

MINUTES OF THE BNAP COMMUNITY STEERING GROUP MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AT THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

Attendance:

Mark Lynch (Chairman), Hilary Durbin, Angela Dove, Cllr Andrew Stevenson, Paul Keyworth, Douglas McNab, Brendan Clifford, Ben Penrose, John Howson, Aska Pickering, Maria Iancu (HTC), Jacqueline Veater.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mari Stevenson, John Cooper, Cllr Peter Ruffles, Cllr Steve Cousins and Sue Cousins.

2. Cerda Planning

Andy Mackley and Mike Robson from Cerda Planning presented their outline plans to develop 50-55 dwellings on the Nursery site on Sacombe Road (also described as HERT4 phase 1).

Highlights of what they presented, together with discussion and questions from members of the Steering Group are documented in Appendix 1.

3. AOB - Housing and Development Working Group

It is still proving hard to extend the pool of volunteers for the group.

An H&D Working Group meeting with Jacqueline has been provisionally scheduled for September 25th. Ben Penrose is proposing a less formal "reboot" meeting of the group members at some point during the previous week.

There was some discussion of the "land swap" proposal that had been put forward in email discussions. It was generally agreed that:

- The County Council are very unlikely to be amenable to this kind of suggestion.
- It is too late in the BNAP process - none of the consultation so far has hinted at anything resembling this proposal.

The chairman agreed to respond to the email discussion conveying the Steering Group's view.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 3rd October.

Subsequent meetings will be held on:

Thursday 1st November

Tuesday 4th December

Wednesday 9th January

The meeting finished at 9:15pm.

Appendix 1 - Cerda Planning Discussions

The following notes aim to summarise the content of the Cerda presentation and any comments made by Steering Group members at the time. This does not, of course, mean that the Steering Group (or indeed future BNAP policy) agrees with Cerda's position on the issues discussed. In particular:

- The proposals put no emphasis on energy conservation or sustainability beyond existing policy minima. This directly conflicts with the results of BNAP consultation to date and with local support for the highly efficient Tarmac "Waterford Wick" development further along Sacombe Road.
- The Steering Group are concerned that the new development will significantly increase the traffic dangers along this stretch of Sacombe Road, which already requires multiple traffic management and speed reduction measures.
- The developers are proposing no direct community benefit (other than a standard S106 arrangement). The development will, however, further exacerbate existing very significant traffic and parking problems on Sacombe Road and will in time further shrink the catchment area for Bengeo Primary school. It therefore seems reasonable to expect a more significant local community benefit.
- The development will remove a significant area of parking currently available for use during drop-off and pick-up at the local school. It is essential that some replacement parking provision is made available.

General:

- Cerda are currently working on an outline planning application for ca. 55 dwellings ranging from 1 bed flats to 5 bed houses, 40% "affordable". They have therefore not yet decided any of the details regarding the appearance or detailed layout of the dwellings.
- Cerda would be prepared to come back for a second presentation when more design detail is available. The chairman suggested that a larger venue which would allow more members of the public to participate might be arranged and Cerda indicated that would be acceptable.
- EHDC have already specified a 2 storey limit. The apartment buildings will effectively be 3 floors, but this will be achieved by using the roof space for the top floor.
- The overall design principle is to create 4 parcels of housing containing inner private space (i.e. back gardens), with properties facing outward so that all public realm space is overlooked.

- A pedestrian-friendly “cross” of streets will separate the parcels and serve properties facing into the development. These extend into “private lanes” that provide access to outward-facing properties.
- No SUDS area will be required - surface water will be discharged to ground. Affinity Water and HCC haven’t yet been consulted, but will be.

Public Open Space and Play Areas:

- There will be a small public open space near the large hornbeam on the NE side. Money is available for a small play area, but the current proposal is to improve the play area on the field between The Wick and Buckwell’s Field.
- There was a strong feeling from the steering group that a play area should exist within the development, partly due to safety concerns crossing Sacombe Road and partly to provide some social interaction for parents. This should potentially be a policy for the BNAP.

Parking and Traffic on Sacombe Road:

- These issues brought up the most negative comments at Cerda’s public exhibition at the Parish Hall on Duncombe Road.
- Cerda stated that it is impossible to provide enough parking for the school (just can’t fit it in) and there would be no way to prevent residents (or others) using anything that is provided.
- Cerda are exploring options with the school, but there is no obvious way to improve parking there.
- Possible “stop-and-drop” or “park-and-stride” systems were discussed, but again, this depends largely on the school. Cerda plan to discuss options with the school.
- A “traffic regulation area” is being considered (by Cerda) - a mechanism to provide some short-term parking on Sacombe Road around school start/end times.
- Parking on the development will be above policy minima. 1 space for 1-bed, 2 spaces for 2-bed and 3 spaces for others.
- Parking will use driveways/garages as far as possible. There will be little road frontage available (due to driveways) for further parking, but some visitor spaces will be provided.
- Cerda believe that over-provision of spaces plus policy changes that have increased minimum requirements mean that overspill parking will be less of an issue than it is on and around Buckwells Field.
- The County Councillor voiced his strong opposition, on safety grounds, to the proposals for entry from the site onto Sacombe Road and for any potential “stop-and-drop” or “park-and-stride” scheme - concerns shared by others on the Steering Group. Cerda stated that HCC Highways had already indicated that the site entry was acceptable.

Ecology:

- Hedgerow frontage to Sacombe Road will be reduced in height and thinned to allow the new development to relate better to the surroundings.

- Concerns about wildlife were expressed by the Steering Group. Surveys have revealed no “valuable” species, but ways of preserving existing wildlife such as suitable headland were suggested.
- Mitigation measures will be included in the final proposals (no details available yet - but the scheme will be “robust with regard to ecology”).

Access:

- As noted under “Parking and Traffic” above, Cerda stated that HCC highways have agreed the use of the Nursery access. The Steering Group, particularly the County Councillor, expressed concerns about existing traffic levels and likely impact, but Cerda take the position that if HCC is happy, it will be OK.
- Cerda stated that there is some possibility of access to the B158 (using a short section of Byway 1), but that 3rd party land ownership issues will probably preclude it. The Steering Group felt strongly that this option should be pursued if at all possible.

Miscellaneous:

- Bin provision will be in rear gardens. Residents must take them out to the core roads for collection. Communal bins for flats.
- Electric car points. Cabling infrastructure is already planned in, but charge points will not be provided.
- Cycle parking. Some cycle racks are proposed, garages are oversized. No external cycle parking for flats (likely security issues). Footpath/cycle access to Byway 1 *may* be awkward - due to a narrow strip of 3rd party land.
- Some concerns were voiced about how clothes drying would work for the flats - the only practical option may be use driers (no space for lines).
- Legal provision will be made to prevent garages being converted to other uses and to preserve front gardens.
- No thought has been given to delivering a “Community Benefit”, primarily because the required number of dwellings doesn’t leave space. S106 benefits (e.g. to the school) may be possible - there is a budget allocated.
- No bungalows are proposed (space constraints).
- Nothing specifically for the elderly is being proposed, although ground floor apartments would probably be suitable. Lifetime homes haven’t been explicitly considered.
- Low energy and sustainability have only been considered in terms of current policy requirements. There was some discussion of the provision of solar panels with the Steering Group, but nothing is currently planned.

