**`Milton Keynes Council Development Review Forum**

**6 July 2020, Civic, 1800 – 1900**

**Virtual via MS Teams**

**Forum Meeting Notes**

**Attendees**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME** | **ORGANISATION** | **E-MAIL** |
| Neil Sainsbury (Chair) | MKC – Head of Placemaking | neil.sainsbury@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Josan Race | Community Action MK | josan@communityactionmk.org |
| Mandy Shipp | Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council | mandyshipp@wolvertonandgreenleystowncouncil.gov.uk |
| Dianne Sutton | MK Forum | DianneLSutton@outlook.com |
| Dave Humphreys | MK Forum | daveghumphreys@gmail.com |
| Cllr Rex Exon | Milton Keynes Council | Rex.exon@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr Allan Rankine | Milton Keynes Council | Allan.rankine@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr Paul Trendall | Milton Keynes Council | Paul.trendall@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Delia Shepherd | Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council | clerk@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk |
| Matthew Lloyd Ruck | Savills | matthew.lloydruck@savills.com |
| Julian Carter | Savills | Julian.carter@savills.com |
| Adam Shepherd | Savills | adam.shepherd@savills.com |
| Amir Hussain | Yeme Architects | amir@yemearchitects.com |
| Tim Skelton | Milton Keynes Forum | colesbourne@btinternet.com |
| David Tooley | Local Democracy Reporter | David.tooley@jpress.co.uk |
| Liam Costello | West Bletchley Council | liam.costello@westbletchleycouncil.gov.uk |
| Janie Burns | MKC Housing | Janie.burns@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Julia Banham | MKC Housing | Julia.banham@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| David Buckley | MKC Planning | David.buckley@milton-keynes.gov.uk |

1. The Chair welcomed everyone, did introductions and explained the purpose of the Forum, ie allowing stakeholders an input into the emerging design and layout of schemes as well as raising the quality and profile of design in Milton Keynes.

**Redevelopment of the Burger King Site, Bletchley**

1. The applicant introduced the scheme with the following points:
   1. The scheme is the product of previous applications and pre-application, which has resulted in revisions.
   2. Scheme comprises 131 apartments and 297m2 commercial floorspace
   3. It is in a gateway location into the town centre with the gateway currently occupied by the rather unattractive Stephenson House
   4. The existing adjacent permitted scheme – Bletchley View (immediately to the north and south) is important to the overall context of the application and the scheme the applicant argued relates well to the surroundings, including the adjacent approved buildings. The applicant explained that the scheme has its own identity but at the same time has a strong relationship to the surrounding context. It relates well to the Bletchley View heights while the proposed brick relates to existing proposed brick in the Bletchley View scheme.
   5. The revised scheme has attempted to articulate the façade treatment, with recess, grid like arrangement and simplified the balconies.
   6. The scheme now includes 5 x 3 bed homes (there were no 3 beds before)
   7. The central block has been revised to reduce the height in relation to Albert Street.
   8. Café or co-working space has been included which will face outwards to the wider area.
   9. Quality of amenity space and management with concierge is very important:
      1. Communal terraces and gardens/balconies
      2. Articulation of the entrance to make them feel more distinctive and legible- Saxon Street, grander double height entrance lobby.
      3. Raised plinth, brick treatments
      4. All apartments meet national space standards
2. Discussion

Cllr Trendall

* 1. It was noted that it was a very good quality presentation but because he was on DCC did not want to pass on any further comments

Cllr Rankine

* 1. Supports more homes in the town centre so as to encourage more people into Queensway
  2. No concerns about the appearance but aware of parking issues. The applicant responded by saying they are meeting a 1-1 ratio that is better than the provision provided on previous schemes and are providing 13 spaces for commercial uses.
  3. Supported building the parking down using the slope / levels difference
  4. Supportive of use of plinth wall as public art as otherwise it could become a graffiti wall which would be a negative.
  5. Would like to see better connectivity with public transport and funding, serving Bowl, MK1, football, employment areas.
  6. Need to ensure that the plinth doesn’t become a graffiti wall
  7. Need better connections to MK 1 and the Towns Fund should improve PT connections to MK1.

Cllr Exon

* 1. No formal comment to make as on DCC but stated it was a very good presentation. Cllr Exon passed a comment that the previous appearance of Stephenson House was even worse than what now exists.

Delia Shepherd

* 1. A lot of the Town Council concerns had now been addressed.
  2. Questions about the commercial space. The applicant responded by saying they are exploring either co-working, café, community organisation, open to suggestions on this as long as it is commercially viable and does not disturb residents on upper floors.
  3. Pleased about increase in parking spaces, as well as the mezzanine level, but it was questioned whether this would have an impact on viability. The applicant said it would make the scheme more expensive but further work is required to establish what would be available for s106 contributions.

