

Minutes of the Mercia Park Community Liaison Group

6.30pm, 3 November 2020

Attendees

Rick Moore	Chair
Nigel Eaton	Netherseal Parish Council
Darren Gelder	Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council
Darren Greally*	Stretton en le Field Parish Council
Colin Manifold	Measham Parish Council
Lucy Morton	Chilcote Parish Council
Mike Ruston	Newton Regis, Seckington & No Man's Heath Parish Council
Peter Snelson	Residents Against Project Mercia
Tony Treadwell	Austrey Parish Council
Daphne Robinson	North West Leicestershire District Council
David Smith	IM Properties
Tony Gurney	Jaguar Land Rover
Nick Ellis	Jaguar Land Rover
Richard Reid	Winvic
Heidi Salmons	Winvic
Emma Alderman	Winvic
Katy Green	Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation
Louise Cotton	Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation
Matt Sutton	Camargue
Giles Venn	Camargue

Apologies

Calvin Bent	Clifton Campville Parish Council
Sue Ward	Overseal Parish Council
Lindsay Swinfield	Appleby Magna Parish Council

*Denotes substitute member

1. Welcome and introduction

- The Chair, Rick Moore (RM) welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Mercia Park Community Liaison Group (CLG). He introduced all of those present at the meeting and noted those who had sent apologies. The Chair reminded members that the CLG had been set up as a way for IM Properties to provide updates about the construction of Mercia Park and as a forum where both positive and negative issues can be raised by CLG members for open and honest discussion.
- The Chair ran through the proposed agenda and invited David Smith (DS), IM Properties' (IMP) planning director, to give a short introduction. DS outlined the ground to be covered and requested that he welcomed items for the agenda at future meetings.

2. Construction

- The Chair handed over to Richard Reid (RR), project manager from IMP's appointed contractor Winvic. He introduced himself and clarified he had taken over the role earlier in the year from Nick Lakin, who had previously presented to the CLG.

- RR delivered a presentation which included phasing plans and timescales, confirming that the project was currently reporting on programme. He advised that the site compound had now been set up and that the initial earthworks phase would be completed very shortly.
- RR advised that landscaping work had commenced, installation of acoustic fencing would start in the next four weeks, and the underground drainage had now been completed. Consultants from Middlemarch and Frog Environmental, as well as the Environment Agency, were attending site to monitor and inspect the work from an environmental perspective.
- RR confirmed work on the industrial units had begun at the end of October on the DSV plot, with the first of the steelwork to be expected in January 2021. He also noted the site team had achieved an impressive score of 40 on a recent Considerate Constructor Scheme site visit.
- RR gave a high-level overview of a forthcoming programme of highways works which will consist of three main elements: a new site entrance, a new access roundabout, and J11 gyratory improvement works. Work along the B5493 for the new site entrance is underway and due for completion in December. Prior to this a full weekend closure will be required. Matt Sutton (MS) from Camargue, added that details of this including diversion routes would be communicated via parish clerks, a community newsletter, and the project website, as well as to all CLG members.
- RR said work on the new access roundabout had begun off carriageway, with online works to begin at the end of January 2021 – initially under temporary traffic lights, with some overnight and weekend closures required from April 2021. Work on the J11 gyratory will also begin in April 2021, although any slip road closures would be overnight and weekend only.
- Darren Greally (DGr) from Stretton en le Field Parish Council asked how long work on the J11 gyratory was likely to last. RR advised this would take around four to five months on and off, with lane closures only active while the team was working in the carriageway. He noted more information and further detail would be available nearer the time and would keep the CLG updated.
- Heidi Salmons (HS) from Winvic provided an update on delivering social value. This included details of the project's Employment Scheme (Construction Phase) that was unveiled in July with four key strands local employment, business opportunities, curriculum support and community projects.
- DGr asked whether the commitments in the Employment Scheme would also extend to the future occupiers of Mercia Park. HS confirmed this document currently just covers the construction phase but other opportunities would follow likely follow in the operation phase.
- Darren Gelder (DG) from Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish asked whether quantitative metrics measuring progress against social value targets were available. HS noted the first of a regular series of quarterly progress reports had recently been submitted to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC), which included figures on contract spend in the local and wider impact areas and data on employment. DS and HS confirmed the first of these reports would be shared with CLG members.
- Lucy Morton (LM) from Chilcote Parish Council asked whether social value commitments would be included in supply chain contracts and if these would have specific numerical metrics and targets. HS confirmed that the goals of the Scheme are being made clear to supply chain partners, who would have obligations to advertise locally for example, but contracts would not include fixed numerical targets.
- Peter Snelson (PS) from Residents Against Project Mercia (RAPM) asked for a clarification about the Scheme's local impact area (LIA) and its wider impact area. HS explained the LIA covered neighbouring districts and borough to the site including North West Leicestershire, North Warwickshire, Hinckley & Bosworth, Tamworth, Lichfield and South Derbyshire. The wider impact area includes the broader East and West Midlands.

