

North West Cambridge University's Development Community Group**Minutes of meeting held on 18th October 2012
at Wolfson Court, Girton College, Cambridge****Those present:**

Morcom Lunt, Windsor Road Resident's Association (ML)
Cllr John Reynolds, Cambridgeshire County Council (JR)
Cllr Douglas de Lacey, South Cambridgeshire District Council (DL)
Clare Macrae, Cambridge Transport Forum (CM)
Cllr Tim Ward, Cambridge City Council (TW)
Cllr Simon Kightley, Cambridge City Council (SK)
Cllr Mike Pitt, Cambridge City Council (MP)
Trevor Woolams Cambridge City Council, (TWo)
Helen Hutchinson, Windsor Road Residents Association (HH)
Eric Marland, The Parish of the Ascension (EM)
Rev Janet Bunker, The Parish of the Ascension (JB)
Hugh Taylor, 19 Acre Field Residents Association (HT)
Cllr John Hipkin, Cambridge City Council (JH)
John Chaplin, Storey's Way Residents Association (JC) CHAIR
Cllr Belinda Brookes Gordon, Cambridgeshire County Council (BG).

Apologies
Anne Mullinger

Project Team (PT)
Roger Taylor, North West Cambridge Project Director (RT)
Stuart McKnight, MUMA (SM)
Gillian McInnes, MUMA (GM)
Heather Topel, AECOM (HTo)
Katie Fleming, Communications Team, North West Cambridge Project (KF)

1. Introductions were made and the minutes of the last meeting agreed with amends.
2. RT gave an update on the next steps for the project.

The group asked the following questions - answered by RT.

Q Will Gravel Hill close when digging starts? (DL)

A: Technically it is not open at the moment but there will still be access up to the Avenue of Chestnuts initially.

Q Is there a map of the area being explored by the archaeological works? (JR)

Yes, we are developing a brochure.

Q Where will the construction traffic come into the site? (JH)

Off Madingley Road, consistent with the planning application. The University is developing its Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which will set out the entire strategy. The current consideration is that the University has agreed with Trinity College to access the site from just west of the Madingley Road Park & Ride on Madingley Road, subject to planning. The CEMP will consider the full range of traffic-related construction impacts, including understanding where the different types of traffic movements come from (ie lorries, construction workers, etc), and will develop a strategy to minimise the effects on the traffic network. The University may consider limited access from its existing farm on Huntingdon Road (Howe Farm, in South Cambridgeshire), for some access, but would not allow for access turning right onto Huntingdon Road from the site. This would only be included if it could show a benefit for journeys from the north of the site. The entire construction access strategy is in development and subject to agreement with the planning authorities.

Q At the point where your traffic could be turning the road has just gone from a 30-40mph and then unrestricted, is this safe? (JR)

A: We are in discussions with the Highways Agency and safety is their main concern and ours.

Q It would be useful to see the boundary between SCDC and CCC on the visuals. (DL)

3. Presentation by Stuart McKnight and Heather Topel on aspirations for the community facilities.

The group then asked questions and raised issues which the project team responded to.

Q I think that having a kitchen is essential? (JCh)

A We need to think about the type of kitchen. What is needed? Is it a kitchen which can cater for large numbers or a small kitchenette, or something in between?

Q Are you planning on fixed wall rooms or flexibility to change the sizes of rooms for different events? (HT)

A We are keen to make the main space as flexible as possible. However we also have the aspiration that the main space will have high ceilings and be pleasant for large numbers, possibly with a balcony and this sort of space is very difficult to sub divide. There will be a design and flexibility trade off.

Q Have you considered acoustics? (DL)

Yes, we think this is really important. We have made this extra challenging as we want to develop a naturally ventilated building but we are committed to both.

Q I like the idea of the hall with a connection to an outside space. I also favour the idea of the main space being able to be used as a concert hall or auditorium, I think we have to be sensitive to the community who are going to live on the site and this type of intellectual community will lend itself well to talks and other cultural events like that. (JH)

It is important also to plan the facilities for the North West Cambridge site in conjunction with those on the NIAB site and it is important to think about the relationship between the two.

The main thing is that the community centre must bring together all parts of the community.

Q What is the maximum overall dimension? (SK)

A It will be about 500/600 sqm, as agreed in the S106.

Q How much of that is the main hall? (HH)

A We are aiming for a room to accommodate up to 180 people, with the balcony possibly up to about 20 more.

Q It is important to consider what other community halls have as their main uses and what pays the bills? For example these activities often require privacy and may make the idea of a wall opening into outdoor space unfeasible. Also when you say it isn't being built for sport where do you draw the line? What about Zumba, yoga, ballroom dancing? (MP)

A I think dynamic sports would be played at the other facility but that passive ones would be suitable for this space especially things like Tai Chi. In terms of creating privacy when necessary that is something we would be looking to do. The project will need to be able to be blacked out for some events (eg. film screening) and this will provide such privacy.

Q It is worth looking at Arbury as they are also collocated with a nursery. (MP)

Post meeting note: The architects have subsequently visited Arbury and other community centres. This included interviewing the managers and proved very informative.

Q What's the height restriction on the centre? (SK)

The height restrictions are set out in the planning application, but looking at the potential uses of the facility, most of it needs to be on ground level.

Q As well as talking to other community centres I recommend you also talk to churches about the sorts of things happening in their community facilities as if you only talk to community centres you will miss a number of important community uses which churches are providing. (ML)

Q What will the hours of operation be? (ML)

A This will jointly be decided between the University and the City Council as joint managers but opening hours will be flexible within reason.

