**Milton Keynes Council Development Review Forum**

**2 September, Civic, Room 1.05/06**

**Meeting Notes**

**Attendees**

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| **NAME** | **ORGANISATION** | **E-MAIL** |
| Neil Sainsbury (Chair) | MKC – Head of Placemaking | neil.sainsbury@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
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| Elizabeth Verdegem | MKC Development Management | Elizabeth.verdegem@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr Robin Bradburn | Milton Keynes Council | Robin.bradburn@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr Jenni Ferrans | Milton Keynes Council | Jenni.ferrans@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr Carole Baume | Milton Keynes Council  | Carole.baume@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Julia Banham | MKC Housing | Julia.banham@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Nick Ffoulkes | Sheppard Robson | Nick.ffoulkes@sheppardrobson.com |
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| Joshua Thomas | Latitude | jt@latitudearchitects.com |
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| Andy Thomas | CMK Town Council | Andrew.thomas@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk |
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1. The Chair welcomed everyone 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 Food Centre, Central Milton Keynes**

1. Nick Ffoulkes from Sheppard Robson outlined the design evolution of the scheme. The residential led mixed scheme comprises circa 900 units including a range of housetype (from 1 bed to 3 bed) and tenure as well as an office building, shops, convenience store and cafes/restaurants. Building heights within the detailed part of the hybrid application range from 8-13 storeys plus ground floor above grade. The scheme respects the grid of CMK and include a new landscaped pedestrianised ‘street’ that connects up existing porte-cocheres respecting a pedestrian desire line to Xscape and provides for a variety of different spaces within it.

Q+A

* 1. It was stated that the scheme ‘sits well’ in and captures the modern version of CMK well.
	2. It was queried why the frontage onto the northern edge of the building facing the entrance into the car park to the east of the landscaped street was not active. The applicant said they would looks at this.
	3. It was questioned why there was no mixed use activity at upper floors like Westgate in Oxford which had independent restaurants on the top floor. Views could be exploited if there were non-residential uses at upper floors. What was there to draw pedestrians across Midsummer Boulevard into the scheme. The applicant explained that ground floor uses were not yet fixed, and it will be market led and there could be restaurants etc, but the scheme certainly will include uses that will draw people into the development.
	4. Stakeholders commended the scheme for the colonnade being setback slightly from the back of the adopted highway as well as the permeability of the layout
	5. It was noted that being located next to the listed shopping building with its sleek design means that the appearance of the building and quality of materials needs significant attention
	6. MKC Housing supported the diverse range of housing types but di make a request for as much affordable housing as possible.
	7. It was questioned how well the scheme relates to the context – particularly to the east (for example there is a hotel to the east). It was agreed that this was likely because there was not enough certainty yet about how the remainder of the scheme would be developed out (that part of the site subject to the outline application). The applicant stated that the outline application would include parameters that would make clear how the rest of the site would be developed out and integrate with in particular existing development to the east.
	8. Questions were asked about the sustainability credentials of the scheme. The applicant explained that it was sustainable because of its location and being well connected while biodiversity will go from zero to positive. The ecology elements allow for nesters. Pollinators etc. SUDS would also be included via water tanks beneath the pavement. It was questioned whether these water tanks could be a feature at ground level. The applicant said this could be explored. In terms of the energy efficiency of the buildings themselves, energy is integrated into the design and the solid to void has been important in this respect. Thermal insulation is 19% better than Part L. Stakeholders challenged the applicant to pushing further than 19%. Low energy fittings would be included while de-carbonisation will drive energy use down. Stakeholders enquired whether the scheme would link into the CMK CHP plant. The applicant said they would explore this.
	9. It was questioned what the minimum distance was between apartments across the landscaped street and whether there are any minimum standards. The applicant said the minimum distance was 13m while the Chair confirmed that there were no minimum standards for front-to-front standards.
	10. Discussion took place around modifications to the existing MSCP. Stakeholders were concerned about the location of bike storage where the current landscaping adjacent to the pedestrian through route is. As a 24 hour pedestrian route stakeholder said it needs to be kept as attractive as possible and it works best from a pedestrian perspective in its current form.
	11. It was also asked whether there would be some form of walkway agreement that will legally keep the new landscaped street open 24/7. The applicant said it would be kept open 24/7. The applicant said the route will be a permissive footpath allowing access by pedestrians and cyclists by the landowner
	12. It was also asked whether this new ‘street’ could fulfil a function at the International Festival. It was said that this would be possible
	13. Finally stakeholders asked what the proposal was providing in terms of giving something back to the community. The applicant explained that the proposed ground floor mix of uses as well as the new housing offer and landscaped pedestrian street would do this.

