

Walmgate Community Association

Minutes of meeting held 25 October 2023 1800-1930

Location: St Denys's Church Hall

Proceedings

- Adam Parfitt chaired the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

- Apologies for absence from Sarah Friar and Councillor Rachel Melly.

Agenda

- Willow House developments
- Swinson House developments
- Castle Mills developments
- Garden waste collection
- Changing Lives
- AOB

Priorities for WCA in 2022/2023

Crime and antisocial behaviour

Changing Lives

- There was discussion about the role and responsibilities of Changing Lives supervisors at Robinson Court.

Action

- Robinson Court supervisor(s) to be invited to next WCA open meeting.

Note from Councillor Merrett

A further update on some of the street issues near the parade of shops in Walmgate past Margaret Street:

- The city centre police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) have added the Walmgate area on as a hotspot/daily tasking for our early shifts between 8am-9pm in addition to the efforts Stonebow, Hungate, St Saviourgate, etc.
- So across the 3 shifts of staff at North St this will get more attention now

along with enforcing any conditions of the City Centre PSPO you mention.

- The sergeant did a walkaround with the PCSOs and saw the area we reported on behalf of local residents in Albert Street which was littered with smashed bottles, empty cans of super strength lager from one of the Walmgate shops. They went to the shop to speak to them but received a negative response. They're going to take this up further with their Licencing team and CYC to see if they can tidy the area up.
- They also identified the area where the street drinkers sit between 8am-9am which was the particular time we have had complaint about. Equally the Sergeant said if they go into Bretgate courtyard or anywhere else nearby, if your sources are not reporting on 101, it would be helpful if they could do so. It's just with competing priorities the SNT may not be there when it is happening, but react to what is reported on 101 so they are more likely to grip the issue quicker if people report problems.
- If any of your sources would like to email about ongoing issues not requiring a call to 101 or 999, they can email snayorkcity@northyorkshire.police.uk and the police will treat anything they tell us confidentially and respond to them directly. They just need to make sure if it is a crime or incident personally affecting them, as opposed to a general ongoing issue, that they call 101 or 999 as this email is only to reach the Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- Finally I'd say the three of us are conscious that this is not just a policing issue, and are considering what other steps can be done to help the individuals who've been causing some of the problems too.

Commenting on developments and planning

Willow House

- Ian Milsted of York Archeological Trust gave an update on Willow House developments.
- The year to date has been a good year for the project, with 64 volunteers involved, mainly referrals from the NHS and Changing Lives.
- CYC has approved a further year for the project into 2024.
- Lottery funding ends in 2024.
- Recent finds include the cellar of a Victorian building, a Roman jewel, and a Bronze Age arrowhead.
- Forward plans include two new trenches.
- YAT plan for greater local community involvement and further Open Days.

Background

- Launched in the shadow of York's city walls at Willow House a former care home on Long Lane, Archaeology on Prescription is an innovative project. It sees participants work with archaeologists to improve their health and well-being, as well as learn new

skills in archaeology. Encouraging local residents who live or have lived in Walmgate to help create a detailed picture of this neighbourhood. Through our finds we are learning more about life in the area from the medieval period to the present.

- Willow House is owned by City of York Council, and the future use of the site is under review as part of a wider redevelopment plan. While this takes place, York Archaeology has been offered the site for the Archaeology on Prescription project to excavate this site just a few metres away from the city walls.
- Archaeology on Prescription is a new social prescribing project, piloted by York Archaeological Trust, which aims to engage the City of York and all of its residents in archaeological work to improve health and well being, foster meaningful social connections and build self-esteem. The first of two 9-week pilots was launched in September 2021 at Willow House on Walmgate.
- Alongside the main project, we are running several projects specifically engaging with Walmgate and the surrounding community, including a gardening project with Edible York and the Barbican Community Group, and an oral history project called Voluntary Voices, inviting Walmgate residents to share their memories of the area.
- The Spring 2023 block had some staff transitions. We also had nearly half of our weeks cut short due to Bank Holidays. But the energy and excitement on site was the same as ever, with everyone looking forward to digging in. This block ran for 7 weeks, from 10th April to 25th May 2023, plus a taster week for potential participants from 3rd-6th April.
- Because we are a participant-led project, participants can take part in as much as they like, from a cup of tea and a chat to the full gamut of archaeological investigation. Meeting back at Willow House, participants can choose from archaeological activities or creative responses to what they are uncovering.

