tall Trees expected to absolutely have the finance in place, and a contract signed with the doctors, and building work completed.
12. Mr Eastabrook said the six conditions were all in draft, plus the phase 2 contamination report (asbestos to be removed). Landscaping would be completed by mid-July. Highways consultant's drawings would be with GCC Highways on Monday and should be approved by mid July. In the meantime, construction of the first 20m of access road was required, and that could start in July with work inside the field, followed by the verge crossing once approved by GCC Highways. Signatures on documents would be required in the meantime, but after clearing and excavating the site, building work could start by September, and then he anticipated completion within nine months.
13. Archie Thomas, Mangersbury Residents Association, no interest in either proposal other than hoping the community gets a good doctors' surgery as quickly as possible:  
Said he was surprised that landscaping had not been addressed before now, two years after outline consent.  
Access concerns – widening the top of Mangersbury Lane would not help with the additional 500 vehicle movements a day round the Bell Inn intersection. Traffic would largely be coming from Oddington Road and that intersection was already getting more and more congested day by day. He said that a year ago Mangersbury Residents Association discussed this with GCC Highways, who advised that, in spite of the approval already given for access from Mangersbury Road, they would look favourably on a change to access from Oddington Road. Mangersbury Residents Association had then approached Mrs Scarsbrook to meet and discuss this, but her only response had been that the problem was the speed at which Mangersbury residents drove. Mangersbury Road access would be a particular problem during the two weeks of gypsy gatherings, and impossible on the days of the fairs when Police closed Mangersbury Road. Pedestrians would be endangered with the number of vehicles trying to gain access to the surgery. He asked GCC Highways to look at this again.
14. Cllr Nigel Moor responded that he agreed with the concerns expressed by Mr Thomas. Had there been a safety audit on access? Mr Eastabrook responded that there had been, and it had been signed off by GCC Highways. Cllr Moor noted that it appeared GCC officers had been persuaded of its safety, but access onto Oddington Road was certainly something GCC Highways would consider. He added that GCC is currently promoting a Traffic Regulation Order with Stow Town Council for a 20mph limit, and looking at lowering the limit from 40mph to 30mph on Mangersbury Road, which would help with residents' concerns. Cllr Moor encouraged Tall Trees promoters to consider access from Oddington Road.
15. Mr Eastabrook responded that the original proposal had access from Oddington Road but the planning department asked for access to be moved to Mangersbury Road.
16. Rebecca Whitby:  
Asked why traffic, speed and landscaping were being discussed, when GCC Highways and CDC planning committee had experts and would make those decisions.

Her family owns land on three sides of the existing surgery. Said she had noticed that Mr Nutbourne's application, in the report on alternative sites, contained claims about the land on three sides of the existing surgery that were inaccurate. She had written to CDC and would do so again. The existing surgery site had been made available to Drs Michael and Catherine King in the 1970s by Ms Whitby's family at nominal cost in response to a community need. She was unclear what would happen to the existing site and thought people's interests should be more transparent.

17. GCB said he understood the problem Ms Whitby referred to but that it was outside the scope of this meeting, which sought to get to the bottom of when a new surgery would be built. He said details about access etc were appropriate topics for this meeting.
18. Alistair Johnston, chairman of Mangersbury Residents Association:  
Supported Mr Thomas's comments as valid concerns in the context of democracy and localism. Said that two years ago Stow and Mangersbury had been promised there would be diggers on the ground within three months. Was there no fast-track with all parties coming together? This was not a good example of how surgeries should happen.  
Mr Johnston said he was also a director of Mangersbury Fields Ltd. He wanted to place on record that that company had prepared an offer to purchase the Gypsy Field in order to acquire the fields to ensure they would be broadly held and would never be developed, providing security for Stow and Mangersbury.  
GCB asked whether that position still existed. Mr Johnston said clearly price negotiation would be required again, but he confirmed that there had been support from approximately 20 residents and significant funds made available. If it had proceeded, there would now have been wildflower meadows and possibly a village hall in place.
19. Steve Jones, Stow resident:  
Asked whether a representative of the doctors' surgery would say which of the two surgery designs would work best now and in the future for Stow doctors.
20. Dr Thornett said it was difficult to answer. The main concern was to have a new doctors' surgery, fit for purpose, as soon as possible. Doctors had a duty of care to patients to ensure that was the case. Sophie, the practice manager, had been working endless hours to make headway in the last couple of years. The practice needed a surgery to be built as expediently as possible, whoever could do it. The practice supported Tall Trees but had spent a lot of time and resources with little progress, meaning it needed to look at other options as well. The practice was not supporting one over another, it just wanted one to be successful. She noted that Mr Nutbourne's site offered room for future expansion.  
Dr Thornett said she echoed some of Dr Healey's concerns re uncertainty of progress with Assura. The practice hoped it was certain because it would provide a surgery more quickly than any other option, but doctors' concern was just to get a surgery built as quickly as possible.
21. GCB said the Clinical Commissioning Group would not enter into an agreement to pay rent for a surgery building unless it was happy with the design. He undertook to take this up with CCG next week.
22. Steve Jones:  
Future proofing – Mr Jones said three people had asked him to bring this up, and asked Mr Eastbrook whether there was room for expansion in the Tall Trees proposal.

