

Mercia Park Community Liaison Group: meeting minutes

6.30pm, 24 February 2021

Attendees

Rick Moore	Chair
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
Lindsay Swinfield	Appleby Magna Parish Council
Calvin Bent	Clifton Campville Parish Council
Sue Ward	Overseal Parish Council
David Smith	IM Properties
Ben Shearman	Winvic
Francis Hayes	Winvic
Chris Sherwin	Winvic
Heidi Salmons	Winvic
Emma Alderman	Winvic
James Smith	Matrix Networks
Phil Hull	Jaguar Land Rover
Matt Sutton	Camargue
Giles Venn	Camargue

Apologies

Darren Gelder	Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council
Nigel Eaton	Netherseal Parish Council
Darren Greally*	Stretton en le Field Parish Council

*Denotes substitute member

1. Welcome and introduction

- The Chair, Rick Moore (RM) opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the third meeting of the Mercia Park Community Liaison Group (CLG). He provided a quick summary of meeting protocols and a top-level overview of the meeting agenda, noting he had received some representations from some members ahead of the session which would be covered in the presentation. RM also reminded all members he was available to pick up and discuss any issues separately after the meeting if helpful and appropriate.

2. Highways programme

- The Chair handed over to the team from Winvic to make introductions, including Ben Shearman (BS), operations manager, Francis Hayes (FH), project manager, Chris Sherwin (CS), site agent, Heidi Salmons (HS), head of marketing and communications, and Emma Alderman (EA), marketing and CSR coordinator.
- CS provided a high-level update on the current programme of highways works consisting of three main elements: a new site entrance, a new access roundabout, and J11, M42 gyratory improvement works.

- CS confirmed that Winvic has completed the majority of the works to the new site entrance and new access roundabout, despite the adverse weather conditions which delayed the original opening of the B5493 by two weeks.
- CS noted that final surfacing, white lining, drainage and verge works for the new site entrance and access roundabout have finished, with new street lighting to be installed towards the end of March. The new adjacent footways will be surfaced once this has been done. He added that no further full closures on the B5493 are now anticipated.
- CS explained that preparation for the enhancement and improvement works on the J11 gyratory were underway and all of these works would be taking place overnight to minimise disruption. Any future slip road closures will also be carried out during evenings and weekends only.
- James Smith (JS) of Matrix Networks provided an update on the project's utilities connection works. This included details of the electric and water infrastructure that is being installed across three county boundaries, running from Tamworth town centre and along the B5493 to the site, most of which is complete. Matrix is currently working around 800m outside of No Man's Heath, and a second team will be added to speed up the final section of works through Warwickshire.
- JS advised most of the work to install the gas main has also concluded, with the final pipe laying in Ashby de la Zouch expected to be finished in March. Two sets of directional drilling (on Willesley Lane and on the A444) will be required to install the final infrastructure, and all work is set to be finished by June.
- Peter Snelson (PS) from Residents Against Project Mercia (RAPM) read out a statement regarding the recent temporary road closure on the B5493, noting previous correspondence over the past few weeks with IM Properties. PS felt that the agreed diversion routes had been ill conceived and asked who had been involved in defining these and whether there should have been more communication with local stakeholders – as well as why signage had been put up around Chilcote but not No Man's Heath and Austrey. He reported that damage had been caused to verges along Appleby Hill by road users (including large vehicles and HGVs) opting not to use the official diversion – which he said was not the quickest or shortest option, for example.
- Matt Sutton (MS) from Camargue responded to the question raised about engagement with local stakeholders, advising that details were communicated locally as soon as confirmation of the diversion routes had been received from the highways authorities. This included a newsletter being sent to local residents in the villages closest to the site, website updates, as well as engagement with CLG members, parish clerks and elected members from North West Leicestershire District Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, South Derbyshire District Council, Lichfield District Council, Leicestershire County Council and local MPs. He advised that IMP and Winvic also similarly engaged as much as possible following the two one-week extensions. He commented that the Lucy Morton (LM), representing Chilcote Parish Council had raised the signage through representations at the last CLG meeting while engagement with the highways authorities was ongoing, but that there were no opportunities to make changes to the diversions once the routes had been agreed and approved.
- CS explained that Highways England as well as the four local highways authorities in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire were engaged to secure approvals for the diversion route. Winvic did not get to choose these diversion routes – it is standard that they are provided to the applicant to set up. As part of this Warwickshire County Council specifically stated they could not go south of the B5493 through Austrey, and Leicestershire County Council similarly said the route to the north could not pass through Chilcote. He also explained that Winvic had no further ability or permission to make any further changes to the routes or to the signage – whether on the diversion or in locations not along the official route – nor the authority to police, enforce or determine which routes people choose to travel on.

