

North West Cambridge University's Development Community Group

**Minutes of meeting held on 14 June 2011
at Wolfson Court, Girton College, Cambridge**

Those present:

John Chaplin, Storeys Way Residents Association (JC) CHAIR
Rev Janet Bunker, The Parish of the Ascension (JB)
Cllr Douglas de Lacey, South Cambridgeshire District Council (DdL)
Cllr John Hipkin, Cambridge City Council (JH)
Aaron Walker, NAFRA, Nineteen Acre Field Residents' Association (AW)
Bob Dawson of NAFRA Nineteen Acre Field Residents' Association (BD)
Cllr Belinda Brookes-Gordon, Cambridge County Council (BBG)
Clare MacRae, Cambridge Transport Forum, (CM)
Cllr Thomas Bygott, South Cambridgeshire District Council, (TB)
Cllr Philip Tucker, Cambridge City Council, (PT)
Helen Hutchison, Windsor Road Residents Association, (HH)
Brian Walker, Castle Community Action Group, (BW)
Cllr John Reynolds, East of England Regional Assembly, (JR)

Roger Taylor, North West Cambridge Project Director (RT)
Heather Topel, AECOM, North West Cambridge Project (HT)
Katie Fleming, Communications Team, North West Cambridge Project. (KF)

Introductions were made and the minutes of the last meeting agreed.

2. RT gave an update on the project.

The group asked the following questions - answered by RT.

Q: You mentioned that there will be 500 units – is this 500 houses? (AW)

A: The houses are of a range of types, for example two thirds of the University units will be 1 or 2 bedroom apartments. There will also be more apartments built in phase 1.

Q: What type will the rest of the housing be. It is difficult to create a community if everything is one or two bed houses and apartments as people don't live there long enough. (JR)

A: We are going for outline planning permission and our masterplan is indicative so I can only speak in broad terms. In terms of the University accommodation two thirds of this will be university apartments as we know there is a demand for this, the rest will be terraced houses (no detached). Remember these are for those who are finding it difficult to afford the rental accommodation in Cambridge, these are not for professors etc.

In terms of the private housing we will be looking at the spread required by the market and are being advised by Bidwells on this. We are looking at roughly two thirds family homes and about one third one and two bedroom apartments.

Houses around Huntingdon Road and Storey's Way will be detached with gardens etc. The rest will be a mix of semis and terraces.

Q: How many secondary school children are you expecting in the first phase? (DdL)

A: Child yield profiles will be different in the University housing from the market housing. We are working closely with the County on this. In terms of primary age children we are looking at 2.3 form of entry onsite. One form of entry in the first phase. The secondary school will be on the NIAB site and through the section 106 we obviously agree to contribute to this.

Q: On the parameter plans it shows a figure of 250m wide for detached houses – I assume that this is an error. I assume that the detached houses are still to the specification we previously discussed and agreed? (BD)

A: We are going for outline planning and the documents are very technical. The heights have to be shown as figures above sea level which can be confusing but we have not changed the original heights – this is simply a legal document. However we do recognise that it could be made clearer and are looking at what we can do about this.

Q: When will the footpath and cycle path onsite be open to the public? (TB)

A: It is vital to make connections from the outset, especially from Girton Corner through the local centre to Storey's Way. This 'Ridgeway' route will be open from the beginning. We are also hoping to do more planting than is necessary in Phase 1 in order that we will be working with a more mature landscape in future phases. The cycleway and footpath will not be able to be open quite as early as when the infrastructure starts to go in, as this would not be safe. It is likely to be 2014/15 when the houses are built.

Q: In the primary school presumably demand will be expected to go up and down as people will only stay in the University housing for a reasonably short time. (JR)

A: The University housing will have fewer school age children than the market housing and we need to discuss with the County how we make sure that there are places available to the children of families moving into the University housing and the spaces aren't all filled by other children from outside the site.

Q: In terms of actually building the school in order for it to be ready within the timetable being proposed is it intended that build will happen off site as there will not be time to follow due process? (JR)

A: We believe that the school can be there by the completion of the first housing units on site. In terms of the school construction, I can't say that we are looking at an offsite option. Sustainability is at the top of our agenda so we will be looking at the most sustainable way of building and that is not always straightforward.

Q: If the first phase is just 500 of the University units (about a 6th of the final build out) can such a modest first phase sustain all of the amenities you are planning? (JHip)

A: Yes we believe so. We believe that integration is key. The infrastructure is a massive investment – £60/70 million but absolutely necessary.

Q: I'm amazed that you are going to be able to offer additional landscape and cycle lane on a small first phase. Are we going to end up being told that there isn't enough investment for these things. It seems awfully generous. (JHip)

A Yes, it is a big investment upfront so that does make it difficult for the University. However we think it would be a huge mistake not to give the community the facilities needed to make it hang together and be a desirable place to be. The University wants to be exemplary in terms of this development and does not want to follow a similar model to West Cambridge.

Q What are the employment opportunities? (JHip)

A NWC is designed to address University housing needs, collegiate provision, research buildings. This is seen as highly important for the future of the University. The main employment opportunities are unlikely to open up on site in phase one, other than the supermarket. The main research buildings are likely to come up in other phases.

Q Will this generate more traffic as people go offsite to work? (JHip)

A University people will buy the houses, in many cases taking journeys off the road. We will be working to improve the routes and on the guided bus route on the Uni4. University also has a good reputation for cycling.