**Redevelopment of Bowback House**

1. The applicant explained that the redevelopment of Bowback House involved:
	* 306 build to rent apartments, mostly 1-2 bed and 3.3% 3 bed
	* Landscaped courtyard at ground floor level with windows 35m away from facing windows above the courtyard
	* The site slopes significantly by 3m from south to north
	* 129 parking spaces beneath the building at grade level
	* Building entranced lines up with existing porte-cochere
	* Active frontage and double height colonnade onto Silbury Boulevard (that wraps around the Witan Gate and North 4th street corners)
	* The building rises to 13 storeys at highest point but comprises a series of terraces with communal space on the roofs of terraces.
	* The scheme would terminate the existing visual axis to North 4th Street which was currently a poor quality route
	* Contemporary approach to elevation design

Q+A

* 1. It was expressed that the scheme fits in well in the CMK and proposed materials are good. In addition the roofscape into the centre is good while the way the terraces step around was seen as positive. The open space retained within the proposal was also supported.
	2. Stakeholders did however have concerns that the scheme wasn’t designed to benefit the wider pedestrian experience (it appears designed solely for users of the building). It was said that the colonnade should be 2m wide and not 1.5m while the disabled access should enter directly into the building from the front at grade – disabled access should not have its own access arrangement. The applicant said they would explore both issues
	3. Concern was raised by the blank ground floor frontages along the Witan Gate and North 4th Street frontages. It was stated that the Witan Gate frontage was a key pedestrian route linking over into Bradwell Common yet pedestrians would be faced by a blank frontage comprising of the proposed car park. It was questioned whether the building could be dropped by 900mm to allow for both an at grade entrance into the building as well reducing the extent of blank ground floor frontage onto Witan Gate and North 4th Street. The key point made by stakeholders was that these frontages do not comply with policy and need to be made active. The applicant said they would consider these comments.
	4. It was questioned whether a wind impact study had been done to establish the impact of the tallest element on pedestrians at the underpass on Witan Gate. The applicant said a wind study would address this.
	5. It was not clear where the access to the retail units was – the applicant explained that they were to the side of the main entrance. The applicant also said these units could be flexibly used including as part of the PRS element – this was to ensure they are filled and don’t remain locked up.
	6. Stakeholders asked whether the retail units could be wrapped around the Witan Gate frontage further – to provide some interest for pedestrians walking along this edge. Stakeholders also suggested a footfall assessment be undertaken of the footpath along the Witan Gate frontage. The applicant indicated they would look at both these points.
	7. Questions were asked regarding the environmental performance of the building. The applicant said the environmental credentials of the building would exceed building regulations and would be looking to seek very good or excellent in terms of old Breaam standards. Stakeholders said the scheme should seek to be excellent in terms of Breeam standards. This was seen as especially important given the rich history MK has in energy conservation (no buildings in CMK has achieved this since the Pinnacle so a challenge was thrown to the applicant). It was also questioned whether the scheme can plug into the nearby CMK CHP plan. The applicant said that they would explore this. The applicant explained that it would be a fabric first principle to thermal insulation with green roofs having a key role to play in delivering a sustainable building – with the extent of green roofs allowing the scheme to be biodiversity positive. Stakeholders did however say that biodiversity should be more than just about including bird boxes. It should explore sedum for example. The applicant said it was still early days in terms of the evolution of the scheme and that these will all be explored as part of scheme development.
	8. It was asked what the community gets out of the development. The applicant explained that the scheme would be delivering active frontages onto Silbury Boulevard, which otherwise is ‘dead’ right now. The scheme would also deliver new housing that would help make CMK more vibrant for everyone while S106 contributions toward public art and culture can deliver wider public benefits.
	9. A final comment was that one stakeholder felt that the top 2 floors of the tallest element of the building should, since the form of the building hadn’t changed between ground floor and top floor, be in the same material as the part of the building below it ie brick – from ground floor to top floor. The applicant explained their rationale for the lighter metallic material which matches the top 2 floors elsewhere across the scheme.