

The development of Kews Meadow

Now and then



Photograph of The Green by Richard Gaisford

Strictly speaking 'The Green' is a name applied to two different entities. First, the grass area south of Workhouse Lane, next to the Village Hall, where the Country Fair is staged once a year and where dog-walkers, ball-kickers and scout packs can stretch their legs; second, the 20-house estate, recognised as a successful example of village housing development.

Fifteen years ago, this whole area was Kews Meadow, owned by the Blackman Trustees. Along the Meadow was the Glebe Strip, then owned by the Diocese of Portsmouth. Part of the Glebe Strip had already been sold for social housing – forming the west side of Duncombe Road. The rest was rented by Graham Tosdevine whose family owns farmland along the south and south east edges of the village. A public footpath ran alongside the Glebe Strip, for walkers who had parked in the village car park and were heading for the South Downs or Hen Wood. The car park was built on land mainly owned by the Tyrwhitt Drakes and rented by East Hants District Council. Also on land owned by the Tyrwhitt Drakes, East Meon Soccer Club played on a rustic pitch on roughly-mown pasture; the changing rooms for home and away teams were a dilapidated animal shelter. And this is where the story started.



The soccer changing rooms – a dilapidated animal shelter



Michael Atkinson, Chairman of the Parish Council

Dramatis personae

In 1996, East Meon resident Peter Street¹ wrote a letter to the Parish Council, suggesting a fund-raising campaign to build of a football pitch and pavilion, in memory of Princess Diana. Although the idea was not accepted, the Council was becoming increasingly conscious of the shameful state of its soccer facilities; it formed a plan to purchase Kews Meadow from the Blackman Trustees and locate a new soccer pitch on it.

The Chairman of the Parish Council at that time – and throughout this saga - was Michael Atkinson, one of the family of farmers who had migrated to the Meon Valley almost one hundred years before. Michael is a forthright, practical man with scant respect for the authorities.

The spokesman for the Blackman Trustees was David Blackman², who lived in Essex and admitted at the time to not having visited East Meon for many years. In the 1970s, the Trustees had sold part of Kews Meadow to the Village Hall, and the land to the west of the Hall was only used for grazing, except when the Country Fair was staged every May. The Trustees were anxious to capitalise their property, and fostered ideas of selling it to a developer for forty or even fifty houses.

In February 1998, a firm of architects working on behalf of the Blackman Trustees, Robert Turley Associates, drew up proposals for an L-shaped housing development on Kews Meadows, which would have encroached on the recently-built under-9s play area; the soccer pitch would be located on what is now the Green, and social housing would be built along the Glebe Strip. This was not passed.

¹ Peter and Audrey Street lived in the old National School building on the Langrish Road.

² Other members of the family were widely scattered, including a sister, Ruth, who lived in Australia – which made the gathering of signatures, on final agreement, a tad complicated.

In 1999, East Meon finalised its Village Design Statement, which, as the name suggests, set out the aspirations of its residents for any future development which might take place in the village. There had been extensive consultation over a period of more than a year, with two Open Days at the Village Hall and sub-groups discussing aspects of East Meon which its residents wished to preserve. An important part of the VDS was a set of recommendations intended to govern the design of any new housing which might be built. These included:

- ‘no squiggly worm’ developments, snaky roads leading nowhere
- no buildings more than three storeys high
- careful attention to detail and variety – none of the bland conformity of so many modern estates.

The VDS also recommended that “the soccer pitch be located next to the Village Hall” and that “better facilities should be provided for the teams”.

One purpose of the Design Statement was to feed into Local Plan, which was being prepared by the District Council. This was another consultative process, intended to set guidelines for East Hants. Philippa Tyrwhitt Drake was the local District Councillor at the time, and Deputy Chair of East Meon Church of England Primary School; she also sat on the Parish Council, and played a vital role in this saga, a constant link between East Meon and East Hants Councils.

