

THURMASTON LIAISON GROUP

11th December 2014

Roundhill Academy

Eleventh Meeting

Attendees

- Cllr Kate Knaggs – Leicestershire County Council and Thurmaston Parish Council
- Steve McDonald – Roundhill Academy
- Owen Bentley – Babttag
- Geoff Mee – Leicester City Council
- Rev. Tim Day
- Lynne Stewart – Duck Pond residents
- Cllr Daniel Grimley – Charnwood Borough Council
- Cllr Peter Mount – Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Parish Council
- Cllr Hugh Asher – Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Parish Council
- Ruth Potter – Lands Trust
- Matthew Bradley – Lands Trust
- Richard Wain – Thurmaston Project Manager (Hawkmoor)
- Victoria Walker – Thurmaston Communications Manager (Beattie)

Apologies

- Cllr Pam Green – Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Parish Council
- Rt Hon Stephen Dorrell, MP
- Cllr Barbara Potter – Leicester City Council
- Cllr Rita Patel – Leicester City Council

1. Introductions

Prior to opening the meeting Richard Wain expressed his sorrow at Ralph Raven's passing, attendees agreed he will be a loss to Thurmaston and the Borough.

Richard Wain conveyed Rob Gill's apologies and explained that as he is managing the progress of the green space management he will Chair the meeting and will pass over to the Lands Trust for today's presentation.

2. The Land's Trust

Matthew Bradley introduced the Lands Trust charity. The charity's key aim is to manage high quality green space, working with local partners. The five objectives are:

- Enabling social cohesion

- Improving health
- Providing education opportunities, including training for volunteers
- Providing economic uplift
- Protecting and improving the environment.

The charity takes on board all of the liabilities associated with public open space, including funding, health and safety, biodiversity and land management for example.

Work with Wildlife Trust, local authorities, Groundwork Trust, farmers, existing landholders and communities to deliver the best outcomes.

In terms of flexible funding streams, the charity has used the following mechanisms:

- Endowment
- S106
- Service charges
- Renewables
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Events – education and community events
- Other site revenues – such as a visitor’s centre or a community building
- Fundraising

At the Land’s Trust Liverpool Festival Gardens project the charity runs a Green Angels educational course to train local people in green space management, helping them to access new employment opportunities.

The charity also holds fun days, health events and works with schools, young rangers and holds educational days.

The Land’s Trust manages 2,000 hectares of land and has a further 6,654 hectares in the pipeline with an investment portfolio of £112million. It oversees 55 sustainably managed green spaces around the country including nature reserves, country parks, public realm, urban fringe, play areas, playing fields, grazing land and woodlands.

The charity seeks to work with the local community so that ownership of the project from design to delivery is possible. A bespoke model is created for every site. The fundraising strategy is tailored for each site.

Examples of the Trust’s projects include:

- Festival Gardens, Liverpool
- Warrington CRA new town
- Port Sunlight River Park – where funding was secured for a new high quality visitor destination on the former landfill
- Northumberlandia - a 46 acre community park, where the Land’s Trust has raised £250,000 for a new visitor’s centre
- Connaught Barracks, Dover – the former Barracks now includes sports pitches and green space alongside development

- Langdon Lake and Meadow – this was a neglected green space near a housing development. The Lands Trust overcame the anti-social behaviour issue and working with Essex Wildlife Trust is managing health activities, volunteering and a fishing lake
- Beam Parkland, Dagenham – an award winning site for the Lands Trust which works with the EA to manage these wetlands delivering new community infrastructure, multi-use open space as well as delivering education benefits
- Osprey Quay, Portland – the Olympic sailing site at Weymouth, which includes commercial space, homes, flood defences and the green space
- Wellesley Barracks – Aldershot – a new 3850 home site with 110ha of SANGS (suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) and public realm. This is funded through a commuted sum via the new residents and the partner is the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. A volunteer ‘friends’ group has been created and the RSPB is involved in the consortium which the Lands Trust has brought together.

3. Questions and Answers

Q) KK: For clarification, what are endowment funding and service charges and is the latter in addition to council tax, how is it calculated and who pays it. I’m concerned people will not want to pay a service charge on top of their council tax?

A) RW: We are thinking that it will be part endowment and part service charge. The latter is achieved at Hamilton and is on top of the council tax. Every property owner before they purchase is aware this fee will be payable in addition to council tax.

Q) LS: This includes existing residents as well, will they need to pay?

A) RW: no, the charge is only for new residents.

Q) KK: Is the Council still liable for this land?

A) RW: You could have a scenario where the land owner retains ownership and leases the green space to the Land’s Trust. Some of the Land’s Trust land may then be managed by the council, such as the sports pitch and the rest they will manage directly. CEG believes it’s very important to have this resolved from day one. Their idea is there should be one party totally responsible with a number of parties overseen in terms of the elements they are managing.

Q) OB: How much will the endowment from CEG be?

