



Serpentine Court Steering Group

Tuesday 3RD November 2020

Minutes

Residents: Danielle Slaymaker (Chair), Sharon Jordan (Deputy Chair), Cassy Elliott (Deputy Chair), Ronke Oludapo, Joan Forsyth, Mercy Zvenyika, Stacey Coleburt, Sebastian Power, Robyn Goodwin, Jean Wallace, Clive Wallace, Mariee Wymer (observer – Locals of the Lakes), John Pearce (observer)

Staff: Julia Bandy (Milton Keynes Council), Rahul Mundry (Milton Keynes Council), Mark Culley (Milton Keynes Council), Kevin Farrell (Tpas)

Apologies: Margaret Prescott, Cllr Emily Darlington, Pauline Wright, Liz Jenkins, Mohammed Rohim, Samantha Goodwin (Tpas)

1. **Welcome and introductions and ground rules**

Danielle opened the meeting (via Teams) and welcomed Julia Bandy and Mark Culley of MKC to the SCSG for the first time. Julia introduced herself as the Resident Engagement Team Leader who manages the Community Engagement Officers (formerly known as Community Partnership Officers).

Danielle acknowledged another major project milestone, with the Development Control Committee giving planning consent for the Lakes regeneration project in early October.

Anne Bircham left her post as the Community Partnership Officer for Serpentine Court, during October 2020. She provided the SCSG leadership team with a thorough handover before she left, and Danielle formally recorded SCSG's appreciation for the work Anne had carried out on the project over the last 3 years.

2. **Minutes of 8th September 2020**

Agreed as a true record.

Matter Arising – MKC procurement team to meet with Tpas and DS – see item 3 Completed.

Matters Arising – Rahul Mundry to produce a new project timeline – see item 4.

Matters Arising – Anne Bircham to check whether tenants in temporary housing on Serpentine Court will receive Home Loss compensation - see item 5. Completed.



3. **Procurement presentation – Mark Culley, Senior Procurement Manager, MKC**

In his presentation Mark covered his role; procurement regulations; the procurement process; what MKC has done so far; how MKC will tender, and evaluation. The Powerpoint presentation has been attached to these minutes as an appendix.

Kevin responded on behalf of the SCSG, and said he was encouraged to hear that MKC was considering ways to involve residents of the wider Lakes in the evaluation process. Tpas has extensive experience of supporting residents to take part in procurement and Kevin commented that they have always added value. He also welcomed the suggestion that residents might be given the opportunity to meet the bidders and pose questions about their bids. Kevin also asked Mark to consider how residents might be involved in monitoring the performance of the successful bidder, and acting as a 'critical friend' to help maintain high levels of site safety etc.

There then followed a question and answer session:

Q: Can you give us an indication of the project timeline for procurement?

A: The timeline will be long, and it is difficult to put any dates against it, now. We still need to look at finances; the supply chain; the submissions etc. We don't know how many bids we'll receive. I am suggesting that the tender period will last approximately 3 months from launch to close of tender – that is the time that bidders will have to review and respond to the tender; it could be longer or shorter. The evaluation and award process will then follow. The bidders will be expected to use the Council portal to make their submissions and that will give us a better understanding of the level of interest.

Q: How could the community be involved in the evaluation?

A: Bidders could be asked to make presentations to residents, to show their proposals.

4. **Project update – Rahul Munday, Development Manager, MKC**

Rahul summarised the discussions and the outcomes of the Development Control Committee (DCC) held in October 2020, and highlighted several issues:

Memorandum of Understanding: - this agreement will replace the Section 106 (Town & Country Planning Act 1990) agreement that a private developer would usually sign with the Council, because the Council cannot legally create a Section 106 agreement with itself. The Memorandum of Understanding will be a legal agreement setting out all the contributions that will be made by the Council, which currently total around £5 million.

Section 278 (Highways Act 1980): - this agreement allows developers to make permanent alterations or improvements to a public highway. The Council is also working on the plans for the Redways.



Objections:- the DCC noted objections to the energy centre; the parking arrangements; the absence of a convenience store for 2 years during the build; the distance between some buildings; the amount of Affordable housing; the issues relating to the Grand Union Canal, the cost of managing the green spaces; and the increase in traffic on the estate.

Support:- the DCC noted support from Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council and the public consultation events, and that the Memorandum of Understanding (for the developer contributions) has been agreed; the proposals for a temporary convenience store; better community and amenity space; that conditions in Serpentine Court are unacceptable; that residents voted for change; and a point was also made that as the development is being done by the Council, if there turn out to be any problems, it will be the Council's responsibility to sort them out.

There were several 'Informatives', which is standard means of providing additional information for developers. The DCC picks out the Informatives that it wishes to scrutinise, and the planning officers are required to provide the details.

Affordable housing: - the DCC took the view that there was too much Affordable housing in Phase A, but the planning team made the point that when Phase B is completed it will account for 51% of the total build and is therefore acceptably close to the 50% requirement.

