

North West Cambridge University's Development Community Group

Minutes of meeting held on 14th September 2010 at Wolfson Court, Girton College, Cambridge

Rev Janet Bunker, The Parish of the Ascension (JB) CHAIR
Cllr John Reynolds, Chairman and Leader of the Conservative Group (JR)
Ted Hawkins, Cambridgeshire Constabulary (TH)
Hugh Taylor, NAFRA (HT)
Cllr John Hipkin, Cambridge City Council (JH)
Cllr Tania Zmura, Cambridge City Council (TZ)
Bridget Hodge, Cambridge PPF (BH)
Ann Mullinger, WIRE (AM)
Aaron Walker, NAFRA (AW)
Brian Walker, Castle Community Action Group/ WIRE (BW)
Roger Taylor, Director, North West Cambridge Project (RT)
Katie Fleming, Communications Team, North West Cambridge Project (KF)

1. Introductions were made and the minutes of the last meeting agreed (with the following amendments: to add that Brian Walker was also representing WIRE at that meeting and that Cllr Tania Zmura (Cambridge City Council) and Ann Mullinger (WIRE) had both sent their apologies).

2. RT gave the following project update:

A14 road proposals

The project's experts are modelling the impact the A14 improvements not going ahead would have on the scheme. However he highlighted that it was important that they were not doing work which would ultimately be abortive as there are obviously a wide range of potential outcomes. It is hoped that the situation will become clearer after the Comprehensive Spending Review on October 20th.

There are also discussions taking place with the Highways Agency regarding the mitigation policy requirement. This would involve the University demonstrating how it is mitigating the increased volume of traffic the site would create through offsite improvements to the infrastructure. Again further information about this policy is awaited.

Q How will this offsite mitigation work with other sites - Orchard Park and NIAB? (AM)

A NIAB has said they would spend a couple of million pounds upgrading access to A14 so we would have to find other improvements to make as these are already committed to. This sort of work could be very costly and run into millions.

Q How will this policy work with the Transport Innovation Fund? (AW)

A JH advised that this scheme has now ended.

JH asked that it be noted that the A14 improvements were part of the Area Action Plan

Q Does this mitigation and offsetting of impact have to be a financial one or could it be achieved in other ways? (HT)

A Absolutely. It will be vital to look at other measures as part of mitigation, for example stopping people taking cars to work, more buses etc

Q What would the impact be if the coalition were to, for example, put the A14 improvements on hold for three years until there is some economic recovery? (JR)

A This is difficult to say until more detailed engagement takes place with the Highways Agency. If no extra load was allowed there would have to be further discussions. However it would be very difficult to commit to the scheme conditioned on such a significant unknown which is outside the University's control, especially at a time when everyone is under additional financial pressure.

Q NIAB is going to have an extra 100 vehicles going through the site every day and the retail policy is still under discussion. What would the impact be on the volume of traffic through NIAB? (BW)

A RT told the group he did not have traffic modelling information for NIAB.

Q Are we lobbying to ensure the A14 improvements go ahead? (JR)

A We have made enquiries at the Department and believe that the A14 is the number one road improvement they are looking at in the country.

Retail Policy in North West Cambridge

RT told the group that the project team has informally fed their view on the retail consultation back to the council. NIAB are also aware. The council have looked at the retail spend and capacity in North West Cambridge and come up with two options – a 3500 sq m store on either the NIAB or University site and then a much smaller store on the other or two 2000 sq m stores – one on each site.

The second option is the University's preference. The University doesn't think that a large store is right for the site. We believe that what is needed is a store to serve the local community not to attract additional traffic in. Each store under option two would be smaller than the Waitrose on Trumpington Road. However we don't entirely agree with this option as we believe the store has to be for food only and don't believe the supermarkets will accept the council's stipulation that these stores should sell food and other goods.

The University's final formal response will be submitted reasonably quickly and uploaded onto the NW Cambridge website.

Q At what point in the scheme will the supermarket be built? (JH)

A The local centre, which this would be part of, will be part of phase one. A failure of many schemes around the country is that the housing was all built before the community facilities.

In phase one the following is planned:

- Supermarket
- Shop units (although initially these may be used as a project office or marketing office)
- Social support – eg a doctor's surgery if this is possible
- 260/280 apartments for University workers
- 150 private sector homes
- Playing fields
- The start of the green spaces – Storey's Field
- The project team also want to persuade the University to have a University Centre for staff and the public which is an eating and bar facility on the mensa model which has worked successfully in Amsterdam

JB reminded the group that the council consultation is open until towards the end of October and that there is an open evening at Orchard Park on the subject on the evening of September 22nd.