Q Would having a balcony offer the opportunity to create a partition below it to create a smaller space in the main hall? (ML)

A Such a balcony would be quite modest and would be unlikely to be large enough for that.

Q Is a bar envisaged for the site? (TW)

A Pub/ family restaurant is planned as well as the University-run cafe (which will be open to the public) and a hotel.

Q What efforts are being made to avoid issues which other community facilities have? (BBG)

A We are talking to the managers of other centres to find out what works and what doesn't.

Q What other meeting rooms will there be elsewhere? For example will the GP surgery have a room for antenatal education etc or the school have a hall which scouts could use? (HH)

We are still talking to the PCT about the surgery and similarly the school. Neither are really in our control – the key thing really is to create a range of opportunities for community activities across the site.

Q Form needs to follow function – many groups using community centres are messy and I wouldn't want groups to be unable to use the space due to health and safety concerns. (TW)

Yes, we are keeping this in mind – we would aim to design the building to be quite special, inclusive and robust – this is why we are inclined to stay away from sliding partition doors which are less robust etc.

Q Will there be some groups who are key holders? Perhaps you could design the building such a way as to allow key holders access to their own areas and not others. (TW)

For discussion in partnership with the City Council through the joint venture arrangements.

Q Going back to the acoustics there can be an issue with high ceilings. They can be very drafty and acoustically bad which means they fail on the interactivity. In fact a number of groups use pubs for gatherings of about 50 instead of colleges as they are too drafty and it can be difficult to hear each other talk. For a space which works well look at Girton Pavilion, that's very popular. (BBG)

Q I suggest you go to Cambourne to see what they are doing. They allow things like Tai Chi but no ball games, they also told us that you can never have enough storage so that is worth thinking about. They think that the kitchen is very necessary. (JCh)

Q Could there be a discussion with the nursery about using their spaces out of hours? (ML)

The initial briefing discussions with the nursery operators have led to a design that is completely separate.

Q My experience is that these arrangements don't work very well as they become spaces that are substandard for both and issues of child protection etc can be problematic. (MP)

Q Is there to be a community worker? (JH)

A Yes – one full time and one part time.

Q Are there plans for an exhibition space for artists? There is a shortage of good spaces in Cambridge. (EM)

A Perhaps in the foyer or in the University Cafe might be more appropriate.

Q What will the University Cafe be for? (JCh)

It will be available for University staff and there will be discounts for them, but it will also be available for the wider public to use. We are working on the detail at the moment but it is a significant space.

Q Could the foyer of the community centre be used for coffee etc as some may not want to use the University cafe? (JCh)

There is a concern that we may have too many places to have coffee etc which could see people spreading themselves very thin and then nothing feels busy or works as a meeting point.

Q How much green space will there be around it? Girton Pavilion works well because of the green space it has around it. (BBG)

As we haven't designed it yet this is still being considered but there will be green space as part of the community centre and the centre itself will be right next to other green spaces. We know how important the green space is which is why we have Sarah Price [leading landscape designer] as part of our team. The Community Centre is also immediately adjacent to one of the main public spaces in the scheme (about the size of Parker's Piece) and a short walk from the market square.

Q I would encourage you to look at other spaces abroad which combine outdoor spaces and indoor facilities really well. (BBG)

Q Will there be faith facilities? (JCh)

The Community Centre is intended to be multifunctional- while there is nothing exclusive to faith users being designed in, the spaces should be available for use by the faith groups. The centre will not exclude faith, it is for all the community.

There was then a discussion about whether it is better to wait until the community has arrived and understand what they really want and need from a facility verses the importance of having a facility in place from the very outset to ensure that cohesion is achieved straight away. TTwo suggested that experience from elsewhere is that where nothing is established at the outset this causes more problems.

Q Experience tells us that there is never enough storage. Also with the proximity to the nursery careful thought needs to be given to what is happening in each space and any shared areas, especially noise from outdoor spaces, child protection issues etc. (JB)

A Currently the two facilities are being planned as independent from each other. In terms of children's play areas being overlooked this is something the nursery operators will give instruction on.

There was then a further series of questions following on from Roger's update.

Q Will there still be access down the Avenue of Chestnuts? (SK)

A Gravel Hill Farm will effectively become a building site so at some point, no. We will have to look at an alternative route.

Q In the past when access was blocked by the University Farm that caused a number of issues (HH).

Q Similarly on the Southern Fringe dog walkers objected strongly when access was blocked. (TW)

A Sooner or later people will have to accept that the area will be a building site for a while but the end result will be much better for everyone.

Q Are you negotiating to overturn the AAP to allow construction traffic to come down Huntingdon Road? (HT)

A We are talking to the relevant authorities about the construction management plan – we'll be looking at the construction access issues in the round, considering the timing of journeys (ie not during peak hours) and the nature of those journeys (construction workers vs delivery lorries). We are talking about things like no traffic at peak times, which vehicles can go where eg delivery vehicles or people coming to the site to work. The construction management plan will be subject to discussions and review by the planning authorities and Highways Agency.

Q How are things progressing on schools? (JR)

Under the Section 106 we are talking to the County about the provision of the primary school. The University is still interested in the idea of running the school as a training school and is looking at that option but isn't interested in running it as a free school. Ultimately it should be decided by about June 2013.

This isn't taking any longer than expected in the S106.

Q What is happening to the land not being developed as part of Phase 1? (HT)

The University Farm will actively manage the land.

4. It was decided that the next meeting should take place in January and that communications should circulate some dates and possible topics for discussion.

ENDS