

Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum
AGM
Wednesday 26th October 2016
Wolvercote Village Hall
at 7.30 pm

Present: Steering Committee members: Christopher Hardman (Chairman) John Bleach, Richard Lawrence-Wilson (Treasurer), Mary Brown, Cllr Jean Fooks, Cllr Steve Goddard, Cllr Angela Goff, Graham Jones, David Stone, Jennifer Attoe (Secretary).

Members of the public were listed separately.

Apologies: Christopher Gowers, Jo and Nick Malden, Fran Ryan, Penny Moyle.

1. **Welcome.** Chairman welcomed the audience to the third AGM and particularly to Roger Smith of Savills. Chair explained the order of the Agenda. Draft policies were on display for inspection during the interval. These are also on the website and were displayed at Fun on the Green during the Summer Festival. Leaflets, explaining the Neighbourhood Forum's policies and progress to date have been distributed to every household in the designated area.
2. **The Minutes of the second AGM of Wednesday 14th October 2015** (previously circulated on the website and at the meeting) were proposed as correct by AG and seconded by RL-W. The minutes were then accepted.
3. **Matters Arising not elsewhere on the Agenda.** None.
4. **Chairman's Report and Progress with the Neighbourhood Plan.**

Progress with drafting sections of the plan has continued this year. It is frankly not easy to sustain rapid progress given the fact that many of those best qualified, willing and able to contribute have very busy lives. One member of the Steering Group resigned during the year partly because of pressures from business. We are very grateful to Jenny Attoe for acting as our Secretary for a year but sadly she is standing down. Once again I would like also to thank Anne Charles for her help with our website. And Phil Dove for his help once again –this time with our leaflet. I am, of course, grateful to all the other members of the Steering Committee.

During the year we have used The Flying Goose to keep in touch with local residents and will continue to do so. And of course we have delivered the leaflet to all households.

We still need more help. In particular we need more engagement with the widest possible cross-section of our community and as you will see from the Treasurer's report, more money. Consequently we are in the process of seeking a grant from Locality to try to speed up the drafting of the plan. We have had very promising discussions with a consultant who has been involved in helping Summertown and Headington whose plan has been accepted by the City Council. The target date for completion of the first draft of the plan is by the end of the next nine months. I am much more confident about this now. I have also been in contact with Summertown because there are clearly joint interests since the two Wards are contiguous. They expect to be going to six weeks public consultation at the beginning of next year. You might have a look at their plan then and even comment because people from here certainly use shops and schools in their area.

I am often asked what a completed plan looks like. There are examples available electronically . One might look at the Headington plan accepted by the city for example and you can now look at Summertown's draft plan. As I pointed out last year the policies in plans are supposed to relate to building development and land use and many of them say what kind of development they would like and identify areas where they would prefer to locate development and those areas that they consider should be protected. As you know our circumstances are rather different: the Mill Site and the Northern Gateway have already been allocated as sites for development, so we have to produce policies that will influence the nature of those developments as well as considering other smaller future developments which may change the character of local areas. Many of the most pressing concerns that people have about development in the neighbourhood are consequent upon development: flooding, congestion and pollution for example. We know too that there are strong views about affordable and key worker housing.

There has this year been one important consultation started about 'the main planning policy document for Oxford' for the next twenty years. There is a close relationship between the aims of a City Plan and a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plans have to take account of the Council's assessment of development needs contained in an approved City Plan It is therefore very important that local people do engage with the city plan, otherwise Council slogans like 'power to the people' are meaningless. There will be further steps in this consultation so look out for them. The Steering Committee of the Forum tried to get the deadline for comment extended, because the first step in this consultation was in the summer when we thought that people might well be on holiday and we wanted more and better publicised events in North Oxford, but we did not succeed. However, we responded and will continue to do so to future consultations. Our response which reflected what we know of local residents' views from the answers to our questionnaire is on our website..

I can now give brief updates on one project and the specific developments included in the minutes of our last meeting.

Godstow Abbey Project.

You will recall that last year we reported that **WE** and The School of Geography and Environmental Studies had been awarded a grant from the Higher Education Innovation Fund for a project to improve the site and to create a display board to explain the history and the conservation of the abbey.. The display Board is there and was dedicated by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant in the presence of the Lord Mayor earlier this year and from the beaten path round it it looks as if it is looked at a lot. The hope is to be able to provide a second board when we have the funds.

I would like to thank Graham Jones from our Steering Committee and Professor Heather Viles and Martin Coombes from The School of Geography and Eleanor Standley from the Ashmolean and the Department of Archaeology who did an immense amount to make this possible and to Nigel Fisher for arranging the removal of the wrong vegetation and leaving the right vegetation on the walls.

Now to bring you up to date with the proposed developments reported on last year

The 17 dwellings approved at Elsfield Hall

The planning permission requires a start on site by Aug 2017 or else the permission will lapse. Nothing has happened so far

(Elsfield Hall is therefore the primary site for the development programme earmarked to start in April 2016 and all the necessary arrangements have been made. However, the recent changes to national housing policy following the election and the July budget [specifically the RTB extension to housing

associations and the 1% social rent cut] means there that there is a need to review the impact of these changes to ensure that the plans remain affordable. So there is a slight hiatus. Once the review is completed, the Council Officer dealing with it will be in touch to talk about how the scheme will proceed, especially concerning the issues in which we have a particular interest such as the road safety audit of the proposed access arrangements and how to manage contractor parking and access during the build process.)

