

Minutes of the Hospital Liaison Group Meeting
Held on Monday 15th March 2010 (19.00 - 21.00) in the Audrey Emerton Building,
Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton

Present:

Simon Burgess (Labour Parliamentary Candidate, Brighton Kemptown & Peacehaven), Simon Kirby (Conservative Parliamentary Candidate, Brighton Kemptown), Cllr Warren Morgan (East Brighton, Labour), Cllr Craig Turton (East Brighton, Labour), 55 local residents

Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals (BSUH) Trust:

Duane Passman, Director of 3Ts, Estates & Facilities
Steve Gallagher, Operational Director, Estates & Facilities
Nick Groves, Associate Director, 3Ts Service Modernisation

1. Welcome & Introductions

Cllr Turton (Chair) and Duane Passman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting (1st February 2010) were agreed.

3. Design Options: Presentation

Benedict Zucchi (BDP Architects)¹ presented the two new design options (Options A and B) and compared them with the original plans as at Outline Business Case stage. [The presentation has been posted on the Hospital Liaison Group website]. The revised options aim to address concerns raised by local residents, Brighton & Hove City planners and English Heritage about *inter alia* the height and massing of the redevelopment.

In particular, the Stage 2 building (Cancer Centre) on Upper Abbey Road/Eastern Road, which is common to both options, is one storey (c. 4.5m) lower than the original plans and is therefore almost the same height as the Barry building. The revised plans also include a curved South elevation stepped back from Eastern Road and a garden at the entrance to the building. The Spanish Steps between the Stage 2 and Stage 1 buildings have been reduced in width and the Western edge of the Stage 2 building has been reduced by several meters but retains the existing boundary wall - so the building follows the same line as the Barry Building does currently.

In both new design options Stage 1 is three stories lower² than in the original plan. The Stage 1 building includes a number of landscaped terraces and green roofs, most of which would be accessible to patients/the public and staff. Under Option B the facade is set back from Eastern Road by 4-5m at the widest point and steps back in three tiers at the higher stories, up to 10m from the boundary line. The 'three finger' design aims to provide a more variegated feel to the massing to fit more comfortably with scale of the neighbouring architecture.

Revised proposals for the Stage 3 car park also now include a green roof.

¹ <http://www.bdp.com/>

² Assuming street level at Eastern Road is Level 1, the top floor is at Level 13, ie. one floor higher than the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital (RACH), and the helipad is at Level 16.

Benedict noted that the revised designs focus on the height and massing of the buildings and are therefore still indicative at this stage; eight to nine months' further detailed work would be required before plans are ready to be submitted for planning consent.

Q&A

3.1 Height & Massing

Residents recognised that the revised plans do reduce the height of the buildings and step them back further from the street. However one resident suggested removing the 9-10m wide Spanish Steps between Stage 1 and Stage 2 to allow the buildings to be brought closer together and further back from the boundary lines.

Duane explained that the Steps provide pedestrian access from Eastern Road, which is the public transport node, to the Northern half of the site and allow windows/light into the departments abutting the Steps. The necessary phasing of the development also means that the Stage 1 building can only be built to the East of the existing Barry Building.

3.2 Distance from Trust Boundary

Residents asked whether the Stage 1 building could be set back further from the Trust's boundary line and stepped back ziggurat-style. Duane explained that Option B is stepped back as far as possible while maintaining the required internal floor area.

One resident expressed concern that the Stage 1 building would be directly opposite her house on Eastern Road and asked whether it could be built opposite the Sussex Eye Hospital (SEH) instead. Duane replied that under the revised options the centre of the Stage 1 tower is opposite Upper Sudeley Street. The Barry Building cannot be demolished until Stage 1 is complete so the tower can only be built to the East of the Barry Building.