Mr Eastabrook said there was 1165 sq m available space in the roof space, which would have floor loading capability for future offices. CCG would pay for 665 sq m of usable doctors' space only, the rest would be for the practice to activate in the future.

23. Maggie Deacon

Said she had worked all her life in public sector and NHS financing. Said we were assured at a public meeting in 2015 we would get a doctors' surgery, and now felt very let down. Said decisions were being made based on short-termism. Wanted confirmation that the Gypsy Field property would be on one level. Didn't want to see people struggle up stairs.

24. GCB said that ground floor space was particularly valuable, and invited Mr Nutbourne to respond.

25. Mr Nutbourne said there were areas available to the east and west of the buildings, so both the waiting room and the clinical building could be extended. For example to provide a common waiting room with a larger range of services, and the surgery size could probably be doubled.

26. Sandy Wilson, Stow resident:

Asked whether CCG would make the decision or would GCC have a say, and would residents of Stow have a say?

27. GCB said we want the best solution, we have a site with permission, if they can satisfy the requirements, it would hopefully happen, if not the Gypsy Field site will be behind. He was appalled that it had taken two years and still not a brick on the ground, didn't intend another two years to go by. Residents may have another opportunity to express views when Mr Nutbourne's application was considered by CDC. They had already had this opportunity with the Tall Trees application. The point was to get on and get it built.

28. Vera Norwood:

Said the Tall Trees proposal had come so far. Noted that all previous applications for development on the Gypsy Field had been turned down by CDC because it was AONB. Even gravel paths and WCs were refused permission. Based on that, Miss Norwood did not see how CDC could allow a building there; it would look very cynical.

29. Mr Eastabrook and Mr Nutbourne were invited to respond.

30. Mr Nutbourne said he had been living with this for about four years. When developing the first scheme, it took nine months to get the CCG and Councils on board. If just one or two more councillors had voted in favour it would have been built by now. He said he was not prepared to keep going. If not successful this time, it would be up to Tall Trees or another site, or someone else taking up an option on the Gypsy Field.

31. Terry Mackley, Stow resident:

Expressed concern about dangerous access from Mangersbury Road. Oddington Road already had a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing that would enable safer pedestrian access.

32. Mary Aisby:

Observed that buildings had been allowed on the land north of Tesco, which could be seen all around the area. The site on the Gypsy Field would be less visible and would not affect the beauty around Stow.

33. Peter Badham, Badham Pharmacy  
Expressed concern about patient demographics. Had consideration been given to how patients could access the site, were there any barriers?
34. Dr Thornett responded that Stow had always had higher than average population age. The new developments would increase the number of very demented patients, but those patients would be visited at home rather than attending the surgery.
35. Cllr Juliet Layton said she had made a number of site visits and kept hearing concerns about Mangersbury Road access. However if GCC Highways had given approval there was nothing that CDC planning committee or planning officers could do to change it. There was no point saying it would be unsafe.
36. Mr Thomas said that, although this was correct, GCC Highways had advised Mangersbury Residents Association that a developer could make a request to change the access. Hence the Association's attempts to meet with Mrs Scarsbrook.
37. Cllr Layton said it would have to go through as a planning application and be reviewed by planning officers.
38. Cllr Eddolls said, as an elected councillor and now mayor, he represented the people of Stow. What Stow needed was a surgery as soon as possible. He said, we backed Tall Trees, and we would back another site. We just want it to happen as soon as possible.
39. GCB proposed the meeting vote on the following motion:

**That this meeting calls on Cotswold District Council to expedite the John Nutbourne application as soon as possible.**

GCB said there would then be two applications on the table and the doctors would have a choice of whom to sign up with.

GCB said he had no control over the statutory planning process, but we could express a view.

Voting took place with a show of hands.

Votes in favour: 140 (approx). Votes against: 14. Motion carried.

40. Cllr Dilys Neill was invited to speak. Cllr Neill said she used to work at the doctors' surgery. She had every sympathy, and understood the constraints of the existing surgery. She was aware that the Care Quality Commission had criticised the existing building. However she wanted to remain neutral in order to represent the views of all residents. Cllr Neill said she had spoken to planning officers about John Nutbourne's application and been advised of August timing. The next planning meeting would be on 12<sup>th</sup> July, and Cllr Neill undertook to request that the application be expedited.
41. GCB thanked everybody for coming to the meeting and making it so easy to chair. He said all he wanted was a surgery built in Stow; he didn't mind which. He might need to call another public meeting if there had been no progress in 6-9 months. He urged all parties to get on with it so we could have a doctors' surgery as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 7.16pm.