

## Wokingham Borough Council

### Gorse Ride Project Residents Steering Group

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 - 7pm to 9pm

St Mary's and St John's Parish Centre

#### Meeting Notes

#### Residents / Stakeholder Attendees:

Chris Wallace	(CW)	Gorse Ride South Resident
Steve Bowers	(SB)	Dart Close Resident / Tenant / Finchampstead Parish Councillor
Annette Lenton	(AL)	Billing Ave Resident / Tenant
Kerry Player	(KP)	Billing Ave Resident / Gorse Ride School
Harry Row	(HR)	Church volunteer, Nine Mile Ride / Gorse Ride School governor
Ian Pittock	(IP)	Ward Councillor for Finchampstead South
Simon Weeks	(SW)	Ward Councillor for Finchampstead South
Doug Bates	(DB)	Resident / Homeowner, Dart Close
Mike Jones	(MJ)	Resident / Homeowner, Orbit Close
Jo Launchbury	(JL)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
Zaheer Sheikh	(ZS)	Resident / Homeowner
Matt Sales	(MS)	Resident, Whittle Close
Jade Morgan-Jones	(JMG)	Orbit Close Resident / Tenant
Rachel Roberts	(RRo)	FBC
Steve Bromley	(SBr)	Ratepayers Hall, California Association, 175 Nine Mile Ride
Roland Cundy	(RC)	Finchampstead Parish Councillor
Richard Rampton	(RR)	Finchampstead Parish Councillor
Jim May	(JM)	Nine Mile Ride School Governor / Finchampstead Parish Councillor

#### WBC / WBC representative Attendees / WHL

Louise Strongitharm	(LS)	Category Manager, Economic Prosperity and Place / Senior Manager for the Gorse Ride Project
Zareena Ahmed-Shere	(ZAS)	Senior Specialist (Estate Regeneration) / Gorse Ride Project Manager
Darren Toes	(DT)	Wokingham Housing Limited (WHL)
Jennie Grieve	(JGr)	Community Development Worker
Matthew Viccars	(MVic)	Housing Officer (Neighbourhoods)
Mark Tomkinson	(MT)	Community Warden
Marc Austin	(MA)	Ayre, Chamberlain, Gaunt (ACG) Architects
Marie Price	(MP)	Ayre, Chamberlain, Gaunt (ACG) Architects
Jonathan Walton	(JW)	Vocalism (ACG's design team)

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	LS welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that seating is arranged around 3 tables because during the meeting each group will be looking at and commenting on the 3 draft development options for Phase 2+.	
<b>1.2</b>	Meeting attendees briefly introduced themselves and gave an overview of their role / contribution to the Group as recorded above.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Approve the aim of the Group.</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	The group were reminded of the following central aim of the Steering Group:	

**“To ensure a meaningful and inclusive resident engagement in the forthcoming potential regeneration of the Gorse Ride Estate”**