3.3 Barry Building Facade

One resident asked whether consideration had been given to retaining the facade of the Barry Building. Duane confirmed that retaining the Barry Building as is, extending it and retaining the facade had all been considered as part of the initial design studies but that this had proved impractical. In particular, in order to provide the required amount of accommodation, the Stage 2 building line needs to extend further south than the existing Barry Building. This also has the advantage of reducing the height of stage 2. The floor-to-ceiling heights of the Barry Building are also at different heights to modern hospital standards and it would therefore be difficult to align new floor levels with existing window heights.

Duane noted that English Heritage had rejected the application to list the facade of the Barry Building. The interior of the chapel is listed, however, and Duane suggested discussing the preservation plans at a future meeting.

3.4 Helipad: Location

Residents asked whether a decision had been made to build the helipad on the 3Ts tower or on the existing Thomas Kemp Tower. Duane explained that a more detailed engineering and structural study had just been commissioned to assess whether the Thomas Kemp Tower could support the helipad and that the decision has therefore not yet been made. He hoped this study would be complete by June/July 2010.

A resident asked whether the helipad could be built on the Downs instead. Duane explained that the standard for Major Trauma Centres is to have an integral helipad rather than landing arrangements requiring secondary transfer by road ambulance. He also suspected that planning permission for a development in the South Downs National Park would not be entertained.

3.5 Helipad: Noise

Residents asked about the noise that the air ambulance would generate landing and taking off. Duane offered to take a group to the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel or to Leeds General Infirmary, which have helipads on site, or to the Kent Air Ambulance base at Marden in Kent. Other residents said they were more concerned about the visual impact of the helipad than the noise. It was agreed that residents who would be interested in a visit should contact the 3Ts Programme Office.

3.6 Bristol Gate Piers

Duane noted that there are two Grade II listed gate piers on the corner of Bristol Gate/Eastern Road. The redevelopment plans include widening this junction so the proposal is to restore the gate piers and relocate them to a place of prominence on site. Investigation suggests that the piers were moved to their current location in the mid to late 1920s and were listed in the 1970s. Duane asked whether any residents or local societies would be able to provide further information - one resident said that the designs suggested they were erected in the 1880s but he was not sure of the original location.

3.7 South Service Road

Residents of Upper Abbey Road again expressed concern that the designs do not alter the flow of service traffic so that vehicles both enter and exit the site from Bristol Gate. Duane replied that unfortunately it has not been possible to achieve this change under any of the options due to the constrained nature of the site and limited space for a turning circle.

Residents also expressed concern that the gates have recently been left open for extended periods. Duane agreed to check this.

Action: Duane Passman & Team

3.8 Verified Views

The presentation included views of the Royal Sussex County Hospital campus from four locations that have been included in discussions with the City Council and English Heritage about the impact of the new development on the Brighton & Hove skyline. Duane reported that up to 40 verified view locations will be submitted as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment and that these viewpoints are currently being agreed with the City Council and English Heritage.

3.9 Green Roofs

Residents welcomed the inclusion of green terraces and roofs however Cllr Morgan cautioned that these have a mixed record of success locally and, if they fail, can be very ugly. Towards the Marina they have also encouraged seagulls. Benedict replied that BDP has had positive experiences of green roofs and that these would support both sustainability and provide residents who look over the site with more attractive views. He agreed that it would be important to research the microclimate thoroughly and investigate the local experience of similar developments.

3.10 Building Underground

Residents asked how many floors the new designs have underground and whether digging deeper could reduce the height of the building. Benedict noted that both Stage 1 and 2 buildings have substantial basements, including plant and most of the engineering. The Cancer Centre's radiotherapy bunkers are located in the basement of the Stage 2 building.

Duane said that he had not discounted the possibility of underground parking but wanted to have settled on a preferred design before exploring this in detail. He ruled out the suggestion from a local resident that major areas of accommodation could be built underground, particularly staff offices.

3.11 Cost of Two Options

A resident asked whether cost would be a factor in deciding whether to progress Option A or B. Duane replied that both options include the same internal floor area and are therefore of a broadly similar cost. Option B departs more radically from the original design and would therefore take a little longer to redesign internally.