Martin Hawthorne

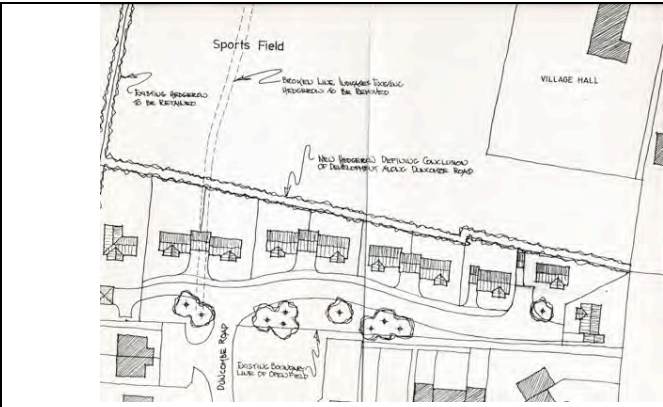
At this point we have met most of the people and organisations which would influence the development of Kews Meadow, with one exception. In 1999, the Blackman Trustees parted company with Robert Turley and engaged HGP, a firm of planners and architects which was already employed by the Tosdevine family. The planning consultant was Martin Hawthorne. Today he is Director of the Droxford office of the international group WYG; at that time he was a director of the HGP Planning Consultancy in Fareham. He looks back on the project as the one of which he is most proud – it has won a Royal Town Planning Institute Community Planning Award, and it is regularly quoted by both East Hants District Council and Hampshire County Council as an outstandingly successful example of village development.

When he started on the project, Martin Hawthorne describes the attitude of the Parish and District Councils as that of ‘mistrust’. “They suspected that the Trustees would sell the development to a volume house builder who would want to put standard houses on the site.” he says. He persuaded the Blackmans and the Tosdevines to consent that they would not approach property companies until exact specifications had been agreed with the Parish Council.

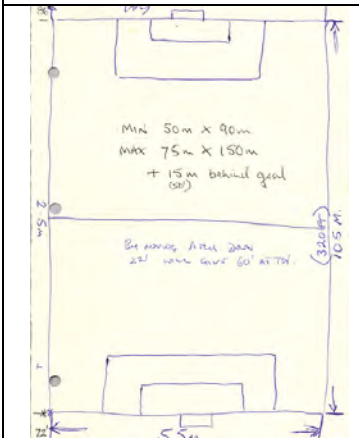
The Parish Council had previously contacted the Blackman Trustees, offering to buy Kews Meadow for recreational purposes. It had suggested that the Blackmans and Tosdevines be granted permission to build elsewhere in the village, to compensate for selling Kews Meadow at a modest price. The Council briefed its own architects, Vincent Edberg, to prepare a master plan ...



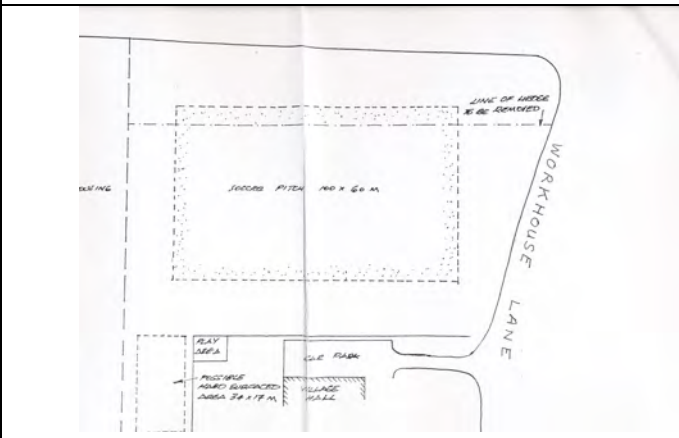
Martin Hawthorne, partner at HGP, who planned the development



Vincent Edberg plan, on behalf of the Parish Council, proposing 10 houses & 'Sports Field'. (A3)³



Official dimensions of soccer pitch, sketched on reverse of cover of Football Club Constitution booklet (A7)



Plan issued by architect Vincent Edberg exploring the possibility of placing the football pitch next to the Village Hall car park, overlapping the Glebe Strip to the West. (A3)

In February 1999, the Clerk to the Parish Council, Bert Perry, drafted a 'Design Statement'⁴ which stated that, although the pitch would fit across Kews Meadows, there wouldn't be sufficient space behind the touch lines to meet Hampshire League requirements. He also pointed out that the hedge of the Glebe strip was not in good condition and suggested that the football club could use the Village Hall for changing. The Village Hall committee was not receptive, not least because it needed the revenues which came from hiring out the Hall on Saturdays for weddings.

