

# WOLVERTON AGORA REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023

17:00 – 18:30

Christian Foundation – Training room 2

<b>Attendees</b>	
Guy Rochez (GR)	TOWN
Tia Castellano (TC)	TOWN
Kath Cook (KC)	Milton Keynes City Council
Laura Wadsworth (LW)	Milton Keynes City Council
David Beattie (DB)	Future Wolverton
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
Adrian Moss (AM)	Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council
Jacky Hart (JH)	Still Green
Simon Rudiger (SR)	Milton Keynes Christian Foundation
AECOM team	

<b>Apologies</b>	
Cllr Robert Middleton (RM)	Milton Keynes City Council
Miles Walsh (MW)	St. George's Way Resident
Alan Sivyour (AS)	Wolverton Resident
Martine Harvey (MH)	Wolverton Resident
Ed Palmieri (EP)	Milton Keynes Council
Neil Murphy (NM)	TOWN
Karen Parisi (KP)	C P Locks
Taj Raja (TR)	Smart Move
Francesca Vernon (FV)	St. George's Church
Badar Bakhat (BB)	Wolverton Resident

## MEETING MINUTES

### 1. General progress update (GR/NM)

#### a. Pre-construction activities

- GR noted on going work with Wilmot Dixon (WD) on PCSA. Biggest delay has been with laws recently introduced i.e. Building Safety Act.

### **b. Construction logistics (N-S access, car park phasing, Church St closures)**

- GR noted the phasing plan remains that the Agora car park will remain open until new SGW car park opens.
- GR said that during construction likely there will be some section closures of Church St. for periods of time to carry out works on site; the exact detail is not yet known, but intention will be to keep disruption on the highway to a minimum.
- GR said that MKCC & TOWN aware of the importance of N-S access through the site; GR confirmed that TOWN/MKCC are not yet at a stage to discuss construction logistics with WD yet. GR noted not to consider anything being said about closures as has not been discussed internally yet.
- AF raised issue on shop owner concerns re. access via square. Response is as per AF's email previously circulated.
- KC noted have not contractually agreed N-S access with WD. We will need to know whether it is possible to deliver the groups requests on access whilst physically delivering the scheme, being aware of Health & Safety risks with construction vehicles and pedestrians.
- GBJ and others understood it was in the bid which included access during construction.
- AM noted would be good to avoid going all the way to SGW to go around.
- GBR also noted rumours on blocked access.
- AN noted expectation to deliver community needs.
- MP noted to put forth as a high priority.
- Overall, GR noted that all concerns will be looked at once conversations are had with WD.

### **c. Hoarding**

- LW noted that she has been working with local artist Daniel Chehade to print pages from the Express newspaper as A0 posters to be displayed on site hoarding.
- A series of larger A0 posters will also be displayed of the current timeline poster.
- GBR requested for timeline poster to be proof read before printed.
- VB suggested to add indicative phasing of access to timeline poster.
- GR noted hoarding displays have been deliberately kept at low costs and to reduce waste as hoarding will come down when WD are on site.
- LW noted no costs have been confirmed for hoarding posters but will be approximately £3k.
- AF noted the value of signs even for a short while is a positive communication. Lack of communication allows others to sow bad comments and assumptions, putting us on the back foot and having to answer negatives. Instead of communicating positives from the get go.

## **2. Community Improvement District update (MO)**

- MO noted that Future Wolverton have achieved funding to continue the project from now until December 2024 which also means extended lease on the Shop on the square.
- MO to come back with full details on project plan at the next working group meeting.

- MO noted grant is 25k.

### 3. Church Street proposals (MK Highways & AECOM)

#### *Proposal*

- GR noted that the Church St. plans presented 3+ years ago on the one-way system, during planning determination had been requested by planners for highways proposals to be removed from plans as one-way system needed significant technical analysis / simulation to assess. MKCC, in taking on delivery of the scheme, committed to works on Church St and carried out the technical study/simulation to test the feasibility of the one-way system/roundabout. This indicated a one-way system not possible without significant highways work elsewhere in town centre (i.e. Tesco roundabouts) which would present delays and cost issues, and therefore not possible under the current Council approval/budget/remit for the project. NM had previously given feedback on this to the group earlier this year.
- The group agreed that this was the case.
- AECOM have been commissioned by MKCC to work up a proposal on retaining two-way system and public realm improvements on Church St.
- AECOM presented the Church St. concept design report (available online at [LoveWolverton.co.uk](http://LoveWolverton.co.uk))

#### *Materials Palette*

- MO queried whether the materials palette has considered its relationship to the conservation area and Agora development.
- AECOM response was that materials have been considered in relation to the Wolverton public realm design guide.