Archaeological activities include:

- Excavation
- Recording
- Sieving
- Finds processing
- Finds identification;
- Historical research.

During our Spring 2023 block, we had 27 participants referred to us from partner organisations Changing Lives, Converge, the NHS, and The Hut, as well as 4 self-referred participants for a total of 31 participants.

Background

Willow House re-development

- CYC plans to redevelop the site underway in 2023, and will come into effect from 2025-2026.
- The CYC Executive will be asked to agree future the allocation of a Willow House development budget from the agreed HRA capital programme
- Decision due date for Executive changed from 26/01/2023 to 09/02/2023.

- Reason: To allow further analysis of options to take place.

Under consideration:

- That £1m be allocated from the existing Housing Delivery capital budget for the design development of Willow House and the wider South Walmgate area to allow the submission of a planning application, noting that a future report will be brought to Executive to present a full Business Case prior to carrying out a procurement process for a contractor.
- That approval be given to explore the inclusion of the adjacent garage sites in the South Walmgate area for redevelopment following engagement with the local community.
- That approval be given to carry out a procurement process to procure multi-disciplinary design and project teams to deliver the Willow House scheme, and that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Place (in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods, the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Governance or their delegated officers) to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting contract(s).

Swinson House

- Josy Knowles reported on a recent break-in at Swinson House.
- At least one member of St Denys's Church was assaulted.
- There was exterior and interior damage to Swinson House.
- Pupils of Danesgate School York were identified as the culprits.
- A 24-hour daily security provision is in place since the assault.
- Police investigation is ongoing.

Danesgate School

- In March 2023, City of York Council was advertising for a new head teacher at Danesgate in Fulford Cross with a salary of £77,455 - £91,947 a year.
- Danesgate Community is a large special school of around 176 pupils aged five to 16, many with complex social, emotional and education needs.

Background

- New plan for the demolition of Swinson House with proposed road closures.
- Agate Hotels are now the current owners and no longer North Star.
- Demolition was expected by Christmas, followed by 2-year construction programme.
- Concern about extremely restricted access and the negative impact this will have on residents plus other users of the area.
- The two storey welfare unit is also another area of concern.
- It is understood that CYC have not yet approved these plans.
- Cllr Merrett has been previously contacted with a request that he look into this.

Castle Mills Site

- Cllr Clarke and Cllr Merrett (by e-mail and in person) reported on the Castle Mills site development.
- CYC set a conventional contract framework for the development.

In August 2023, the timeline for plans to build a 168-bedroom hotel in York was revealed following an inspection.

Planning documents show most of the work at the former Banana Warehouse furniture store's facade, in Piccadilly, should take between two and four years to complete.

Further inspections are expected to take place, as well as the removal of vegetation around the back of the building that may damage the building fabric.

Note from Councillor Merrett

Re response from: Catherine, planning.enforcement@york.gov.uk, crmmembers@york.gov.uk, CC Gary, Kilbane, Melly, Clarke, Chris, me

- **Thanks for the info on the planning situation. However I don't think it is unreasonable to expect that the Council and its contractor would operate to best practice standards, and at the very minimum standards consistent with those normally applied to sites which do need planning permission, and in this case, the specific standards encompassed in the planning permission Mr. Donegani flags in his original e-mail.**
- **Are you doing that or have you specified some alternative highway department requirements, such as the good contractor schemes used in some other local authorities?**
- **Clearly not working or running generators outside the 8 - 18 hours quoted in the site permission should surely be the starting point?**

Note from Catherine, planning.enforcement@york.gov.uk,

- **I believe that the noise issue has at least been partially resolved and the contractor will try to reduce it further if possible.**
- **The site compound is associated with the city centre HVM works, which involves twelve individual sites. The area is ideal as plant and materials are locally stored with space for site offices and welfare facilities.**
- **We consulted with our planning colleagues and the advice received was that planning permission was not required for this use. As a council owned site the scheme costs are reduced as no charge is incurred, and use is made of a derelict area prior to redevelopment.**
- **The use of the compound site was arranged with David Warburton and Richard Stephenson.**

Background

- Problem still with contractor noise, generator, and hours of use.
- Still no planning permission or CEMP provided.
- Again it is in the Piccadilly AQMA.
- CYC has taken no action for the protection of residents from unseen particularly emissions.
- Unacceptable early morning work on The Castle Mills Site.

