

Purfleet on Thames Community Forum  
 Minutes of open meeting held Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011  
 Venue: St. Stephen's Church

| No | Item  |
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| 1  | <p><b>Welcome</b><br/>           John Welcomed everybody to the meeting.</p>  |
| 2  | <p><b>Apologies for Absence</b><br/>           Stephane and Tim were not able to attend the meeting.</p>  |
| 3. | <p><b>Minutes of Last Meeting</b><br/>           Minutes of the last meeting (July) were approved as a true record. A minor correction was made (ie. North Road instead of New North Road). John apologised for any errors.</p>   |
| 4. | <p><b>Updates/Matters arising from Previous Meetings</b><br/>           There were no matters arising from previous meeting.</p>  |
| 5. | <p><b>Guests Speakers</b></p> <p><b>Simon De Vere – Thames Gateway Development Corporation Project Manager</b></p> <p>The purpose of Simon's attendance was to provide some explanation of the Purfleet Development process as well as the reasons and nature of the planning application for the process of implementation. The main points of Simon's presentation are as follows:</p> <p><b>Background</b><br/>           Simon mentioned that there are 57 hectares of land from the High House to Rainham Marshes being considered for the development project.</p> <p>In 2007 a Purfleet Masterplan was developed to reflect how housing development will underpin the economic development of Purfleet. The plan is for a mixed use development comprising the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail (10,000)</li> <li>• Industrial (40,000)</li> <li>• 3,500 homes</li> <li>• 630 pupil primary school</li> <li>• Health Centre</li> </ul> <p>According to him, in 2009, Stakeholder consultations were held to provide an understanding of the policy context as well as put in place the Purfleet Centre Development Framework.</p> <p>The political change delayed the process by about 12 months but the framework has now been approved by the current government. Simon mentioned that this is a positive achievement for Purfleet in that many other projects were refused. Despite the delays, he said, things are still good.</p> <p>However, there has been knock on delays on the procurement process to find a partner. The Corporation are now in the process of searching for a partner to work with. Hopefully, that process should be concluded by the December 2011. Simon mentioned that more than 50% of the land has also been acquired for the development and the project is expected to commence early 2013 with a 15 year development cycle.</p> |

## Planning Application

Simon mentioned facilitating the planning application through de-risking the process for the private sector and making up for some of the time lost.

The challenges for the application include flexibility, robustness and longevity. The outline includes:

- Illustrative Master Plan
- Parameter Plans
- Design codes

All needed to inform and ensure successful development. An environmental impact assessment has also been done because of the quarry. Some of the parameters include:

- Building heights: 2-3 Storey houses and up to 5
- 2-5 storeys to be used for employment purposes
- One or two potential landmark buildings – up to 15 storeys.

The parameters will control how buildings, streets and pedestrians interact. There are also design responses for the five different areas demarcated for the project. In some areas there will be low density houses.

### Questions from members included:

Q1. Why does the TGDC want to **block the river front with tower blocks**? Why don't they take those tower blocks rather to the back?

Answer: Purfleet is considered the gateway to the gateway and as one or two landmark buildings are needed. Secondly, the private sector who are putting money into the project would like to have value for their money and such landmark buildings will offer that to them. However, it will not be a replication of Harrisons wharf along the river but just one or two. The scheme, he said, should be technically viable taking into consideration issues around contamination and the river.

There were other concerns about the fact that even though Harrisons wharf will not be replicated, the heights of other buildings along the river front will eventually lead to it being blocked.

Q2. Children in schools: the development will bring about an influx in the number of children in Purfleet. Are there any serious thoughts for school requirements?

Children should be able to go to school in Purfleet, near their families. There should be both **primary and secondary schools** to ensure this happens. TGDC should have a serious think about families and not just property and money.

There was no specific answer but the concern seemed to be well taken and noted.

Q3. Why does the TGDC want to impose more than 3000 homes in that small acreage? In such development processes, accommodation is normally of **poor value square footage**. That is not regeneration but degeneration!

Answer: The TGDC can configure a number of residential dwellings with different parameters including:

- Detached houses
- Family houses (Quarry)

- Semi-detached

This answer did not however address the issue of poor value square footage.

Q4. Does building tower blocks mean that the cottages behind the train tracks will be blocked? This raises important security concerns. Already there are disruptions with motorbikes...(the conversation on this continued with Simon outside the meeting)

Q5. Is the BPB – Paperboard Mill part of the TGDC? How will this affect employment?

