

Bloor Homes – Sandleford Park East

Stakeholder Liaison Group – Draft Meeting Minutes – Thursday 28th November 2024

Updates

Date: Thursday 28th November 2024

Time: 4:30 – 6.00pm

Venue: Boardroom, Bloor Homes Southern Office, Newbury Business Park

Attendees:

Project Team:

- Adam Rickenbach (AR) – Project Director, Bloor Homes
- Lucy Ormrod (LR) – Development Planner, Bloor Homes
- Louise Hingley (LH) – Communications & engagement, Cratus Group

Group Members:

- Tony Hammond (TH) – Say No to Sandleford
- Trevor Coles (TC) – Newbury Rugby Club
- Tobias Miles Mallowan (TM) – Newbury Town Council
- Cllr Roger Hunneman (RH) – Newbury Town Council
- William Pitt (WP) – SPOKES
- Cllr David Marsh (DM) – West Berkshire Council

Apologies:

- Cllr Patrick Clark (PC) – West Berkshire Council
- Cllr Adrian Abbs (AA) – West Berkshire Council
- Peter Lambert (PL) – Newbury Rugby Club
- Holly Gray (HG) – Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Dr Liz Pope (LP) – Eastfield Doctors Surgery
- Cllr Tony Vickers (TV) – West Berkshire Council
- James King (JK) – Park House School
- Rebecca Fenn-Tripp – Bloor Homes

1. Introductions

- LH welcomed all members, and the group made introductions.
- LH provided an overview of the agenda, highlighting that the primary workstream since the last meeting had been addressing the planning conditions.
- LH announced apologies.

2. Previous meeting's minutes

- LH invited members to share any additional comments on the minutes from the last meeting, which they wished to make in this forum. LH noted that amendments had been made to the minutes following their original circulation after the first meeting.
- Members had no further comments on the minutes.

3. Engagement update

- LH explained that in August, Bloor had written to and met individually with the residents on Monks Lane who would be most impacted by the accesses into the development. She noted the purpose of those meetings was to explain the configuration of the accesses, provide an opportunity to ask questions and reassure residents that contact would be maintained before and during the construction of the accesses.
- LH emphasised the importance of the Stakeholder Liaison Group in the ongoing engagement and noted that a public engagement event would take place once the project moved into the Reserved Matters stage, which would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.
- RH asked what had been sent to residents, as he lives on Monks Lane and did not receive anything.
- **Response:** LH and AR clarified that invitation letters were sent to a select number of households directly impacted by the accesses, as the purpose of the meetings was to address the concerns of those living in closest proximity to the two accesses. LH stated that she would provide the distribution area of the invitation letter.
- TH highlighted that residents between the A339 and Monks Lane would be affected by issues of air quality due to the increased development in the area and road usage. He also mentioned the recent planning approval for the Aldi site but

noted that he would address the air quality issue in more detail later in the meeting.

4. Design Code update

- AR explained that the Design Code was approved last month. From the version presented in this forum, there have been only minor adjustments, to elements relating to the roads, remaining before final approval. He presented the Legibility Plan from the Design Code on-screen but, noted that, since it was presented in detail at the last meeting, he would not talk through it again. Instead, he invited members to ask any questions they may have.
- AR added that LH would send the Design Code to members individually and it is available for download from West Berkshire Council's Planning Portal.
- RH asked to be sent the Design Code.
- **Response:** AR agreed that the Design Code would be sent to all members after the meeting.
- TH asked whether the Legibility Plan related only to Phase One – which encompasses the northern parcel.
- **Response:** AR confirmed that the Legibility Plan related to the northern and central parcels.

5. Valley Crossing update

- AR explained that Bloor had made significant efforts to improve the design of the Valley Crossing. Instead of cutting across the landscape, the Crossing will now follow the land's natural topography, creating a softer and more integrated design. AR highlighted the benefits of the revised design, including the ability to utilise the existing haul road, the preservation of a veteran tree, and better integration with the landscape.
- DM asked if the dormice crossing was still included.
- **Response:** AR confirmed that the dormice crossing is still included, which will enable dormice to travel from tree canopy to tree canopy which is their preferred method of movement.
- WP asked if the area shown is a particular area that dormice like.
- **Response:** AR confirmed it is an area that dormice use and has been recommended by the ecologists.

