**Bangour sub-committee: Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 24th February 2021 at 16.00**

Present: Jim Watson, Ian Ferrel, Lynda Mcgivern

Also in attendance: Wendy McCorriston (West Lothian Council Development Management Team Manager), Robert Evans (Head Consultant Bangour Village), Graeme Johnstone (Technical Manager with Ambassador Group), Gordon Coster (Managing Director of Ambassador Group).

Jim Watson (Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the role of the sub-group

Each person introduced themselves and explained their background and role.

**TRAFFIC**

* **JW** asked if the developers had any idea of the potential increased volume of cars and how that might impact on Dechmont Village. **GC** responded saying thatthe initial assessment had been updated one year ago and it showed little increase. He also said that they (Ambassador Group) had offered to facilitate traffic calming in the village but counsellors didn’t think it was necessary. He also explained that Chris Nicol (West Lothian Roads and Transportation) had told him that it was a council issue not the responsibility of the Ambassador Group.

Major road works will be required on the main road and it was realised that the impact of traffic from the development (including surrounding areas) would potentially be more than originally predicted, although it was still within the BMIA guidelines.

Ambassador Group would be happy to revisit the impact in the village again and will give it consideration. **GC** agreed that heavy vehicles should not go through the village. **IF** explained that Dechmont Community Council already had concerns about the volume and speed of traffic in the village and had been at ‘odds’ with traffic/road department for some time. **GC** explained that factors such as dictating speed limit is out with their control.

**IF** asked what the speed limit would be within Bangour Village. **GC** said it would probably be between 20-30mph although it is the RRC guidelines that will determine that and not the developers.

**JW** advised that DCC would pursue retaining the current reduced speed limit and the introduction of better speed calming. **GC** said that despite **CN** saying they are not required to, the Ambassador Group were willing to do some work to help. **RE** said that any measures can only be facilitated by following the correct procedures.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

* Questions were raised about public transport provision for Bangour Village. **RE** explained that it would smaller not large buses which would service the site. **GC** said that they have approached local bus companies regarding provision of bus services but only 2 agreed to consider it. **RE** said that buses would probably use the second roundabout (near the shop) to turn as going through the site would be too time-consuming for a bus timetable.

**IF** brought up the lack of a sufficient busservice through Dechmont and how it might be helpful if this was incorporated into any service introduced for Bangour Village.

**GC** explained that the bus companies and the Council will decide the bus routes. **WMc** stated that these factors are dependent on a successful application and decisions will made be based on usage and demand. Developer contributions will be discussed at the committee meeting.

**HOUSE NUMBERS**

* **GC** confirmed that there will be 998 units (221 of these will be affordable housing). They had assessed the ability and capability of the site to facilitate this number of houses.

 **EDUCATION**

* **JW** asked if the site of the Primary School had been decided. **RE** Explained that it had been deliberated with various stakeholders. The initial idea was too expensive and in order to utilise one of the listed buildings, the site would now be adjacent to the recreation hall and the area for provision of sports would be down the hill from there. It had been agreed that the primary school would be developed at cost, with no financial implications to others i.e. the Education Department.
* **JW** expressed concerns about the distance to the secondary school (approx. 10 miles) and would there be transport provision for Bangour Village children. **WMc** said that the Education Department will organise transport.

**WOODLAND AREAS**

* **GC** explained that there is currently only access to approximately 30% of woodland area on the site and it is their intention to increase the usage to 70%. *Factory fees* will be used to cover the costs associated with maintaining these areas. **RE** said that architects have looked at the structure and condition of planted areas and intend to include both formal and informal areas with cycle tracks, benches, natural wildlife areas and woodland paths etc. There will be a network throughout the estate with additional access from the western side of the site.

**JW** asked if local residents would be guaranteedaccess to the woodland areas. **RE** responded that it will be embedded in a registered agreement. The concerns of local residents were acknowledged and **RE** stressed the importance of maintaining a dialogue through a *working group* who can feed back any concerns to the Ambassador Group. The subcommittee were assured by **RE** that access rights will be included in the legal agreement. **GC** pointed out that under Scot’s Law (‘Right to Roam Act’) access could not be denied.

Although the project will take 7-10 years, the site is big enough to allow continued access during this time.

**PROGRESS OF SITE**

* **IF** asked for an update on what was happening with the church. **RE** said that the Scottish Church Trust had detailed a feasibility study (with contribution from **GC**’s team) and had determined that future use appears to be feasible and will support church services, events and workshops. Conservation specialists have agreed a full schedule of work for the SCT to undertake, mainly on the roof. The church will make use of the new heating system that will be servicing the site.
* **IF** asked if the car park on the Farm road will be re-opened. **GC** explained the reason for closing it was to deter vandals however it will re-open although there is no confirmed date (earliest 4-6 weeks once work has been completed on the Farm Road). It will be used by site staff; the local community will also be able to use it.
* **IF** pointed out that the farmer was still experiencing problems but was loath to report them to the police for fear of repercussions. **GC** said that the Ambassador Group were aware of the problems and had discussions/dialogue with the police and counsellors. He is unsure of the impact on the farmer when the car park re-opens.
* **GC** explained that a lot of specialist work is required in relation to the site for example a high-pressure water main needs to be diverted and there is a lot work to be completed with regard to the infrastructure and site reinforcement (sewerage, heating system). Unfortunately, Covid 19 has affected progress on the site. It may be a least a year before houses are started to be built and listed buildings need to be dried out which takes 1-2 years, some listed buildings need to be demolished.

Cables will need to be run through Dechmont Village but Ambassador Group will do their best to mitigate any disruption.

* **GC** is keen for the project to be successful and feels that community engagement is pivotal. There is now a Project Manager on site. Although there is information about the site in the public domain they propose to produce a watered down, easier to read version to summarise the details. **WMc** agreed that the application is immense and too much to read in its entirety.
* **RE** asked if DCC will be invited to participate in the committee meeting, **WMc** explained that they wouldbe invited as consultees as opposed to objectors. DCC have concerns about the development which have been considered. Counsellors on the committee will be the decision makers and would like all interested parties to attend the Committee Meeting at 10am on 3rd March. An invitation to participate has been sent to **IF** and **WMc** is keen that DCC are represented by one or two people.

 **AOB** -none