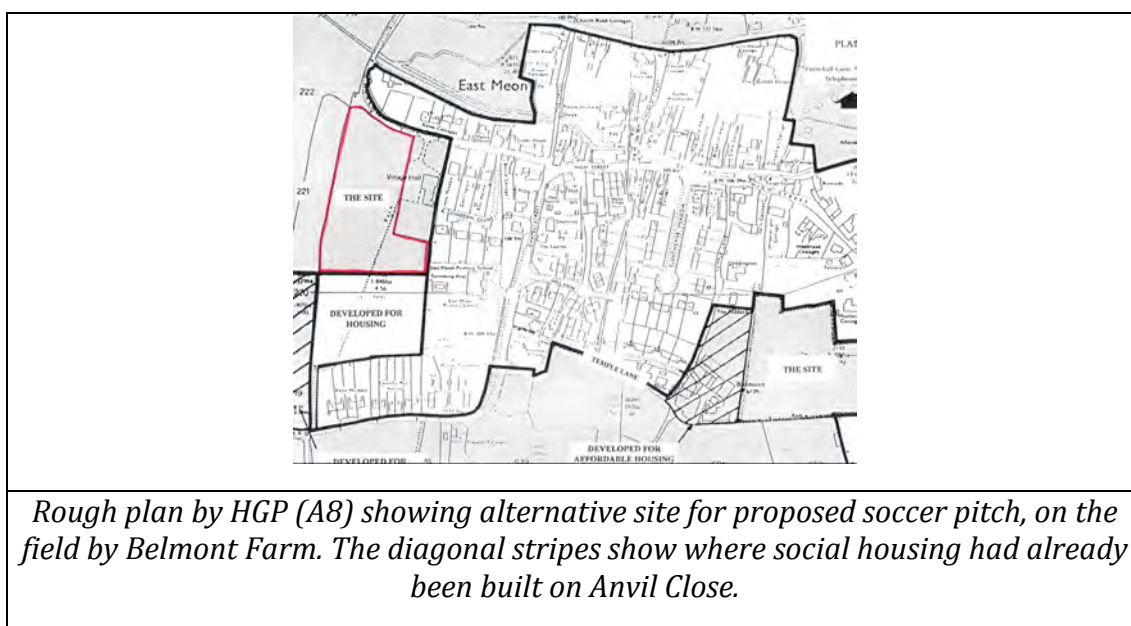
³ References (A) and (B) refer to documents in the History Group archive.

⁴ Presumably intended as a contribution to the Village Design Statement, then nearing completion

Round the houses

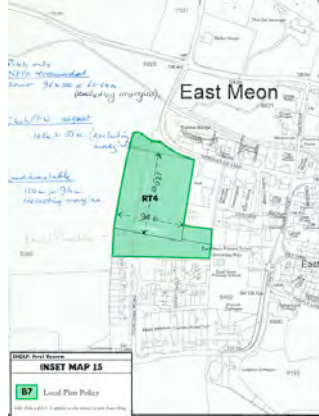


For a year, proposals ricocheted around the village. A significant step had been taken in June 1999, when the Diocese agreed (A5) to a site meeting to discuss the sale of the rest of the Glebe Strip. In October 1999, a draft of the Local Plan (A22a, A22b) was published which supported the Parish Council in its proposal to locate the football pitch on Kews Meadows, with 10 houses located at the south end (where 'The Green' estate is now). In November 1999, a solicitor's letter was sent to the Diocese asking for its consent to build housing at the south end of the Glebe Strip – where there remained space for up to 6 social houses.

It was by now it was established that a Hampshire League standard soccer pitch could not be fitted into Kews Meadow. Hawthorne wrote to the Parish Council in July 1999 proposing the same number of houses, 10, as Edberg had suggested at the southern end of the Meadow; he also suggested that the football pitch be located on land which belonged to Clive Tosdevine, by Belmont Farm (at the south-east corner of the village). The soccer team would use the cricket pavilion for changing rooms⁵. The remaining land on Kews Meadow would be used as a children's 'kickabout' area.



