

MEETING NOTE

WOLVERTON AGORA TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP – MEETING 3.

13th November 2018

ATTENDEES:

Cllr Rob Middleton (Chair)	Milton Keynes Council and Ward Member for Wolverton
Ed Palmieri	Milton Keynes Council
Andy Forbes	Kings Church
Marie Osborne	Future Wolverton
Taj Raja	Wolverton business owner and Central Mosque attendee
Allan Nall	Wolverton Business Association
Hilary Saunders	Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council
David Beattie	Future Wolverton
Steve Barby	Future Wolverton and Town Council Representative
Jonny Anstead	TOWN
Neil Murphy	TOWN
Marketa Nosalova	TOWN

General

AF circulated notes from Agora & Agora Car Park Working Group Survey.

NM provided an update on the project. In summary:

- TOWN had exchanged contracts on the Agora and Agora Car Park and completion was expected in Q1 2019.
- Press release was expected to go out from MKC on Monday 12/11/18. Information was now in the public domain through TOWN's and Future Wolverton's websites and social media.
- TOWN would be targeting submission of a full planning application May / June 2019.
- A brief overview of the investment partner, Trivselhus, was provided. It was noted that Trivselhus are currently building a project in MK and that TOWN are also completing a project with Trivselhus in Cambridge.
- The ownership of the Agora would be transferred with vacant possession in Q1 2019.
- It was noted that the company owning the Agora and Agora Car Park will be called Love Wolverton Ltd.

Demolition

- NM noted that under normal circumstances a building cannot be demolished in a conservation area without having planning consent for its replacement. But given the strong support for the demolition of the Agora, TOWN expected to propose that early demolition be considered in this case.
- The question of demolition was opened to the group for debate.
- There was general agreement that an early demolition of the Agora would be desirable.
- It was noted that demolition of the Agora would demonstrate intent to develop to local residents and this would be likely be perceived as a positive step forward.
- There was some concern raised over existing tenants in the Agora. In particular it was noted that a new tenant selling carpets and lino had just moved in recently.
- NM clarified that the sale contract for the Agora required the Agora to be sold vacant possession. All tenants are therefore understood to be on leases with a notice period of 4-6 weeks.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement - General

- JA would be leading for TOWN on public and stakeholder engagement.
- The engagement programme would build on key principles that have already been consulted on and established through previous documents such as the Wolverton Regeneration Strategy (SPD adopted 2004), Agora Development brief SPD (adopted 2013), Wolverton Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2015), etc. Therefore, the public consultation was expected to be based on a number of established principles as opposed to starting with a blank sheet of paper.
- It was noted that some principles of the scheme are linked to the viability of the project given that TOWN has clear commercial parameters in order to make the agreement for the Agora and Agora Car Park viable.
- TOWN invited Transport Working Group to help with the public engagement process. The Group is in a strong position to be the backbone to engaging with the local community given the different voices it represents. TOWN suggested expanding the terms of reference of the Group in order to make it not only specific to parking and transport but also relevant to other topics relating to the development. There was general agreement on widening the scope of the Group.
- Widening membership of the group was considered, and MO suggested greater involvement from local schools. In general it was noted that relevant individuals can be invited on an ad-hoc basis to workshops without necessarily being part of the core group. It was noted that elderly housing, education and aesthetics are some topics that should be considered further in the future and community engagement in these areas will be required.
- SB noted that there is a general concern in Wolverton over change being for the worse. The worry that the Agora will be replaced by a scheme that is less popular with residents will need to be carefully managed. NM noted that the Group will serve as a helpful sounding board in mitigating these concerns and understanding the reactions of the local community prior to decisions being set in stone.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement - MKC

- AN noted that MKC's engagement with the local community would be very important in understanding what is best for residents and for Wolverton.
- EP noted that MKC takes public engagement for the Agora seriously and one of the reasons MKC has chosen TOWN is due to its passion for Wolverton and understanding of the place through working on the neighbourhood plan previously, etc. EP also noted that MKC as the landowner have a certain level of authority over the scheme and specifically the terms of sale give MKC some control prior to the scheme being submitted for planning.
- It was noted that TOWN will have a Planning Performance Agreement with MKC allowing for a reiterative dialogue prior to submission of the full planning application. Although TOWN will be expected to coordinate with MKC at the public consultation on topics such as parking, it was noted that TOWN only has control over what is within the red boundary line.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement - Process

JA provided an overview of the expected engagement process. In summary:

- The next Group meeting will take place in December.
- A workshop will be set up in January. This will take the form of a working session where key topics for the development will be discussed in workshop format.
- It was noted that the Group would form a strong core group for the workshop given the experience and knowledge of the members regarding the main issues around the development.
- Other individuals would be invited to join this workshop, including relevant representatives from MKC. But the workshop will not be a public event and the group will be kept to approximately 30 people in order to make the session as productive and focussed as possible.
- It is expected the individuals at the workshop will be split into groups tackling different issues relating to the development and coming up with solutions within a clear set of parameters.
- RM noted that the workshop will be most efficient if it is focussed around the key themes that are the main concerns for the local community such as transport, parking and aesthetics.
- The workshop will need to be set up in the next couple of weeks and topics for discussion to be drafted (see actions).
- The relevant outcomes of the workshop would then be incorporated into the detailed design process and into a wider public engagement event in spring 2019.
- There was general agreement that this workshop would be a productive step forward.
- In general, TOWN noted that the public engagement process will not be just a one-off event but that TOWN is keen to engage more with the local community through, for example, school visits.

Parking and transport

- NM noted that owing to the focus on getting the land contracts over the line the parking dialogue has not moved on significantly from last meeting. The only change to note is that additional parking provision on St Georges Way is being considered by MKC. No decisions have been made by MKC to date regarding St Georges Way.
- NM noted that TOWN's transport and highways engineer consultants will look at offsite parking options and present solutions to MKC but that parking provision lies within the remit of MKC. TOWN will be exploring a car club option on the site.
- HS noted that currently the buses stop at the bus station on Church Street and wait for up to 15 minutes with their engines turned on. This is not welcome for local business owners. There may be a possibility that a bus terminus could be put in place in the parking lot of the train station. This is outside of TOWN's control but has been noted as a welcome possibility. David Beattie had been in contact with the bus companies and will introduce TOWN.
- It was noted that a small part of Adopted Highway land was located at southwestern end of the site. This was discussed as follows:
 - This land was originally intended to be included within the land sale as it was part of the site identified in the SPD, but was excluded from MKC's decision to dispose.
 - TOWN and MKC were therefore looking at the possibility of adding it to the agreement now to allow improved layout in that part of the development,
 - As adopted highway, it is not currently developable. For it to become developable, TOWN would need to submit an application and propose alternative access arrangements. This would likely only take place after the submission of the planning application.
 - It was noted that residents may be concerned that the highway would be stopped up before a new access was made available. TOWN emphasised that this would not be the case as the site's status as Adopted Highway require the above process to be followed.
 - RM gave reassurance that residents would still be able to access their properties.

Other

- MO noted that there should be a strategy in place for the high street in order to support existing businesses while development is taking place.

Actions

- TOWN to circulate minutes of meeting by cob Tuesday 20/11/18.
- JA to collate draft FAQ and answers by Thursday 22/11/18.
- NM to draft revised working group terms of reference by cob Tuesday 20/11/18.
- TOWN to set up and scope workshop in January including a draft list of workshop themes.
- MKC and TOWN to consider relevant individuals to attend workshop in January.
- TOWN to set up next meeting in early to mid-December.

- TOWN to arrange site visit to Marmalade Lane.