

# SO18 BIG LOCAL

**Making a difference in Harefield,  
Midanbury & Townhill Park**



SO18 Big Local

Townhill Park  
Southampton  
SO18 2HE

Stephen Harrison  
Case Officer, Planning and Sustainability  
Southampton City Council  
Civic Centre  
Southampton  
SO14 7LS

02/11/2015

Dear Stephen,

**Planning Application Number: 15/01856/OUT/Site code: 7069**  
**Townhill Park, Southampton**

## **Introduction**

This joint response from the members of SO18 Big Local has been compiled by the following SO18 Big Local Partnership Committee Members: Kim Ayling, Barbara Hancock, Helen Pain & Jo Proctor.

SO18 Big Local is one of 150 'Big Local' projects in England, each of which will receive £1 million funding over ten years from the Big Lottery Fund to make positive, lasting changes in their communities. SO18 Big Local works in the Townhill Park, Harefield and Midanbury areas of Southampton. It is a resident led programme, with a local partnership committee making decisions and delivering its plan; the latter has been drawn up as a result of conversations and consultations in the local community. SO18 Big Local is now in its third year. Its work is being delivered under a number of themes including: Environment, Young People, Building Community Spirit, Community Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion, and Local Issues. From the outset the regeneration plans for Townhill Park were identified as an important issue affecting the lives of local residents with which SO18 Big Local should be concerned.

Broadly, we are supportive of the planning application, and certainly of the aim to transform Townhill Park "through a programme of investment in well designed, energy efficient new homes and wide ranging estate improvements". We welcome the concept of the 'Village Green', especially as the neighbourhood currently lacks the central focus that this will provide.

## **Our detailed comments**

The following comments are arranged around a number of different aspects of the plan (and are not in any particular order of importance).

### **1. Affordable Housing/ social housing for rent**

We want to see the regeneration benefit existing Townhill Park residents, as well as those who will move into the area. We see the phased development giving the chance for existing residents of the walk-up blocks that will be demolished in phases 2 and 3 to be able to be rehoused in Townhill Park, if they want to. Within the Design and Access Statement, it is stated that 35% of the redevelopment will be affordable housing.

In the light of recent government announcements concerning social housing rent and the right to buy, will this stated percentage hold? Will the potential for local rehousing of people from phases 2 and 3 into the new housing still be possible?

### **2. Access for construction traffic and issues related to the construction phase**

We wish to request that the issue of how construction traffic is permitted to reach Phase 1 sites is stipulated as a planning condition. Meggeson Avenue has several pinch points, which already pose difficulties when buses stop and cars are unable to pass safely; it has two schools with the consequent movements of children twice daily; and the road surface is already in a parlous state at some points.

We therefore consider that construction traffic should be confined to accessing the site via Townhill Way, and barred from Meggeson Avenue. We also would suggest that heavy vehicles should avoid school times (around 9am and 3.15pm) completely, as Moorlands Primary School has a crossing point in Townhill Way.

Additionally, we would like to see safeguards for the residents closest to the construction by way of requirements being made under the 'Good Contractor' scheme (for example around hours of working and other matters which will directly impact on residents in the housing near the building sites).

### **3. Roof gardens**

These have been included in the plans as a way to replace amenity open space that will be lost from between the well-spaced blocks currently on the site (Phase 1). If the roof gardens were to become locked due to disturbance and damage, this would result in a failure to meet the requirement to retain an equal amount of amenity space before and after redevelopment. Adequate management to ensure this does not happen is therefore a necessity.

We are concerned that a general statement about care of the roof garden within the tenancy agreement would lead to a poor sense of ownership, with consequent neglect or

vandalism being a substantial risk. As a planning condition, we suggest that there needs to be a requirement for a proactive management plan to be put in place, with an imaginative scheme to raise the sense of ownership and pride in the roof gardens. We would like to see SO18 Big Local and Townhill Action Group consulted with and involved in the process of drawing up the detailed proposals for the management of the roof gardens.