The proposal to site the soccer pitch at Belmont was supported, in a letter written by Mark Whiteley, secretary/manager of the soccer club, in September 1999 (A9).





⁵ In fact, the cricket and soccer seasons overlap by at least a month at each end, so the logistics of sharing the pavilion might have been awkward.

 <p>Inset Map 15 Local Plan Policy B7</p>		
<p><i>Local Plan proposals issued in October 1999 (A22) proposing pitch on Kews Meadow, and 15 houses</i></p>	<p><i>HGP proposal for 10 houses on Kews Meadow (A6), with the soccer pitch at Belmont Farm</i></p>	<p><i>... and 9 houses at Coppice Corner (on the bend between Chapel Street and Coombe Road) (A10)</i></p>

It was also suggested that Coppice Corner be developed to accommodate a further 9 houses. This location was not straightforward – it could be interpreted as the thin end of a wedge leading to further development south of Temple Lane, outside the ‘policy boundary’ proposed in the Village Design Statement and the Local Plan. Access to Chapel Street or Coombe Road would be awkward and expensive to engineer. Nonetheless, this option remained on the table for some time.

In December 1999 HGP sent its proposal to EHDC for consideration alongside the Local Plan, including the suggestion that the football pitch be located at Belmont Farm ‘freeing up Kews Meadow for other purposes’. Nine houses combined with Village green/kickabout area and two hard courts would be built on Kews Meadow and six houses fronting onto Coombe Road (A1).

In April 2000 (A4) Hawthorne sent a lengthy letter to Meon Matters suggesting, on behalf of his clients, that the mingling of Blackman and Tosdevine land offered the solution to the Parish Council’s previous request, namely, that the Trustees sell Kews Meadows land for recreational purposes only, and for a modest price. The new proposal offered his clients the opportunity to build houses elsewhere in the village. (A handwritten note at the bottom of this letter suggests that it might be too long for inclusion in the parish magazine – and it seems not to have been published.)

 <p>LAND AT EAST MEON FEASIBILITY PLAN 1</p>		
<p><i>HGP plan showing possible housing south of Coombe Road. Undated. (A11)</i></p>	<p><i>Another section of the same plan showing alternative layout for housing on Kews Meadow.</i></p>	<p><i>HGP plan, July 2000 showing proposed development on Coppice Corner – and area for 5 social houses on Duncombe Road (A10)</i></p>
		<p><i>Plan, left, showing proposal for two new housing estates, one on Coppice Corner, the other to the west of Coppice Cottages and the south of Coombe Road.</i></p>

In the May edition of Meon Matters, letters appeared opposing the proposals. One, signed by three members of the Village Design Statement committee, pointed out that “there appears to be little space for market housing⁶ Affordable housing may need to be built”, and, “The Policy Boundaries proposed in the Appraisal should be observed”. Coppice Corner and the site south of Coombe Road both lie outside the Policy Boundary. (A14)

The goal posts have been moved

In July 2000, a significant breakthrough was achieved. The notes on this Parish Council meeting state that ‘quite literally, the goal posts have been moved’. They record that ‘Mr and Mrs Tyrwhitt-Drake have suggested that the soccer pitch might be created on their land beyond the Glebe Strip’s outer western hedge, near the car park. To be able to provide the football/village green facilities, the developer says he needs the proceeds from selling 15 houses; it is proposed to

⁶ ‘Market’ housing is priced according to the market, as opposed to ‘social housing’, subsidised accommodation for the less well-off.

build 10 houses on the southern part of Kews Meadow above the children's play area and the remaining 5 on the old allotments and adjacent paddock between Sebastopol Cottage and Coppice Corner Cottages. The Diocese has agreed to transfer the Glebe strip, where 2 or 3 houses can be built at the southern end next to the other development. This would leave the bulk of Kews Meadow and the Glebe Strip as a new Tennis Court and changing facilities for teams and referees.'

The statement recorded that Tony Fry, a councillor who lives on Temple Lane, close to Sebastopol Cottage, strongly objected to any development at Coppice Corner.