Parking: - through public consultations, residents have said they would prefer unallocated parking. The DCC was concerned that not sufficient parking in the proposal and whether it should be allocated. Currently there are 1.25 spaces per dwelling, but after some garages are demolished, it will rise to 1.34 spaces per dwelling, across the development overall.

Convenience store: - the Council is proposing to provide a space for a temporary store during Phase B. The best option appears to be to change the use of the light industrial unit for the duration, and this would not require planning permission.

Energy centre: - The Council is carrying out an audit to assess what was decided; the reasons for the decision, and whether it was the correct decision. Certain members of the DCC wished to see adopting the conclusions of the audit be made a condition of the planning consent. However, the planning team said this could not be done legally. Planning conditions have to meet 6 tests to be permissible and this would not do that; one of the conditions, for example, is for the condition to be 'precise' it is not possible for an audit that has not yet come to any conclusion to be considered precise.

There then followed a question and answer session with Rahul about the planning application:

Q: What guarantees are in place to ensure that the project gets the same money as it would through a Section 106 agreement?

A: It forms part of the planning agreement. The Council must pay the money - it is guaranteed.

Q: What guarantees are there that a temporary shop will be provided?



A: There are no guarantees as the Council is not prepared to run it. The Council can support interested parties, but there can be no favouritism. I will do my best to support the initiative.

Q: Why doesn't the Council allocate car parking spaces, if there will be more in the future? We struggle at the moment, because outsiders park their cars on the estate.

A: The Neighbourhoods Team has been carrying out a survey of the garages across the estate. The information has been shared with the architects and the transport consultants. Some of the garages are used and some are not. They are looking at which ones to keep and which ones to demolish. We are expecting a proposal with options from the architects and transport consultants.

Q: I've read that demolishing garages doesn't create any more car spaces. Is that true?

A: There is a ratio: for every garage that is demolished the number of car spaces increase. I don't know the ratio off hand. I will check and inform you at the next meeting. **Action: RM**

Q: Has the Council carried out a survey of car ownership on Serpentine Court, to check exactly how many cars there are and whether there will be enough spaces in Phase A? Some households have more than 1 car.

A: I don't know the answer to that question. The Neighbourhoods Team carried out the survey of the wider estate. The garages were designed at a time when cars were generally smaller. Some garages are used for storage and many of them look unsightly. There is a limit to what the Council can do with car parking on the new developments. I will investigate your question and provide an answer for the next meeting. **Action: RM**

Q: Is the plan to demolish some or all the garages?

A: The architects and transport consultants are looking at this question. There has been no decision about the garages on the wider Lakes. There has been a definite decision to demolish the garages on Serpentine Court. Some garages on the wider estate are affected by the development proposals, but no decision has been made about their future.

Project finances: - a paper was taken to Cabinet in September 2020 to obtain general approval for procuring the project. Cabinet will consider the budget for the project on 15 December 2020. Several internal committees must also give approval before then – the committees are in hierarchy. Cabinet will examine the funding for the Lakes project and the overall HRA Business Plan. The Lakes project has cross-party support. The project is currently over budget, but the project team is undertaking a 'value engineering' exercise to try and identify savings.

Project timeline: - Rahul could not provide a project timeline for the meeting and advised that he would need to wait for a Cabinet decision in December before producing a revised timeline. He predicted that he would have it ready by the end of January and would bring it to the following SCSG meeting. **Action: RM**



There then followed a question and answer session with Rahul:

Q: Am I right to assume that building works won't be starting in Spring 2021?

A: It is unlikely that building would start so soon. Covid will have major implications for the project, as does Brexit. We don't fully understand the implications of Covid or Brexit on the building industry. The Council intends to get on with the environmental works and we are trying to get agreement to do so. We are talking with internal teams over starting work on items such as the Redways in Spring. There is always the potential for slippage and numerous risks on such a large project.

Q: What can SCSG members say to residents about the project, if asked?

A: You can tell them about the planning consent; the December Cabinet meeting, and the release of a new project timeline by the end of January. My job is to take the project forward and I will do that to my utmost.

5. Questions & Answers

Danielle had collated the following questions from residents during early October, and Anne Bircham (CPO) had obtained the answers in time for this meeting.

Q: How many options will be put forward for us to choose from?

A: Residents will be offered choices which match their housing needs. This is based on the most recent Housing Needs Assessment. The number of choices given depends on the availability of the required home type in the building programme. It is possible that some residents may be given one choice depending on their needs and availability. A formal offer will be made once any choices have been considered.

Q: How long before moving will we get the choice?

A: This is currently uncertain but will not be before the building contractor is appointed and a construction programme is agreed.

Q: I don't want a flat as I have a young child who needs to have a garden due to their having needs?

A: The choices of home will be based on the Housing Needs Assessment. Information about any special medical or health requirements for any in the family will need to be put into the assessment.

Unfortunately, we do not always have properties available with gardens and there is no direct entitlement to a garden within the allocation policy or the Local Lettings Plan.

Q: Will they put in a priority category?