Cllr Turton thanked Benedict for the helpful presentation and thanked Duane for allowing residents to see it as promised before the wider public. Cllr Turton asked for residents' views on the new design options. In a straw poll, residents overwhelmingly preferred Option B of the three design options presented.

4. Communication

Nick Groves said that he would email or mail all residents on the mailing list within the next two days to notify them that the presentation had been posted on the Hospital Liaison Group website. He asked that anyone who does not receive this please contact the 3Ts office - not all of the email and mailing addresses provided have been legible. He also asked that residents mention the mailing list to their neighbours.

One resident noted that some of the documents posted on the website have the print option disabled. Nick apologised for this error and said the document settings would be amended.

5. Transport Study

Duane confirmed that the full transport study had been posted on the website as requested. Cllr Turton invited questions:-

5.1 Adjacent Roads

A resident of Eaton Place asked that future more detailed studies give greater consideration to the impact of the construction on the roads running from Eastern Road to Marine Parade. She felt that the impact of the construction would be exacerbated by the Council's proposal to divert traffic around Kemp Town. Duane agreed that a more detailed study would be needed and that it would need to reflect the current iteration of the City's Core Strategy.

5.2 Scope

A resident asked whether the study had considered the impact of the construction and development on traffic throughout East Brighton. Duane said that he would review the document that had been posted on the website.

5.3 Passenger Car Unit Counts

One resident suggested that Passenger Car Unit counts commence as soon as possible to give a baseline over a full year.

6. Reflections on Previous Development

6.1 UAR Document

Cllr Turton thanked residents of Upper Abbey Road (UAR) for producing a document that very helpfully summarises their experiences of the RACH development and makes suggestions for management of the 3Ts development. Duane confirmed that this had been posted on the Trust website and that hardcopies had been produced with the minutes.

Duane said that he would be happy to work through the document in detail at the next meeting to discuss and agree the key points. In the meantime he would ensure that in the next mailing residents are directed to the document on the website.

6.2 Activity Phases

A resident said it would be helpful to understand exactly how construction activity would be phased over the ten year build programme. Duane replied that this level of detail was not yet available. However once the contractor has been appointed it will be important to

review with local residents the proposed phasing of activity, the construction methodology and opportunities to minimise the disruption caused.

7. Election of Vice-Chair

Jackie Nowell, a resident of Upper Abbey Road, was nominated and elected by consensus as Vice-Chair. On behalf of the Hospital Liaison Group, Cllr Turton thanked her for agreeing to accept this role.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Consultation Process

Residents asked a number of questions about the planning process, including the stage at which residents would be able formally to express their views, the nature of discussions to date between the Trust and the City Council planning officers, and opportunities to appeal the planning decision.

A former Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee summarised the process and the opportunity residents would have to express their views as part of the formal consultation that would follow submission of the Trust's application for planning consent. She explained that it is standard for planning officers to provide advice to major planning schemes on the Council's planning framework and other relevant policies. However Local Councillors, who are not involved in providing such advice, then make the decision. She added that conditions, such as hours of operation, could be added to the planning approval to ensure that disruption is minimised. Some residents noted that such conditions were not enforced with the building of the RACH.

It was agreed to invite Martin Randall (Assistant Director / City Planner, Environment Directorate) or a member of his team to attend the next meeting to explain the planning process.

Action: Duane Passman & Team

8.2 Future of the Hospital Liaison Group

Residents asked for a commitment from the Trust that the Hospital Liaison Group would continue for the life of the redevelopment and beyond. The group in its previous incarnation had been dissolved when the Trust felt that there were no ongoing issues to discuss. Duane agreed to take this proposal to the Trust Board for consideration.

Action: Duane Passman

9. Next Meeting

It was provisionally agreed to meet again on Monday 10th May, subject to the availability of Martin Randall and team. Duane confirmed that the date/venue would be notified to residents via the website, by email/mail (where residents have provided details for the database) and by flyer.

[Please note that the next meeting will now take place on Monday 24th May from 7pm to 9pm in the Audrey Emerton Building, with refreshments available from 6.45pm].