

WOLVERTON AGORA REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION – TRAINING ROOM 2

Wednesday 12th July 2023

17:00 – 18:30

Attendees	
Cllr Robert Middleton (RM)	Milton Keynes Council
Guy Rochez (GR)	TOWN
Tia Castellano (TC)	TOWN
Hilary Saunders (HS)	Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council
Allan Nall (AN)	D W Roberts
Andy Forbes (AF)	Kings Church
Gillian Barrow Jones (GBJ)	St. George's Church
Marie Osborne (MO)	Future Wolverton
Maggie Pemberton (MP)	Wolverton Resident
Badar Bakhat (BB)	Wolverton Resident
Adrian Moss (AM)	Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council

Apologies	
Laura Wadsworth (LW)	Milton Keynes Council
Miles Walsh (MW)	St. George's Way Resident
Alan Sivyour (AS)	Wolverton Resident
Martine Harvey (MH)	Wolverton Resident
Kath Cook (KC)	Milton Keynes Council
David Beattie (DB)	Future Wolverton
Ed Palmieri (EP)	Milton Keynes Council
Neil Murphy (NM)	TOWN
Stephen Norrish (SN)	Milton Keynes Christian Foundation
Karen Parisi (KP)	C P Locks
Taj Raja (TR)	Smart Move
Francesca Vernon (FV)	St. George's Church

Meeting minutes

1. General progress update (GR)

- GR summarised email previously sent out to the working group in regards to the PCSA process with Wilmott Dixon, including the need to work through the costs to demonstrate value for future Council decisions and the challenging economic climate.

- HS raised concerns around programme delay and what were the reasons for it.
- GR responded that there has been some nervousness around the scheme on Wilmott Dixon's behalf in terms of perceived complexity of design. Therefore, this has taken longer to review costs and design.
- GR also noted that this does not hinder Wilmot Dixon's ability to go ahead with the scheme.
- RM emphasized that the economic climate is affecting other projects across Milton Keynes and also nationwide.
- MP suggested whether we can change the design to be smaller and therefore quicker to complete.
- Following this, AN suggested delaying or removing block F as an option to decrease costs and quicken the timescale which was also seconded by HS.
- GR noted that this cannot be done as it will involve going back to planning stage which adds further delay and costs in the long term.
- GR also noted that delaying block F until a later date would mean asking the contractor to mobilise twice, which would add to cost.
- MO supported GR's response and noted that the option of removing block F will mean reducing units that are needed in the current housing crisis.
- MO also expressed the importance of not going back to the planning stage.
- RM noted in terms of funding, there is Council money available but will have to go through a process of convincing councillors on the need for funding on this project, and the prioritisation over other projects.
- GB questioned whether there was anything that could be done in assisting the project in terms of political support.
- RM noted that the council will go through the usual processes and meet to decide on additional budget. He suggested that if the group were keen they could collectively write a supporting statement to encourage priority of the project in terms of funding or could be present at the meetings themselves with the statement.
- **ACTION:** There was a general consensus on writing a statement to the council and attend the relevant meetings to support the anticipated future council decisions on fundings.
- **ACTION:** RM to send dates on council/cabinet meetings to the group.

2. Community Improvement District (MO)

- MO gave an update on CID process.
- MO noted that the 9-month engagement process of the CID is coming to an end with various CID pilot areas (and representatives from Power to Change and DLUHC) meeting in Wolverton to discuss outcomes on the 13th July.
- The CID report will be published nationally.

- MO noted there is lease on 'the shop' located at 9 Radcliffe Street which will have pop up retailers and opens on the 13th July.
- MO noted that the CID action plan will be shared in the next working group meeting.
- GR questioned what PTC next steps are in which MO responded that this is unknown at the moment and will understand more after the 13th July event.

3. Future meeting and communications (RM/NM)

- Next meeting date TBC. (*Post-meeting note: anticipate this will be after school holidays*)

4. AOB

Town centre shopping and parking (AN)

- AN shared development plan with shop units and raises concern around there being too many shops.
- GR noted there is still on-going demand for the retail units on the development particularly due to interest in the units offering more modern and bigger space than currently available in Wolverton.
- He also noted that retail units have been deliberately designed to be on street corners due to higher footfall and would be less appropriate for it to be residential.
- GR emphasized that intention is to create a curated mix of shops in the development which will not be takeaway shops and businesses that are unsustainable.
- AM noted there is some interest in current local shops wanting to move in to the new units but there will then be an issue of filling up their original shop space.
- HS also noted that there will be more footfall in the square with the new access through the development and will therefore encourage more customers for businesses in this area.
- AN noted refill shop in Stoney Stratford were evicted due to their inability to pay rent.
- GR referred to MO's work with current shops to make use of unused space and providing opportunity for businesses to promote their goods and services.
- RM noted that the conditions of the retail scene are unknown in the next 3 years similar to what we did not predict during covid, but that doesn't provide justification for not including commercial space and whilst approaches to retail may be changing, high street presence is still in demand for many businesses.
- AN noted that when speaking to future tenants they should be aware of shop trends taking place in nearby towns.

- MP noted parking for shops on the new development and whether shops will rely on people by foot/public transport.
- RM noted there will be parking on Church street and new parking across the road.
- RM noted that overall we should not be promoting more parking if we want this development to encourage sustainability.
- GR also noted that the council has policy that encourages sustainable transport and hence the provision of a mobility hub as part of the scheme offering closely located bike hire schemes, car-club and bus provision.
- AF questioned what will be the estimated population increase once the development is complete.
- GR responded that it will be a circa 280 people but would need to check.

Hoarding graffiti/street art (GR)

- Group expressed the need for a large programme on the hoarding. MO particularly wants to prioritise this and artwork.
- MO offered to assist with a clear brief to give to the Public Arts Steering Group to commission hoarding poster.
- GR noted that A0 poster had already been produced on basis of group's previous request.
- Several members of the group responded that this wasn't sufficient. RM supported this and asked GR to progress a bigger poster/display on the hoarding.
- **ACTION:** GR to discuss with MKCC (Kath Cook, Laura Wadsworth and Louise Izod) and update group in the next few weeks on potential hoarding displays.
- AF noted whether there is any value in providing opportunity for a meeting to show development progress. General consensus that this may be useful closer to works starting.
- HS noted that she saw fences being put up in St. George's Way (SGW) and whether progress had started.
- GR noted that SGW works will commence as part of the main works, albeit it will be the first part of the works to progress. GR queried the fences that had been put up and that the fences were not related to the development.