A: There is no prioritisation in the choices or offers. Every home should match the



needs of the family.

Q: Do I need proof that this is needed?

A: Any evidence of special medical or health requirements will need to be given at the time of the Housing Needs Assessment.

Q: If so, what proof is needed for this?

A: Medical notes with a summary of the condition or need requirements will be required. We can also request independent medical assessment as part of a housing needs analysis.

Q: I've seen the plans and was wondering if I would have to have it open planned, or will I get a choice in open planned or closed?

A: This will vary and will depend what type of property you would be offered?

Q: Why do you need prove for needing a wheelchair accessible property?

A: As there are a limited number of wheelchair-adapted properties, all special requirements will need to be supported by the appropriate evidence. We cannot allocate a wheelchair accessible property to someone who does not have a registered disability.

Q: Would overcrowded Serpentine Court residents get priority over temporary accommodations residents? Would temporary residents get priority over secure tenancy Serpentine Court residents? Could temporary residents get the compensation?

A: Households placed in temporary accommodation in Serpentine Court are issued with a licence to occupy. They will not be eligible for home loss or disturbance payments when the building is demolished and will not be rehoused as part of the formal regeneration decant process. If they are living in Serpentine Court at the time the building is ready for demolition, they will be moved to alternative forms of temporary accommodation.

This means that none of the temporary residents will remain on the Lakes when the time comes to move out unless they are offered alternative accommodation via the Council or secure their own accommodation. The families/individuals will be offered alternative temporary accommodation and will not be eligible for Home Loss and Disturbance Allowance.

Q: In the new houses are we getting the induction hobs and ovens? We are under the impression we still get to design our kitchens and bathrooms is this still able. Do we still get a shower over the bath?

A: The detailed specification of the new homes has not been agreed, but more information will be shared once the building contractor is appointed and the details



have been agreed.

Q: Can we have an up-to-date timeline on dates and when the work is going to commence/be on site?

A: We can't say for sure when work will start on site. However, the Planning application is due to be considered at the Development Control Committee meeting on 8th October. Work on the procurement of contractors is ongoing (since Cabinet meeting Sept 2020) and there has been a good level of early interest in the development from building contractors. Once a contractor has been appointed then we would plan to start on site as soon as possible.

Mohamed Rohim had also raised the following question:

Q: Problems of unemployment, lack of skills and education, lack of food, poor health, crime and anti-social behaviour have increased due to Covid 19 and are being felt acutely in the Lakes area. Now the planning application has been considered and agreed, what plans do MK Council have to support the Lakes Estate Community with these problems during the wait before the new homes are built?

Anne had only been able to obtain a partial answer, as follows:

A: Skills, education and employment:

The Council's Economic Recovery Plan set aside £2.25 million to support the city's businesses and residents through the Covid-19 crisis and the subsequent recession.

It is now developing a comprehensive programme of schemes to help support both people and businesses in the borough through these challenging times.

After allocating the financial contributions in a Cabinet decision on 1st September, it is now completing a due diligence process to formally agree all the milestones and deliverables before commencing work so it's assured they are schemes that can be delivered.

What does this mean for the Lakes?

- There is already one scheme in delivery that MK Council is focussing on for the Regeneration estates - a virtual pop-up business school that will be advertised very soon – it's a non- traditional course to help those with ideas on setting up their own business get started.
- Also, a Restart network will focus on those who find themselves unemployed and will provide 121 support and advice on accessing training and courses through MK College. The council is working very closely with MK College to shape this up and it will be a large programme of support for MK residents.
- There is also funding specifically to support Regeneration estates- there is more work to be done on shaping the schemes, but the allocation of funding to them in the September 1st Cabinet meeting is a clear signal of the Council's intent to ensure support is available to all people in MK. There will be more information available once the schemes are shaped up.



6. **Any other business**

The pharmacy: - Cllr Darlington briefed Kevin on the latest developments before the meeting. She had met with a representative from Jardines, the local pharmacy chain to discuss their interest in taking over the Lloyds shop unit, and the discussions have been encouraging. To gain support for Jardines' application to register as the new pharmacy, Cllr Darlington had written to residents and the consultation ends on 7 November. The Council has been able to terminate Lloyd's lease early, but there would be a short period before Jardines could move in, so Cllr Darlington has been working on temporary alternatives, which include opening one of the other vacant shop units, or Spotlight. The Councillor encouraged SCSG members to respond to the consultation and promote it to their neighbours.

Estate Renewal Forum: - Cllr Baume has been developing the terms of reference for the new Estate Renewal Forums (ERF). The Lakes will be one of the first estates to have an ERF and the plan is to hold an initial meeting before Christmas and commence formal meetings in January.

MKC Waste & Recycling consultation: - Samantha Goodwin of Tpas had asked Kevin to notify SCSG members of the current consultation exercise. Kevin had circulated the flyer to members.

Date of next meeting: - Tuesday 6th January 2021 - 6.30pm – 8.00pm via Teams – to be confirmed.