

BARTLEY GREEN WARD FORUM MEETING

Monday 13th February 2023

7.00pm – 8.30pm

St. Francis Centre

Illeybrooke Square

Woodgate Valley

B32 3RU

COUNCILLORS: Kerry Brewer and Bruce Lines

NO. OF ATTENDEES: Approx 70

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Beverly Edmead - Community Governance Team

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions, Cllrs Brewer and Lines welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Cllr Bruce Lines in the Chair

2. Notice of Recording

Residents were advised that members of the press and/ or public may record and/or take photographs of the meeting.

3. Illeybrook Square – Regeneration Information Update

Cllr Lines expressed disappointment that the Officers dealing with the proposed regeneration/redevelopment of the Square had not attended the meeting despite a request for their attendance.

Copies of the designated area of Illeybrook Square was circulated to residents at the meeting.

Cllr Lines explained that information regarding the proposed redevelopment of Illeybrook Square had not been forthcoming at the moment, but he understood that discussions and proposals had been to redevelop the land for housing.

The land was owned by the Housing Department and was in dire need of much needed redevelopment and improvement. Previous discussions were for Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) to redevelop the site to provide social housing, however, this no longer appeared to be the case, and the indications were that the land would be declared surplus to requirement and sold to a preferred developer to provide approx. 54 residential homes/units on the site.

Cllr Lines added that although the proposals had not yet been submitted to or approved by the City Council Cabinet Committee (who had responsibility for making these decisions), it was important for residents living in close proximity to Illeybrook Square to be made aware of what could be happening in the future and for them to have an opportunity to have their say in the redevelopments/regeneration proposals once they were in the public domain.

In the discussion that followed, residents made the following points/comments:-

- How many parking spaces would be provided per property – currently parking issues including obstructive and dangerous parking was a real concern locally. Most households had two or more vehicles, so how would the additional parking/vehicles be accommodated.
- Additional housing in the area was not needed, and that the space could be better used to support local people and the economy/local shopping experience, and that there were other areas in the ward better suited to accommodate additional housing units.
- What types/size of properties would be built on the site and would these be social or private housing
- If they were going to be private developers, they must not be allowed to create HMOs or exempt/supported housing in an already densely populated residential area
- Extra homes would put an additional strain on existing resources – how would the demand for GPs, school places and other essential local services be met
- The existing green space and play facilities around the Square must be retained and improved - not sacrificed for additional housing
- Illeybrook Square was once a thriving parade of local businesses that served and was part of the local community. Consideration and greater efforts should be given to supporting the three or four remaining thriving businesses and encouraging new business/independent traders to the site and improve the retail offer for local people.
- The regeneration of the Square as a local shopping parade was needed more than additional housing
- Facilities for young people/community café/mix use space for all ages should also be considered as this could help to regain/foster

community spirit

- Council officers were deliberately letting the Square fall further into disrepair through lack of investment and encouragement of new independent traders.
- Building additional homes should not always be considered the answer to regenerating an area/neighbourhood - officers should consult with residents properly and work with them to see out what was really needed.
- St Francis Centre must also remain as it is a much needed and used facility in the heart of the estate. Any properties built in the Square must not affect or have a detrimental impact on the facilities.
- A Freedom of Information (FOI) request should be submitted to see how many potential businesses had applied/made enquires to rent the vacant premises in the Square

The remaining business owners further advised that the current lease on their respective premises was due to expire within the next couple of years or so; however, they had not had any contact from Officers regarding renewal or future arrangements, and that their livelihood was at stake.

Responding to residents' comments and concerns, Cllr Lines explained that firm plans for the site had not yet been submitted, and this would need to happen along with the submission of a full Planning Application before any redevelopment/changes to the Square could go ahead. Residents living closest to the Square would have to be consulted once a Planning Application has been submitted; other residents living further afield would also be given the opportunity to comment but would not necessarily be notified of the proposals by officers.

He added that both Cllrs had tried to obtain information regarding the proposals from Housing Development Officers, but so far, nothing further had been shared. They would keep continuing to press Officers for information and share with residents as and when it was available; in the meantime, residents must continue to support the current local businesses in Illeybrook Square if these were to be kept.

4. Ward Action Plan 2022 – 2026

Cllr Brewer briefly advised that the Ward Action Plan for 2018-2022 had been drafted following comments, consultation and input from across the ward including individual residents, community/voluntary groups, interested stakeholders and local schools.

The three key themes for the Ward Action Plan identified from the comments were:-

Clean and Green

More litter-picking groups and activities

Removal/reduction of fly-tipping

Zero tolerance and approach to littering/dumping – better education and awareness

Graffiti removal

Better coordination of local services/service provision and use of community facilities

Residents advised of fly-tipping by the disused private garages /walkways and drying areas in Clapgate Lane and Parkside. Cllr Brewer agreed to investigate.

Inclusive Bartley Green

To make connection with all residents across the ward/encouraging active participation for all age groups

Closer working with the local police team and the Safe Haven Group for Young People

Working with young people to ascertain their issues and needs/outreach work/identify hot spot areas where young people were gathering/trying to include young people as much as possible

Better use of community facilities and a timetable of activities and events across the ward

Safer Bartley Green

StreetWatch and SpeedWatch Groups – more volunteers needed for both groups to carry out patrols alongside the local police team – full training and support was given

Local police team also looking to increase the PACT meetings/closer working with the local police team

Cllr Brewer added that all methods of contact and communication – including the wide range of social media would continue to be used to ensure that all sections of the community was given the opportunity to contribute/participate, and that the first draft of the Ward Action Plan would be submitted following the meeting.

5. Local Updates.

Visitors Centre – Woodgate Valley

Limited opening hours were still in place due to a shortage of staff, so currently the centre could only open if the Rangers were on duty. However, roof and boiler repairs were also urgently needed – Sue Amey, Districts Parks Manager was actively seeking funding to get the repairs completed so the centre could eventually re-open.

Car-parking charges would no longer be introduced at Woodgate Valley Country Park following recent consultation. Cllrs thanked everyone who had submitted their views and comments during the consultation process.

002 Bus Service

The bus service was due to be discontinued by Diamond Bus Services as it was no longer deemed financially viable. Cllr Brewer had contacted Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to see if the service, which was well used by local residents and provided good connection links to Halesowen and Merry Hill could be reviewed/retained.

There were no further updates.

Councillor Brewer and Lines thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm