

MILLFIELDS USERS' GROUP

Minutes of General Meeting of the Users' Group on Saturday 2nd May 2009 at All Souls Church Overbury Street E5

1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Present: Bob Benge; David Brunetti; Barry Buitekant; Vivienne Foxley; Claire Kelly; Anna O'Sullivan; John O'Sullivan; Ian Rathbone [Chair]; Anne Thesenvitz; Brian Weller [Secretary]

Apologies: Tim Evans; Emma Jack; Christine Kings; Anna O'Brien; Sarah Plett; Teddie Sawyer; Elizabeth Bayliss-Sawyer

2 MINUTES OF AGM ON 9 FEBRUARY 2009

- 2.1 The Minutes were **AGREED** as a correct record
- 2.2 Matters arising:

Minute 6.1 Members queried progress on renovation of playground toilet block and change to mixed use of S. Millfields cycle path

Minute 8 (c) Members queried progress on promised provision of new bike racks

3 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Users' Group Constitution provided for a Committee of twelve members, but at the AGM in February only eleven members had been elected.

AGREED: that Barry Buitekant be elected to the User Group Committee.

4 MILLFIELDS MASTER PLAN – PROGRESS

The Meeting noted the report put to the Committee on 23 April, and considered a draft brief for the consultancy phase which had been sent to the Secretary by Hackney Parks Department on 30 April.

The proposed programme following the extended consultation period was noted, with analysis and feedback by mid-May, the consultant phase from June to September, and development phase from Autumn 2009 assisted by Parks Department's new Parks Development Team.

Members felt that the draft consultant's brief sought to integrate a vision for Millfields with a considerable number of other strategies and Master Plans, some of which might in fact be harmful to the essential character and purpose of Millfields. A preferred approach would

be to seek to identify the essential character of Millfields as perceived by its users, and consider how other strategies and plans might be modified so as to preserve Millfields.

Members noted the draft Study Aims and Objectives. They considered that the core objective was renovation of the Park Lodge to provide a range of services, identification of sources of capital finance to pay for that renovation and a sustainable business plan for its continued operation. They agreed that a central objective should be development of Millfields as a social space, encouraging social interaction and community cohesion. They were interested in practical measures “to forge improved physical links” between the three main spaces forming Millfields - and discussed better phasing of the Leabridge Road/ Chatsworth Road traffic lights, and improvement of the footpath under Lea Bridge linking North Millfields with the Princess of Wales public house. It was strongly felt that emerging high density residential development proposals along the Leabridge Road in Waltham Forest threatened the links into Hackney and Walthamstow Marshes and the Lea Valley Regional Park.

Members wished to see a strong element of ‘green’ strategy and sustainability in the strategic and design options for Millfields.

AGREED:

- 1 that the promised full consultation and involvement of Millfields representatives throughout the Master Plan process be welcomed**
- 2 that further views of members be sought following Brian Weller’s circulation of the draft consultancy brief, and that members appointed as Millfields representatives to the Master Plan Steering Group (Bob Benge, Ian Rathbone, and Brian Weller) meet with the Parks Department to discuss the draft and the views of User Group members on it.**
- 3 that these discussions need to include important parallel issues for Millfields, eg Pathfinder; National Grid access; possible mural; section 106 and Electricity Act 1989; John Laing withdrawal and physical aftermath.**

5 PATHFINDER – NEW PLAY FACILITIES FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Members recalled that the User Group had bid for a share of the £2.6M awarded to the Learning Trust for provision of additional children’s play facilities. Our bid was for provision for older children. An announcement of the successful bidders was expected soon and there were unofficial indications that the Millfields bid might succeed.

If so, it was **AGREED** that a small Working Group led by Claire Kelly and Emma Jack should be formed to work with the Learning Trust and to inform and consult the Committee and members of the User Group on implementation.

6 MILLFIELDS COMMUNITY ORCHARD

It was reported that the Community Orchard, consisting of 51 variegated fruit trees was successfully planted in the week ending 14 February with the assistance of Russell Miller and volunteers from Tree Musketeers. Planting had been carried out by children from Rushmore and Southwold Schools and by members of the User Group. Financial support had come from National Grid.

