

Farm Terrace Allotment Group Meeting

11 October 2012

Held at Watford Town Hall

Present:

Lesley Palumbo (Chair) (LP)
Tom Dobrashian (TD)
Paul Rabbitts
Kathryn Robson (KR)

Head of Community Services
Programme Director
Parks and Open Spaces
Partnerships & Performance

Watford BC
Watford Health Campus
Watford BC
Watford BC

Kyle McClelland (KMcC)

Associate Director - Strategic Developments,
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Kate Collins

Sheils Flynn

Farm Terrace Allotment Holders

1	Welcome, introductions and matters arising	Action
	<p>LP opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. She introduced Kate Collins from Sheils Flynn and explained Kate would be leading the workshop session at the meeting.</p> <p>LP said it would be helpful to remind the Group as to why the meeting was being a workshop session. She said at the previous meeting of the Group (19 September) there had been a strong message from members that they wanted to address site issues through a more interactive session. Basically, the Group wanted to build their understanding of the site. Kate Collins had been asked to attend to facilitate this.</p> <p>LP informed the Group that although there were a number of people at the meeting who would be able to help with the session not everyone working on the Health Campus scheme was present. This meant that not all questions / issues could be fully addressed but that feedback would be captured where necessary.</p> <p>She also reminded the Group that the evening would focus on the physical constraints of the Health Campus scheme but the Group also needed to keep in mind that there were other significant constraints that the Campus team has to take into account as it progresses plans for the site. These include the economic constraints (the scheme has to be financially feasible) and the complexity of the hospital plans. The evening would provide an opportunity for the Group to work together collectively to really engage on issues but they needed to keep in mind the complexity of the scheme.</p> <p>LP commented that at this stage in the project there was no final masterplan available for consideration – it is still being developed by the team along with Kier Property. It is a work in progress. She explained that the information that was being presented at the meeting to support the workshop session captured a moment in</p>	

	<p>time – where the Health Campus scheme is now. Issues would have moved on again by next week – this is the nature of the project. She said it was important that the Group did not leave the meeting thinking anything is definite in terms of the Health Campus – issues are constantly changing; developing the masterplan is an ongoing journey.</p> <p>An allotment holder said that the meetings were, in his opinion, a waste of time until the final plans are ready (which he is hoping will say that the allotments will be left alone). However, other Group members welcomed the opportunity to contribute.</p> <p>Another allotment holder said that Farm Terrace allotment holders are not opposed to the hospital. They wanted the value of the allotments on their own merit to be understood and for the opportunity for them to be included in the scheme to be considered.</p> <p>An allotment holder asked if the plans and maps that were being used at the session were the same as the councillors had seen. TD said this was the case.</p>	
2	<p>Constraints and opportunities (Kate Collins / Kyle McClelland)</p>	
	<p>LP invited KC to present her item on the physical constraints relating to the Health Campus scheme. KC explained that she was at the session to help facilitate and to provide the Group with an opportunity to put their views across – but this had to be done in a realistic way that took into account what was possible. KC said she was a Landscape Architect / Urban Designer and that she didn't work for Kier or the council but she had supported the Health Campus project through developing the scheme's Landscape Position Statement. This has supported the green infrastructure proposals for the scheme. KC said she had also helped evaluate the bids. This gave her a good understanding of the scheme and the site.</p> <p>KC then presented the physical constraints of the Health Campus site. She explained that she was using the outline planning permission plans, which were the same as had been given to the developers to work with when they were developing their bids.</p> <p>KC told the Group that the river running through the Health Campus site meant there was quite a lot of the site that sits within a floodplain. This had been confirmed by the Environment Agency which also set out what could and could not be built on the floodplain. For example, family housing, which is much needed in West Watford, cannot be built on the floodplain whilst flats can.</p> <p>KC also explained the topography of the site and showed how the slopes were another significant constraint as to what could be built and where.</p> <p>An allotment holder asked why housing could not be built outside of the red line boundary shown on the plans. KC said that the site itself has to be viable so that what is delivered needed to fit within the site plan. TD said that there would need to be at least 500 houses on the site. LP commented that other areas of the town were potential housing sites. The demand for housing is high in Watford and, therefore, all possible sites are being considered – not just the Health Campus. TD pointed out that the Core Strategy had allocated up to 600 houses on the Health Campus but this was also the case for a potential redevelopment at Watford Junction.</p> <p>An allotment holder asked whether the Wiggshall Depot site could be included to make the site viable for Kier. Can Watford BC sell off other land to subsidise the</p>	

	<p>Health Campus scheme. LP commented that planning for housing is on a 15 year basis – therefore the council is looking at all future potential sites across the town.</p> <p>Another allotment holder asked who had requested the allotments be considered as part of the scheme. Did it come from potential developers? KMcC said that it wasn't Watford BC saying 'build on allotments' and TD confirmed this.</p> <p>An allotment holder asked whether the allotments actually helped prevent flooding on the Health Campus site and taking them away would exacerbate flooding. KMcC said that there were plans to reuse water on the site so any excess water would be used. This was in addition to the mitigation that KC had presented.</p> <p>KC also showed the Group the constraints relation to sewage pipes and utilities and the listed building that is currently part of the Hospital. She pointed out the Croxley Rail Link that will be running through the site once it is built and operational and the 'blue light' access road. KMcC said that the road has to access both the old and the potential new Hospital. An allotment holder asked whether the route of the road has been decided. KMcC said that key points of the road were fixed but that the exact route had not yet been decided. TD commented that the current planning permission for the site had agreed a route for the road but that work was still underway on finalising this.</p> <p>The Group noted that the access road went through Oxhey Playing Fields.</p> <p>KC took the Group through the contamination on the site – which is a significant issue.</p> <p>LP thanked KC for her presentation and invited KMcC to present the constraints from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's (WHHT) point of view.</p> <p>KMcC explained to the Group that there were a number of issues that impacted on the future reprovision of a hospital. This included the fact that the Princess Michael of Kent building's current footprint is too small (it probably need to increase its size by 50% to meet current NHS standards) and that reprovision of the Maternity Unit is extremely important. He commented that the Combined Heating and Power (CHP) system will stay where it is currently as it is the ideal location.</p> <p>Overall, KMcC advised the Group that the new hospital building will need to be substantially bigger than present and he also commented that important linkages between buildings / services need to be ensured.</p> <p>An allotment holder asked why so much needed to be fitted into the site. TD said the less that is included impacted on the viability of the site.</p>	
3	Workshop session	
	<p>The Group split into two smaller groups to work through a 'planning for real' type exercise. This involved trying to fit all the required elements onto a plan of the site.</p>	
4	Feedback from workshop	
	<p>When the two groups had completed the workshop session they fed back their views. TD said he would take the options that the groups had identified to Kier to feed into the masterplanning process.</p>	

	<p>LP thanked the Group for the work they had put into the evening and she reiterated that the ideas that the allotment holders had come up with would be shared with Kier.</p> <p>LP also reiterated that, although it might seem feasible to fit the required elements into the Health Campus site through the workshop session, the Group needed to keep in mind what had been said at the beginning of the meeting in terms of the need to ensure that the scheme is financially viable and to accommodate all the potential future needs of the Hospital.</p>	
5	Next meeting	
	To be confirmed.	