



## **OLD OAK NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

### **NOTES OF A JOINT MEETING WITH THE GRAND UNION ALLIANCE HELD ON NOVEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> 2020 ON ZOOM.**

Attendance: Henry Peterson (adviser), Mark Walker (Chair), Theresa Magee, Robin Hayes (GUA), John Cox, Andrew Slaughter (last part) Hitash Talor (last part), Colin Winger and a further 13 members and associate members of the Forum and GUA. Thanks to Amanda Souter for hosting the Zoom session and noted that a recording would be made.

#### **1. HS2 plans for works on the Scrubs and other locations**

1.1 The arrival of HS2 contractors/surveyors on the southern side of the Scrubs at Braybrook Street had caused much concern amongst local residents. No clarity as to what works were involved or when/how these had been granted permission. Impact of the nature reserve area and on wildlife and vegetation looked to be significant.

1.2 It had emerged that these works involved a relocation of the Stamford Brook sewer and re-routing of major utility cables to the HS2 station. These works had been referred to in a HS2 Schedule 17 consent approved by HS2, but LBHF had issued a statement protesting at the lack of local consultation and it was not clear whether further LBHF consents were needed on e.g. environmental/ecological issues.

1.3 The proposed works on the Scrubs involved an access entrance from Braybrook Street and a fenced north/south road for HGV vehicles to a works compound on the northern boundary. An alternative access from Old Oak Common Lane would be much less disruptive and had been raised as an option previously.

1.4 A petition objecting to the works has been launched on Change.org at [https://www.change.org/p/cllr-wesley-harcourt-save-wormwood-scrubs-from-hs2?utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=custom\\_url&recruited\\_by\\_id=c9578460-7d36-0130-6b53-3c764e049b10](https://www.change.org/p/cllr-wesley-harcourt-save-wormwood-scrubs-from-hs2?utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=custom_url&recruited_by_id=c9578460-7d36-0130-6b53-3c764e049b10)

1.5 Those on the Zoom session also reviewed slides showing the forthcoming Atlas Road Utility Works, the Victoria Road Crossover Box, the realignment of bridges on Old Oak Common and the works on the Wells House Road retaining wall. The latter involved HS2 taking over temporarily the rear gardens of Wells house Road residents.

#### **2. OPDC Local Plan proposed 'modifications' for 'Western Lands'**

2.1 The October 13<sup>th</sup> OPDC Board had received a presentation on the proposed 'modifications' to the OPDC Draft Local Plan. There were the first details of the OPDC's new strategy for the 'Western Lands'.

2.2 Following its November 2019 decision to abandon plans for the Cargiant site, the OPDC Draft Local Plan would now focus on achieving a housing target of 13,972 new homes within the OPDC area. These included further sites on the eastern OPDC boundary in Scrubs Lane and on the North Pole Road Depot. But the main new proposal was to develop a new 'major town centre' and build 3,100 new homes at the Channel Gate site north of Old Oak Lane.

2.3 Atlas Junction (the roundabout) lies within the Old Oak neighbourhood area (OONA) but the boundary was drawn tightly by OPDC in 2017 and excludes nearly all possible sites for development. These new OPDC plans for Channel Gate and Atlas Road would have huge consequences for the local area. The OONF initial proposals for its neighbourhood plan had seen this location as a 'neighbourhood hub' rather than a 'major town centre'

2.4 Noted that the OPDC proposals involved 'a range of building height' including 'generally 8-10 storeys with some taller buildings'. OPDC had also confirmed an expected net housing density of 525 dwellings/hectare. This type of development was similar to that planned for the Cargiant land at Old Oak North.

2.5 Noted that a 'New Key Route' was proposed running from the Atlas Road site across the Channel Gate site (to the north of the railway cottages) and joining Old Oak Lane at the bridge to Willesden Junction. An OPDC image of the completed development, alongside the Oaklands development was shown.



### 3. The case for a rethink by OPDC

3.1 The meeting discussed the scope for any alternative to this type of development, which bore no relation to the neighbouring areas. As a location for a 'major new town centre' Channel Gate/Atlas Road would have no Underground or Overground link (the nearest being at Willesden). Proposals for 3,100 new homes on the site felt like a simplistic switch of housing numbers from the Cargiant land, with no underlying rationale.

3.2 Slides of the approach used by the city of Amsterdam were shown. These involved the creation of a new town (Almere) outside the city centre. This was Europe's largest 'self-build' project.

The entire area has been master planned by the local authority into a number of districts. Each of which has around 720 self-build plots and by early 2012 around 1000 homes had been built; eventually some 3,000 self-built homes are planned.

3.3. The meeting considered a number of reasons why OPDC may need to rethink their approach to Channel Gate/Atlas Road:

- Why will Atlas Junction ever become a 'major town centre' given that public transport will be limited to HS2 and Crossrail?
- Other town centres in London are better connected (as Old Oak Park would have been). This would be a half mile walk from HS2 platforms.
- OPDC need £2bn of infrastructure when UK economy is broke. What is the rush? Why not see what the HS2/Crossrail interchange brings?
- Risk that OPDC site allocations will attract spec developers to pay inflated land values at Channel Gate as at Scrubs Lane and North Acton – based on assumed permissions for super-densities
- Setting a strict low-density policy for next 10-15 years will allow the area to grow and evolve, merging existing and new communities

3.4 Agreed that OONF should refine its ideas for an alternative approach to Channel Gate/Atlas Road. This could include the option of seeking OPDC approval to extending the present OONF neighbourhood boundary to include both these major sites.

3.5 Even if OPDC did not agree to extending the neighbourhood boundary, ideas for a low density 'Atlas Town' could be built into the OONF neighbourhood plan as a 'community aspiration'. This would help generate a wider debate on regeneration schemes in London and how Local Plans should respond to what may become permanent changes to home, work and travel patterns post the 2020 pandemic.

#### **4. Update on The Portal and 73 Stephenson Street**

4.1 Noted that revised proposals for The Portal (North Acton) had been granted consent by LBE Planning Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> October, as an application delegated by OPDC. 36 storeys, 350 housing units, density 946 units/ha, 35% affordable. Stage 2 consent from the Mayor of London would now be required.

4.2 Noted that the application for a residential development at 73 Stephenson Street (Railway Cottages) had been withdrawn

#### **9.AOB**

9.1 There was no other business. The Zoom session meeting closed 19.20 with members agreeing that this online format works well. Next session scheduled for 6pm on Tuesday December 1<sup>st</sup>.