- PS responded and asked why local people or parish councils with knowledge of the local roads weren't consulted before agreeing the diversion route. He advised that he raised the issue of the damaged verges with his local borough council member, who had contacted Warwickshire and Leicestershire County Councils and then been asked to speak to Highways England. He asked again why "local traffic only" signs had been put up around Chilcote but not Austrey and No Man's Heath.
- Lindsay Swinfield (LS) of Appleby Magna Parish Council noted she would soon need to leave the meeting and asked for an update about the Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS). Darren Gelder (DG) of Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council had been due to provide a summary but sent his apologies. David Smith (DS) of IM Properties advised he had received an update and was due to pick up with DG, and would share further details following the meeting.
- Lucy Morton (LM) of Chilcote Parish Council thanked Winvic for the installation of the "local traffic only" signs as part of the diversion, although noted that residents had reported an increase in traffic during the B5493 temporary closure in any case. She noted that some damage had been brought to the parish's attention on the road between Chilcote and Netherseal, advising she would share photos, and asked whether remediation could be added to Winvic's scope of work. LM also asked CS about an issue a villager had flagged regarding the new raised area opposite the new site entrance on the B5493, with concerns about visibility and safety.
- CS responded to confirm that all of the works had been designed for B-category roads and these complied with the relevant British standards. He noted that the new road markings and road studs should now clearly indicate the road set up and that once installed towards the end of March, new street lighting will provide further visibility.
- Tony Treadwell (TT) of Austrey Parish Council restated concerns about the damage to verges on both sides of the road along Appleby Hill, which has been attributed to traffic using an alternative route around the temporary B5493 closure. He asked whether the Chair or IM Properties had been able to review the video he had shared identifying the problems. RM and MS both confirmed that they had not been granted the correct access to be able to view the video.
- DS confirmed that IM Properties was aware of the issue and this had been brought to its attention by a number of local people including Cllr David Humphries (North Warwickshire Borough Council member for Newton Regis and Warton). He advised he had requested Winvic to review the affected routes and, accepting that IMP had no direct responsibility for highways maintenance, to engage with the local highways authorities to have a conversation about the matter in the first instance.
- CS noted he had already engaged with Leicestershire County Council and approached Warwickshire County Council but was still awaiting a response and would report back. LM requested again for the section of road in Chilcote to be included as part of this.
- CS returned to address the earlier question from PS regarding consultation, advising diversion routes are never put out to local consultation by the highways authorities prior to being approved. He reiterated that the locations of the signage that were determined as part of the TTRO could only be included along the diversion route (to the north of the B5493) and not off the diversion route to the south.
- PS accepted the Chair's suggestion to take the conversation away and follow up with further explanations and discussion at a separate session after the meeting. Winvic agreed to propose some dates to PS.