Liam Costello

* 1. It was questioned whether the scheme fitted in with the Bletchley Prospectus. The applicant stated that while the Prospectus is not policy it does fit with the vision in the Prospectus and primarily supports higher densities close to the bus and train station such as this scheme does.
  2. The affordable housing provision was questioned. The applicant responded that it is not quite firmed up yet and the design could also influence the affordable housing quota.

Tim Skelton

* 1. It was asked about landownership – who owns land to the north and south of the site. The applicant responded that the lands to the north and south is owned by Bletchley View Ltd
  2. Concerns over living space, depth, back to back distances, etc-

The applicant responded that a key element to ensure a high quality of life for residents is the shared amenity space and concierge with café / break out work space etc which will allow residents to get to know each other. How amenity space is designed and managed is really important. There should be opportunities for sitting and meeting other residents of the development but the success of this come down to management arrangements. The applicant further explained that a minimum number of residential apartments are required to pay for these management arrangements. The exact figure is dependent on site and market characteristics but in this location the applicant needs to deliver circa 130 dwellings in order to ensure that the scheme can support the desired high quality on-site management services required.

The applicant went through shadow studies to demonstrate the limited impact of the buildings on light and explained how the existing and proposed development had the most significant impact already.

* 1. Concern was expressed over the design, as a landmark design within Bletchley it should be more distinctive and interesting and not need to reflect neighbouring permitted buildings as much as the applicant has stated. Why for example was brick being used?

The applicant responded that brick will be durable and last 50 years and is an appropriate choice, despite the expense, multi-textured brick can create a sense of articulation and depth, windows are set back for a deep reveal. Cladding panels (as an alternative to brick) can discolour.

* 1. Could the plinth wall be considered for use as public art? The applicant replied that the plinth wall is being considered for public art and what that might comprise.
  2. Concern over deep balconies for apartments, and that this will cast shadows into the apartments. Would it help if the balconies were staggered? The applicant responded that the balconies were staggered. In terms of internal light/shadowing, the applicant also explained that there are no long corridors and the longest corridor has got glazing at the end to let light in.
  3. It was questioned whether any roof top space could be used by the general public? The applicant explained that on the 5th floor that there was some upper level external space for shared use by residents of the development
  4. It was questioned what was being provided in terms of public realm. The Council responded that new public realm would be introduced in the wider area as identified in the Prospectus such as downgrading of Saxon Street with more space given over to pedestrians the reconnection of Queensway to Buckingham Road via a pedestrian scaled street as well as new improved pedestrian connections to Blue Lagoon Nature Reserve which is not far away but currently difficult / convoluted and largely unattractive to access.

Dianne Sutton

* 1. It was queried whether people would want to look over the busy/car dominated Saxon Street
  2. It was clarified by the Council that the intention as stated in the Prospectus was to reconfigure Saxon Street to become more pedestrian friendly / human scaled. This was particularly in the context of an eastern train station entrance to allow people to easily cross Saxon Street to the eastern entrance.
  3. It was asked where the redway runs on Saxon Street relative to the scheme? The applicant responded that the development would not affect the public highway so a redway could be accommodated (it is not however being delivered as part of the development). The Bletchley Prospectus further proposes the reconfiguration of Saxon Street to allow a more pedestrian scaled and friendly Saxon Street which would likely include a new section of redway to connect with the existing redway further to the north

Dave Humphreys

* 1. It was asked if any street art was being proposed. The plinth could attract graffiti so therefore need to ensure no vandalism can occur. Public art might help in this regard. The applicant responded that they would explore this.
  2. It was asked how delivery access vehicles would access the development / where would removal vans park for residents moving in. How do emergency vehicles get to the tower element of the scheme? The applicant explained that this can occur from both Albert Street and Saxon Street. The applicant is also exploring whether a new lay-by for servicing could occur on Saxon Street immediately prior to the north of the existing slip road to the bus station
  3. It was mentioned that a concern would be if residents hung their laundry out on the balconies and how this would look from the wider area. The applicant responded that this could be controlled through pro-active management and individual tenancy agreements.

Julia Banham

* 1. The shared facilities were seen as very important particularly as it is an apartment scheme
  2. Need to consider the affordable housing. The applicant explained that this was still being explored and agreed.
  3. The treatment of the plinth also needs to be considered

Janie Burns

* 1. Especially given the context of covid-19, the affordable housing element of the scheme is really important.

Mandy Shipp

3.32 Surprised about the scale and number of flats provided, creating a proliferation of flats in the area, and issues related to Stephenson House. Who is expected to move in? Will they sell and if they don’t what sort of place will be left? The applicant responded that it is purpose built residential development (not retrofit from offices like Stephenson House) with shared amenity space while the quality of building with mix of demographics and good management are the key ingredients to ensure a quality place that people will want to live in.