

# MEETING NOTE

## WOLVERTON AGORA REGENERATION WORKING GROUP – MEETING 1.

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

### ATTENDEES:

Ed Palmieri (EP)	Milton Keynes Council
Andy Forbes (AF)	King's Church
Allan Nall (AN)	Wolverton Business Association
Hilary Saunders (HS)	Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council (part)
Marie Osbourne	Future Wolverton
David Beattie (DBe)	Future Wolverton
Taj Raja (TR)	Business representative
Stephen Norrish	Milton Keynes Christian Foundation
Neil Murphy (NM)	TOWN
James Cox (JC)	TOWN

### APOLOGIES:

Cllr Rob Middleton (Chair) (RM)	Milton Keynes Council Ward Member for Wolverton (Apols)
Karen Parisi (KP)	CP Locks (Apols)

## 1 Introductions & Summary Update

- NM thanked the group for its efforts on planning application. No-one had got everything they wanted but the outcome was good for the town and many of the positive aspects had much to do with the work of this group.
- TOWN to be appointed as Development Manager for the Council, and the Council is funding the scheme, plus St George Way's and Public Realm works. TOWN is to develop out Block C for Still Green Cohousing separately using private finance.
- Demolition is out to tender and will start in the near future.
- St George's Way car parking is to be delivered before the Agora development. Councillor Middleton is keen to engage the Working Group on how the car park is operated and managed, and for the membership to grow to include residents from St George's Way and Buckingham Street.
- Group to also play role in monitoring and issues arising on possible disturbances from building work.

## 2. Working Group Membership

- AF stated the importance of the group getting behind the project given planning milestone being reached, specifically noting the importance of unity within the group.
- NM noted that the positive value of the group, and its direct influence on the scheme comprising the public realm and offsite works including St George's Way car park.
- MO noted the importance of sharing and clarifying the message on TOWN's role going forward, and specifically who the community should contact if there are any issues arising. MO suggested the Love Wolverton website could be used for this purpose. NM noted that a communications plan will be implemented which will ensure the community is kept up-to-date. NM also noted that any future contractor will have a community liaison outreach who will be a direct contact for any construction-related issues arising. NM noted that the contractor may attend the working group if required.
- AF questioned correspondence from WGTC's new Town Clerk which referred to a separate residents' working group. NM noted numerous correspondence from the Town Council, and the need to bring residents into this forum, as well as further consultation on St George's Way. MO noted need for residents and businesses to form the membership of this group and offered specific suggestions for new members to represent residents on surrounding streets.
- NM noted likely separate written and in-person communications to residents on Buckingham Street given direct interface with the site and the need for early engagement on programme. AF noted that it would be worthwhile engaging with residents in The Square in addition to Church Street, Buckingham Street and St George's Way.
- SN noted that engagement with the Town Council to select residents would be worthwhile, since the Council rightly sees itself as the legitimate representative of residents. EP seconded. It was agreed to ensure residents representation from each of the surrounding streets within the working group through the Town Council given their role in representing residents of Wolverton.

**ACTION:** TOWN to liaise with the Town Council over resident engagement.

## 3. Revised Terms of Reference

- SN questioned whether MKC were inviting the group to be formed, and therefore have a mandate for their presence and standing within the group. NM noted the terms of reference states the groups role as a 'critical friend' to the delivery of regeneration of Wolverton Town Centre.
- SN noted importance of being invited to form this group, to ease any tensions on group membership within the wider community. MO seconded, noting it would be beneficial to provide clarification around membership of the working group on the Love Wolverton website, and the Council's website. EP referred to MK Council's decision authority which includes references to the Stakeholder Group which therefore provides the mandate and justification required.
- AF noted difference the group's focus will shift from concentrating on the components of the Love Wolverton planning application scheme to focusing on 'when' (programme)

and 'how' (process). NM noted that there is scope for the group to influence the 'what' through the public realm works and St George's Way car park works.