A) RP: An endowment is an investment sum of money which generates interest each year. The Land’s Trust invests carefully to ensure that the endowment continues to earn money which can then be used towards the green spaces it manages. The Land’s Trust works on a 3.5% return, anything over and above that is then reinvested.

Q) OB: What percentage would come from endowment and what percentage from service charges

A) RP: Every scheme is different and we build the model depending on the detail. This is still to be worked up on the scheme.

Q) Rev Day: Who makes the decision regarding the land management?

A) RW: It will be the local authority, with input from the land owner, developer, City, County and Parishes as well. We would not be able to commence the development until this management agreement is in place.

One alternative would be the Council taking on board the management. Charnwood has indicated it would still want to be involved with the management of the sports pitches. Ultimately CEG wants to ensure one body stays in charge so there is responsibility for ownership and everyone knows who that is.

The Land's Trust is not a management company cutting grass. It is a charity which specialises in holistically caring for extensive spaces and essentially has a brand to protect.

Q) PM: What would the service charge be on a project such as this?

A) MB: In the region of £200 to £250 per year. If there is a surplus it is given back to residents or reinvested for use on the projects on the site.

Q) OB: Have you seen any obvious natural partners on this site, such as the farmers who are adjacent to the site?

A) MB: Absolutely we have a lot of sites where grazing is undertaken by local farmers, on some we pay local farmers for grass cutting and hedge trimming.

RW: The laying out of this open space from day one is crucial. It has to be laid out so it is efficient to manage and we would aim to work with local partners, such as farmers from day one.

Q)P How does the service charge vary?

A) MB: The service charge is in proportion to the amount of green space. If there are a lot of play areas the service charge is higher than semi natural green space. Sports pitches increase the costs and then there can be income generating elements

I've modelled more than a dozen of these SUEs, and often we find they are very similar in terms of open space requirements and opportunities.

RW: The Lubbethorpe scheme in Blaby is a service charge based on house size. Employment also contributes towards the management of open space and affordable providers also need to contribute.

Q) PM: Can't see how you can provide rural green space within an SUE

A) RW: Within the development the space is more formal, when you come out on the edge there will be sports pitches but also less formal space, which may include grazing land. There has to be a transition from agricultural land and natural open space to semi-formal open spaces to more formal spaces. There will also be buffer zones, woodland and planting.

Q) LS: What is a countryside partnership?

A) MB: We set up partnerships on every scheme which includes organisations such as local farmers, volunteer groups, the Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust or Groundwork Trust for example, educational or health groups as well as the community (resident's forum or friends groups), parish and town councils and local farmers. We bring everyone together in a forum.

RP: Our aim is to build a community, not just manage green spaces and the partners we will work with are selected to ensure this.

Q) LS; Does this group decide what happens on the ground?

A) MB: All of the stakeholders will meet to discuss the ideas for the site as a management board.

RW: This liaison group could evolve into such a forum so people here might want to remain involved in this. Under the terms of the S106 with the planning permission we have to have a liaison group in place to get involved with the management of the site.

Q) OB: Will the landowner retain ownership of the land?

A) RW: He would be a partner and may retain ownership of the green space and lease it to the Lands Trust on a 99 year lease although this hasn't yet been resolved. One of the things the land owner does want to do is to engender the small 'o' ownership of the green spaces with the community.

Q) HA: What happens with the wildlife on site?

A) RW: We undertook extensive ecology and biodiversity surveys to understand the site and mitigation measures were outlined for construction and post development. Existing hedgerows will be retained and new wildlife areas will be created.

Q) LS: Do you create the green spaces for wildlife first?

A) RW: There is a balance between publically accessible open space for different uses and restricted wildlife areas. Three years before the road goes in we are putting new planting and measures in place to enhance biodiversity/landscaping at Hamilton Park. Unless we do this we cannot build the road.

Q) LS: I don't believe that the environmental study tallies with what I know.

A) GM: The surveys are only valid for a period of time, so before we start on site new surveys have to be undertaken throughout the development so we are dealing with what is on a particular part of the site before we develop. This enables us to micro manage and plan each of the areas/phases putting in the correct mitigation.

RP: Modern developments are very different now than 20 years ago, green infrastructure corridors and sustainable drainage systems create fantastic wildlife corridors, which usually provide better habitat opportunities than on a field which is ploughed. We have examples of colliery sites and tips with absolutely nothing on the site and now we have fantastic habitats on the site.

Q) LS: What happens in the interim period?

A) RW: If there are habitats which have to be relocated we do this. We wouldn't be developing the whole site. We can bring the ecologist to a future meeting if this would be useful.

MB: The Lands Trust ecologists are also incredibly passionate and we work closely with the Wildlife Trust and Natural England. This is something which is essential for us.

Q) OB: 2,000 hectares isn't a massive amount how secure are you in the long term?

A) MB: We are second to the National Trust in terms of the endowment funds we hold, so we have a very strong financial backing. We offer something very unique and our Chairman is an ex accountant and is Chair of Savills and they keep the company on a very tight leash. We have been set up in perpetuity; we are not a management company but we are a charity which is risk averse. We don't take land without a clear funding stream in place.