- TH noted that the original design for the Valley Crossing included a nature crossing below, but it now appears to be absent from the plans. He raised the concern that this could increase the likelihood of roadkill.
- **Response:** AR clarified that a 2.1m x 1.5m structure will be included beneath the Crossing, allowing animals to safely pass through. He assured TH that the nature crossing had been retained in the updated plans.
- TC mentioned that the Rugby Club is expecting to regain ownership of the 'triangle of land' located to the north of the Valley Crossing.
- **Response:** AR showed the area of land that TH was referring to on the plan shown on screen and confirmed that Bloor will handing that land over to the Rugby Club.

6. Country Park condition

- AR explained that, for the Country Park condition, Bloor was required to submit detailed information, including the species of trees to be planted and specifics on the design of the attenuation basins. AR explained how the attenuation basins would take rainwater.
- AR showed a map of the Country Park, explaining that a number of footpaths and boardwalks would be created to provide access through the Country Park. He also noted that footpaths would be added along the southern boundary.
- AR also explained that a temporary car park would be created with pedestrian access into the Country Park directly opposite. He also highlighted that the Public Rights of Way on the southern side of the site would be upgraded to better accommodate cyclists.
- AR explained that the Country Park would be delivered in two phases. The eastern half would be delivered before completion of the 150th home, at which point, West Berkshire Council will assume responsibility for the maintenance. The western half would be delivered after the completion of the 150th home, in the western phase.
- RH asked whether management of the Country Park would be transferred to West Berkshire Council and then later to Newbury Town Council.
- **Response:** AR explained that Bloor will provide West Berkshire Council with a large commuted sum to cover costs in maintaining the Country Park. He added that while there have been discussions about Newbury Town Council potentially taking over management in the future, the final decision would rest with West Berkshire Council post-adoption.
- WP asked whether the Country Park gives Bloor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits.

- **Response:** AR explained that the development was granted permission before the government brought in the legal requirement for 10% BNG on developments. He added that the Country Park will deliver c.40%+ Biodiversity Net Gain, but no credits can be used from this because the BNG was considered a planning merit which contributed towards the approval of the plans.
- TH asked what the thinking was around the Community Orchard.
- **Response:** AR explained that there are discussions about having a warden and tours being provided around the Orchard but this rests with West Berkshire Council.
- TH asked what planting may be included as part of the Community Orchard. He added that he had prior experience working with orchards.
- **Response:** AR agreed to show TH the planting species which West Berkshire Council had approved for inclusion in the Community Orchard.
- RH asked if allotments are included in the plans.
- AR stated that the planning approval for Sandleford Park East does not include allotments but the inclusion of allotments in the Country Park could be a consideration at a later point for West Berkshire Council.

7. Utilities update

- RH asked whether Bloor was aware that houses on Monks Lane use septic tanks.
- **Response:** AR explained that Bloor had undertaken geophysical testing, and the results confirmed that the ground was not contaminated.
- RH asked where the foul drainage would be directed, noting that there had previously been discussions about it passing by the train station, with Thames Water covering the cost of installing larger pipes.
- **Response:** AR explained that three pumping stations would be provided at the low points to pump water to the northern end. He added that Thames Water is aware of the capacity issues and is planning to deliver a holistic solution. As a result of the upgrades Thames Water are providing, an upgrade of the pipes is not required.
- TM asked what the timescales are for the Thames Water upgrades and whether it aligns with the homes being built. He added that whilst not all the development is within the parish, significant impacts would still be felt within the parish.
- RH added that at the Planning Inquiry it was stated that the pipes aren't the right diameter, and he was hoping when they did the station improvements, there would also be pipe improvements.

- **Response:** AR explained that increasing pipe size doesn't necessarily help and he believes the Thames Water upgrades will be a better solution for Newbury. He added that he is confident the upgrades would be delivered ahead of the delivery of Sandleford Park East, but it is subject to Thames Water, and they haven't commented on timescales. AR also stated that he had an update meeting in with Thames Water in February and would report back.
- TM stated that he thinks Newbury Town Council should inquire with Thames Water themselves.
- AR explained that in regard to drinking water, the existing resource is suitable, but the water tower currently drains at a high rate and therefore a new connection would be created into the water tower.
- RH asked about the electrical supply to Sandleford Park East.
- **Response:** AR explained that Bloor has paid SSE c.£750,000 to connect into the electrical supply. He added that new circuit breakers would be delivered, and these were on track to be delivered in Q3 2025.
- RH asked where the electrical cable will travel to the site from.
- **Response:** AR explained that the electrical cables will follow the A339 from Greenham Business Park. AR added that the current supply has capacity for approximately 100 homes.
- WP asked if the electricity supply will be offset by any solar panels.
- AR explained that Distribution System Operators (DSOs) state that solar panels need to be able to meet the full load and therefore there is no opportunity to offset currently.
- TC added that the Rugby Club has installed 28 solar panels, and the DSO has stated that it would be six months before they will take energy from the panels.
- TH asked how the water would be treated.
- **Response:** AR explained that the water will be treated through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) with vegetation to filter the water.