- 2.2** Steering Group members in attendance are here not only for their personal interests but also as community representatives therefore it would be helpful if those attending would feedback these group discussions / disseminate information to their neighbours / wider community and also feedback wider views to this Group. **ALL**
- 3 Draft Terms of Reference for the Group**
- 3.1** LS went through the draft Terms of Reference that had been revised and updated following comments received from this Group.
- 3.2** IP asked which type of councillor will make the meeting quorate - a Wokingham Borough Councillor or Parish Councillor? LS asked the group what they would like and it was agreed that it could be either Borough or Parish.
- 3.3** SB asked if we could invite GPs and Police to join the group? ZAS stated that the PCSO is on the Steering Group and had sent apologies. GPs are already part of the group and receive the minutes. SB suggested that we should co-opt someone on if we needed to and the Group agreed.
- 3.4** SB asked if the Steering Group paperwork could be circulated more than a few days before the next meeting so everyone has time to read them over a weekend. LS suggested 3 working days and this was agreed. **ZAS**
- 4 Selection of Chair and Vice Chair**
- 4.1** Very good response was received for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair.
- 4.2** As more than one nomination was received for Chair and Vice Chairperson positions by the closing date of 7th November, ZAS requested nominees to forward a personal statement by 28<sup>th</sup> November that will help Steering Group members (excluding officers) vote for the most appropriate candidate for these important roles.
- 4.3** Candidate information and personal statements were issued to all Steering Group members ahead of today's meeting. Ballot forms were issued to attendees (excluding WBC Officers) at today's meeting. LS suggested people complete their ballot forms and place in the ballot boxes before we start the breakout session (item 7).
- 5 Actions from Previous Meeting**
- 5.1** 3.4 – Everyone was requested to review and comment on the draft Terms of Reference by 7<sup>th</sup> November. A number of comments were received and the document has been updated to reflect this.
- 5.2** 4.1 - Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair were invited by 7<sup>th</sup> November. More than one nomination for Chair and Vice Chair was received.
- 5.3** 7.2 – Legal advice regarding tenancy rights / issues. Update: Council have commissioned Cornerstones and will be receiving the advice from them any day now. Once the information has been issued, the Council will arrange a dedicated meeting for residents to discuss tenancy issues in the New Year. **LS / ZAS**
- 5.4** 9.7.5 Draft Phase 1 plans to be placed on next meeting's agenda – Done Darren

Toes from WHL is here today to present the draft Phase 1 plans to this Group.

- 5.5** 9.7.9 – Consulting with teenage groups in the area. Update: ZAS met Jim Gallagher and Jamie Walker from FBC on 4<sup>th</sup> December to talk about how to engage the 2 youth groups (Kickex and Explode) in the area. Informal and non-traditional consultation in small groups will work best. Will be arranging for the consultation to take place around mid-January next year to get their input on the preferred option.
- 5.6** MJ – answer to 10.2 needed on how the owner-occupiers will be treated. It was stated that it would 'probably be cheaper for the council to offer homeowners a new house'. We had an audio recording that it would be a like for like house. Owners are concerned that things have dragged on for 3 or 4 years and are 'locked-in'. AL added that tenants are in the same position as they can't swap their homes. MJ told the Group that due to this uncertainty a couple of people are suffering from depression. LS advised that the Council have bought some of the properties that were placed on the market. MJ pointed out that homeowners can't buy other properties in the surrounding area. MJ stated that homeowners thought they were being told the truth when were advised they would be getting "like for like" new homes. LS informed the Group that this was on the table but a decision has not been made. Some homeowners may have debts and want to clear their debts and therefore downsize. ZS further queried whether "like for like" was still an option. LS stated that we do not have firm answers to this question yet but when we do (as the project advances post Masterplanning) we will have discussions with each owner-occupier. ZS stated that he took this to mean "No". SW acknowledged that LS had stated the Council's current position – i.e. she is unable to give an answer to this question at this point, as a firm decision on this matter has not been made. The Council has not made a decision beyond developing Phase 1. LS added that last March's Council Executive Report had one line that said people on the next phase would be prioritised for phase 1 so it allows for everyone (owners and tenants) to be prioritised. We have to move in an incremental way around the estate. At present, we do not have a development or phasing plan. By March, we will have an idea from the phasing plan of the cohort that will be affected. From this information we will be able to then agree the order of how re-housing can be achieved. It won't be a perfect match but we will try as best we can to accommodate the needs of people living on the estate to enable the community to be kept together.
- 5.7** 10.1 - ZAS is in contact with both Gorse Ride and Nine Mile Ride school representatives. Barbara Wojnaa (school governor for Nine Mile Ride School) has joined the Steering Group. Barbara is out of the country at present so Jim May is representing the school today in her absence.
- 5.8** 9.5.1 – The total number of homes on site is down as 177 – CW questioned how accurate this is. LS advised that there are 182 properties in total on the main (phase 2+) estate which includes 2 vacant properties and 3 Housing Association properties. In future we will say that these are estimated.

