

# **WNF Annual General Meeting**

## **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

### **Wolvercote Village Hall**

#### **Present:**

Steering Committee (SC) members: John Bleach (Vice-chair), Cllr Paul Buckley, Christopher Hardman (Chair), Katherine Kay, Richard Lawrence-Wilson (Treasurer), David Stone, Cllr Liz Wade

Members of the public: Anne and Phil Charles, Tony and Pam Dale, John Gittins, Margo Boore, C and R Russell, Steve Roberts, Stuart McFarlane, Mary Kinnear, Nicky Henderson, Liz Newton, Mary and Elaine Hernen, Tim Metcalfe, , Ruth and Colin Tudge, Sidney Birch, Kate Richenburg, Christine Jennings, Jo Malden, Tamsin Smith, ED Williams, Geoff Brooker, Matthew Simpson, Sheila Pargeter, Jim Benson, Suzanne McIvor, Kate Bliss, Peter McGrath, Lorna Logan, Tony Joyce, Graham and Suzanne Jones, Claire Winterbottom, Barbara Spencer, Robert de Newton, Matt Todd, Elaine Chaston and about a dozen others.

**Apologies:** Mary Brown (SC), Cllr Steve Goddard (SC), Christopher Gowers, Allie Noel.

#### **1. Chairman's Welcome**

Christopher Hardman opened the meeting at 7.30pm and asked for a minute's silence to commemorate Jean Fooks, much valued former steering committee member and councillor, who died at the end of November 2018. He then welcomed attendees to this the sixth AGM.

He also announced the important news that at a concurrent meeting in the Town Hall, that our Neighbourhood Plan, having recently been examined and edited by the independent Examiner, had just been accepted by the Council Cabinet. It would now be presented to local residents at a referendum in the Spring of 2020. The precise date for this was yet to be decided with the Council, but it was hoped that, to ensure maximum turnout at the polls, it would take place when people were probably voting to elect their local or national representatives.

#### **2. Minutes of the fifth AGM - Wednesday 10th October 2018**

Approval of the minutes of the last AGM was proposed by Graham Jones and seconded by Katherine Kay.

#### **3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda. None.**

#### **4. Steering Committee – proposed change of Constitution**

CH explained that the proposed change was a result of the necessity to re-designate the Forum in 2018 and the consequent delays in the examination of the plan and the date of a referendum. Without this change, the part of clause 8.3 relating to re-election would have meant that members of the Steering Committee (SC) responsible for the plan would not have been eligible for re-election to manage the arrangements for the referendum and the implementation of the plan. Therefore he proposed that the

words ‘...after which they shall not be eligible to stand for re-election until a year has passed’ should be omitted from clause 8.3 which should now read: *‘SC members are to be elected for a period of three years and may subsequently be re-elected for further periods of two years’.*

By a show of hands, this proposal was adopted.

## 5. Election of Officers

The role of returning officer was taken by Katherine Kay, not herself standing for re-election on this occasion.

- Sadie Paige had resigned from the post of secretary, due to her relocation to Scotland. CH thanked her for her hard work which had been very much instrumental in progressing the draft plan to its present stage. She had agreed to continue helping to achieve the final adoption of the Plan, albeit remotely and for a nominal fee. However the post of secretary managing the day to day affairs of the steering committee was now vacant.
- Five members of the steering committee, including CH (Chair), JB (Vice-chair), RL-W (Treasurer), DS and PB were now up for re-election and there were still further vacancies.
- These five members were duly re-elected as a group by a show of hands.
- An offer to join the steering committee had been received from Simon Ryde of 5 Wolvercote Green who was not able to attend the meeting but sent in a statement about himself together with nomination of proposer and seconder, in the names of Chris and Janice James respectively, both of 7 Goose Green Close, also absent from the meeting. Matt Todd, who was present, voiced his support for S Ryde in this role. KK further proposed that the meeting should accept these nominations and this was seconded by Sidney Birch. S Ryde was duly elected.
- Further offers were received from Steve Roberts of Godstow Road, proposed by Elaine Chaston and seconded by KK, and Tony Dale also of Godstow Road, proposed by Pam Dale and seconded by KK. Both S Roberts and T Dale were duly elected.

