

Mercia Park Community Liaison Group: meeting minutes

6.30pm, 26 April 2022

Attendees

Rick Moore	Chair
Andy Kennington*	Chilcote Parish Council
Calvin Bent	Clifton Campville Parish Council
Catherine Ridgway	North West Leicestershire District Council
Colin Manifold	Measham Parish Council
Darren Gelder	Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council
Darren Greally*	Stretton en le Field Parish Council
Neil Parker	Stretton en le Field Parish Council
Nigel Eaton	Netherseal Parish Council
Mike Ruston	Newton Regis, Seckington & No Man's Heath Parish Council
Peter Snelson	Newton Regis, Seckington & No Man's Heath Parish Council
Tony Treadwell	Austrey Parish Council
David Smith	IM Properties
Emma Alderman	Winvic
Francis Hayes	Winvic
Danny Swann	Jaguar Land Rover
Ash Evans	Unipart
Anne Wilde	Unipart
Sarah Pritchett	DSV
Simon Tucker	DTA
Matt Sutton	Camargue
Giles Venn	Camargue
Apologies	
Lindsay Swinfield	Appleby Magna Parish Council
Sue Ward	Overseal Parish Council

*Denotes substitute member

1. Welcome and introduction

- The Chair, Rick Moore (RM) thanked everyone for attending and began the session, welcoming everyone to the fifth Mercia Park Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting and inviting all attendees to introduce themselves to the room.

2. Construction programme update

IM Properties update

- The Chair handed over to David Smith (DS) from IM Properties, who thanked everyone for attending the first meeting in person since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and reiterated the business' commitment to community relations. He provided an overview of progress, confirming that DSV's building had been handed over, infrastructure works were due to be completed and Units 1-3 (nearest the B5493) handed over by the end of the week (w/c 25 April), with Units 4-5 set to be completed by September – with IM Properties' involvement in the construction phase to be finished before the end of the year. At this point the focus would turn to community and occupier relations.

- DS noted that 95 per cent of the site's landscaping had now been completed, with some works still ongoing that would need to be finished in the next planting season. Once the final units have been handed over in September, a management company will take over managing the whole site which will include overseeing any remedial landscaping works. All footpaths across the site are completed, public right of way P94 will reopen shortly and P96 will remain closed for public safety until August while the final buildings are completed. On employment and skills, it was noted the project has been delivering against its commitments agreed with North West Leicestershire District Council and the initiative is being handed on to the site's occupiers.
- DS confirmed that a planning application has been submitted for Unit 7, a 50,000 sq ft building located where the current Winvic site offices are situated. This is set to be determined within the next few weeks and work could start later in 2022. Work has been continuing to assess the form and nature of provision for the amenity plot, with an initial round of canvassing completed and marketing currently underway. A number of potential options remain under discussion.

Winvic update

- Francis Hayes (FH), Winvic senior project manager, noted that highways work had all been completed and delivered an update on construction of the vertical build. The DSV plot is now completed and operational, having been handed over in September 2021.
- FH provided an update on progress for JLR's build, which is in week 63 of 81 and due for completion in September 2022. Units 1, 2 and 3 are now largely complete and are being handed over on 29 April. Upcoming works on Unit 4 include completion of roof and floor slab, air test, finishing touches and snagging, while Unit 5 requires block paving to car park, continuing of warehouse roof, trimming, and floor slab, office cladding and first fix M&E.
- Emma Alderman (EA), Winvic CSR manager, delivered an update on social value, which among other highlights covered: a summary of training initiatives which have taken place in the Mercia Park 'Future of Construction' Training Centre; attendance at recruitment fairs and job events; the opening of the on site Sustainability & Innovation Hub; hosting tours for local authority contacts and partner organisations; and supporting Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) World of Work video.
- EA also provided details about site visits from students and teaching staff from a range of different local educational groups and institutions, including work placements. Winvic has also been liaising with Sir John Moore C.E. (A) Primary School to support with several improvements projects, providing maintenance for No Man's Heath Village Hall, and continuing to support Nuneaton Signs across 20 projects nationwide.