Q Is the supermarket viable in phase one if the housing is not yet up? (AM)

A Supermarkets negotiate rent and this is stepped depending on housing capacity until it is full.

Progress of masterplan within the University

RT told the group that the project team had developed good working relationships with the local authority and joint planning teams and got through a great deal of issues already. Some areas are still to be resolved: allocations policy; typology and mix of accommodation.

In terms of progress the team are still on track to lodge an application in early January. They are working with officers to get information to strategic consultees (eg Highways Agency) to try to speed the bureaucracy up.

The objective is still to get a resolution to grant consent by midyear next year.

There have been few comments on the green paper received so far. However more are expected. The report will then go to council and then the grace will go to Regent House for a decision by 24 December.

Q The green paper approach is unusual for the University. Are they going to do this process again? (HT)

A We are working within the process we were given and this is of course a very unusual situation. The decision to be made in December is whether the project team may go forward to submit a planning application. There will need to be another grace for the first phase. It is not clear whether a green paper will be required but the first phase will not be viable without a significant investment from the University.

Latest on planning application, including the summer consultation events

RT told the group that there were no further exercises planned and that some consultation fatigue had been detected. He was also aware that some people were asking what the project team had been doing with all the comments they were receiving. A document is going to be uploaded onto the website which shows how people's comments were used and the practical benefits of the consultation process.

The next major public consultation is likely to be the local authority's formal consultation on the planning application.

Q Cambridge City Council are not putting all planning documents online and it is not feasible for everyone to go to the council to view the relevant documents. Can these be put onto the North West Cambridge website? (HT)

A TH advised that the majority can be viewed online and RT said that in principle this should be fine proving that this was technically possible and the cost not prohibitive.

4. Ted Hawkins, Cambridge Constabulary gave a presentation to the group on 'Secure by Design'. This presentation will be uploaded onto the North West Cambridge website.

5. Questions were asked and responses given by TH.

Q Does Secure by Design advocate cycle paths? (RT)

A Yes, as long as they are well lit.

Q Is the car parking at St Matthews Gardens a good example of the type of underground car parking which is acceptable on the scheme? (BW)

A Yes, as there are roller shutters which come down behind you after you enter the car park. The car parks with just barriers are no use as they do not stop people getting in and out and therefore can be at risk of car crime.

Q How are you consulted by developers, at what stage? (AW)

A Sometimes an architect will ring at the pre-planning stage to get input. Other times once planning has been approved the Secure by Design team will get the design application to be part of the scheme. It is separate to planning and a stage after.

Q If your advice is disregarded and the planning application goes in any way do you have any more rights that anyone else to protest? Can the planners just ignore your objections? (HT)

A We can object and outline the issues we are concerned about as they may lead to an increased level of crime in that area.

JH told the group that as part of the City Council's Safer Cities scheme 50 dwellings on Oxford Road and surrounding streets had benefited from improvements like gating accesses and this scheme had gone very well.

BW highlighted the importance of designing in security measures as part of the initial design and that this is much cheaper than trying to put them in later.

RT agreed with this point and told the group that the project team were looking at the security measures as part of the plans now for this reason.

Q It is important to have good lighting but are the team not looking at reducing lighting as part of the sustainability measures? (BW)

A TH clarified that the key thing about lighting was to ensure uniform lighting in order to do away with shadows.

6. Topics for future discussion

JB asked the group for suggestions of topics they may want to focus on at future meetings.

JH suggested something on how the University development will be integrated with existing communities. He said that there were concerns that it would be like the West Cambridge development and that local people needed to feel like they had access.

RT suggested that this could be expanded to take in thoughts about how the onsite community is established as issues of community cohesion and integration are important.

AM asked if this could be extended to NIAB. RT said that it could be difficult but that the project team could try to get someone from NIAB along too.

RT highlighted that there is integration with NIAB in terms of planning, especially on issues like roads and educational facilities. For example there are discussions about educational provision both now and in the future and the local police touch down.

AW asked who produces the development and design guidelines for the NIAB site. RT told the group he assumed it would be Willson Homes and probably some others. The key is how they are written and whether they are properly implemented.

AM told the group that at a recent meeting she had heard that there would only be a library van on the NIAB site so could there be things we think they are providing which they will not provide.

RT said that it was up to the local authority to ensure that NIAB provided the community facilities they were expected to.

There was consensus around the table that the next topic should be about how cohesion is built within the new community and with existing communities.

RT to discuss with the consultant team and organise a presentation for the next meeting,

7. Next meeting

The group agreed that the end of November would be a good time to meet again as by then the detail of the Comprehensive Spending Review would be known and there may be a clearer idea of whether the A14 road improvements are going ahead as planned.

KF to circulate some dates for the next meeting.

ENDS