## **6 Phase 1 Progress and presentation of draft plans**

- 6.1** DT presented the draft phase 1 plans to the Group, highlighting that these were still working progress. These drawings have been submitted to the Council's Planning Team to obtain Pre Planning Application advice, however we are sharing this early with the Group.
- 6.2** MS asked if everyone has moved out of Phase 1. The group were advised that there were 11 residents left in Cockayne Court. Out of these 10 are due to move to the new extra care facilities at The Birches or Fosters. Out of the 7 bungalows affected, 2 are still occupied with residents to be re-housed. It is likely everyone will

be re-housed early next year so demolition and site clearance can take place.

- 6.3** DT explained that he works for Wokingham Housing Limited which is a development company owned by the Council to deliver affordable housing in the Borough and provide an income stream through rental and profit to support Council services. WHL are currently building 8 sites in the borough to deliver 150 affordable homes. Arnett Ave (Phase 1) will be redeveloped as part of their future development programme and it is possible that it will be used to re-house residents from Gorse Ride.
- 6.4** These draft plans were drawn up to factor in site constraints such as trees, neighbouring properties and gardens, water table. A total of 37 new dwellings (mix of flats and houses) are currently planned. WHL are awaiting formal pre planning application advice (expected in New Year), however have talked to the Council's Planning Team which has guided the design and improved design with better parking areas.
- 6.5** The following comments were made by the Group:
- 6.5.1** • Shared surfaces (home zone approach) are flat and do not feature deep kerbs to separate roads and footways which would cause difficulties for visually impaired individuals. AL stated that guide dogs need a kerb to negotiate roads/paths. Pedestrian links should be maintained.
  - 6.5.2** • CW asked how many parking spaces are provided per home. DT replied that guidelines are complicated but it does comply with Wokingham Borough Council's planning policy guidelines and parking standards.
  - 6.5.3** • AL stressed that you need a car in Gorse Ride because public transport is poor. DB commented that ACG have done a traffic survey to measure traffic movement / speed and looked at parking impact / capacity.
  - 6.5.4** • HR commented that there is a danger that green spaces will be parked on as there won't be sufficient formal parking spaces. It was observed that this should not be an issue as the planning policy and parking standards are being applied.
  - 6.5.5** • Concern was voiced that the guidelines were different many years ago which is why the parking in Gorse Ride is not currently sufficient. The number of dwellings may need to be reduced to provide sufficient parking.
  - 6.5.6** • AL commented that a balance was needed – especially near the school. We don't want to live in a new regenerated estate where there are parking problems. She asked for information on the parking standards / guidelines to be provided. LS confirmed that the parking standards applied to the scheme will be confirmed. DT pointed out that these plans are only draft (pre planning application) and could be revised to reflect the formal planning advice / feedback expected in the New Year.
  - 6.5.7** • KP asked if there will only be one access as there is now? This is the case for vehicles. LS emphasised that Phase 1 and Phase 2+ are separate developments and there are no plans at the moment to link the 2 phases with a road although there will be pedestrian links.
  - 6.5.8** • DT told the Group that the building materials will be similar tiles and bricks with gables on the houses and timber cladding. The flats will be 2.5 storeys.
  - 6.5.9** • Next steps – waiting for response from planners (expected Jan 2018) on these draft plans so that the plans may be updated for the planning application. Demolition of existing units planned in Spring 2018. If the planning application is approved the build programme is likely to be between 12-18 months.
  - 6.5.10** • DT said he was happy to take on board comments on the design. Request was made for electronic copies of these draft plans. DT said that this would be made available to this Group.
  - 6.5.11** • A question was raised on when the plans will be finalised. DT replied that if Pre Application Advice is received in January 2018, a revised plan to form

**LS / ZAS**

the Planning Application could be complete for submission by April / May 2018. There will be a 2 month decision period, during which the plans will be on display as part of the formal statutory public consultation process. LS stated that we will arrange a wider consultation in the evening to allow more people to attend ahead of the planning application.

