

MEETING NOTE

WOLVERTON AGORA TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP – MEETING 1.

5th February 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
Mike Edwards	Future Wolverton
Taj Raja	Wolverton business owner and Central Mosque attendee
Allan Nall	Wolverton Business Association
Amanda Webster	Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council
Hilary Saunders	Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council
Muhammed ?	Central Mosque
Jonny Anstead	TOWN
Neil Murphy	TOWN

Terms of Reference

RM asked if these had been received and for any comments. Andy Forbes and Taj Raja indicated they were still to see these.

Action: TOWN to recirculate.

Presentation and key issues

NM gave a presentation of background, context and key issues. Action: TOWN to circulate PDF of presentation to members.

RM Outlined key issues, picking up from NM's presentation:

- Viability is central issue. MKC in period of austerity and can't simply step in to help deliver this. The scheme must wash its face.
- It's acknowledged that local groups and users of local services and shops have difficulty parking.
- Public transport is also important.
- There are constraints on budgets so s106 contributions can't simply be reduced to offset viability issues elsewhere.
- Affordable housing levels are being protected MKC from a development control (DC) point of view.

- Commercial vs residential – question as to whether residential is more valuable.
- The approach has to be underpinned by the Wolverton Neighbourhood Plan – this must be the starting point – albeit as a platform for conversation. Like any policy, DC can consider it in wider context.

Questions / clarifications following presentation

HS: asked NM to expand on what was intended by way of accommodation for older people

NM – opportunity identified by Future Wolverton and market advice. Could be 55+ facility. Would be located in dedicated block at gateway with external space and balconies etc. Could be part of an appropriate response adjacent to listed church. Helps to spread the commercial risk.

AN: MKC hold the key to the scheme. St Georges parking has been half empty. Could be used at weekends and weekdays on a restricted basis.

RM clarified that MKC can help by looking at its landholdings around Wolverton or in similar ways (rather than financially).

ME: within policy, is there a percentage specified for affordable housing? RM confirmed 30% is MKC policy and will go to 31% in future

ME suggested c.35m2 starter flats to be included. NM confirmed that some 37m2 studios were included in mix and that the development would be designed to appeal to among others young people who want a town centre location near the station.

ME asked whether TOWN was planning to undertake car parking study in house. NM confirmed a transport consultancy would be working for TOWN and could include this in scope; the methodology would have to be agreed with MKC and others.

ME pointed out that transport could be different in 20-30 years – greater or lesser use. NM agreed that movement would likely become more service-based in future. While this would be considered, a transport strategy would need to persuade MKC as to today's situation.

MO Could an action from today's meeting be for MKC to list what sites it owns in the town to help enable parking? Opportunities to improve the situation for existing residents. EP confirmed.

AF asked whether the design would be Victorian-friendly? NM confirmed that it wouldn't be a pastiche design, but one that would reflect and be sensitive to its context.

AF outlined a series of issues, including:

- Emphasised that it is not only about the viability of scheme, but what is already there – existing business have to wash their faces. King's Church relies on renters of space to pay bills to fund non-profit activity.
- Oil tanker needs to be able to go in and out of St Georges.
- St Francis and St Georges both do lots of funerals and weddings. Kings will also be doing these.
- Kings hosts dance clubs and the planning department insisted on parking when this was commenced in 2014.
- Baby Basics – 0-5 charity – lots of deliveries of food, baby clothes, etc.
- To support the above, Kings is reliant on users renting its space. MKC award them rates relief.

- Kings is the only place offering Universal Credit advice.
- Brickhill expert never spoke to stakeholders about parking and never visited when there were any cars.
- AF has observed 100 cars using the Agora car park most weekdays.
- Tesco's is close by but has a Customers Only car parking sign
- Glyn Sq. enforces parking restrictions by issuing £100 parking fines.

AN explained that Church St is northern terminus for MK buses – not very good, substandard bus bay of incorrect width and other issues. Brickhill scheme was appalling from a public transport point of view. This needs to be upgraded as part of the scheme to appropriate standards.

NM confirmed TOWN was not just looking within red line of the site but at the surrounding streets. Asked whether a one-way system may help this situation? This would enable some angled parking at the same time as sorting out the bus stands. Not yet clear whether this would / should be explored as part of proposal. Action: TOWN to seek clarification from MKC on potential remit for study of one-way streets/bus stopping/street parking.

HS: Junction Radcliffe and Church St is also difficult at present as buses come into oncoming traffic. Might signals be considered? Creed St junction also an issue.

TR: keen and excited about redevelopment plans – this has been wanted for decades. TR was also part of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. Reassured about the sensitivity of design etc, thanks to TOWN's previous involvement in that process and as part of the Prince's Foundation Team. Noted that as well as being excited about the scheme, there is concern about making another mistake that will be regretted for decades to come. Noted in particular that the Pakistani community use the Mosque, especially during festival periods. The plan to redevelop the car park is of some concern – would like to see what can be done over the road, hesitant about how useful other spaces will be to these users. Explained while it is traditional for Mosque users to travel with others, this is not always possible may travel owing to individual circumstances. Many worshippers are taxi drivers; some will be working in MK but not living here.

ME: Lidl will have 150 spaces at end of Radcliffe Street which may help. Action: TOWN to check what Lidl planning permission says about town centre car parking.

AF: post office – elderly people needing help to access their savings. Need a post office.

MO: A business in Wolverton is understood to be looking to host a post office.

MO – public transport needs to be a focus as well – it's as much about people who don't own cars.

JA emphasised that while it's clear that organisations are, or feel, dependent on the car park, they have no inherent right to use it for general use (and that a current or future Agora purchaser could withdraw it from general public use other than associated with the Agora) – therefore it seemed important to establish a more appropriate and permanent approach to meeting parking needs (which the Agora redevelopment may play a part in).

AN asked how much retail was envisaged. NM explained that 1,200 m² allowed for. Top up supermarket; and small, fronted shops / A-class uses to complement. Co-op not apparently interested. Engaging retail expert. There could also be some community use.

Next steps / summary of actions

- Focus here is mainly here about mobility and parking but it's expected that in doing so the group will touch on other aspects of proposals too.

- General view that an independent voice is needed to help agree parking need and possible solutions. John Dales (movement advisor during the Neighbourhood Plan workshops) may be able to assist; TOWN to approach. This should include agreeing the baseline requirements for different organisations (and the peaks in use).
- Older people's accommodation – some more work will be required.
- Smaller residential units – more detail welcome on this
- MKC to present a plan showing land in its ownership in order to identify sites to be explored.
- TOWN to check and circulate the legal agreement around Tesco commitment and pass on to MKC.
- Public transport – MKC to clarify what TOWN should look at in terms of off-site interventions
- TOWN to circulate a copy of presentation
- TOR – notes to be made available