There is a two year management agreement with Russell Miller, but the User Group had primary responsibility for watering and care.

A briefing session on that subject including watering of all trees had been organised on 12 April, and Emma Jack and Tim Evans, who led for the User Group on orchard development had since set up regular User Group watering sessions to be held every Thursday from 4.30 pm.

information signs describing the trees have been designed and erected in the orchard, and each tree had an individual nameplate. Information leaflets had been designed and it was hoped to have copies shortly.

AGREED: that the report be welcomed

7 NATIONAL GRID – A NEW ACCESS ROAD ACROSS MILLFIELDS?

Members considered the report of the Secretary (**enclosure 7**) on impending discussions between National Grid and Hackney Council of the possibility of changing access arrangements to the National Grid site on South Millfields. At a National Grid meeting with Hillstowe Street residents on 20 April Ian Rathbone and Brian Weller had been told;

- (a) that given the fact that NG will be on Millfields till 2014 and the considerable problems of site traffic caused to Hillstowe Street residents, National Grid are wanting to discuss with Council Officers the possibility of building an alternative access road **across Millfields** avoiding Hillstowe Street;
- (b) however for the meeting on 22/4 NG had only arranged LBH attendance from Traffic Management, Highways, and Pollution Control. They reported that no senior Officer from Parks Dept. was able to attend, and they had not invited a Planner .

Millfields reps had urged, and it was agreed, that unless Parks and Planning could be represented at a senior level the meeting should be rescheduled to a date when such representation could be achieved.

An interim view had subsequently been conveyed to National Grid Community Relations by Brian Weller as follows;

"There is perhaps one other thing I need to say very clearly, as Secretary of Millfields Users' Group, to avoid misleading you and your colleagues. Along with Ian Rathbone last night I expressed a wish to be helpful to National Grid and to Hillstowe Street residents in considering a solution for site access which reduces the site traffic problems which they are experiencing. That should **absolutely not** be interpreted as a willingness to be involved in any solution which is not subjected to full and proper consultation and due legal process. I will, in co-operation with National Grid and Council representatives try to keep the Users' Group fully informed of any discussion or proposal which would benefit from their informed consent. And I will try to ensure that their views are reported back to you - or given to you direct."

Members expressed concern at any prospect of a road from Millfields Road across Millfields to the Sub-station site, and asked for examination of access - however difficult - via the Council Depot in Millfields Rd.

AGREED: that these discussions be closely monitored and members of the User Group be kept informed of developments.

8 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Members considered a report from the Secretary on other matters of concern to the User Group (**enclosure 8**) and agreed;

- 1 that the memorial bench for Gerald Laufer, previously agreed, be dedicated if possible on 19 July.**
- 2 that on the proposal for a mural on National Grid site hoarding or boundary wall, the Meeting preferred the approach of a mural with local historical references, created by a local community arts group with local school and community involvement.**
- 3 that agreement be given in principle for a community picnic on July 19th, in the Orchard area, as part of the nationwide "Big Lunch" day being promoted by the Eden Project, and that Claire Kelly investigate further, including the impact of Parks Department events policy.**
- 4 That potential development on Essex Wharf and other sites in Leabridge Road be monitored closely with a view to promoting 'stakeholder engagement' at an early stage.**
- 5 That the Group's discussion on the provision of further public Noticeboards be drawn to the attention of the Park Manager.**

9 FINANCE REPORT

Claire Kelly, Treasurer, reported a bank balance of £59.05.

AGREED: that the report be noted, and that the Treasurer be asked to research the availability of small grants to improve the financial position of the User Group.

10 DATE OF NEXT GENERAL MEETING

AGREED to confirm Thursday 30 July at 7.00 pm, with venue to be confirmed.

11 Any Other Business

- 11.1 Claire Kelly reported the retirement of a long-service gardener from Millfields and regretted that the occasion had not been marked by the Group.
- 11.2 Secretary to inquire of Parks Department notional present Ranger cover, and proposals for future cover.

Close of Meeting

2.25