Q I want to know about Chesterton Station? What are the University doing to make that happen? (BBG)

A As Project Director for NWC I wouldn't necessarily know what was happening on that. Paul Milner at the University would know from a University perspective.

Q I wanted to ask about the unit shops, I am concerned that these may not be used straight away as there is a feeling that there will not be the demand for them. At West Cambridge there is a real problem as there are no shops. (BBG)

A There are some shops on the West Cambridge site but there was not enough demand so they are empty. These were in some cases even offered for free.

Q I would question whether this offer was put forward at the right time. There is now more footfall, things have changed massively in the last year. (BBG)

A This is something which would need to be discussed with Paul as I don't look after West Cambridge. Initially the feeling is that NWC would unlikely to have the footfall so these units would possibly be used for something else initially, like a community centre or something.

Q Are the Units just south of 19 Acre Field not part of the development? (JC)

A No these are not part of the development. EMBS are doing something else with that.

Q The parameter plans you mentioned stated heights at 34m above sea level to show a fixed point. What about the relationship of your proposed buildings with other buildings in the area? We need to fit the picture into what other buildings look like and how the area will look as a whole. The trees and M11 what is the timeline for these trees to grow to the right level. (JR)

A Pictures do exist. These show the landscape and visual impact. These have been taken into account and we are being sensitive to the environment.

On the trees at the M11 they will be planted early, but clearly it will be some time before they mature as we will not be planting mature trees.

Q The GP surgery and care home, is a provider in place for this? It looks like a substantial care home is being looked at and of course there are lots of options. This is a sector with issues. I would encourage you to start to talk to commissioners early about this as there is a real opportunity to think about the potential for integrated development between the care home and PCT site – rehabilitation/ step down etc. There is a real opportunity to link together which could help provide community cohesion. (BD)

A We share those thoughts. It's early days and we are still in discussions with the planning authorities. This isn't in the AAP but we agree that it is important and we are working with advisors and planners to think about it.

Q It's not just about what the market would want to provide, others may be interested too. I would urge you to start these discussions soon. (BD)

Q I am disappointed that we have not had a presentation on community cohesion, we have had a presentation on a spatial plan. I was looking forward to a discussion about community cohesion and cultural activities. Can we have a session on community cohesion please? (JHip)

A We were trying to set out the overall social agenda.

Q Where are the initiatives which knit communities together? (JHip)

A We need to take the first steps to define the first phase and the needs of the community. There is a huge amount of work to do to move these aspects forward – eg discussions are ongoing with faith groups and they have produced a pastoral plan. It's too early to go into this in detail but for example we are allowing for 4 units for faith workers on site and this needs to be built into the overall management.

We have responded to the request to show community facilities as we are still forming thoughts on the first phase but there is a limit to what we can do during this first phase.

Q Could we talk about faith provision at another meeting? For example Cambourne is a good example.(JC)

A This may be slightly premature and may need kept for a future meeting.

Q Perhaps they shouldn't tell us, people should be asked. (HH)

A Obviously we will bear this in mind. The community provision is being driven by the planning guidelines. At that stage there will be a huge amount of detail. For example we will run a workshop on the provision of the community hall and we will want to engage and decide what is best also with other communities.

A The community centre is not designed right now but we will start to consult during the early part of phase one. (HT)

There was then a discussion about the timing of the community centre and some members of the group expressed concerns that if the centre is temporarily located in some of the empty units in the local centre then the community centre might not get built. RT reassured the group that there is a legal obligation to deliver it as it is in the Section 106, and that it was really just a question of timing and balance between investment upfront and what the return is at that point.

Q You should be forward thinking about onsite facilities. For the key worker housing there must be a captive audience who could be consulted with, those who are waiting for accommodation – you could engage with them? (BD)

A We are, in fact, in the process of closing out a major survey on the staff likely to use this site.

Q I understand that there was an issue about a gas pipeline and some changes had to be made, what difference has that made to the plans in terms of dealing with noise from the M11? (BBG)

A The main change was actually that there was not enough earth for the out and fill we had envisaged. However, the earthworks will have a very big impact on noise on the ground floor and although less on the first floor still within requirements. (HT)

Q Faith provision, I'm not a fan of centres. I would like to see a College chapel with a chaplain. (TB)

A There is a college working group under the colleges committee looking at what form it should take. It will be designed to deal with the lack of collegiate experience for the postdoc group. However it is unlikely to form part of the first phase.

Faithwise it will depend on what comes forward, which will depend on the college.

Q What about undergraduates? (JHip)

A There will be no undergraduates on site.

Q How many key worker houses and how many for students? (JHip)

A 1500 units for key workers and 2000 collegiate student units. These are most likely to be postgraduate ensuite rooms.

Q Do we know when any more of NIAB is coming forward? (JB)

A Do we know what happened to the NIAB community group? I think they are working on this – they have big traffic problems.

Q Is a bus service from the station in the section 106? I am keen to keep this on the agenda. (BBG)

A The problem is that there is only one bus company to talk to but we share the ambition and believe it's important.

Next meeting

Clit Hipkin suggested an open discussion on community cohesion. The group agreed.

The group suggested others from other communities it might be useful to involve including Sue Blimer who has just led a member led review on NIAB and a minister from Cambourne.

It was agreed that this next meeting should take place after the summer around September time.

Group members were asked to email any suggestions they had for others to be invited to this session to John Chaplin (Chair) or Communications Management.

ENDS