Answer: Yes to the first question. Simon mentioned that there are two bidders being considered. These are both proposing different operations but in general **Retail uses should be part of phase I.** The project is about **making change** and employment is one of the key changes that will be addressed. He was however not sure which other areas fall within phase I.

Q6: Between 600 – 1000 houses have already been built in Purfleet. Are these being **subtracted from the 3,500** (making it about 2500 or up to about 2,900) or the **3,500 are in addition** to what has already been done?

There was no specific answer to this question.

Q7: Why develop around the conservation area? How about the protection of wildlife? Why take the birds from their habitat and create a new one? There should be a balance between development and ecology?

Answer: The idea is to get public access to it. The PCDF is advocating for a controlled bespoke design. There will also be an environmental statement that addresses these issues.

Q8. Will the transport system be developed commensurate the kinds of developments planned?

Answer: There is going to be a sustainable form of development and transport is one of the key components. So far the rail extension is nearing completion and the bus service will be enhanced. This will require promotion of the use of public transport as well.

Q9. What are the potential benefits for the Garrison Estates:

Answer (from John): The Community Forum represents the whole of Purfleet. These discussions take into consideration the needs of every resident in Purfleet and there is no distinction between areas or people. Everybody in Purfleet has their say, through the community forum. John passionately emphasised that the potential benefits of the project is for and should be for every resident therefore the Garrison should not be singled out for unique benefits.

#### **Comments from members included:**

C1: The initial design was crap. Hopefully parameters for internal and external design for the houses will be better.

Answer: The objective of the project is to create a market place for services and facilities and to bring about **transformational change**. As a result there is need for

public/private sector partnerships and the private sector, as we know, **need a good return on investment**.

C2: The general feeling about Simon's department is not nice. They seem bent on taking away the little **rural nature** left in Purfleet.

Answer: In terms of the policy proposal, the TGDC are in agreement with the Thurrock Council. Simon also believes that there is public support for the project. According to him, over 75% of those who participated in initial consultations agreed with the process. The emphasis again was on mix, numbers and heights.

C3: The general opinion in most meetings attended showed **no one wanted tower blocks**. Majority of people simple don't want them.

Answer: 3,200 households received the letter with the proposed plan sent recently before this meeting. Simon was however not sure how many will be consulted as part of the application process. However, there **will be notices and any objections can be raised** .

C4: Tower blocks built in London now need to be demolished so there is no point in building them in Purfleet.

Answer: The longevity of the buildings will be assessed and assured. The ultimate power of approval of the planning application lies with the council. The mandate of the TGDC ends on the **31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012**. From the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2012, the council picks up from where the TGDC will end.

C4. The development process is skewed towards outputs, delivery, and estate management. It is not clear how open spaces and public areas will be maintained. Secondly, after the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012, the TGDC will not be available to pick up any pieces resulting from the planning application as well as any changes that will result. (this raises concerns about whose interests are really being considered in this whole process). What the community needs are **family homes** – 4/5 bedrooms, with beautiful gardens (to ensure good quality of life for residents)

C4: Applications normally have the tendency to be made 'palatable' but over time, bit by bit, some of the conditions are removed, just like what happened with Wattswood. There are fears that the same will happen in Purfleet. Reserve matters also don't come out the same way as the planning application. Developers can, have and do apply to change planning conditions so it is more likely to happen than not.

Answer: The application process will set broad parameters but will not go into the detail. The local authority also has control of the process.

This answer did not address the concern of eventual changes by the developers.

### **Suggestions from members**

S1: Consider planting botanical plants formerly used by the Whitbred Family around the Marshes/Gardens.

Finally, a member stated being in sympathy with plans for high rises and the fact that investors want to ensure value for money (for the footprint). He however hoped that the developers will not go beyond 15 storey buildings.

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| 8.  | <p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>No other business was discussed.</p>   |
| 9.  | <p><b>Date and Venue of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>John asked if members present liked the meeting and it was generally felt that they did. Within this backdrop it was agreed that the next meeting will be held on the <b>31<sup>st</sup> of October</b>, at St. Stephen's Church.</p> <p><b>The Guest Speaker will be Graham Farrant, Chief Executive of Thurrock Council.</b></p> |
| 10. | <p><b>End of Meeting</b></p> <p>John thanked everyone for the attendance and participation and the meeting was brought to a close.</p>   |