The Wolvercote Mill site

Outline approval was given by the Council for 190 houses on this site on December 1. There are a series of welcome conditions attached to the approval and John Bleach spoke at the Council meeting making a number of additional points. Our main additional points were that there should be provision for housing for elderly people, for key workers and some form of co-housing. There should be encouragement for the development to be carbon neutral, and there should be consultation with the existing community with regard to travel plans, the provision of community facilities, continued maintenance of the site and the mitigation of noise from the A34.

An issue which we know residents were particularly concerned about was flooding and the provision for adequate drainage. The 'Outline Surface Water Strategy' supporting the application was a 'conceptual design' only sufficient to support an outline application but it will need to be refined and developed at the full planning application .

The current position is that the University is in discussion with a developer but 'for reasons of commercial confidentiality' is not able to give further information. It is hoped that there will be an announcement before Christmas.

Northern Gateway

As I am sure you all know this site is now owned by companies for St John's College - and Savills are now acting for them in the production with planners of a master plan. We did make strenuous efforts to demonstrate the inappropriateness of a development , certainly one of this size ,on this site reflecting the views of residents but development was approved by the inspector and so what we have to do is work to make the development as acceptable as we can. Savills have been very willing to make efforts to engage the local community through contact with the Neighbourhood Forum and Roger Smith accepted an invitation to come to tell you where they have got to. Roger will be willing, I am sure, to answer a few questions but please remember that this is not a workshop or presentation about the Northern Gateway. During the break he will also be able to talk to you informally.

Before I ask Roger to speak may I ask if there are any matters arising from the minutes which I have not covered in my report and if you have any questions.

5. Progress of the Northern Gateway Development.

Roger Smith apologised that Rod Linnell, who was in charge of the planning for Savills was on holiday but said that if he were not able to answer questions he would take email addresses and respond with the answer. He said that the Northern Gateway site had been identified for development over 10 years ago and it was now established that it would be built so it was in our interests to work with the Plan. A planning application would be submitted in about April/May 2017. Revised proposals would address local concerns about traffic, pollution, noise, ecology etc. An Environmental Impact Assessment was part of the application

which comprised 500 dwellings, with 50% to be affordable and mixed tenure with 2500m retail/employment space and possibly a hotel. It was thought that St John's would be reluctant to dispose of the freehold because they may wish to retain a long-term interest in the site. Air quality was most affected near to the A34 and the planning application recognised that traffic is bad and it would seek "to ensure it is no worse than it already is". The outline planning application is for the whole site, a "hybrid". The first phase development was for housing, retail etc. Section 106 terms are still to be agreed on and it will be at least three years before anything happens. The Highways Authority will demand that infrastructure schemes and on site improvements are made in a phased approach before any extra traffic is generated.

Doug Parr said that it is important that the transport model conforms to what actually happens. i.e. how much traffic will actually be generated: how many cars in peak hours, how many people working on site or away – bus/walking/cycling. It must be agreed with the County Council how that is distributed – A34 or city-bound, and modelling the junctions that will be affected by traffic and traffic counts and modelling must be realistic. A question was asked about the link road and it was said by the Inspector and repeated by RS that the development was *not* dependent on the link road being built and there was no funding. It was also said at the exhibition at Jury's Inn that St John's would not want to start the Northern Gateway development before the link road is built. Cllr Jean Fooks said that there *was* funding. **JF read from the recent Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire: there is a list of projects to be funded by Oxfordshire's City Deal money. One of them is a scheme to support the regeneration of Oxford's Northern Gateway and the A40 approaches to Oxford. The following sentence caused concern: "The package will relieve congestion and deliver growth at the Northern Gateway development site, including 800 houses, of which 300 are additional to current plans, and up to 8,000 new jobs." JF said "The roundabouts scheme is the bit to reduce congestion - but this is the first time I have seen a reference to increasing the housing numbers from 500 to 800."** This is a 300 increase from the 500 originally proposed and agreed in the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan, adopted by the City Council in July 2015 and built into the Thomas White Oxford proposals aired at the public exhibition in April 2016. This revised number is more than the number of households in Cutteslowe (775) and many more than in Lower Wolvercote (526). Even the representative of the developer (RS) seemed to be unaware of this new number. It was questioned how this had been missed in the consultation which apparently had taken place. GJ said that because of the housing situation it would be good to raise housing higher up on the list and make it a priority in phase one.

6. **Elections.** AG took the floor for the elections. There were three vacancies to be elected for a three-year term including the position of Secretary. The election is open to anyone living or working in the designated area and the Steering Committee can co-opt a member if required. CH appealed for a secretary to help with taking the minutes of meetings which otherwise would have to be shared around the Committee. He also required help with applying for grants to complete the Neighbourhood Plan. This needed to be done within six months and if successful the grant had to be spent within a time limit. No one came forward to stand for any of the positions except for Paul Buckley who AG introduced and invited him to speak about himself. Mr Buckley has lived in Lakeside for more than 20 years and has been closely involved in the railway issues associated with the new Chiltern Railways line. That issue had now come to an end and it was time for him to move on to other things including Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum. He was proposed by AG and seconded by DS and welcomed onto the Committee.

7. **The Treasurer's Report and Accounts 2015 – 2016.** The accounts had been audited by Neil Geddes, an independent examiner. A grant has been applied for to finance a consultant to help with the draft plan. This consultant had helped with Headington's Local Plan which was successfully accepted. GJ proposed and MB seconded that the accounts be approved.

8. **Any Other Business.** Notice was given that the Farmers' Market would be moving to the White Hart Wolvercote from Sunday 29th October. This was not entirely clear on the flyers handed out. The Good Neighbour Scheme also produced a leaflet which was available. CH thanked the Women's Institute for providing refreshments and cake. A container for donations for the hire fee for the hall was placed at the door.

9. The meeting was closed at 8.50 pm