

MOUNT PLEASANT ASSOCIATION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Meeting of Executive Committees for MPA and MPNF

Held on May 22nd at 7pm at the Margery Street Community Hall

PRESENT: Ed Denison, Nicholas Boys Smith (Create Streets), Elena Henson, Oliver Bennett, Meg Howarth, Francois Smit, Miles Hansard, Bruce McDougall, Judy Dainton. (9 people)

APOLOGIES: Graham Weston, Josie Vos, Julie Riley (3 people)

1.INTRODUCTION. The Chair (Judy Dainton) summarised the main purpose of the meeting: to decide what to do next about our CRtBuild project, which had failed to get planning consent. She then emphasised that the Forum's duty to produce an acceptable Neighbourhood Plan became even more pressing, in light of the enforced delay on our CRtB Order for the Mount Pleasant development site. She said that whatever the groups might decide about the CRtB Order, the success of the Neighbourhood Plan was essential, to make sure that the local voice could influence local planning in our area. The Plan was essential to the future of our whole Neighbourhood, including the Mount Pleasant site, and was not just some "add-on" to facilitate our concerns with one particular development.

Nicholas Boys Smith echoed those views, saying it was imperative that the Neighbourhood Plan was successful, so that, apart from any other projects the group might engage in, in the near future there would be local representatives able to monitor the developers progress on that Mount Pleasant building site, and a locally representative body which would be actively and legally part of the local planning process.

The group agreed that everyone present understood and supported this position.

2. OUR COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD PROJECT

The issues were:

- What do we want to do now?
- If we want to go forward with this project, what is the best way?
- If we don't want to go forward with this project, what other alternatives do we have?
- What sort of public response should we give?

There was detailed discussion about :-

success/failure of a second attempt; was it worth applying for judicial review; how much extra work and money would be involved; should we use CRtB or NDO order; what work would need to be done to get our project through the planning system; would we have the time to do it; items relating to funding and grants.

Nicholas shared with the group the professional advice he had obtained for us from lawyers, planners and civil engineers.

- The lawyers thought the Inspector's decision was wrong on some points of law. They agreed the legal decision could probably be challenged by Judicial Review, but if successful that would just over-rule the Inspector's judgement, it would not over-turn the planning issues re car parking, affordable housing and viability. Therefore they advised against judicial review. Costly, time consuming and would only take us back to first base. We would still have to win the planning arguments.
- The planners advised that we should bite on the bullet and accommodate the RM car parking within our scheme. They said we probably could fight and win the point in terms of actual RMG parking requirement, but we wouldn't win in terms of the logistics of Royal Mail need for allocated vehicle space during the turmoil of the redevelopment works to both Royal Mail headquarters and the new development works. A battle not worth fighting since car parking allowance was part of Royal Mail's extant planning permission for that part of the site.

- The planners advised that in a review of affordable housing allocation we should clear our lines with Camden, and absolutely define where we stood, what Camden would support, and to clarify the expectations which constrain us...the Royal Mail extant planning permission. However, they recognised that we could successfully re-arrange parts of our design to meet some, if not all, of the Inspector's expectations.
- The Civil Engineers accepted that our viability report could have been argued with more precision, and that we probably needed to explore the complexities of land value in more depth.

The group discussed this information. We agreed to research the possibility of employing an expert viability consultant. We knew that there was a possibility of negotiation with DP9 on the actual number of parking spaces RMG would accept and that there was some "wriggle" room there.

We agreed that overall our expert advisors had indicated that we could reform our CRtB Order to meet planning expectations and therefore it could be worth submitting a revised order.

We were unsure about the relative merits of approaching our re-application by use of either the CRtBO or NDO mechanism.

The group of 9 representatives then spoke individually, saying whether they thought we should proceed to re-submit our CRtB Order in revised form. All were in favour, but it was decided we needed to know more about the expected costs. Some members had reservations about the amount of work and time involved, but in the end they supported the decision to re-submit. Therefore the decision was unanimous.

It was agreed that once the group had received information about costs and funding (probably within the next two weeks) and the relative merits of NDO/CRtB, a formal decision would be made.

Until then, the groups would not inform the press. However it was agreed that, in the spirit of community democracy, Judy would notify the full Forum, the MPA wider membership, and subscribers to our website, of our current position. She would issue this as a Newsletter.

It was agreed that executive members would pass on the contents of the Newsletter to their local bodies, so that as many of the resident neighbourhood as possible were fully informed.

There was subsequent discussion, speculation and chat about the progress of Royal Mail's sale of the development site which was not minuted. There was subsequent discussion about the tone and content of our public announcement of our future plans. It was decided to draft that formal response sometime in June – maybe to coincide with our next public Forum meeting on June 19th.

3. THE REST OF THE AGENDA WAS POSTPONED DUE TO LATENESS OF HOUR.

Because the CRtB discussion had been long and detailed, and time was late, it was agreed to carry out the rest of the items on the Agenda by email.

A full report of Executive decisions will be circulated by Newsletter and at the Forum public meeting June 19th.

4. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

June 19th Public Forum meeting – Margery Street Community Hall – 6.45pm

June 26th Forum Exec meeting – Margery Street Community Hall – 7pm