Questions and discussion

- Peter Snelson (PS) thanked Winvic for the ongoing work at No Man's Heath Village Hall and raised a question about landscaping and visual impact of the development, circulating a photograph to attendees taken from a residential property in the village. Referring to a meeting which took place last year attended by the Chair, Matt Sutton (MS) from Camargue and the project's landscape architect, he asked whether IM Properties would review and consider doing any more on landscaping with the buildings nearing completion.
- DS noted the impractical nature of attempting to consider the view from every local property but stated that IM Properties would be happy to come back and review the landscaping across the site later in the year, once all of the building work has been completed, to check it has delivered on what was approved as part of the planning application. **(Action)**
- Andy Kennington (AK) asked about the final five per cent of landscaping that was remaining, noting that a good job had been done overall but whether any additional trees could be

planted at the top of some of the bunding to break up sight lines. DS said there was likely to be a reason for the planting strategy but would check and respond. **(Action)**

- PS commented about the importance of the visual impact from the No Man's Heath Village Hall, noting that while not a residential property or 'in' the centre of the village it 'is' the heart of the village. He noted previous discussion about whether screening could be planted on the verges next to the B5493 and if the highways authority could be engaged about this. DS advised IMP can commit to having a conversation but this is not likely to be straightforward or yield anything deliverable. He referred back to his earlier comment about compliance with the planning permission.
- Colin Manifold (CM) noted that when driving towards the site the colour of the buildings can appear to change depending on the daylight and asked whether there was a different mix of materials being used. He added that on some occasions the buildings were hardly visible. FH confirmed that all used the same materials although with different colours and that these are likely fade and weather in with time. DS reiterated that seasons, weather and time of day all had a bearing and commented that the buildings had settled well into the landscape, but agreed to pick up again later in the year as part of the landscaping follow up.
- AK asked IM Properties how the management company would function. DS explained that this will be independent and funded via the service charge from the site's occupiers who will be accountable to them and the owners of the estate.
- DS commended Winvic on its employment and skills programme, noting that everything that had been achieved occurred during a very difficult period and the team had gone over and above to ensure their commitments had been met. He advised that the Employment Scheme Progress Report documents were all available on the project website, with another to follow later in the year, and that these could be circulated via email to all CLG members. **(Action)**
- Darren Gelder (DG) welcomed the positive employment and skills update and asked how many new jobs had been provided to people living near the site in the context of how the local community has benefitted. DS said he did not have those figures to hand but would be able to follow up and provide these. **(Action)** FH added that Winvic had received CVs from several local people they had passed on to their subcontractors, who subsequently found work elsewhere off-site via this route.

3. Occupier update

Unipart overview

- The Chair invited Ash Evans (AE) from Unipart to introduce the company to the CLG and explain its relationship with JLR's operations at Mercia Park. AE presented an overview of Unipart Group in terms of the size and scale of the business, its customers in key industry sectors including automotive, and its operations across the globe. He discussed the company's culture and commitments to upskilling its employees, as well as the charity work the business undertakes in the communities in which it operates.
- In terms of its operation at Mercia Park, AE provided a summary about how Unipart's would be operating JLR's global parts logistics centre for at least the next five years. It is one of the business' oldest partners having supported them for over 30 years across multiple sites. AE shared a recruitment timeline and map, advising that there will be significant and diverse range of roles available – headcount will quickly increase from 100 by October 2022 to 1,000 within the following 12 months. An overview was also provided on sustainable access and the company's value proposition.

Questions and discussion

- DG asked for additional clarity about the relationship between Unipart and JLR. AE explained that Unipart are operating JLR's global parts and distribution who contract out their logistics services. Unipart currently operate 12 other locations around the world which involves dealing with JLR's after market products, delivering these to businesses who repair vehicles.

- PS asked about staffing levels and commented that Unipart and DSV's total number of employees once fully operational fell short of the totals being presented at the planning stage of the development, and asked about how this impacted the sustainable transport plans. DS stated that the forecasted numbers were robust and the best available at the time.
- AE advised that Unipart's operations would be running out of two of the units on site. Danny Swann (DSw) from JLR stated that the all of the remaining units on site will be JLR buildings with details still to be confirmed about how these will be operated.
- AK asked about employment numbers and locations, commenting that it looked like people would be travelling further to work at the site than had been suggested during consultation phase of the project. DS noted that it had previously been stated most people were expected to travel from within a 30 minute drive time. Simon Tucker of transport consultants DTA noted that the edge of the larger conurbations shown on Unipart's map (including Nottingham, Leicester and Birmingham) were within the 30 minute window.
- DG recalled seeing details in the consultation materials about the number of people who might walk or cycle to work at the site and asked if Camargue could recirculate these numbers, as it was felt that these would not be accurate in reality (**Action**). CM noted that there had been discussion about the possibility of adding a cycle lane onto the road from Measham.
- On employment, Sarah Pritchett (SP) from DSV noted that its team had relocated from its previous Tamworth operations. The business had initially found it challenging to recruit locally towards the end of 2021, but that uptake since the start of the year had become significantly stronger. CM asked whether the company had attended jobs fairs in local towns including Ashby, SP noted it had attended some (but not those referred to) and that most of its recruitment marketing was taking place online and via social media.
- CM, AK and PS all reiterated concerns about employment in terms of total numbers and local recruitment. Neil Parker (NP) suggested people would not want to travel from Swadlincote given the traffic on the A444. DS confirmed the previous details about employment could be shared (**Action**) and that IMP's position is consistent and has not changed, reminding members that it was still very early days in operational terms and there was a long way to go on recruitment.

