

Meeting with Stephen Hemming re Towergate 5.1.2016

Present: Lisa Emmanuel, Stuart Copeland, Stephen Hemming

Introductions

SC introduced himself along with his role in the NPWG and the background to the development and progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

SH introduced his role within Lambert, Smith - Hampton - agents acting on behalf of HCA with regard Towergate. SH is Head of the Planning & Development Team covering the wider Midlands area.

LE introduced her role as Project Officer on behalf of WCC.

Walton Neighbourhood Plan

SC summarised the consultation process with residents, including three surveys and additional engagement over the last two years.

There has been a high level of response and engagement with stakeholders which has led to a view that the area has been well planned, people like living here and do not want this messed up. Development is ok as long as it is done well.

It is essential that infrastructure is provided before expansion and that future development is suitable for the area concerned.

SC went on to summarise some of the discussion with landowners, including Simon Dougall from HCA. The meetings have been positively received and have demonstrated that WCC and the NPWG are pro development, provided it is done the right way.

SH agreed that in his experience where developers have worked with the community everyone generally wins, achieving the best for all sides.

SC then went on to share the experience of Church Farm as an example of where developers have not worked with the community resulting in the current appeal and years of delay.

Towergate

SH re-established the position regarding the status of Towergate historically, being of little value for employment use.

Simon Dougall had shared our previous discussions with SH and it was acknowledged that the HCA have a part to play in place shaping as well as raising the best return for the land.

However, with the delivery model having changed, it is not clear to SH currently what the position is with regards maximising returns versus delivering the "place"

Surveys are currently being carried out at the site, to date SH does not know whether HCA will bring forward the site themselves or just “allocate’ the site.

SH believes the site would probably interest more of a mainstream housebuilder rather than someone like Gallaghers, although that cannot be known.

Discussion then followed with regard the three sites within the “Wavendon Triangle”. In isolation none of the sites support the provision of infrastructure, but jointly they would contribute towards provision.

SC re-iterated the NPWG’s position that cash is not the issue - space on site to bring forward infrastructure is the key.

SH asked if we were aware of the plans for the additional bit of land above Towergate and to the left of Fairfields – believed to be owned by HCA – is there potential to find out what is planned for this land and could a discussion be had with regard a local centre?

Post meeting note: SH has confirmed that HCA no longer own the land.

Site Allocations Document

SC pointed out the fact that Fairfields is not contained within the site allocations document – having already been part of SLA land. As such we are unable to comment on it through this process

Discussion then followed with regard WCC and the NPWG’s intended response to Towergate through the consultation process – centring on the need for “master planning” alongside ensuring key links are maintained and design is in keeping.

SH confirmed that he will liaise further with HCA over the tone of their response to agree a shared approach.

SC further pointed out that Fairfields need not be “out of pocket” as they could potentially give up land in lieu of 106 contribution – but this can only be achieved if MKC planning ensure a holistic approach and involve us in discussions early on.

Summary

It was agreed that we would share our responses to the site allocations consultation prior to the deadline date of 20th January.

LE to also share the draft Neighbourhood Plan with Stephen as soon as it is ready.