

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

DOORSTEP GREEN – PUBLIC MEETING

The Village Hall, Wednesday 20th November 2002 at 7.30pm

Present: Henry Lambert Chairman Oxborough Parish Council
Chris Heatley Councillor OPC
Allison Conder The Countryside Agency Advisor
Giles Merritt The Countryside Agency Assistant Officer

18 members of the public.

Apologies: Bernie Chapman Councillor OPC
Graham Donachie Councillor OPC
5 members of the public

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting –especially Allison and Giles from The Countryside Agency- and briefly out-lined the purpose of the meeting, which is to create a village green to meet all the many diverse needs of the community, without over-burdening the villagers through council tax.
 2.
 - i. Allison stated that Oxborough had applied for the Doorstep Green fairly late on in the day and consequently out of a possible 25 projects in the region Oxborough counted as number 19.
 - ii. The prime aim of the project is to create a public open space, available to all the community. The main criteria for a successful application are that strong community support can be demonstrated, there is no other public land nearby (within ½ mile) and that the land owner (Ian Monson) is willing to sell at a value of the land decided by the District Valuation office
 - iii. The start-up grant would be 70% for the feasibility study (a maximum of £3500), which would consist of providing a fully-costed plan, including details on the long-term maintenance (a 20 year management term) and completing an inclusive consultation process for all people of all age groups. The Parish Council is obliged to find at least 10% (ie. £500) and the remaining 20% could be sourced by matched-funding. *Of course this first stage might cost a lot less, therefore the contribution from the parish council or other sources would be much less.*
 - iv. A sub-committee action group would need to be established (including Councillors) right from the start, at least 5 members.
 3. Requested items: (a) who will be responsible for maintaining the green – see point 2. iii – the parish council.
 - (b) suggested layout- to be decided on after the application for the start-up grant has been approved.
 - (c) location of play equipment – as point 3.(b) above.
 4.
 - i. It was noted that the main road through Oxborough is both busy and hazardous and that the siting of any play area would need careful consideration.
 - ii. The green, once established, should be kept tidy, especially keeping the grass well cut.
 - iii. Although the land is currently registered under the ESA scheme, Allison thought that it would *not be possible* to continue this once the land is owned by the parish council, as a landowners number

is required to register the land. (Under this scheme, Ian is obliged to leave the area uncut for a number of consecutive months. It was noted that when the vegetation is left to grow unhindered the road is not clearly visible, which could make it unsafe for youngsters and also that it makes it very difficult to walk on when it is overgrown.)

- iv. There are examples of Doorstep Greens, notably Thompson, just south of Watton. Allison and Giles suggested that once the start-up grant has been approved, that the sub-committee could make 'field trips' to other greens, which could give ideas on how Oxborough could develop a green.
- v. Since the road is so busy, it was suggested that more 'slow down' traffic signs could be placed along the road. A permanent 'children at play' sign would be useful.
- vi. Is there a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the two large beech trees? (a requirement of the application form for the start-up grant is that Breckland Council must be approached regarding any possible TPO's). Since it is known that a considerable amount of money has been spent over the years maintaining them, maybe Ian should be asked for an estimate of the costs involved. Ask a tree surgeon to examine them.
- vii. Regarding the busy road, the question of safe access was brought up. Maybe some of the Stage 2 money could be used to provide safe access – a paved pathway? Need to liaise with the Highways Agency if necessary. Should the District or County Council be unwilling to fund safe access, although permission is granted, the sub-committee would still be eligible for Grant Aid.

5. In conclusion, the Chairman asked for volunteers to form the sub-committee:
John Voaden, Charles Ashley, Barbara Pritchard, Susan Hernandez, Chris Mathews, Chris Heatley Henry Lambert and Alan McGee (although unable to attend, volunteered prior to the meeting).

A few final points:

- i. There is no need to decide on the final use of the land until *after* the start-up grant has been approved.
 - ii. The Countryside Agency can recommend a landscaper for the project or/and the sub-committee can choose an independent one.
 - iii. The largest sum of money would be Stage 2 – the Countryside Agency can provide a minimum of £10,500 (this represents 70% of the minimum Stage 2 grant of £15,000. (Projects which cost less than this to develop cannot be considered.) For the balance Oxborough could approach Landfill and Local Authorities who would be keen to support such a community project.
 - iv. There is a website which illustrates the work of the Countryside Agency Doorstep Green projects: www.countryside.gov.uk
 - v. The Chairman read an extract of a letter received from Ian: "...a multiple of two and a half times its agricultural value is an appropriate price to ask. Currently, this land for agricultural purposes is worth £2500 per acre and, as it is just over two acres in size...£12,500 in total....The only conditions of sale...would be that this land cannot be re-sold out of public ownership for any form of building or development and must be maintained as a village green for the use and recreation of the village at large."
 - vi. The next step is to fill in the application form and return to the Countryside Agency by 5th December.
6. The Chairman thanked Allison Conder, Giles Merritt and everyone for attending the meeting and for those who volunteered to form the sub-committee. The meeting closed at 8.15pm (John Voaden encouraged those present to attend the next Village Hall Quiz night, being held the next day in the pub)