- 6.5.12 • SB commented that potentially some people from GR would be moving into Arnett so can Gorse Ride tenants have an input too? LS confirmed that the event will be open for everyone in Gorse Ride as well as Gorse Ride North.
- 6.5.13 • CW asked who will be managing these properties? It was confirmed that WHL will be the development company but not hold the properties on completion. No decision has been made on whether the properties will be managed by Berrybrook Homes or Loddon Homes but it won't be managed by the Council.
- 6.5.14 • AL asked what type of tenancies will be offered on these homes? LS stated that at this point we do not know – this is what we are seeking legal advice on.
- 6.5.15 • A question was asked if we have an update on when Legal Advice will be issued. LS advised the advice has been delayed but is due imminently. However, Officers will need time to review the document and “translate” the legal jargon so that we can feed this information to the Group in a meaningful way. We will hold a specific residents meeting in the New Year to discuss this information.
- 6.5.16 • SB asked if we could visit one of the WHL development to see what they are like. DT suggested looking at units at Grovelands to see the standards that homes are being built to. A suggestion was made that perhaps people could go to Phoenix Avenue too? LS said we could arrange a mini bus to take everyone for an ‘open day’. Grovelands is empty so you could see inside homes although it's a cramped site compared to round here.
- 6.5.16 • Group Members asked what the definition of affordable housing is? It's social rented, discounted ownership or discounted rent provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. On this estate its predominately social rent so we will look at replacing that. Until we know the profile of the next phases, the tenure is not confirmed.

LS / ZAS

## 7. Phase 2 + feasibility update and presentation of draft development options

- 7.1 Following on from surveys and residents / community feedback received ACG have put together 3 draft development options for consideration. For this part of the session, Steering Group members were invited to discuss each of these options with people sitting at their table for approx. 15 minutes then feedback initial thoughts and preferences to the meeting.
- 7.2 Before starting the above session, as per the request of the Group at the last meeting, MA gave the following update on the progress of surveys that are being done as part of the Stage 1 project feasibility (information gathering).
- 7.3 Transport and traffic survey was done over a 7 day period between 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November to monitor traffic profile and speed. Speeds were noted at various points during the day and evening. Traffic measuring points were across Billing Ave and Gorse Ride. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds on Gorse Ride South was recorded as 25.5mph northbound and 23.9mph southbound. On Billing Avenue, the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds were recorded as about 18 mph. The findings show both roads have generally low vehicular speeds. We would want to encourage low speeds in the new regenerated estate. It was pointed out that Billing Ave traffic point wouldn't have given a fair assessment of speed as it was located at a corner where drivers would have a tendency to slow down anyway. Billing Avenue is a rat run. Irrespective of that, the interest is to design an estate that encourages slower driving.

**7.4** Tree survey – All tree species were categorized and given a priority grading of A, B, C and U. Category A are trees of high quality, Category B are trees of moderate quality, Category C are trees of low quality and Category U trees unsuitable for retention. There are no TPOs. The design of the 3 options aims to keep all Category A trees and most Category B trees. To accommodate design and layout requirements, it may be necessary to remove trees in the remaining categories.

**7.5** Ecology - Bats and reptiles – initial findings show low potential for these species. Further surveys will be done in the peak season which is May to August and will define the demolition works for phases. Supervision will be put in place whilst the demolition goes ahead. The team will look at everything to allow the species to develop – could even put gaps in brickwork to allow birds/bats to nest.

**7.6** Utilities – There is a 750mm surface water sewer on site (running South to North across the site) that we don't want to build on. We'll have to develop a layout that will allow access to the pipe and provide an assumed best practice "no build" 3m buffer zone (tbc by Thames Water) on either side of the pipe. The Gas governor located off Whittle Close also needs to be factored in, and gas mains, which runs down Dart Close. The Gas governor and main also needs a 3m buffer zone on either side. There are also 4 existing substations. These deliver gas and services to properties outside the project boundary too. Additional substations may be required to serve the properties within the new development and beyond. An option that keeps utilities where they are would be the cheapest. However, it would be possible to divert these services at a cost if required. If we do move the sub stations there would potentially be more land to build on. IP asked whether the telephone and broadband lines are being looked at. MA replied that these are being considered.