#### **4. Energy efficient and sustainable homes**

We are very supportive of the new homes reaching as high a standard of energy efficiency as is possible. During the consultations about the regeneration proposals, residents were told that the new housing would be much more energy efficient than their current housing, and that this would help compensate for higher rents. However, we are aware of recent changes in government regulations that have lowered energy efficiency standards. The Design and Access statement on Sustainability (section 7) states that the new housing will achieve a Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 rating. Was this what was originally planned, or was Level 6 the original target? We would not want to see any weakening of the high standards promised during the consultations.

#### **5. Construction of the flats to include 'soft spots' that will facilitate alterations to flat sizes**

We are concerned about the sound insulation between flats on two grounds; i) that the 'soft spots' may give rise to poorer sound insulation, leading to noise nuisance between flats; ii) that if a 'soft spot' is opened to change the size of a flat, the revised party wall may not then have the same level of sound-proofing as the original. We would like to see some reassurance about the sound insulation between flats, and whether including soft spots will have a negative impact on noise leakage.

#### **6. Management Plans for the green spaces**

SO18 Big Local is committed to facilitating local people to engage with the green spaces. For this to be effective, there must be a meaningful dialogue and proactive support from the City Council, and a clear management plan for the open spaces in place.

The Green Infrastructure Management Plan highlights the value of Frog's Copse and Hidden Pond, and makes the proposal to increase knowledge and use by local people of these spaces. It is rightly pointed out that these local spaces will be a constant resource throughout the redevelopment programme. Additionally, promoting use of the green spaces is needed to conform to Natural England's policy of increasing use of local amenities to reduce pressure on more sensitive areas such as the New Forest National Park.

Because of the loss of open space from the outset of the development we consider that it should be a condition of Phase 1 planning consent that this management plan is put in place (i.e. it should not be left until the redevelopment of phases 2 and 3).

We therefore suggest that the proposed improvements to the spaces, and the access to them, together with signage, be required as part of Phase 1. This would then help to mitigate the loss of green spaces as plots are fenced off, demolished and redeveloped. The recent research done by University of Southampton in collaboration with SO18 Big Local showed that many local people were unaware of Frog's Copse and Hidden Pond, demonstrating that better signage and access needs to be part of the improvement package, so that more current residents visit the spaces, and new residents (once Phase 1 is completed) will more easily discover them. The signage should also include directional information for nearby amenities such as Riverside Park and Itchen Valley Country Park.

#### **7. Play areas and spaces for teenagers**

There is substantial concern from residents about lack of play areas, especially for the duration of the redevelopment programme. Two play areas have already been lost (one to Pond View development; one for Phase 1 demolishing); the remaining one in Ozier/Kingsdown, which includes a youth shelter next to it, will go at Phase 2.

We consider it important for young children to have a play area that is near enough not to mean the parent has to use a pushchair or car to reach it. The current play area in Frog's Copse at the top of Marlhill Close is a site that will be accessible throughout the redevelopment programme, therefore it would make sense to refurbish this area in a way suitable for young children, as well as providing for 'natural play' which seems to be the only proposed for it at present. We would therefore recommend speedy and effective engagement with local people to establish what would attract residents to use the area. We know that parents are keen to contribute to discussions about the equipment, and SO18 Big Local would actively like to be part of this, and any wider planning about play spaces.

For teenagers, the loss of the playgrounds has also already had an impact. They gather in the communal areas of the blocks of flats (the Benhams Road blocks especially) leading to the potential for conflict with other residents. The youth shelter next to the Ozier/Bailey Green play area was erected some years back precisely to stop young people congregating in Rowlands Walk blocks. This shelter will go as part of phase 2, so exacerbating the issue of what provision there is for young people.

The 'development' of Frogs Copse early in the regeneration, for example including creating the proposed mown kick about area, has the potential to be a useful tool in helping residents of all ages, including young people, to cope with and live alongside this huge regeneration project.

