

Fourth Meeting of the Kirkstall Neighbourhood Forum at Paxton Hall on Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 7:30pm

Draft Minutes

Present: (31) Helen Ashmar, Angela Barron, Steve Barron, Naomi Batten, Graham Bellamy, Tom Brannigan, Melody Brewer, Fiona Butler, John Carson, James Corah, Christine Eddison, Alleyne Ellis, Steve Gradys, Steve Harris, John Illingworth, Judith Judd, Ursula Klingel, Martin Knox, Sylvia Landells, John Liversedge, Amy McAbendroth, Celia McBrinn, Paul McBrinn, Sam Meadley, Michael Park, Andy Rontree, Josh Rose, Patsy Taylor, John Taylor, Sue Taylor and Sandra Walton

Apologies: (9) Wendi Carson, Joanne Dickinson, John Hall, Dean Mitchell, Liz Minkin, Mandy Long, Stuart Long, Fiona Venner and Lucinda Yeadon.

- (1) **Informal discussion:** The meeting started with informal group discussions around four themes: (i) footpath network, (ii) Kirkstall riverside, (iii) traffic problems and (iv) parking.
- (2) **Election of a Chair for this evening.** Formal business started at 8:20pm. John Liversedge was proposed and seconded as Chair, and elected unopposed.
- (3) **Endorsing new members:** The meeting approved 12 new members: Angela Barron, Steve Barron, Sue Buchan, Alleyne Ellis, Martin Knox, Celia McBrinn, Sally Postlethwaite, Josh Rose, John Taylor, Patsy Taylor, Sue Taylor and Sandra Walton
- (4) **Minutes of the Third Public Meeting held on 8 June 2016** were agreed as a correct record and there were no matters arising, other than the issues listed below.
- (5) **Composite Board Minutes** for June, July and August 2016 were received by the meeting, and there were no matters arising, other than the issues listed below.
- (6) **Timetable for producing a Neighbourhood Plan:** The meeting agreed the recommendations from Ian Mackay:
 - (i) immediate **engagement** with residents throughout the plan area, often working in small groups and including a skills audit that maximises local input,
 - (ii) production of a multi-topic **intentions document** in January 2017 with optional priority projects,
 - (iii) production of a **draft plan** in spring 2017 with consultation over the summer
 - (iv) publication of a **pre-submission** neighbourhood plan in January 2018
 - (v) leading up to a **referendum** coincident with the local elections in May 2018.
- (7) **Issues discussed this evening:**
 - (i) **Traffic** was a major concern. There was consensus that traffic had reached unacceptable levels, which seriously diminished residents' quality of life. This was true whether these were moving vehicles or stationary queues, cars, vans or HGVs. Members requested noise and chemical pollution data near major highways, and detailed statistics on queue lengths and vehicle speeds at different times and locations. The Secretary said that in 2007 he had given evidence on behalf of KVCA at a Public Inquiry into the London Metric Development at Bridge Road. This evidence correctly predicted the situation which has now developed. At the time highway officers conceded privately that our estimates were accurate, but

they were under political instructions from the Council to remain silent and offered no evidence to the Inquiry. As a result, the Planning Inspector accepted the complacent Metric figures, leading to the present situation where the network is fully saturated at peak times, with no plans and no budget to handle the expected traffic growth from Kirkstall Forge or the redevelopment of the derelict Tesco site. Members were alerted to an important public meeting of the Inner West Community Committee about traffic problems on Wednesday 13 October in the Milford Sports Club, starting at 6pm.