The Parish Council note further stated that 'The Council firmly believes that it would not be acting in the best interests of the village as a whole if it failed to give very serious consideration to what is on offer at no monetary cost to the Parish⁷.' It ended by inviting the views of as many Parishioners as soon as possible.

On 20th September 2000, Martin Hawthorne wrote a letter to the Parish Council setting out proposals for 10 dwellings on Kews Meadows, three on Glebe Strip, 5 at Coppice Corner, Football pitch, Changing rooms, multisport pitch, car park, £5,000 for BMX equipment, land for car park, village green 'including pond and woodland', £30,000 for future maintenance.

Village consultation

At this stage, the Council felt it should consult the village about the plans and a public meeting was held on October 25th at the Village Hall. This was the Council's statement at the exhibition of proposals:

"The Parish Council wishes to see the land to the west of the Village Hall kept as an open space, used to provide a football pitch, and available for other public uses. It maintains that both Kews Meadows and the Glebe Strip are needed to provide adequate margins for the playing pitch. It recognises the District Council's need to find sites for housing and accepts that the southern end of Kews Meadows and the Glebe Strip is a potential site. "

⁷ The Parish Council was negotiating for as plentiful a 'Planning Gain' as it could achieve. In return for allowing the building of the agreed number of market houses, the developers would eventually agree to meet the costs of:

- The Hampshire League-standard soccer pitch and changing rooms, on land to be purchased from the Tyrwhitt Drakes
- A multisports court towards the north of the Glebe Strip
- A contribution to the cost of a BMX track to the north of the car park
- An extra classroom for East Meon Church of England Primary School.



HGP plan, July 2000, showing the new location of the soccer pitch, on land made available by the Tyrwhitt Drakes, with changing rooms and multisports pitch on the Glebe Strip. (A18)

In November 2000, Parish Councillor Anella Parker Martin wrote to Michael Atkinson with a summary of the conclusions of the community consultation, expressing a number of reservations but general support. She noted a strong objection from the occupant of the bungalow in Chidden Close which would be next to the new houses on the proposed Green. (A21a & b)

Altogether, 21 objections were lodged which could have prevented acceptance of the new scheme by the new Local Plan. Martin Hawthorne engaged in a campaign of meeting those who had made them. He even spent a day at the primary school, describing the plans to each class in turn, and running a competition to design the motifs for the gates for each of the houses facing the (grass) Green. In the fullness of time, all the objections were all either acted upon, or withdrawn.

Petersfield Housing Association

The Petersfield Housing Association already owned the remaining section of the Glebe Strip, on the corner of Duncombe Road and Coombe Road; this had been purchased from the Diocese in 1993. In November 2000 the PHA expressed its intention (with an accompanying statement from Local Plan 2nd Review) of building social housing – up to six – as soon as possible. (A19 & A22a & b)

Agreement, for now

Two important letters were written by East Meon Parish Council in November and December 2000. Firstly, to the solicitors acting for the Blackman Trustees, reporting that the parish response at the consultation had been favourable. The second was to East Hants District Council's Local Plan team, again describing the conclusions of the consultation process as favourable, and stating that previous 'irreconcilable differences' between village and landowners had been overcome.