8. Other planning conditions

- AR explained that seven planning conditions had been agreed too, the most important of which was the Phasing Plan which AR showed on-screen.
- AR explained that the first phase, with sub-phases 1A and 1B, would be located at the northern end of the site. He noted that a decision had not yet been made on whether to begin with the western or eastern half, but the construction of the spine road would also take place early on.
- TH asked whether each parcel would have its own proportion of affordable housing or would one parcel deliver a greater number of affordable homes.
- **Response:** AR explained that the northern and southern parcels will both deliver 40% affordable housing.
- TM stated that West Berkshire has particular challenges around the delivery of affordable family homes. He asked whether the affordable housing would be focussed on family homes or 1–2 bedroom homes.
- **Response:** AR explained that a variety of homes would be included in the affordable housing provision and Bloor has engaged with West Berkshire Council to ensure the provision meets local needs. AR added that the affordable housing would be pepper-potted and the mix had been prescribed by West Berkshire Council.
- TM added that Newbury Town Council was keen to ensure affordable homes were pepper potted.
- **Response:** AR stated that the location of affordable homes would be detailed in the Reserved Matters applications.
- RH noted that mixed tenure affordable housing is difficult to manage.

9. S278

- AR outlined that there are two accesses into the development, both from Monks Lane. He showed the configuration of the main access into the development and added that the access was approved previously but has been amended.
- AR outlined the amendments: a basin has been put in on the northern side of the roundabout to attenuate water and following the introduction of the LTN 1/20 Policy the cycle lane has been widened with greater priority to be given to cyclists.
- AR stated that the access had been technically approved by Road Safety Auditors and Bloor is in discussions with West Berkshire Council about adoption.
- RH asked where the hedgerow will be lost as part of the access creation.

- **Response:** AR explained that the hedgerow will only be lost where there is a need to physically build to that point. AR added that the landscaping around the access had not been defined yet.
- AR then showed the configuration of the eastern access and added that the main amendment related to the introduction of a Dutch Curb so drivers must go up and down a ramp when approaching the access, which will help to slow down vehicles and give cyclists priority.
- AR explained that detailed planning for the accesses is approved and once legals are signed, Bloor could start construction. AR added that the two accesses will be created at the start of the construction works and would likely start later in 2025.

10. Future RMAs

- AR explained that the Infrastructure Reserved Matters application (INFRA/RM) would be brought forward first, which will include details relating to the primary street, the Valley Crossing, secondary streets and the attenuation basins on the northern parcels. He stated that Bloor are targeting Q1 for submission of an INFRA/RM.
- AR added that how quickly the INFRA/RM progresses will determine when the first Residential Reserved Matters application comes forward.

11. AOB

- RH asked whether the orientation of homes for solar panels had been considered, as this aspect was mentioned in the Planning Inquiry.
- **Response:** AR outlined that the orientation of homes for renewable energy is covered at a high level in the Design Code.
- RH asked whether gas would be provided within the development.
- **Response:** AR outlined that Bloor is aspiring to meet the Future Homes Standards and are planning to use Solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps, together with other standards like increased cavity thickness. AR added that Bloor hasn't applied for any gas connections and the full energy load can be met through electric.
- RH asked whether the school's energy demands would also be met via electric.
- **Response:** AR confirmed the school's energy demands would also be met through electric.
- DM asked if meetings could be held on a different day than Thursday and ideally, in the mornings.
- LH asked what days and times would work best.
- Members in attendance agreed that Tuesdays or Wednesdays work best at around 11am or 11.30am.

- AR and LH confirmed the actions arising from the meeting.
- TH raised concerns that south Newbury faces a lot of construction over the coming years, with four developments potentially coming forward at the same time. TH added that smart planning ahead is needed to ensure activities like the delivery of materials do not happen daily and there is some respite from construction for residents. TH and TM stated that an ongoing conversation between all developers and Newbury Town Council would be useful.
- AR stated that Bloor would be ahead of other construction taking place but acknowledged the concern raised.
- TH stated that regardless, there would be come a time when lots of construction was happening at the same time, and it needs to be mitigated holistically.
- AR acknowledged the need for mitigation and solutions put forward such as iterating the Construction Management Plan as time goes on or having a larger Construction Management Plan which encompassed all the developments.
- *The meeting closed at 6pm.*
- *AR showed TH the planting species which West Berkshire Council had agreed for the Community Orchard.*