**ACTION:** TOWN to revise terms of reference to include specific references within the Council's decision authority

- AN suggested changing purpose within the terms of reference to include reference specifically to works to Buckingham Street. Bullet point two – include reference to programme within the second bullet point. NM invited members of the group to suggest changes by email.
- MO left the meeting for another appointment.

#### 4. Overview of Delivery Programme and Arrangements

- NM noted that the following discussion was on draft working programmes at this stage:
  - o On funding, NM explained that MK Council are now funding c. 80% of the Love Wolverton scheme with TOWN delivering Still Green cohousing through private finance.
  - o MK Council have taken a decision to also invest in St George's Way works and the offsite public realm works including on Church Street:
    - St George's Way works to be delivered early, and brought into same construction programme as the Love Wolverton Scheme managed by TOWN.
    - Public Realm works likely to be last to be delivered and likely to be delivered by MKC as Local Highway Authority.
  - o These processes will report to a newly formed Project Board chaired by Stuart Profitt – Director of Environment and Property at MKC. TOWN in their role as Development and Project Manager will report to that forum, which also includes independent advisory surveyor appointed by the Council.
  - o TOWN and MKC are currently out for tender for a demolition contractor to demolish the Agora Centre. It is expected that a Contractor will be appointed in December with activity to begin on site in December/January before full demolition to begin in February 2022.
  - o The Love Wolverton project will quickly move through a detailed design process, before procuring a main contractor in March/April 2022 and construction beginning in earnest likely in September 2022. NM noted that design work for St George's Way will be progressed quickly and included in main tender.
  - o The main contractor will to have split site into two, with St George's Way and western end of Love Wolverton scheme commencing at the same time. Works to St George's Way car park to be finished within 3-4 months and opened before work on the Agora car park commences, meeting Councillor Middleton's public commitment.
  - o An options study for public toilets is currently being progressed, exploring at locations within St George's Way, The Square, Church Street, within a retail unit

in Love Wolverton scheme, and then possible option to pay for management and maintenance. The Town Council will be consulted during October, as Town Council will take on management and maintenance of the toilet.

- o Expected 22-month build programme from September/October 2022 with first residents moving in during February 2024 and the entire scheme to be completed by July 2024 including public realm works. NM noted that his positive programme is supported by MK Council.
- o Planning conditions to be discharged, and whilst unlikely to reopen big design discussions, discussions will take place around design of bus stop as an example, possibly through email correspondence if not a meeting.
- HS joined the meeting, noted parking concerns and public toilets. NM recapped meeting including engaging with the Town Council over the toilet.
- AF noted Kings Church difficulties around insurance issues of having public enter the building for the public toilet. AN noted different needs for public toilets in Wolverton, specifically i) bus drivers, ii) visitors to Kings Church and iii) Tesco's.

## 5. Discussions and Questions

- AN questioned why Radcliffe Street wouldn't be adopted highway. NM explained due to the road not being designed, purposely, to adoptable standards, and how Radcliffe Street would become a Public Right of Way to alleviate any concerns of privatisation. NM noted opportunity to close the road for festivals if required.
- HS questioned the design of the windows and whether they'd be sash. NM noted that due to the lack of environmental performance in 'modern' sash windows, it would be possible to meet existing or future building regulations or the need to mitigate overheating in modern properties.
- SN requested list of items for influence for the group to use time productively in decisions, and that it was important not to relitigate planning and design matters that have been decided and are in the past as this will waste time.

**ACTION:** TOWN to share list of items that are able to be influenced post-planning permission.

- DB asked for an update on the retail units. NM noted that MK Council will retain the units, and TOWN are developing a strategy to be agreed with the Council including early pre-lets to interested parties. Interested parties to date include established, independent, Milton Keynes businesses as well a bakery, butchers, taproom and convenience store.
- AF offered Kings Church for any future engagement activities.
- Closed at 18:56.

JC TOWN

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