- DG asked whether there had been any particular environmental challenges or lessons learned from construction so far. RR commented that everything had gone to plan so far, including working with local landowners to clear the ditches around the site. Drainage is now able to be carefully controlled, with Frog Environmental and the Environment Agency working with the site team to manage water discharge.
- LM thanked Winvic for its efforts to minimise run off in the local stream in Chilcote which flows into the River Mease and asked the team to continue their vigilance on this matter into the wetter winter months.
- LM noted issues caused by the recent closure on the A444 relating to utility works, with additional traffic including some HGVs attempting to route between Netherseal and Chilcote. As part of the forthcoming closures on the B5493, she asked whether additional signage could be used to mitigate further problems. RR confirmed he would take these comments on board as part of the diversion plan currently being negotiated with Leicestershire County Council.
- LM asked whether issues including mud being spread on local roads from the transportation of earth to a nearby farm near Acresford were related to the project. RR confirmed this was not connected to the site; DG confirmed it was a separate issue and the parish was aware.
- PS asked if discussions about the proposed diversions included other local highways authorities. RR explained that the route had to be agreed with Leicestershire County Council in the first instance, but then would need to be signed off by the authorities in Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire.
- Tony Treadwell (TT) from Austrey Parish Council asked if the team was aware that in some instances local roads including Appleby Hill were split across boundaries between Warwickshire and Leicestershire. RR confirmed the team was aware.
- Daphne Robinson (DR) from NWLDC wanted to check if people knew how they could contact Winvic if necessary. RR confirmed all contact details were on its website; MS noted that this information would be reiterated in the next community newsletter.
- Giles Venn (GV) from Camargue provided an update on the project utilities connection works on behalf of IMP's contractor, Matrix Networks, who were unable to attend the meeting. This included details of the electric and water infrastructure being installed in Tamworth town centre, across Ashby Road Bridge and along the B5493. Separately, the installation of a new gas main is currently continuing through Ashby de la Zouch, although this will require one further weekend closure on the A444 (13/11-16/11). Details of the official road diversion were provided.
- PS asked about the levels of disruption as the electric/water installation passes through No Man's Heath and how this would be communicated. GV advised no road closures or diversions should be required, but would follow up with Matrix Networks to check sufficient notice will be provided ahead of work starting.
- LM commented that separate work carried out by South Staffs Water (SSW) in the summer had caused damage to the verges along No Man's Heath Road into Chilcote. MS confirmed the team would follow up again with SSW.
- PS noted that barrels had been left on the verge along the B5493 which had later spilled onto the road; RR advised these were not related to site works but would investigate any similar incidents if they are reported.