## 6. The Treasurer’s Report and Accounts 2018 – 2019

RL-W presented his report for the previous year. He reiterated that while the accounts were healthy at this stage, funds would be needed to publish the Neighbourhood Plan document and to prepare for the referendum. He proposed that his report should be accepted and this was seconded by KK.

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### **INTERVAL & REFRESHMENT BREAK: an opportunity to propose and prioritize community projects**

During the break, the audience was invited to visit the list of projects suggested to date and displayed in the hall, and to add their suggestions.

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## 7. Chairman’s report: The Neighbourhood Plan; The Future of the Forum; a report on development sites

At the last AGM we hoped that we would have been able to have a referendum this year but the examination of the draft plan was delayed because the Forum needed to be reconstituted, and that took until March, and then there were lots of exchanges with the examiner and with the Council. We now have an approved plan ready to put to the vote in a referendum.

I want to thank the members of the current SC and those who have served on it in the past, some of whom are here. Some have served right from the beginning – John Bleach chaired it to begin with and is indispensable. It has required a lot of effort and time from everyone. We would all agree that most recently we have been helped considerably by Sadie Paige, who has moved to Scotland. I want too to mention our debt to Angie Goff and Jean Fooks. We have also been helped by people who are not on the SC- Anne Charles for example has and still is dealing with our website. I personally am very grateful for all their support .

The examiner has, as we expected, recommended changes. There is not time here to go into much detail. Some changes have slimmed down the plan and some have made policies clearer. Where policies replicate national or local regulations we don't need to repeat them, but they have not been forgotten. The examiner has been careful to ensure that policies don't conflict with planning regulations. For example, sometimes where we wrote 'must' it has become 'should', and he has changed wording to indicate that certain things would not be 'supported' where the decision is up to the planners. In cases where we believe that a recommendation might diminish the impact of a policy, we have done our best to prevent its being weakened. One example of this was our attempt to relate Air Quality and Noise Pollution standards to WHO standards which we thought the most independent international standards. The examiner wanted a more general reference to up-to-date standards. We made sure by discussion with the Council legal department that it was understood that this included WHO standards.

During the year we have made joint reponses together with the Commoners to major consultations.

In December we responded to the Local Plan. We considered many sections to be neither justified, effective nor consistent with national policy. Our particular concerns were the concentration on employment growth rather than housing, and the outdated figures for housing need: the allocation of land for employment rather than housing, the policy for affordable homes, the release of Green Belt land, building heights and views , air quality and transport policy.

### **Oxford North**

We have made two long responses in considerable detail to the proposals for the development at Oxford North.

A decision on the planning application has been postponed by the West Area Planning Committee . The major issue for the postponement is the proposal to provide a maximum of 35% affordable housing rather than the city policy target of 50%. The point is that the developers don't consider that the site is viable – in other words it will not produce sufficient profit for St John's if they provide more housing. We always doubted their viability statement and still do. We did take expert advice. However, there are also other concerns about the development proposals. Whoever lives there, in affordable homes or not, should expect a pleasant and healthy environment. I suggest you read our submission. Our reservations are serious. For example:

We now know that there will be no funding for the Loop Farm link road. That being the case, the Area Action Plan required the on-site link road to be a substantial two-lane road with segregated provision for cyclists and pedestrians, and capable of accommodating HGVs.

The link road proposed in the application is totally different from that envisaged in the Area Action Plan and in the supporting Northern Gateway Sustainability Appraisal. It is a 20mph street shared with cyclists and pedestrians, and with HGVs prohibited. It is not only completely incompatible with the capacity need identified by the Area Action Plan and supporting work, but is potentially dangerous.

Traffic modelling shows that there would be intolerable traffic stress at the Wolvercote roundabout without the on site link road.

This alone should, we believe, mean that the current application is refused and resubmitted.