- (ii) **Parking:** Members acknowledged that there are two separate problems. (i) Most of our houses were built before the massive growth in car ownership, so there are insufficient places for residents to park. (ii) Many parts of the ward are plagued by commuter parking and match-day parking for cricket, rugby and special events at Kirkstall Abbey. The overall shortage is estimated to be about 500 residential parking spaces, spread across the ward, *without making any allowance for commuters and other visitors*. City centre commuters find it cheaper to park all day in Kirkstall and catch a bus into town. Members agreed that Cricket matches and Rugby matches produce different traffic problems, at different times of day. The current cost of parking bays built to LCC Highways standards is about £5000 per vehicle. At this rate 500 additional bays are completely unaffordable and we need a radically different solution. There are many demands for residents' parking schemes.
- (iii) **Footpaths:** Members identified two major north – south radial routes: one along the Harrogate railway line and the other along the valley bottom following the River Aire. In addition, there are numerous parallel tracks and orbital routes linking to neighbouring wards. There is a particularly well-developed network through Hawksworth Wood, which extends across the A65 to Newlay. This links the main two north – south routes together. There was considerable interest in extending, improving and signing our local footpath network, and Paul Holdsworth [cp.holdsworth@ntlworld.com, tel. 0113 2251750] offered to coordinate our efforts in this area.
- (iv) **Kirkstall Riverside:** The ambition to create a new public park in the Kirkstall Valley dates from the 1960's when Leeds City Council embarked on a coordinated program of land purchases south of Kirkstall Abbey between the A65 and the River Aire. These ambitions are reflected in the site allocations maps for the 1972 Leeds Development Plan Review. Unfortunately, the Conservative administration formed after the 1974 local government re-organisation had other priorities, and sold some important sites in Kirkstall to finance development elsewhere in Leeds. Instead of being converted to recreational open space as originally intended, both Kirkstall Mills remained in light industrial use.

These problems were compounded when Mrs Thatcher's government imposed the Leeds Development Corporation (LDC) on Armley and Kirkstall in 1988. The Council responded by creating the Leeds City Development Company (LCDC). These undemocratic and secretive organisations were dominated by commercial property developers who even used a paid informer to spy on local community groups.

Nevertheless, considerable areas in Kirkstall remain in Council ownership, and the Leeds Development Corporation allocated part of the Kirkstall Power Station site for a Kirkstall Valley Nature Reserve, having discovered that the soft and corrosive fly ash lagoons were unsuitable for any form of foundation loads. The original plan envisaged a Visitor Centre at St Ann's Mills, and this is still possible today. It requires a footbridge across the River Aire

behind Morrisons supermarket at an estimated cost of £250,000. This would enormously improve public access to this recreational open space. Leeds Canoe Club want to develop a white-water canoe training course below St Ann's Mills weir, and might sensibly share the mill building with other recreational and educational users.

During the planning battles in 1988, local residents commissioned an agricultural land survey by MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food). This showed that the Burley Mills allotments were largely grade one agricultural land, the top 1% in the entire country. These allotments are deep alluvial silt that has scarcely been disturbed since the last ice-age. At one stage Leeds City Council wanted to tip a million tonnes of toxic fly ash on top of this pristine land to create a supermarket car park! You could not make this up.

At present the Kirkstall Valley is divided into thin strips by the Leeds – Liverpool canal, the Skipton railway, the River Aire, various mill goits and the A65. Access can be difficult from one area to the next, however a relatively minor investment in footbridges and footpaths would open the entire area to the public and make hundreds of acres of new recreational land accessible to inner city communities. An application had recently been submitted for a new footpath behind St Ann's Mills that would connect the riverside footpath by the Rugby Academy to the "goitside walk" created by the Kirkstall Community Program in 1985. An extension is possible behind the Kirkstall Tile Centre, creating over 1.5km of secluded waterside footpaths within a few metres of the busy A65. There were numerous opportunities for community volunteers, and it was agreed that these should be reflected in our Kirkstall Neighbourhood Plan.

- (8) **Site visits to areas of interest:** The initial list of sites was agreed (Abbey Mills, St Ann's Mills, Burley Mills Allotments, Goitside Walks, Kirkstall Forge, Kirkstall Valley Nature Reserve, Hawksworth Wood & Oil Mill Beck) with a preference for choice of weekend dates and times.
- (9) The meeting closed at 9:22pm

John Illingworth
28 September 2016
(last revision on
4 December)