3. Construction update

- CS provided an overview of current site infrastructure works, which included an update on the completion of the first phase of site earthworks. Work on landscaping, internal site roads, acoustic fencing and underground services remains ongoing. Upcoming works will include work on a foul pumping station by Severn Trent Water, Matrix Networks utilities connections to site and ditch clearance.
- Colin Manifold (CM) of Measham Parish Council asked a question about the ditch clearance work and whether litter could be picked up from all of the verges near the site, which has traditionally been a problem in the local area. CS advised a litter pick had recently taken place on the B5493 and a further one is planned soon on the J11 M42 slip road as part of the works. The team will aim to do this regularly throughout construction.
- LM noted Winvic's comments that 50 per cent of the landscaping had now been completed and asked which elements remained left to do – requesting to see a mark up of the landscaping overview plan to show where it has been done. CS confirmed screening and planting was ongoing, with some of the mature and semi mature trees going in shortly. DS noted there is a long-term commitment to manage the site's landscape as part of a 20-year plan to April 2040 (which has a five-yearly review provision).
- PS requested for landscaping to be added as a rolling agenda point for future meetings. He also asked for a separate, offline meeting with IMP and its landscape architects to fully understand the views from No Man's Heath, and how these compare to the CGIs presented at public consultation. DS confirmed he would be happy to set up a meeting; MS suggested the landscape architects could be invited to the next CLG meeting to provide a recap of the scheme.
- BS provided a summary of Winvic's current construction activities on DSV Group's plot, noting that work was well underway on the steelwork of the units for the cross dock terminal and main warehouse. Other work includes cladding, roofing, and window fitting on these units, as well as the installation of the external concrete yard slabs. Upcoming activity will include work on the internal structures, including mechanical and electrical installation.
- FH delivered an update on the vertical build of the JLR section of the site, which has recently started and is targeted for completion on September 2022. Earthworks, groundworks and drainage are currently underway, with foundations set to be installed later in March and the first steelwork expected in May.
- LM asked for an update about site drainage, including how water run off into the local brook is being managed. FH commented that the recent adverse weather including snowfall and heavy rain had made this more challenging, but that Winvic has been working with the Environment Agency on other measures. Winvic has appointed a full time water management manager to the scheme, and continues to work with independent consultants from Frog Environmental on the site's water management strategy.
- BS advised that Winvic will soon be installing a concrete batching plant on site near to the site compound. This has been designed to enhance efficiency and will see a 37 per cent reduction in vehicle deliveries to site as a result – as well as see all of the water used for washing out equipment recycled back onto the project. The plant will be installed in two weeks' time and is due to be operational within one month.
- HS delivered an update on social value, including a recap of the project's Employment Scheme (Construction Phase) agreed with IM Properties, DSV and North West Leicestershire District Council to primarily benefit the six local authority areas immediately surrounding the site. She noted that while physical visits have not been possible to site owing to Covid-19 restrictions, the team has adapted its training offer to virtual sessions for example. Winvic continues to work with its supply chain and communicate opportunities through its partners – while £3.4 million has been £3.4 million spent in first six months on subcontractors and orders in the local area.

- HS noted one of the social enterprises it has supported – Nuneaton Signs, which focuses on employing people with health conditions – is now working with Winvic across other projects and has had to recruit more employees as a result of a growing order book.
- Sue Ward (SW) of Overseal Parish Council asked how 'local' is defined in terms of social value and the heat map of spend across the area. HS explained the Local Impact Area (LIA) covered neighbouring districts and borough to the site including North West Leicestershire, North Warwickshire, Hinckley & Bosworth, Tamworth, Lichfield and South Derbyshire.
- Daphne Robinson (DR) of North West Leicestershire District Council asked which local schools Winvic is working with as part of its programme. HS confirmed the names could be provided after the session. *[Post meeting note – the schools involved are Market Bosworth School, Sir John Moore Primary School, Belgrave High School]*

4. Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS)

- RM noted the earlier comments from LS requested an update about VAS. In the absence of DG, it was agreed an update would be provided after the meeting.

5. Community Fund

- RM provided a short update on the Mercia Park Community Fund, advising that with Window 2 now closed around £116k of funding had been requested for the £58k available. The next Panel meeting to review the applications will be taking place on 24 March.
- Several members noted it would be beneficial for communities to know where and how their villages have benefited from the fund. DS advised he would be requesting for a summary of the schemes that have already been supported with funding to be communicated and circulated to all CLG members, to provide further information about how the Community Fund is helping projects and organisations locally and its positive outcomes. MS agreed to ensure more regular updates are provided to CLG members.

6. Communications

- MS confirmed that local communities would continue to be updated on a regular basis through newsletters and updates to the project website. Future updates will include further details about projects and schemes benefiting from the Community Fund, as well as usual information about construction and highways work. Parish council clerks will continue to receive key updates. MS also reminded members that all emails received to the project email address are considered and responded to.

7. AOB

- CLG members asked whether a visit to site would be possible in future so they can see the progress for themselves. All agreed this could be arranged after national lockdown restrictions are lifted towards the summer.
 - PS thanked HS and Winvic for their work to repair the damaged kerbstones at the village hall car park in No Man's Heath.
 - It was agreed the next meeting of the CLG will take place later in the spring, around May, with a date to be confirmed nearer the time.
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