As a charity we don't pay tax so we can plough all money back into the scheme. We employ 33 to keep overheads low and work with local partners so we create local jobs. In terms of the model, Lands Trust provides the most added value, we are bringing in fundraising that other companies cannot deliver.

RW: The funding for each project is also ring-fenced and any deal reached would also include guarantees to ensure longevity and give all parties reassurance of the quality management of the site's green spaces.

Ultimately, the Land's Trust adds value to larger schemes; the model doesn't work for 50 houses but works incredibly well on a mixed use site such as this.

If anyone would like to come and meet people in the communities we work with we'd be happy to organise this. Please let Victoria Walker know and she can coordinate this.

RW added that he had visited Phoenix Park and it is working fantastically well and is very impressive.

Q) KK: We tried to establish what the new development would be formed, how in an emerging community do we established a group before there are any residents?

A) RW: From CEG's perspective as master developer, we would need to be hands on in creating the strategy. The local authority will also want hands-on involvement. But we would expect Thurmaston and Barkby parishes would want to be on that body and also Roundhill College. We don't want everyone to have exactly the same views; people should challenge ideas to ensure that the best is delivered.

Q) HA: One of the major concerns in Barkby is the roads and this was discussed extensively at our meeting yesterday in terms of signage and road conditions.

OB: We know what road schemes are proposed, but it could be that the liaison group members have suggestions to modify this, how receptive would CEG be to new ideas?

A) RW: new traffic counts and liaison will be happening continually and there is a review mechanism in place as well. We would be happy to invite the transport consultant, Dean, to a future meeting to discuss the ideas and would welcome the input and ideas from the liaison group.

Q) KK: What timescales are we looking at for resolving planning, the Local Plan and starting on site

A) RW: If things go smoothly there's the possibility of being on site by 2015/2016.

Q) KK: If DWH's application does get approved, what would happen?

A) RW: There are numerous avenues and it all depends on what the council does in terms of determining other applications. . We have met with DWH in the last week and discussions continue.

OB: CEG is appealing in terms of the need for DWH to produce an EIA.

Q) PM: What do you do in terms of delivering amenities?

A) RW: There would be a full range and this would evolve over time. A community centre for example could be used for a variety of things. The local centres include schools, sports, local shops and a community hub which could be a room for the police, library space and a hall which might be hired for events, leisure and religious use for example.

Q) OB: What reaction has there been to the viability report which says the smaller local centres on the site are not actually viable?

A) RW: We will review this and report back. There is a phasing approach to delivering the local centre to ensure they are viable. The schools for example would be delivered early and other elements open as there is demand for those uses and a quantum of people using them. ACTION POINT - RW

Q) HA: What about the factory space?

A) RW: there are no factories but there is some employment space, we have to undertake a marketing exercise to understand what is required. There is a strategic employment site at Watermead so we do not see our employment coming forward until the later stages and only if there is demand. It is likely to cater for smaller companies and start-ups.

Q) OB: When the application goes to the minister, when do you expect to hear back regarding a call in?

A) RW: I think it is three weeks but we will check with Nick Baker. ACTION POINT

RW: If it does need to be referred then the timetable will extend.

Q) OB: I am participating in the examination discussions, is CEG taking part?

A) RW: Yes, we have submitted statements to all elements and will participate in the north east of Leicester element. We will be there every day to see what is happening so we can address any points we need to.

Q) OB: There was a statement that we would do all we can to do to resolve the S106 pre-Christmas, is this still the case?

A) RW: We are progressing and will be in extensive meetings this week and next. We hope to resolve but it might be early in the New Year before it is completed.

Q) Rev Day: When will we see the draft?

A) RW: The best thing to review is the officer's report which outlines the financial commitments – VW to send to Reverend Day. **ACTION POINT**

Q) OB: The first 500 houses will include mitigation, is there money in the pot to extend what is agreed in the first phase if something changes?

A) RW: It will include mitigation measures from day one and it does outline expenditure in the villages. A S278 agreement with the county will be agreed and CEG will fund that. Triggers will be set in terms of the funding mechanisms and we pay the money over to the County. We have to be on our toes when it starts as we need to be able to occupy houses on the delivery of each of the elements which have been agreed with the County.

Q) SMcD: Our education delivery from 11 year olds to 16 year olds is proving popular with parents. We've had 200 applications and will reach capacity immediately in the next in-take. In the timescales you are hoping for, when the first house is built if it has an 11 year old we wouldn't be able to accommodate them within Roundhill.

A) RW: This is something we are looking at as part of the S106 discussions at the moment.

Q) LS: Last time when I asked about buffer areas around the Duck Pond and Nick was looking into it

A) ACTION POINT – VW to liaise with NB and provide feedback.

4. Date of Next Meeting

VW agreed to circulate meeting dates prior to Christmas and to set a date in the New Year.