

# MEETING NOTE

## WOLVERTON AGORA REGENERATION WORKING GROUP – MEETING 10.

2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019

### ATTENDEES:

Cllr Rob Middleton (Chair) (RM)	Milton Keynes Council Ward Member for Wolverton
Ed Palmieri (EP)	Milton Keynes Council
Andy Forbes (AF)	Kings Church
Marie Osborne (MO)	Future Wolverton
Allan Nall (AN)	Wolverton Business Association
Hilary Saunders (HS)	Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council (apols; Adrian Moss standing in)
David Beattie (DBe)	Future Wolverton
Dave Boatwright (DBo)	The New Queen Victoria
Rosaline Frost (RF)	The New Queen Victoria
Karen Parisi (KP)	CP Locks
Joan Foster (JF)	Maisies
Steven Norrish (SN)	Milton Keynes Christian Foundation
Taj Raja (TR)	Wolverton business owner and Central Mosque attendee
Neil Murphy (NM)	TOWN
James Cox (JC)	TOWN

### 1 Note of last meeting

- AN noted the potential for additional car parking if chevron parking was used rather than parallel parking as is currently suggested. NM explained how it was advised to move away from chevron parking due to issues around pedestrian safety and general calculus about good public realm and streetscapes.
- In response, RM explained that £1m - £1.5m dedicated by MKC for St George's Way and one-way improvements, but EP and RM would expand on this later.

EP also noted that both Tesco and Lidl have large car parks within the town centre, and that Lidl's is dedicated to provide town centre parking.

- AF explained how Block F should not be constructed, allowing for additional surface level car parking opposite Kings Church Community Centre.
- MO explained that town centre users will find a parking space and will walk from there. MO emphasised that the scheme presents an opportunity for 50-100 years' worth of public realm improvements, and during that time car ownership will reduce. EP supported this, further highlighting how the quality of public realm will improve town

centre experience and stated how MKC's recent decision on St George's Way and the one-way system is above and beyond what is required.

- KP reiterated that people will want to park directly outside the shop, and would not walk from St George's Way Car Park as it is too far.
- TR noted that it is vitally important for development to be viable and there needs to be some give and take, however still questioned whether or not Block F could become surface level car parking.

In response, NM referenced the stakeholder block workshop in March and the need to ensure that a viable quantum of development is positioned on the site, as well as the survey work undertaken at a time agreed with MKC Highways Authority. NM explained the benefits that 250 new residents in the town centre would bring to local businesses.

## 2 St George's Way Car Park and One-Way system

- EP described how on 27<sup>th</sup> August, MKC took the decision to support Agora development through investment in re-allocating the St George's Car Park and creating a new one-way system in the town centre along Church Street to the sum of £1-1.5m:

In short, EP explained how the plans would include demolishing the garages at the rear of the St George's Way estate, to create new parking spaces for residents of the estate, and therefore creating capacity in northern car park. Works will include a public WC.

- RM clarified that the call-in period lasts until Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September, and noted that the Agora redevelopment has been in corporate plan for 25 years, and this is a significant step. RM also noted that MKC is currently tight, and £4m is being reduced from overall budget. Therefore £2m is a big commitment to Wolverton.
- RM advised that detailed plans of the proposals will not be available until later date.

**Action:** EP can share papers and plans on St George's Way car park in advance.

- NM clarified that all parking for the new residential units is contained within the site, and therefore the St George's Way car park will be for the town centre only, essentially replacing the Agora Car Park.
- EP explained that there are currently two separate processes underway:
  - 1) TOWN planning application; and

- AN questioned how servicing of the retail would work, including deliveries and refuse.

NM explained that there will be 1 loading bay to serve convenience store in Block A with usage constrained to a small period before turning over to short stay car parking. 5 or 6 spaces on Radcliffe Street will be designated for 20-30 min short-stay car parking as well. NM further explained that the Neighbourhood Plan sets out requirement for tight-grain development which does not enable the opportunity for increased car parking spaces.

- EP stated that he'd like the group to positively engage in process of re-designing Church Street and incorporating the one-way system.

**Action:** EP to host session with MKC highways and Stakeholder Group

### 3 Programme

- NM gave overview of current project programme, including decision to push onto planning, despite falling house prices and rising contractors price. Planning application to be submitted in October.
- NM went onto explain TOWN are going to submit standalone application for the demolition of the Agora in September for three reasons:
  - To tackle ongoing anti-social behaviour around the site;
  - Provide certainty that development is going to happen; and
  - Help to reduce ongoing cost around business rates, maintenance and electricity.
- AF noted wider issues around anti-social behaviour in Wolverton, and the group agreed there is wholesale consensus to support application.
- KP wants alarm fixing, four times today

**Action:** TOWN to review alarm.

### 4 Public Review

- NM provided an update on the results of the public consultation in which TOWN received 210 forms and 97% support for redevelopment of the Agora. NM noted that all the data received throughout the event will be published online, and that overall it was a really positive event with great feedback.

Three main issues arose from the review:

- 1) Town centre parking;
  - 2) scale and appearance of two corner buildings; and
  - 3) character e.g. roof-styles and ornament
- Other issues highlighted included the building facing onto the Market Square and NM explained that subsequently the design team have made changes to the elevation and set back the massing of the top storey.
  - On Block F, the design team have looked to the Minecraft exercise with local primary schools as inspiration for green wall/glazing. NM also mentioned that Block F could have a community-led use on the ground floor but it would need business plan.
  - Following a meeting with the MKC Highways, the scheme will now have its bins collected from Church Street and Buckingham Street with no bin lorries now travelling down Radcliffe Street.

## 5 Wolverton Microgrid

- NM told the group how TOWN have engaged with Future Wolverton regarding the possibility of expanding the Wolverton Microgrid energy system, following guidance from the government on the move to electricity only systems and a move away from gas power in residential dwellings.
- NM clarified that the microgrid is a localised energy generation system, using air-sourced heat pumps to create heat from the air (by swapping with cooler air – like a reverse refrigerator); and how the system would be supported by electricity generation through PV (solar panels) on the roofs of new properties.

The electricity created would be contained within the scheme in a Tesla battery which draws in surplus electricity and pushes it out at peak times with the surplus is sold to grid by Community Group (ESco).

NM explained how this would have benefits for new residents in the form of cheaper electricity and how it provided the opportunity for an electric car club charged by community energy. For the local community, it would provide cheap power to nearby heritage buildings.

- KP questioned whether the development would have any impact on the substation which served Church Street, NM explained this would not be the case.

## 6 AOB

- NM stated how the Agora -Go-Go, has managed to engage plenty people in public art and discussions on the Agora more widely, and how there will be money left for a party.
- DBo questioned what will happen to the bricks from the Agora, NM noted that some panels will be retained and be included within the scheme. However, much of it will be crushed on site and used as fill.
- DBo also raised concerns over the dust from the demolition, NM explained that the demolition will likely take place from the inside out and the dust will be managed.
- Referring back to the demolition application, AF reaffirmed the group's position on supporting the demolition application. NM explained how group can support through the planning application.
- AN questioned the programme from hereon in.
- NM explained how the wider planning application will take determined within 13 weeks and when submitted at the end of October a decision will be due early spring. In the meantime, there will be work behind the scenes on detailed design, contracting and procurement, selecting a Registered Provider for the affordable housing with one-eye on the housing market and Brexit.

NM described how the scheme is tight financially, and how currently the scheme would struggle to be profitable in good market. However, NM clarified that when 'hell breaks loose' i.e. Brexit, the timings should align with the project and therefore there is a decent period for market to recover. NM went onto further explain that a 'Normal developer' would re-design the scheme to trim costs but TOWN are committed to design quality and how TOWN plan to sell homes when the market recovers and plan

to go to contractors when tender prices low. If this is not possible, the scheme may be built in three phases rather than two.

- AN questioned any S.278 works on stopping up the highways. RM explained that is a separate process subject to public comment, like the planning application. NM explained how TOWN are presuming a 6 month period to discharge all conditions, on any permission and that period will include TROs and other legal agreements.
- The group agreed that access between Church Street to the Market Square should be maintained at all times. NM explained this was down to the contractor but agreed it should be retained.

**Action:** TOWN to include within requirement for demolition tender document.

- AF asked if the London Plain Trees opposite Kings Church Community Centre would be retained. NM explained that the arboriculturalist have justified their removal as they are in poor health due to being planted too close together.
- AF noted that there had been two representations to Kings Church Community Centre's licensing application, and that a licence had agreed with MKC.
- RF raised a deed of easement agreed between a developer and the nearby Stables Public House, and raised concerns about new housing and noise complaints.

**Action:** TOWN to review deed of easement provided by RF.

RM explained that the Deed of Easement doesn't waiver people's statutory rights to complain to MKC about public nuisances. NM that explained noise is a statutory nuisance and people moving to Wolverton, moving onto a busy street will expect noise; and therefore, a low level of conflict is expected.

- AN raised concerns around the current proposals for buses on Church Street. RM explained Cllr Normal Miles raised concerns over shelter.

NM explained proposed shelter will have real-time information and that MKC Highways haven't asked TOWN to provide additional bus shelters. NM explained how the new development will have three bus stops (within a layby) in a row, with single shelter at the first where people will wait at head of the bus queue.

EP noted that it is already on MKC's radar, and it's on TOWN radar and that It will be looked at as a part of the planning process. EP explained that space is tight on Church Street and therefore the proposals have to do the best we can with the space available.

**Action:** TOWN to review bus stop.

- AF shared an annotated plan which showed potential car parking capacity if Block F was not to be constructed and a surface level car park was provided instead.
- NM explained that people can now register on the Love Wolverton website for residential and retail units.

JC TOWN

September 2019