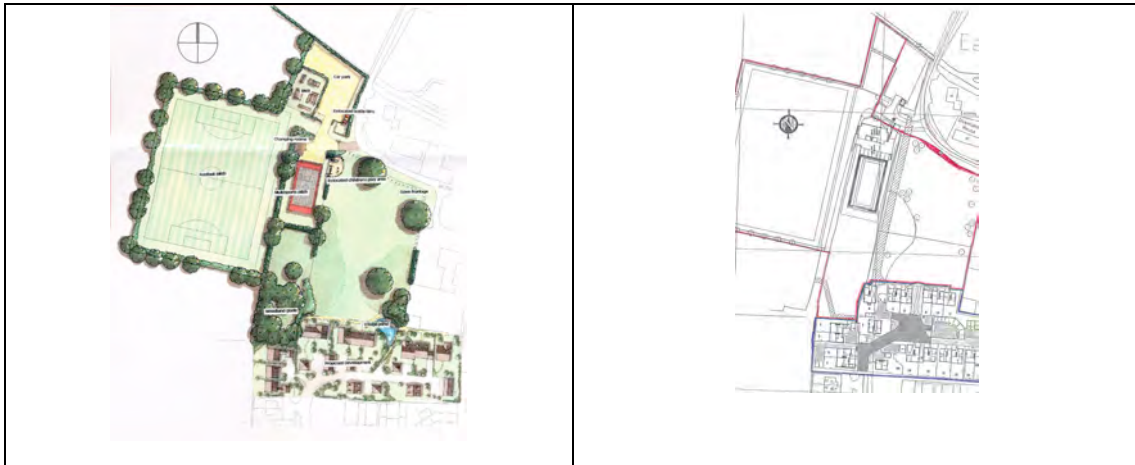
In 5th December 2000 Martin Hawthorne wrote to Michael Atkinson setting out the developers' latest offer of Planning Gain – the football pitch and changing rooms, the multi-sport court and its tarmac car park, a £5,000 contribution towards a BMX track, preparation of a village green including pond and woodland area, the sum of £30k towards the future maintenance of these facilities and a further £20k towards community projects. Access to school from Garston Close would be restored. (A20)

2001

This year saw a change at EMPC – Bert Perry retired as clerk, and handed over to Sarah Cowlrick. In his letter notifying Hawthorne, he noted a 'lack of progress' on the development and suggested that the stumbling block might be the 5 houses proposed on the Coppice Corner site.

Also in January, Martin Hawthorne wrote to EHDC's Head of Development Services, arguing the case for progressing the proposals despite the fact that the Local Plan enquiry was not complete⁸. He suggested that its approval should not be needed in this case, since "full consultation has taken place and there is no alternative site".

At some point during the first half of this year, the proposal to build at Coppice Corner appears to have been withdrawn and in August Hawthorne wrote to the Parish Council suggesting that 18 houses be built at Kews Meadow. (B12). On August 15th, the Parish Council wrote agreeing to this proposal.



In the same month, Blackman and Tosdevine submitted their first planning application, for 18 houses and on September 21st the Petersfield Post ran a news item saying that the application had been made. (B8 & B5)

National guidelines

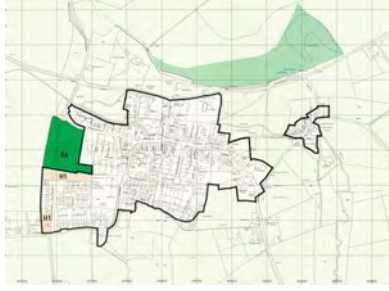
At this crucial point, national planning guidelines come into the picture. In the year 2000, the Department of the Environment had altered PPG3 to increase the concentration of houses in new developments; 30 should be built per hectare in place of the previous requirement of 25. The plans for 18 houses at Kews Meadow fell below this level and the Government Office of the South East would not accept the plan.

Martin Hawthorne made a presentation to East Hants planners, who in turn wrote to GOSE pleading on behalf of the Kews Meadow development by East Hants planners, but GOSE insisted the number on the site had to be increased to 20⁹, meaning reductions in the size of some gardens and re-allocation of garages¹⁰.

On 9th November 2001, Martin Hawthorne wrote to Michael Atkinson telling him that the Local Plan had 'allocated the site for 20 houses to accord with PPG3'. In the same month, he wrote to EHDC withdrawing the original planning application and promising to submit a new one, this time for 20 dwellings.

⁹ This actually represented a concentration of 28 per hectare, still strictly below the requirement

¹⁰ The garden of the house in which the author of this case study lives would have been 15 metres deep, twice the actual depth.








EHDC Local Plan Second Review. Two housing areas are marked (H1) and the Policy Boundary excludes Coppice Corner and the south of Coombe Road.

On April 9th, the area team leader at EHDC's Planning Department, Jeremy Heppell, wrote to GOSE stating 'The application is strongly supported by local people, parish council and district council ...The Council is concerned that the housing element could be considered to be premature and therefore prejudice the implementation of the development plan ... The EHDC Local Plan First Review places the whole of East Meon in the countryside where infill development only is permissible and allocates this site specifically for recreational uses. The current plan clearly does not conform ... The Second Review ... allocates the site for 20 houses, but the plan is unlikely to be adopted until 2005

In April 2002, the Petersfield Post published an article announcing that 'Major East Meon development gets go-ahead', but this only referred to the District Council's consent.

