

WOLVERTON AGORA REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

Wednesday 2nd March – Meeting Notes

17:30 – 19:00

ATTENDEES:

Cllr Robert Middleton (RM)
Kath Cook (KC)
Ed Palmieri (EP)
Laura Wadsworth (LW)
Neil Murphy (NM)
Guy Rochez (GR)
Tia Castellano (TC)
Adrian Moss (AM)
Hilary Saunders (HS)
Maggie Pemberton (MP)
Miles Walsh (MW)
Andy Forbes (AF)
Alan Sivyour (AS)
Stephen Norrish (SN)
Marie Osborne (MOS)
David Beattie (DB)
Martine Harvey (MH)

1. Introductions & Group membership update

- All members were introduced.

2. Project update

- GR noted council purchased the Agora very end of last year.
- Goody Demolition appointed to demolish the Agora, demolition activity on site will start in April and will continue for approximately 22 weeks. Currently Goody are discharging planning conditions before they can commence.
- Goody to send around a note shortly with update on programme. NM noted that Goody had jumped the gun in issuing letter at beginning of February.
- Main Contractor for the development will be appointed later this year, likely in September. Development work will then commence early in 2023.
- Plans are in progress on St Georges way – Public consultation and planning application have already been conducted and submitted for this. The plans involve an upgrade to current parking and landscaping to help make up for the loss of the current car park outside the Agora.

- Decision from local planning authority to be received later this month (March).
- MP noted positive view of Goody Demolition as they are members of the Considerate Constructors Scheme.
- AM also noted positive view due to Goody giving robust answers in the planning meeting.
- GR noted to contact TOWN with any queries regarding demolition contractor and will aim to resolve this with them. Also, welcomes group to directly contact Goody Demolition on any issues if they feel comfortable.

3. St. George's Way car park planning

a. Feedback from the pre-planning consultation held in December 2021

- GR summarised consultation held last year in November where 68% of local residents supported the proposals with useful comments on the conservation area which have been taken on by urban designers.
- There was also commentary on WC (toilet) – project team have looked at different types/locations which resulted in its proposed location due to a number of constraints which has meant it is not as close to the bus stop or town centre.
- HS and MP expressed negative response to location of WC and should be closer to bus stop. Concern that people will use café/restaurant WCs.
- NM noted another option to look at putting WC in the retail units though capital costs will be greater. It will be up to cafes/restaurants on whether they choose to provide toilets accessible to the public.
- Also noted that distance to proposed WC are relatively short and piece of work being done by MKC highway on the crossings and public realm elements will help to make access easier.
- Rationale for choice was that it was easy to maintain and well overlooked.
- NM noted the WC is a Sanisette style toilet which is self-cleaning.
- In response to concerns around youths hanging around the WC, the Agora Regeneration Love Wolverton scheme will have an area dedicated to youths.
- AM noted bus stop location is beneficial for those getting off the bus.
- MO noted was unaware of WC and agreed with HM's concerns of its location. Perceives this as an add on, rather than a genuine consideration of the overall project.
- AS would have wanted the WC to be incorporated into a public building instead of public area.

- b. Update on associated planning application
- RM noted that working group members could submit a comment on the WC location as part of the planning application, however could potentially delay the overall development.

4. Early discussion on St. George's Way car park management strategy:

- a. St. George's Way resident needs
 - NM shared original plan of St. George's Way car park and new proposal plan which has been submitted.
 - The North car parking spaces could potentially be designated for town centre and visitor parking whilst the south car park would be more residential parking.
 - TOWN and MKC to understand what residents who use the space have now and what they may need and noted the importance to balance different needs.
 - Car parking spaces for residents are essentially closer to their homes compared to where they originally were located.
 - Final decision on parking management will be Milton Keynes council parking team, following public consultation.
 - MO noted close proximity of car parking spaces to front of houses.
 - NM noted the ECVF charging points are quick charging points for visitors and are not for permanent parking but will clarify on other charging points for residents.
 - MW noted any plans for controlled parking systems to avoid areas being taken up by visitors. Also, noted lighting to be considered at the back of the terraced housing and access routes in between parking spaces.
 - NM noted there may be a permit scheme for residents and a charging scheme for visitors. Timing/ duration of parking will be looked at. Scheme will be DDA compliant.
 - AF had a positive response towards plan and noted many people who live there do not have a car. Also, noted lighting will be adequate from existing buildings and openness of car parks.
 - NM clarified that management strategy involves understanding what would be the patterns of use and by whom throughout the day.
 - Also, notes that parking spaces are presumptive and up for discussion.
 - GR noted circa 40 residential units including tower. Circa 12 unit for flats/maisonette block.

- MP and others disagree with getting rid of mature trees.
- GR noted Arboricultural assessment and biodiversity survey being done, and being assessed as part of planning application. This will also consider increasing natural habitats.
- RM noted as the plans have already been submitted there could be some work done separately around enhancing the current scheme particularly from a biodiversity perspective.

ACTION: TOWN to set up separate discussion on enhancing the current plan through a biodiverse/sustainability perspective.

- MOS advocated the sustainable nature of the development including microgrid – may be helpful to discuss separately with newer members.
- Majority agreed on initial free period of parking
- Some welcomed the parking overall due to the new retail units and the church in the area which will attract visitors

ACTION: TOWN to work some parking options to share with working group.

b. Local business & faith organisation needs

- NM noted for group to follow up thoughts and notes of the needs of the local area as hard evidence is needed. For example, AF had sent a note on the church's pattern of use.

ACTION: Group members to send GR and NM notes of parking needs.

c. Short stay/long stay parking allocations

- MP noted all residents should be provided a car parking space even if they do not own a car. Also noted parking shouldn't be charged as it will deter people from shopping in Wolverton as the area is known for free parking.
- Majority agreed on initial free period of parking and charge after a certain period.
- Some welcomed the parking overall due to the new retail units and the church in the area which will attract visitors.

5. Public events and activities

- RM noted would be good to have an opportunity to gather together for the first milestone of the project during the building demolition phase.
- GR noted school engagement event through an online event of Minecraft demolition and also designing of hoarding to kick off demolition of Agora.

- Events to be discussed on those open to all ages.
- MOS noted Agora a go go programme around graffiti art that happened a while ago. There is an outline programme for this to mark the removal of the Agora.
- Also, suggested projecting images of the Agora on the building over time to share the heritage publicly.
- MO noted planting with local community. To discuss this in biodiversity discussion separately

ACTION: KC, LW, GR & MOS to meet on the hoarding engagement and work on something to share with group next meeting.

- MOS suggested for copies of the photographic book that captured engagement previously to be available for people to pick up from the town hall.

ACTION: Photographic book on engagement to be sent to LW and KC.

- AF noted time capsule/foundation stone to be put into building. Celebration around this and for it to be recorded.
- NM noted that we are in the process of reappointing Simon Beckett to photo document the demolition and construction process.

6. MKC/TOWN/Contractor communications to public

- To revisit at next meeting as needs be.

7. Future meeting and communications

- To meet quarterly, potentially Late May/early June, but sooner if matters arise.