Of course traffic at the roundabout is congested enough now, but think what it will be like with 4,500 employees and 500 houses on the Oxford North site plus – and we are not allowed to consider this because developments do not yet have planning permission - all the proposed developments in neighbouring areas.

We know more and more every day about the harmful pollution caused by traffic congestion.

There are many other reasons too.

We submitted a very detailed assessment of the unsatisfactory surface water issues with the site thanks to Paul Kirkley.

Local residents are, for example rightly critical of the impact of proposed buildings on views and no one considers the Red Hall to be architecturally acceptable.

The entry to a City once considered to be architecturally distinguished and of international importance deserves much better.

### **The Mill site**

Once again we have responded to planning documents. Sadly the discovery of asbestos has meant that the removal of the tree belt behind Home Close could not be avoided. We had been very concerned about the managing of pollution on the site in the original application but this pollution was not detected. It is a pity that the original survey was not better.

Their suggestion that the provision of a bird hide serves as public art on the site is rather pathetic.

We have asked again and again about the arrangements for the transfer of the Community Building to the Local Community but know no more than last year.

### **The future of the Plan and Forum**

First of all we have to get the plan through a referendum and we would like to have a lot of people voting. It could be as early as February but we would obviously prefer it when the weather is likely to be better. Fortunately the Council has to pay for this but we have to do the advertising. We have a grant from the Doris Field Charitable Trust to help.

A forum has a limited life and has to be renewed every five years. It is very important that policies in a made plan, projects and the developing wishes of a community are monitored and, if necessary fought for. We now are part of a group with Headington and Summertown and have joined an Oxfordshire Alliance to assist us in managing the way forward.

Headington is seeking to set up a Community Council to take over from its Forum. Community Councils are quite like Parish Councils. They are usually non political but members are formally elected and they can get grants and loans as well as having more control over the spending of, for example, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money. We would of course need Community support and City Council approval for a Community Council. At this stage I simply wanted to say that we are watching the proposal at Headington with interest.

The mention of CIL is I know a matter of interest to us with the developments already taking place and those proposed. Chris Cameron from the City Council has kindly come to tell us about it. Before he speaks are there any questions on my report?

### **Questions from the floor**

Q. Would the imminent changes to voting boundaries would have an effect on the boundary of Neighbourhood Plan Area?

R. This would have no effect.

Q. What if the Steering Committee had refused to accept the Examiner's comments?

R. We would have had to begin the process all over again and the Plan would have had to be re-created.

Q. What would people be required to vote for in a referendum?

R. It was expected that the wording on the ballot paper would ask: "Do you want Oxford City Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wolvercote area to help it decide plans for the area?"

Kate Richenburg, from Harefields, expressed concern, that despite the original intention that the Forum would represent the residents of the whole ward from Wolvercote to Cutteslowe Park, she had the feeling that the residents of Wolvercote village remained at an advantage over residents from other parts of the Ward, as the name of the Forum implies. She felt that more needed to be done to ensure that the latter residents benefit equally, from the Plan, particularly in terms of CIL funds.

Robert de Newton proposed a vote of thanks to all the members of the steering committee past and present, who had worked to create the Plan.

## **8. Community Infrastructure Levy: Chris Cameron**

CC introduced himself as the council officer responsible for all matters relating to CIL.

He responded to questions previously submitted to him by CH and outlined the rules. There were also questions from the floor, including:

What could the money be spent on?

How was the CIL on any development project being calculated?

In summary, the benefits to Wolvercote Ward (which equals the neighbourhood plan area) would be considerable, that is 15% of the funds received any development within the Ward by the City Council, increasing to 25% of these funds once Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan had been adopted through the local referendum. This money, already set aside for the Ward by the City Council, would be available for community projects (listed at the meeting) which would be allocated by the Council, based on recommendations from the ward councillors and the Forum. It was expected that the Forum would be devoting a considerable amount of its time in the future administering the allocation of these funds.

## **9. Any Other Business. nil**

## **10. Date of next AGM: Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020, in Wolvercote Village Hall.**

The meeting closed at 9:45pm

JB 12/11/19