

West End Action Group (WEAG)

8 July 2017

UPDATE ON BUILDING 95 HOUSES NEAR MALTHOUSE FARM

Dear WEAG supporters,

Construction of the 95 homes to be built on the three fields around Malthouse Farm, Benner Lane, will soon begin. The builder will be Martin Grant Homes; they have bought the land from Southern Heritage Developments who had steered the planning application through the planning system including the appeal hearing.

WEAG's committee has held a meeting with three representatives of Martin Grant, to hear about the process and timing of construction, to ask a host of questions, and to establish contacts with whom we can get in touch at any time during the long construction process as and when we have further questions and concerns.

Preliminary work on the site has already begun. An archaeological survey has involved digging numerous trenches to check whether there are any significant remains under the surface of the land (extremely unlikely); the trenches have been filled in; the analysis has not yet been completed.

Tree-protection fencing has been erected around much of the boundary of the site to prevent construction vehicles moving above the roots of those trees which will be preserved - namely almost all the trees which currently stand, except those in the way of one of the site's entrances – the one which will be almost opposite the mouth of Malthouse Lane. The exact location of this entrance can readily be seen from the gap in the fencing. (Of course, three years ago before the planning application was submitted Southern Heritage had already cut down about a dozen mature trees that stood in the way of the intended U-shaped estate road.)

The school has requested that reinforced fencing be used along the length of the boundary with the school grounds. In addition, our WEAG meeting felt that such fencing should be used around the whole of the site, for safety and because the existing tree-protection fencing does not secure the site from intruders.

Construction proper will begin in August or September, when the remaining paperwork has been cleared with Surrey Heath Borough Council. The intention is to quickly build the two estate entrances, and get some of the heavy construction equipment and materials on site, before Holy Trinity's school term begins.

After that, the construction and deliveries traffic and the school-run traffic will have to coexist as best they may! Martin Grant have been in contact with the school to discuss ways of minimising inconvenience, but there is no doubt there will be moments of gridlock and chaos.

One thing that should help is that all construction and delivery traffic will be instructed to approach the site only from the north, i.e. from the A319, and to leave the same way. There may also be signs at the southern end of Benner Lane saying there's no access for construction traffic. This ought to mean no construction or delivery vehicles driving directly in front of the school or round the right-angle bend a few yards to the south – though drivers don't always follow instructions or may get lost. Use of the northern part of Benner Lane should also help separate the Martin Grant traffic from the construction traffic for the several Beldam Bridge Road and Kings Road sites.

Parking of construction and delivery vehicles will be on site (except during construction of the site roads and entrances). There will be a wheel wash on site to remove any mud before vehicles move back onto public roads.

The water table of the site is high. Decades ago there was a pond in the north-west corner of the site (the nearest point to the current village pond). Martin Grant will be clearing out all the ditches on the site, and ensuring the site complies with regulations for coping with storm floods. One of the Martin Grant people said "We cannot solve all the flooding problems of an area. All we can do is ensure we don't make things worse". Piped drainage from the estate will be connected to the main drain in Benner Lane near the road entrance by the school.

The construction method will involve piled foundations of the houses - partly because of the high water table. We have urged that the piling will be done by auger drilling (screwing down into the ground) rather than the much noisier hammering in; that task is currently out to tender with potential subcontractors, but will almost certainly use auger drilling. Auger drilling also means less muck has to be carried away from the site, thus cutting down the large number of lorry movements in and out of the site.

Martin Grant will build simultaneously from both ends of the site, i.e. from the entrance near the school and from the northern entrance almost opposite Malthouse Lane. This will mean that progress is made rapidly on both the so-called affordable homes near the school and the more expensive homes on the other side. There will be show homes in the north-west corner of the estate, i.e. to the left of the northern entrance.

By Spring 2018 the first houses are expected to be ready for occupation. Sales will begin earlier than that, with buyers able to buy off plan. Completion of the total site is expected to take 24-30 months, meaning finishing around September 2019-February 2020.

A management company will be appointed to look after the green spaces on the estate, when construction is finished. There will be an annual management fee on homeowners.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Martin Grant team went away with a list of further queries WEAG's committee had put to them, and they will come back to us. They will also be happy to provide WEAG with occasional updates on progress, which we can feature in newsletters and put on our website (www.weag.info).

From September when the construction starts in earnest there will be a fulltime Construction Manager permanently on site, who will be one of the contacts for any queries or comments. Meanwhile if WEAG supporters have any questions they would like answered they can put them to us by emailing contact@weag.info

Recycling site at Swifts Lane, Bagshot

On a totally different subject, Surrey County Council are proposing to close four of the smaller community recycling centres in Surrey in order to save costs. Only the larger sites would be kept open. There would also be restrictions on the opening times of the surviving centres, and other changes. There is a public consultation about this plan: see www.surreycc.gov.uk/recyclingcentres

The site at Swifts Lane, Bagshot – the most convenient for West Enders - is one of those marked for closure, leaving Camberley and Lyne as the nearest sites for us (and, being close to the Hampshire border, the Camberley site will require proof of residence in Surrey). If you wish to express your views about all this, you can complete a short online questionnaire, which has a link from the website above. It gives a chance to agree or disagree with various aspects of the proposals. The closing date is 7 August.

Regards

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