#### *Trees and planting*

- MP queried whether tree species have been implemented in relation to the Agora development and what the rationale was in terms of tree location.
- AECOM response was that the trees suggested have been considered in relation to their size, tree canopy and climate resistance particularly as they are located on a busy road.
- Tree suggested on south of Church St. between Block D and F and not on northern side due to lack of pavement space. Not many trees have been placed at the roundabouts due to visibility issues for vehicles.
- Group queried what a rain garden was.
- AECOM response was that they are areas of planted shrubs, trees and plants in urban areas that are designed to reduce flash floods and reduce surface run off by draining water towards them.
- AECOM also noted that in response to whether the rain gardens are low maintenance that like all planted areas, some maintenance is required and would need approx. 2-3 visits a year.
- HS noted that she was against trees as they are not part of existing street scene in Wolverton. Raised concern on the need for more parking.

#### *Parking*

- MO agreed with HS and believed that the proposed concept design will not work. She questions whether consultants have taken into account how the street works.

- MO refers to Urbed scheme previously presented with two-way road which she states was realistic and had parking whilst still having pedestrian improvements. Believes money should be spent differently.
- *Post-meeting note: No two-way scheme was ever drawn by Urbed, it was however discussed pre-planning that the arrangement on the north side of Church St could be applied regardless of if the street is one- or two-way.*
- LS clarified that studies/modelling done by MKCC Highways/AECOM had shown that the one-way system previously proposed with the Urbed scheme does not work well. One way traffic will result in congestions and it will require costly interventions at Tesco double roundabout and in Stratford Road
- GR noted some clarification needed on previous scheme by Urbed.
- *Post-meeting note: MKCC Highways were briefed with last plan produced by Urbed, no alternative two-way iteration was produced by Urbed. See note above.*
- GBR referenced St. George's Way (SGW) and issues with hearse access – layby needed. Suggests disabled bay parking spaces to be a part of layby.
- GR noted SGW layby is outside of highways scope, and that Neil had confirmed this at previous meetings.
- LS agreed to look into potential Church layby.
- GBR noted people usually drop in and out of shops on Church St and would not want to park in SGW.
- GR clarified that a portion of parking at SGW will be for any resident.
- MP raised original Urbed design should have been considered, believes current proposal is a waste of money.
- GR noted TOWN/MKCCC issued a design brief to AECOM with previous Urbed plan so that context was given and AECOM have considered that work.
- AECOM noted that they had presented flexible space in the concept design which can be changed to accommodate parking.
- AF noted shop owners on Church St. have contacted him to raise concerns on parking. Overall, agrees with scheme but it needs more parking.
- DB requested clarification on 'restricted parking'.
- VB noted that 'restricted parking' means that it is the same parking restrictions that are there at present.
- AF noted to consider that a high number of people walk and drive in for SGW events, Church, Mosque and Queen Vic events.
- AN noted that the north side of church street is wide and has worked well and will therefore create a loss of business due to lack of parking.
- JH agrees with short-term parking needed. Needs alternatives to reducing parking.
- AN noted business would be impacted. Suggests that length in SGW can include layby, to be used by the Church, Town Council and residents.
- **ACTION:** LS noted to look into potential for Church layby parking provision.
- Everyone was unanimous about the need for the current parking for shops customers & deliveries to remain as is.
- MO - Strongly stated the fact all in the room and community were united on this.

#### *Bus layover*

- MO noted issue with layover of buses being Infront of people's front doors, existing and within the new development.
- AECOM noted that had to take into account crossings and streets.
- DB noted issue with busses turning off engines in terms of noise/air pollution.
- MO noted that because of the crossing it seems as though problem is moved elsewhere.

- HS agree with raised crossings and crossing in the middle is narrowed. However, believes the overall proposal is unrealistic and that the square should be catered to more trees/landscaping and keep the church street as more of an urban high street.
- AF agreed with MO comment on buses running diesel fume outside new homes and added where is city's commitment to Environment having stopped all EVPs and stopped using the dispensive charging plate installed outside KINGS. Also the diesel buses always drop diesel on the tarmac which cause constant road surface renewal where they stop and believes they will do the same to the new road.
- AF suggests EV buses are needed to address issues raised but sits with bus companies.

#### Overview

- GR clarified that it is a concept design and is open to changes.
- MO feels as though previous discussions have been ignored and that the proposal does not relate to discussions had and the overall Wolverton scheme. Thinks rework is needed and wider response from community.
- AF agreed and reiterated the point that designers have worked off new information without consideration of past conversations.
- *Post meeting note: AF notes that a lot of the design is good, but the need for the existing parking and deliveries is crucial to the shops. Notes that we have an opportunity to redesign including both positions and retaining the parking for the shops business.*
- *Post meeting note: DB raised the need to consider existing residents of Church Street with regards to parking. Is in favour of the parking staying but has to include resident needs not just shops, shoppers and deliveries.*
- MO raised importance of conversations had in relation to previous Urbed plans regardless of whether it was included in planning application.
- KC noted proposals shown previously were outside of red line boundary of the site and could not form part of the planning application and did not get included.
- All agreed that consultation will continue until 27<sup>th</sup> October. All comments from working group and wider community will be considered in the new iteration of the proposal.
- Confirmation that the next proposal will be presented to the group first before going out to the public.

#### 4. Future meeting and communications

- To be circulated on doodle poll.

#### 5. AOB

- GR requested that AOB be included in next meeting, unless urgent.