

Mercia Park Community Liaison Group: sustainable transport meeting minutes

6.00pm, 20 July 2021

Attendees

Colin Manifold	Measham Parish Council
Nigel Eaton	Netherseal Parish Council
Darren Gelder	Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council
Peter Snelson	Residents Against Project Mercia
Rick Moore	CLG chair, attending as an observer
David Smith	IM Properties (IMP)
Simon Tucker	David Tucker Associates (DTA)
Giles Venn	Camargue

- Giles Venn (GV) introduced the session and thanked everyone for joining, advising attendees that the meeting had been coordinated following an update by David Smith (DS) at the last full Mercia Park Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting on 8 June where it was agreed a dedicated session would be organised to provide a comprehensive update on the scheme's sustainable transport strategy.
- GV introduced and handed over to Simon Tucker (ST) of David Tucker Associates (DTA), the project's transport consultants, to run through a short presentation with an update for members covering Mercia Park's sustainable travel measures.
- ST provided a recap of IMP's proposition and its holistic approach to sustainable transport which covers travel planning, public transport linked to shift patterns, new and improved infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists as well as a robust car sharing scheme. He noted operators' shift patterns were likely to see reduced peak hour traffic movements compared to assessed scenarios, and the majority of HGV traffic will enter and exit the outside of peak hours to avoid congestion.
- Darren Gelder (DG) of Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council asked for clarification about what the 'peak hours' were. ST confirmed the modelling assessment considered these 7.00am-10.00am in the mornings and 4.00pm-7.00pm in the evenings.
- ST provided a recap and ran through each of the conditions that have been set out as part of IMP's planning consent for Mercia Park, including the requirements for a framework travel plan, Sustainable Access & Transport Strategies (SATS), a bus service programme and individual operator travel plans.
- ST outlined the scheme's section 106 planning obligations, noting that the required travel plan monitoring contribution has been paid and that DTA has been instructed to progress as travel plan coordinator. Travel packs including documents and a website setting out travel options are being drafted and will be shared with the operators, while bus passes for a free bus service will be provided for up to six months for 15% of staff.
- ST gave an update on progress with the scheme's bus strategy, confirming that no existing service would adequately satisfy the occupiers' shift changes. He advised that a phased strategy will see services added that initially serve Tamworth (for DSV's occupation) and later Measham, Coalville and Swadlincote once the park is fully occupied.
- ST noted that there were currently three options being explored for procuring the services, including via a commercial tender for a service to serve employees and the public, options for

a direct and bespoke service for employees only, and a demand responsive service that would be 'on demand' with dynamically adjusted routes.

- ST delivered an update on progress with SATS, confirming DTA was currently undertaking the travel plan coordinator role. With DSV due to start occupying the site from Q3 2021, its draft travel plan is currently with the council for review, while its HR department is involved in setting up bespoke car share scheme. Initial work is continuing on JLR's travel plan, and detailed staff patterns are awaited.
- ST reconfirmed the public transport strategy is phased. While the full development will provide at least two services (to Tamworth, and then to Measham / Coalville corridor and the Burton/ Swadlincote corridor), phase 1 for the first 12 months will cover DSV's start up before rolling out the further phases. There will be a review at end of Q1 2022 to reflect any changes in DSV trips, and phase 2 will introduce the further services.
- DG asked how the service through Tamworth would serve the labour market there, and whether people would need to travel into the town to access the service. ST confirmed that postcodes of staff had been plotted with the majority coming from the major built up areas of Tamworth that would be able to access the service. He advised the reason for the review at the end of Q1 2022 was to check how well the service was working, with the option to then refine and optimise if necessary.
- Peter Snelson (PS) of Residents Against Project Mercia asked that if a commercial service was selected for the route, how would No Man's Heath residents benefit and would there be a charge. ST explained if a commercial service was chosen it would be regular but aligned to match shift patterns rather than consistent through the day. PS asked whether a service to Tamworth would include a bus stop in No Man's Heath. ST said there was the potential for this, advising that a tendered service would need to register a timetable and set of agreed stops. A time responsive service would not require this registration, however.
- ST emphasised again that the initial Tamworth service would be reviewed at the end of Q1 2022 and there would be no benefit in being committed to providing a service for five years that was inefficient. JLR's shift patterns will be factored into phase 2 for the additional new service and the full picture will only become available once its staff start work on site.
- ST provided a recap about the Local Transport Improvement Fund (LTIF) which had been discussed and agreed in principle at the project's application stage and introduced following issues being raised during consultation. The aim of this would be to identify and address any unforeseen impacts and areas of concern proven to be a result of activity at Mercia Park.
- On the LTIF, ST confirmed that the travel plan coordinator (DTA) will "control" the fund and review costs of assessment and implementation of any works. Once the site is operational, any local concerns should be raised either via the Community Liaison Group or directly with the travel plan coordinator. In the first instance, the coordinator will liaise with the operators and consider options e.g. for training and enforcement for HGV drivers. The coordinator will then liaise with local highways authority to discuss any issue and revert back with a view on mitigation (if appropriate) – checking the issue is caused by the development – and then confirming the process for implementation.
- DG asked how any impacts would be assessed what the datum point would be once the site is operational in Q3 2021 – commenting that any data would need to be collected now prior to occupation. ST confirmed that the baseline for the planning consent was data included in the Transport Assessment from 2019, compiled at the time of the application. This included outputs from Leicestershire County Council's wider area traffic model. ST noted no surveys have been taken since but that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on traffic volumes in the last 18 months.
- DG noted specific interest in the A444 in his parish and asked if the original data could be shared. ST advised this information was all available in the documents submitted at planning; GV agreed to share these again with members including the Transport Assessment.

- PS asked to what extent the pandemic could permanently impact travel patterns as more people start to work from home and commented that it is hard to compare 2019 data with post-Covid traffic flows. He asked if the baseline data would be recalculated prior to JLR opening its facilities. ST advised that updating the surveys would need to happen at some point, not least because if any issues are shown to emerge it will be necessary to identify whether these have arisen through the development or through post-Covid changes (e.g. an increase in speeding is more likely to be the result of the latter).
- PS asked if DTA would be open to more surveys if speeding or rat running did increase without a post-Covid baseline. ST agreed to give this some thought, noting that the DSV data already shows there will be a lower demand than had been anticipated in the original transport assessments (which used generic B1/B2 figures). If the data is updated it will be important to consider when this takes place, avoiding school holiday periods for example.
- PS commented on the new facilities for pedestrians and cyclists included within the Transport Assessment, such as improvements to footpaths, but couldn't understand who would be walking or cycling to the site and how this could be encouraged. ST advised that the focus on walking and particularly cycling was still a focus of DSV's travel plan, noting that limitations will be related to distance travelled rather than the facilities themselves. This is why the travel plans are focused on car sharing and bus services as the predominant change in mode. ST gave the example of a highly successful car share scheme with Ocado at IMP's Birch Coppice site.
- DS concluded the session and confirmed that IMP intended to keep CLG members regularly updated as the sustainable transport plans progress. He noted IMP would be continuing to press DTA as travel plan coordinators to deliver the maximum possible benefits provided, they are viable and sustainable financially and environmentally. He suggested another sustainable transport session with CLG members could be held to update on how things are progressing after DSV have started their occupation at the site.
- Rick Moore (RM) thanked the presenters and asked if the slides from the session could be sent to all CLG members. GV confirmed that these would be passed on following the meeting.