In May, Hawthorne was writing to GOSE pleading that the revised number of 20, although still less than the density required, 'was close to the PPF3 advice of 30 to the hectare'. At some point that summer, GOSE relented. This was fortunate, since Hawthorne believes that the DOE Planning Inspector would, in 2003, have rejected the plans.

The colour of Rosemary's blouse

<p>SURFACE TREATMENT</p>  <p>The main body of the scheme is proposed to be surfaced in natural Yorkstone. The suggested material comes in a variety of shades and has to be set in a small amount of bedding to give a level surface on the stone.</p> <p>EXTENSIVE WALLS AND FENCES</p>  <p>In addition to the stone walls, there will be a mix of brick and stone walls. The walls will be constructed from local materials and will be finished with a variety of treatments. The walls will be constructed from local materials and will be finished with a variety of treatments.</p>  <p>The walls will define the village throughout the development and will be a key feature of the scheme. The walls will be constructed from local materials and will be finished with a variety of treatments.</p>  <p>The walls will define the village throughout the development and will be a key feature of the scheme. The walls will be constructed from local materials and will be finished with a variety of treatments.</p>	<p>WINDOW DUALING</p>   <p>Dualing found on many of the older properties in East Meon will be retained as part of the visual design concept.</p>  <p>The detailing was used to replicate the style of individual properties remaining in the village and proportion were maintained. Following the recommendations of the Village Design Statement curved lintels, sills or window surrounds, door surrounds and dormer windows are proposed to match the period style and materials of each individual property.</p>   	<p>RENDERED PROPERTIES</p>   <p>The study also revealed that a large number of older dwellings in the Conservation Area were finished in render. The render properties generally have classic gable ends with large window panes. These walls were a mix of plain clay and natural stone.</p>   <p>INGLIDES</p> 
<p><i>HGP produced an illustrated folio to demonstrate its approach to the choice of surfaces, window designs, rendering &c.</i></p>		



The final layout of 20 houses, with their gardens and garages, from the same brochure, which HGP prepared to accompany the planning application

Martin Hawthorne arranged a meeting between the Parish councillors and the owners, at which he presented the details of the proposed construction. Samples of brick had been developed with a specialist manufacturer, and were shown. The texture and colour of exteriors were discussed. The house which is now No 17¹¹ owes its hue to the blouse worn at that meeting by Rosemary Ryder, which, it was suggested, was a very attractive shade of yellow. After that meeting, very precise specifications were drawn up.

At this point, Hawthorne and his clients felt ready to put the development out to tender by 'four or five' construction companies which Hawthorne felt could be trusted to deliver to a high standard and to the agreed specifications. Bewley Homes was the successful bidder, and in September 2000 it sent out a letter to all East Meon residents informing them of the fact, and requesting consent for temporary access for construction vehicles over Kews Meadow.

In December 2002, a detailed Agreement was signed between EHDC, HCC, EMPC, CJ & GM Tosdevine, Bewley Homes and W.T.P. Tyrwhitt Drake, covering a wide variety of commitments including the use and maintenance of recreation facilities, drainage on Tosdevine land, investment in a fourth classroom at the school, the developers' further contribution to affordable housing, community, education, and many other stipulations. The Parish Council had insisted on a clause to the effect that the District Council would not accept any alteration to the designs or plans which it had not approved.

