

Former Wye College – Wolfson Lecture Theatre and Wolfson House sites

Neighbour workshop note – 15th December 2016

On 15th December 2015 the project team, working on behalf of Telereal Trillium, hosted an informal workshop with members of the immediate community to discuss issues specifically relating to the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site (on land off the High St.) and the Wolfson House site (on land off Upper Bridge St.), Wye. Neighbours of both sites were sent an invitation letter and asked to register for a place at the session in order to manage numbers. In total approximately 25 individuals attended the event, with the majority taking part in the whole of the workshop discussion (1 or 2 chose to visit the static display of the plans only).

1. Workshop structure

The event was an informal workshop where attendees were encouraged to sit in tables of 10 with members of the project team allocated to each table to help guide discussion. The workshop had a running time of approximately 2.5hrs between 7.00pm - 9.30pm. A proposed agenda was sent with the invitation to the meeting which set out the broad structure for discussion. The agenda was generally followed throughout the meeting to guide discussion. This was set out as:

- **7.00pm – 7.15pm: Introduction**
- **7.15pm – 8.00pm: The Wolfson Lecture Theatre site** – *discussion on existing site and initial plans*
8.00pm – 8.15pm: Concluding remarks for the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site
- **8.15pm – 9.00pm: The Wolfson House site** – *discussion on existing site and initial plans*
9.00pm – 9.15pm: Concluding remarks for the Wolfson House site
- **9.15pm – 9.30pm: General Q&A and concluding remarks**

2. Initial discussion and questions

The workshop and how it fitted into the planning process was explained at the outset and general questions were asked. The main one regarded the appropriateness of the approach to the near neighbour workshop. It was felt by one member of the group that the discussion should have been opened up to the whole village, as had been suggested by Councillor Noel Ovenden.

The facilitator explained the rationale behind the approach, which was to ensure those most affected by the sites had the opportunity for detailed discussions at the early design stage, and that the plans would also be provided on the project website for the wide community to understand the comment on.

3. The Wolfson Lecture Theatre site

Overall, the designs of the proposed properties for the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site were positively received, with a comment made by one attendee “at last something is happening”. There were a number of key issues discussed on both the detail of the plans for this site as well as general points, these included:

- **Principle of development** – it was understood that the site had been identified in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for development and that they could come forward outside of the development of the wider masterplan for the former Wye College land.
- **Parking provision** – It was recognised that whilst roughly 8 cars regularly park at the site, they had no right to do so. However, as there was existing pressure for on street parking, every effort should be made to avoid adding to this through the development of the site. 1 parking space / house was not considered enough. It was explained that Kent County Council was comfortable with the parking level proposed.
 - **Suggestions included:**
 - Parking be provided at the old College laundry site (connected by a footpath to this site)
 - Taylors Yard, off Church Street is a good example of how parking should be arranged
 - Whilst parking is important, the site should not be turned into a car park; a second parking space off-site would be sufficient
- **Number of units/density** – there was a general feeling that the plans were well designed but that perhaps included too many new homes for the size of the site.
- **Unit 6 removal (replace with parking)** – The removal of Unit 6 could enable the delivery of more parking on site and would also alleviate reduce the number of units
- **Accesses to existing properties** – some neighbouring properties have existing access through the site which residents would like to be retained. 11 The Green and 5 The Green were mentioned specifically as having existing access.
- **Rubbish disposal** – Existing properties in The Green may have established rights for rubbish collection through the site.
- **Garden sizes** – There was discussion about the relationship between garden sizes and parking provision and disagreement in the group between the benefits of larger gardens or more parking.
- **Unit mix** – It was initially considered that too many 2 bedroom homes were being proposed as it was thought there is greater demand for larger 3 or 4 bedroom family houses. There was however acceptance that the delivery of this type of housing could come forward on a different part of the larger former Wye College site.

4. The Wolfson House site

The designs for the Wolfson House site were generally welcomed and the replacement of the existing building was appropriate. A number of issues were raised including:

- **Parking provision** – the balance between built development and parking should be carefully considered. Could more be provided on site? One space per unit was not considered acceptable. There is existing concern about on-street parking at this location as it is already over-capacity.
- **Existing ground level / proposed ridge line** – Heights of the buildings were queried as they seemed to be higher than the existing building and it was suggested the existing ground level could

be lowered to accommodate the building. It was accepted that the plans which will be submitted were likely to propose to keep the same height as the existing building.

- **Visibility at Vicarage Gardens exit** – Need to improve the visibility leaving Vicarage Gardens onto Upper Bridge St as this was considered to be one of the most dangerous junctions in Wye.
- **Relationship to existing buildings** – There was a request to carry out a daylight study to demonstrate no adverse impact on properties on the opposite side of Upper Bridge St. Wyllie House on Vicarage Gardens has trouble manoeuvring into and out of its off-street parking space due to cars parking on opposite side of road – is there a potential for this to be addressed?

5. General discussion

There was an opportunity for general discussion towards the end of the workshop and a number of general points raised throughout the discussion sessions which have been set out below:

- **Village wide parking provision** – Parking provision across the village is an existing issue. Generally a number of residents struggle to park outside their homes. There is an increase in pressure from the Free School.
- **Large vehicles** – Traffic issues arise when large vehicles attempt to use the narrow streets in the village. Upper Bridge Street is “the most dangerous”.
- **‘Multi-storey’ car park** – *One resident* suggested there was the potential for a new “multi-storey” car park to be provided on land elsewhere in the village to alleviate existing parking issues; the old boiler house site was proposed.
- **Appropriateness of approach to engagement** – *following the discussion on the sites, it was noted by the resident with concerns at the beginning that the session had been well run and worthwhile for all concerned.*

6. Conclusions

Overall discussion was positive throughout, the principle of residential development was acceptable and bringing back into use some of the existing buildings at the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site was welcomed. There were concerns over the level of parking provision. The removal of Unit 6 on the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site would generally be welcomed in order to provide more parking spaces on this site. Careful consideration needs to be had over existing rights of way at the Wolfson Lecture Theatre site. A reduction in the ridge line of the proposed building on the Wolfson House site would also be welcomed.

A full table of key issues arising both during the discussion at the workshop as well as through the feedback submitted online via the project email address will seek to respond where possible and outline how the project team have addressed any concerns. This response table will be made available at the project website www.formerwyecollege.co.uk