The Last Mile Delivery hub

- Cllr Merrett reported on the Last Mile project development by e-mail to WCA and in person at the meeting.
- City of York Council is to set up a trial for a ‘last mile delivery’ hub on 107 -109 Walmgate,
- Pilot to help set parameters for the project.

Background

- Companies delivering to York businesses will be encouraged to get their parcels sent to a delivery hub near the city walls in a bid to cut air pollution and congestion.
- City of York Council is to set up a trial for a ‘last mile delivery’ hub which will see parcels then delivered into the city centre and surrounding areas on foot and cargo bikes.
- The city has been given £285,000 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the project.
- The council has identified one of its own buildings, 107-109 Walmgate, as a suitable delivery hub for the nine month pilot, which is set to begin in September.
- Delivery operators such as Amazon, Royal Mail, Hermes and DPD were surveyed as part of a feasibility study and the council will now look to sign operators and city centre businesses up to the trial.
- Cllr Andy D’Agorne, executive member for transport, said: “It sounds very exciting and encouraging. We regularly discuss the constraints of a tight city centre.
- “Increased last mile delivery is certainly something I think the city is going to welcome and benefit from.”
- Labour’s transport spokesperson, Cllr Rachel Melly, said: “Freight accounts for one third of all transport carbon emissions and van traffic has doubled in the 25 years leading up to 2019, so the council looking at alternatives is long overdue.

- “Other cities are ahead of York on this, so I’ll hope you’ll learn from other places that have operated these sorts of distribution hubs.
- “I support this trial in principle but I feel it will be a missed opportunity unless more work is done on realising the potential benefits.”
- Cllr Melly also said the scheme should look to include pick-ups as well as drop-offs, which the council’s head of highways and transport, Dave Atkinson, said would be possible if companies agreed.
- “We will seek to monitor other benefits where we can as we undertake the trial,” he added.

Working with the City of York Council on improving the area

Council Estate

- There as discussion of the general state of council properties and surrounding areas.

Action

- **Walkabout with the Local Councillors, PCSO, CYC, and WCA to be arranged.**
- **Councillors to be apprised of Hope Street and Calder House neighbourhood amenity issues relating to abuse of properties and alley thoroughfares.**

Outdoor storage for bikes in Hope Street

- Further discussion of outdoor storage facilities for bikes in local Hope Street and adjacent properties.
- Lack of secure storage for cycles in some of the smaller / older blocks of flats

Calder House

- Further discussion of abuse of properties and alley thoroughfares in local Hope Street and adjacent properties.
- Alleyway between Calder House and Hope Street - antisocial behaviour, lack of gardening and maintenance to the fences.
- Neglect of hedges, litter etc across the area.

Recycling of Garden Waste

- Discussion of garden waste recycling service provision by CYC and St Nicks

Better links with local businesses and other organisations

St Denys’s Church Hall

- Jose Knowles reported on recent well-attended activities at St Denys's Church Hall.
- The weekly Wednesday and Thursday gatherings are well supported.
- New Friday afternoon weekly initiative planned with focus on IT, arts and crafts training.
- Monthly movie show planned for Saturdays.

Red Tower

- Bill Hill reported on the re-opening of the Red Tower.
- In August 2023, CYC and Red Tower supporters celebrated the reopening of the historic medieval tower in the city following work to renew its roof for future generations.
- The medieval tower was once part of the city's historic defences and is the only brick structure.
- The reopening celebrated the reroofing of the tower and the conservation and management of the City Walls undertaken by the council, partners and stakeholders.

Airbnb holiday lets

- There was discussion about the impact of Airbnb holiday let provision on the residential housing stock availability.
- New central government regulation under review.
- CYC has powers to limit extent of Airbnb property purchase and change-of-use re-development.

Date of next meeting

- Fourth Wednesday of month.
- 22 November 2023, at 6pm, St Denys Church Hall,

Attendance

Committee members

Adam Parfitt (Chair)

Jose Knowles

Jennie Howells

Digby Waller

Residents

Maureen O'Hare

Lesley Bowes

Councillors and Officials

Councillor Dave Merrett Guildhall Ward

Councillor Tony Clarke Guildhall Ward

Others

Ian Milsted (York Archeological Trust)

Bill Hill (Red Tower)