¹¹ To the west of the dividing path, now occupied by Alastair and Diana Dudley Williams

The end of the beginning

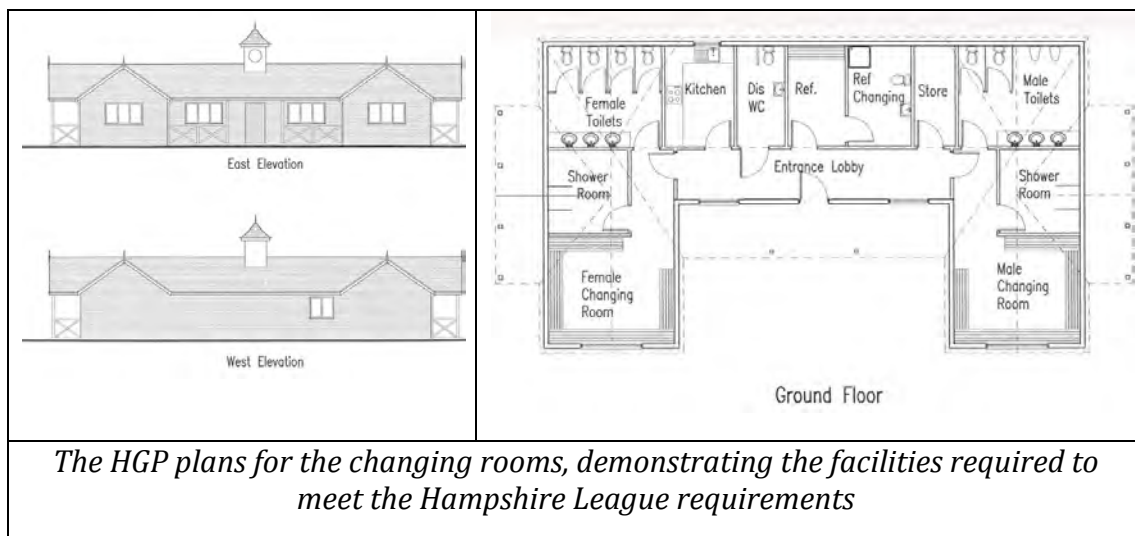
Hawthorne has two regrets. Firstly, that the Government's insistence on higher density housing led to the overall design being more cramped than was intended. Secondly, the scheme was designed to include a small number of windows with small panes, in accordance with the vernacular of some older houses in East Meon¹²; this went wrong when building regulations insisted on wider struts than the design, so that these windows admit inadequate light.

The Parish Council had many battles with Bewley Homes over delays in delivering their final commitments and on points of construction – the trees planted on the Green did not grow at first because they had been planted on ground containing builders' rubble; the contractors laying the soccer pitch were slack about observing the high standards specified, and other niggles, which Michael Atkinson in particular was tenacious in pursuing.

The BMX track was never built, mainly because the young people who had been keen to build it, lost interest – and the site now contains a number of thriving allotments.

The Parish Council was worried about the possibility of water draining off Duncombe Farm and flooding the new development, not least because the development had replaced grass land with tarmac surfaces and housing. Grahame Tosdevine agreed to introduce a diagonal drain to divert the water.

The biggest disappointment of all was the decline of East Meon's soccer club, which dwindled to vanishing point (despite the greatly improved facilities). The Hampshire League standard pitch is now rented to the thriving Clanfield club, which boasts up to six teams (including some East Meon players). The pavilion is used only on match days, rendered useless for community use because it is subdivided into so many rooms and bathrooms.











¹² Old Bell Cottage is one example

Despite these problems, both Greens have proved considerable successes. The housing estate has generated a thriving community of mixed ages and occupations, and its design is closely maintained by the residents' company which took over management from Bewley Homes. The Village Green is, in fine weather, an open space for bikers and casual ball players whilst in all weathers it is a honeypot for dog walkers. The village school gained an extra classroom and the village a multisports pitch which is in regular use.

Planners both at EHDC and Hampshire County Council regard the development of Kews Meadow as a text book example of consultation. "The big thing in planning today is 'localism'" says Hawthorne. "This project was 10 years ahead of the game".

Appendix 1 – photographs of the construction of The Green

These photographs were taken by Workhouse Lane resident (and former Parish Councillor) Susan Hull, during the construction of The Green, between October 2002 and May 2003

	
October 2002	October 2002
	
January 2002	January 2003
	
February 2003	February 2003
	
Early April 2003	May 2003

Appendix 2 photographs of construction of the Pavilion and multisports court

Photographs also taken by Susan Hull, between March and June 2003

	
March 2003	Early May
	
Early May 2003	Late May 2003
	
Late May 2003	Completed