3. Vehicle Activated Signage

- DS provided context about recent discussions about Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS), noting that during pre-application consultation feedback was provided about possible contributions towards additional off-site traffic mitigation. IMP had agreed to monitor and manage any unforeseen impacts once site becomes operational, with a view to considering initiatives in the future where Mercia Park can clearly be demonstrated to have a material negative effect on the local and wider highway network.
- DS confirmed that IMP had nevertheless already received requests including to the Community Fund for assistance to manage existing concerns on the network. IMP has therefore agreed an exceptional one-off contribution of up to £5,000 to purchase a Vehicle Activated Sign, subject to conditions. These include ensuring the mobile unit is to be managed and shared by local villages and that a protocol is drawn up to ensure fair use by parishes nearby to the site. Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council (ODA PC), via Darren Gelder, have been invited to lead on the initiative having initially tabled and brought forward the request.
- PS raised a query about the transport impact assessments prepared by IMP's consultants that were used to develop the sustainable transport plan and whether these include accurate data relating to occupiers JLR and DSV. DS confirmed discussions were ongoing with the occupiers. PS accepted the Chair's request to discuss this issue after concluding the conversation on VAS.
- The Chair invited DG to provide an update on behalf of ODA PC. DG confirmed the parish had been looking for a number of years to address local concerns about speeding and had been aware others including Appleby Magna had been doing the same. DG confirmed the proposals for VAS were being taken to his finance committee meeting and a full council meeting w/c 9/11/20 for approval. Subject to the proposal going forward, the parish would take on responsibility for managing the mobile VAS unit, which would require discussions with local councils about its correct use and installation, including drawing up terms about how it would be shared with others.
- DR asked which communities would be entitled to make use of the VAS once it had been purchased. DS confirmed this would be within areas potentially impacted by the site where it was felt it was needed.
- PS returned to his question about transport impact assessments, and whether these had been based on data not relevant to the occupiers leaving them inaccurate. He noted a request at the previous meeting for JLR to provide its sustainable transport plan which would allow issues to be dealt with more efficiently and accurately. DS responded to confirm the original assessments were conducted with some data from JLR, but that this was ultimately a framework document upon which the site sustainable transport plans could be delivered. He noted discussions were ongoing with JLR that would see further data provided which would help to develop the proposals for car share schemes, new bus routes and walking/cycling options once the site becomes operational. DS confirmed he would be happy to return to the topic at future meetings when more information is available. Tony Gurney of JLR agreed he would take this away and continue to work on the proposals and provide updates. PS accepted the Chair's recommendation to conclude discussion and have the topic as a live issue at future meetings.

4. Community Fund

- Katy Green (KG) and Louise Cotton (LC) of the Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation (L&RCF) provided an update on the Mercia Park Community Fund. This included a recap about the L&RCF, the aims, objectives and priorities of the Fund and the size of the grants that can be applied for.

- LC confirmed that the Community Fund Panel had awarded 19 different groups a total of £96,487 in the first round including for green space projects, educational programmes and health & wellbeing initiatives.
- LC noted that the fund is now reopen for round two, with a closing date of 8 February 2021 and a panel meeting to review the applications scheduled in March 2021. LC confirmed that the Fund is aiming to support more local charitable groups delivering much needed community-based projects and encouraged all CLG members to share details which are available on the project website and via L&RCF.
- TT asked whether projects outside of North West Leicestershire, including those in North Warwickshire, were eligible to apply. LC confirmed projects in all counties surrounding the site within the local area were able to apply.

5. Any other business

- LM advised there had been an increase in suspicious vehicles in Chilcote over recent months and said she would share the details of a contact in the local police force to be passed on to Winvic and IMP. RR confirmed anything suspect would be reported [*Post meeting note; contact details passed on to Winvic and IMP teams*]
 - DGr asked that given the large amount of plant and machinery whether there was 24-hour security on site. RR confirmed this was the case.
 - MS confirmed that the next communications would be a community newsletter aligned to key milestones on highways; this would be shared via email to all CLG members and local parishes, as well as posted to local residents near the site.
 - The Chair asked members when they would next like to meet, suggesting a date in February or March around the next milestone relating to the highways work, and to work on the assumption this would once again be a virtual meeting.
 - DGr said keeping frequent communications open would be appreciated, and short but regular updates welcomed. MS noted Camargue will circulate potential dates for a next meeting in January.
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