DSV overview

- SP provided an overview of DSV's business, it's different divisions, customers and sectors, and its various operational locations across the UK. It has relocated around 130 staff to Mercia Park from two sites which have now closed nearby at Tamworth. The company is servicing customers across retail, wholesale and e-commerce streams from varying sectors including toys, DIY, apparel and gardening.
- SP confirmed DSV currently has over 270 staff based at the site, with a mix of permanent and agency staff. She confirmed it would be possible to share anonymised postcode data showing the breakdown of where employees travel to work from. (**Action**)

4. Sustainable transport

Update from DTA

- The Chair invited ST to provide an update on sustainable transport, who gave a recap of the main conditions from planning. ST noted that DTA had prepared the framework travel plan for DSV, which has been approved and is being implemented, and is in the process of discussing how to do the same for Unipart.

- ST delivered an update on condition 22 covering bus service provision, noting the full development will provide at least two services to site (out of options from Tamworth, Burton/Swadlincote and Coalville). The number 20 service has been operational to site for seven months, with some minor amends to the service to reflect DSVs shift patterns. The next stage is now being considered as Unipart/JLR's recruitment expands. One option to extend the number 19 service via Measham to the site is being explored – a formal strategy is expected to be agreed at the end of Q3 2022.
- The formal launch of a 'Lifeshare' scheme is due to be introduced later this year – this has been previously delayed due to Covid-19 social distancing policies. ST noted that a similar car sharing scheme used by Ocado at Birch Coppice has been extremely successful.
- On travel plans (condition 24), ST reconfirmed Unipart/JLR's plan is under preparation and that a first formal review of DSV's plan is due in November 2022 – twelve months on from its implementation.

Questions and discussion

- PS asked about the bus services to site and whether local people are able to use them. ST confirmed this was the case and that these were extensions to an existing local service – the timetables are advertised via Midlands Classic and available on Google – and that more could be done to promote the service such as through leaflets in village halls and noticeboards. **(Action)** While details are commercially sensitive, ST confirmed that people were using the service.
- DS accepted that more could be done to promote the bus service. He added that sustainable transport had been the subject of extensive conversation as Unipart begin to step up recruitment and underscored the importance of understanding where the labour force was travelling from to ensure the right services were put in the right place, but which equally would be commercially viable.
- PS asked how many people were currently travelling to work by cycling. SP noted that at DSV at least three people were cycling to work.
- DG asked about wider transport challenges, noting anecdotally that there seemed to be an increase in traffic on local roads including on the M42, and what the impact would be from Mercia Park once fully operational. ST advised that more would be known in November following the travel plan review, but that overall the operations of DSV and Unipart were likely to generate less traffic than had originally been forecasted in the transport assessment, especially as shift patterns would not largely coincide with rush hour.
- DG asked how many HGV movements are expected for DSV and Unipart once fully operational. AE said around 70 per day (between 6am and 11pm) would be anticipated for Unipart, averaging at around four per hour. SP advised it would be a similar figure for DSV, and that vehicles tend not to leave empty (i.e. they are reloaded when on site). DSV shifts are eight hours, running from 5am/6am-2pm and then 3pm-11pm, while office workers are staggered between 8am-4pm and 9am-5pm.

5. Community Fund

- The Chair provided a quick snapshot of information relating to the Community Grant Fund, advising that over 100 applications have now been received. The Fund has awarded 61 grants overall, totalling almost £260,000 towards charitable organisations. The majority of funding has been allocated to local projects and organisations.
- In the interests of time with the meeting overrunning, it was agreed that Giles Venn (GV) would circulate information in the presentation including links to some short videos following the meeting. **(Action)**

6. Any other business

- It was agreed the next meeting of the CLG will take place in late summer/early autumn as a face-to-face meeting on site, with the aim of arranging a walk around part of the site.
- AK noted that local farmers in Chilcote had been asking about electricity generation and details about the site's renewable energy. DS said that an update could be sent separately on this after the meeting. **(Action)**
- Tony Treadwell (TT) asked about the use of the Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS) which had previously been purchased by IMP and whether Austrey Parish Council would be able to use this. DG noted that this has been used successfully in Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council and was available to other local parishes on request – advising TT to contact the parish clerk. ST asked DG if data collected from the sign could be passed on and agreed to follow up separately. **(Action)**
- TT noted that the access covers along the B5493 to the new utility connections had started to sink in places and asked Winvic to check these. FH advised that this work had been carried out by an independent contractor, Matrix Networks, and would raise this with them. **(Action)**

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