**7.7** Drainage – WBC are keen to introduce sustainable drainage (flow control) into the design as there has been localised flooding within the Borough over the years. One way this can be done is by incorporating shallow basins / depressions within a large green grassed open space area to enable water to be captured and not directly run off into the drains.

**7.8** It was commented that the Parish Council had done some work which revealed that traffic speed is high in the area. Will you design in a speed 'zone' or a speed 'limit'? If it is a "zone" it will be possible to do something through engineering works and shared surface aspect. If it is a "limit" then we cannot do anything. SBr would like to be involved in the shared surface aspect research. MJ remarked that pinch points are not environmentally friendly in terms of CO2. You can achieve the same by alternatives - making something a footpath.

**7.9** The following ACG 6 presentation boards were made available for review:

- Board 1 : Site Opportunities and Constraints
- Board 2: Design Approach
- Board 3: Option A – retains existing roads and utilities
- Board 4: Option B – East / West Green throughroute
- Board 5: Option C – The Village Green
- Board 6: Design Precedents

Table discussion feedback and options:

**7.9.1** Table 1: 1<sup>st</sup> preference Option A  
2<sup>nd</sup> preference Option C  
3<sup>rd</sup> preference Option B

Reason: Liked to retain existing roads and the potential to use roads other than just

Billing Ave – layout helps traffic flow. B is likely to be a car racetrack.

**7.9.2** Table 2: 1<sup>st</sup> preference majority Option C

Reason: A and B had large blocky areas of parking which was not attractive. It would be ok to go with A because we are making use of existing infrastructure. HR concerned with 'Brands Hatch' type layout which would encourage ASB with cars.

**7.9.3** Table 3: 1<sup>st</sup> preference Option C  
2<sup>nd</sup> preference Option B  
3<sup>rd</sup> preference Option A

Reason: Option C is open and airy and not closed in. No brands hatch, good to solve school parking, room for alterations (garages) felt it was more like a community. Thought B divided the community. A is the wrong design and wastes too much space.

**7.10** In Summary Option B was least preferred and Option C appears to be more popular.

**8 Upcoming Community Engagement Events**

**8.1** The information shared at this Steering Group i.e. presentation boards showing the 3 draft options will be on display at the forthcoming fortnightly Regeneration Surgeries to be held at the Community House.

**8.2** Request was made for forms to be completed to give views on the 3 draft options. Going forward people's collective views will help WBC to identify the preferred option that will be developed as a Masterplan as part of the next workstage.

**ALL**

**8.3** Forthcoming Regeneration Surgeries:

Tuesday 12 December – 10-11:30am

Tuesday 12 December – 5:30 to 7pm

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January – 10-11:30am

**8.4** ZAS will arrange consultation with Gorse Ride and Nine Mile Ride School and Youth Groups (Kickex and Explode) on the preferred option in mid to late January.

**8.5** Steering Group meeting dates will be set for January and shared with everyone asap. A request was made for these meeting dates to be set in advance and announced at the end of these meetings.

**9 Next Steps in Project Programme:**

- Consensus on Preferred Option to take forward as the Masterplan
- Masterplan development
- Steering Group / residents meeting to discuss tenancy issues
- Steering Group - Masterplan Presentation
- Outcome of Feasibility and Masterplanning work with recommendations presented to Council's Executive in March 2018

**ZAS**

**10. Any other Business**

Votes for Chair and Vice Chair

- Chair elected – Steve Bowers
- Vice Chair elected - Clare McEnoy

**Post Meeting Update – The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at 7pm at same venue to principally discuss tenancy issues.**

**Next Steering Group Meeting focusing on Masterplan development – will take place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 7pm also at the same venue.**