#### **8. Echelon parking in Meggeson Avenue**

There is some concern amongst residents of Meggeson Avenue about the safety of oncoming traffic, cyclists especially, as vehicles leave echelon parking; there are a large number of commercial vans that local people have for their businesses which would pose a

higher risk in this regard due to poorer visibility from car driver's perspective if they tried to reverse out when parked between larger vans. We consider that the risk of accidents would be reduced if the angle of echelon parking was sloped to encourage reversing in to park, and forward to leave the parking space, when it is easier to spot oncoming traffic.

**9. Plot 1 shared surface**

It is not clear whether this area for parking and pedestrian use (the new road leading into Roundhill Close) will have a vehicular exit onto Meggeson Avenue: the different drawings submitted seem to conflict. We suggest that a vehicular exit so close to the roundabout junction with Townhill Way would cause a real hazard, and that no vehicles be allowed to enter or exit there.

**10. Bus stop siting**

We agree with the detailed information in the Transport Assessment at paragraph 4.6.2 that 'the proposed bus layover close to the historical bus turnover facility needs to be wider and off the main road to avoid conflicts'. The current location of the bus stop, just before a steep rise with a consequent lack of visibility for motorists behind a bus poses a real risk of cars taking a chance in overtaking the bus and colliding with oncoming traffic over the rise. There is a similar issue with the bus stop between Cutbush Lane and Benhams Road.

**11. Traffic calming measures on Meggeson Avenue, and cycle routes**

On the plans Cutbush Lane is noted as a cycle-friendly route. Currently, from Benhams Road to Townhill Way it is rough, muddy when the weather is wet, and unlit. Unless improvements to this section are made to provide a better surface, and lighting, this is not a cycle-friendly route, so Meggeson Avenue would need to be the alternative,

For this reason the traffic calming measures planned for Meggeson Avenue need to be cycle friendly. We notes especially that the width constrictions proposed for the traffic calming are very tight, and would put cyclists at risk of other vehicles trying to pass them at these points. We request that cycle lanes be made by providing a gap at constrictions.

We note the recommendation for a formal consultation on facilities for cyclists as part of the detailed application process (Transport Assessment para 4.9.7) and SO18 Big Local would welcome being part of this process.

**12. Access to Townhill Park**

The Transport Assessment says that it considers 'the accessibility of the site within the surrounding transport infrastructure', yet it makes no reference at all to the difficulties of getting out of the area in the morning, or back into it in the evening. There is no analysis of the traffic flow, in particular out over Woodmill Bridge in the morning and back in the evening, and what the impact on this already congested area will be from the increased

housing. The impact doesn't just affect residents of Townhill Park but the surrounding areas too - with Woodmill Lane backed up towards Midanbury some mornings, seizing the roundabout at the junction of Woodmill Lane, Forest Hills Drive and Manor Farm Road. In the evenings the impact of the congestion over Woodmill affects Swaythling, in particular backing up at the traffic lights at the junction of Woodmill Lane, Langhorn Road and traffic coming into Southampton on High Road. The alternative route over Cobden Bridge also has substantial congestion in the rush hours. We consider that a traffic assessment of Woodmill and Cobden Bridge is essential prior to planning approval, to enable proper consideration of whether there can be changes to ensure the new housing doesn't exacerbate an already difficult situation.

### **13. School places**

A local authority briefing in August 2015 indicated significant pressure on school places in the East of the city. Other local developments have not allowed for the increased demand for school places – i.e. we are not reassured that this will have been properly considered. (Harefield Primary School is full in most year groups and so cannot accept children moving into the new housing in Yeovil Chase, right next to the school, or children moving into the Mansfield Park site in Harefield). Has there been a full and proper analysis of the impact of the increased housing on the capacity of the local schools to provide for the new population? Additionally, if recent government changes affect the tenure mix, has there been an analysis of the possible impact this would have on the demand for school places?

In conclusion, we would be grateful for these comments to be taken into account as part of the process of considering the planning application,

Yours sincerely,

Jo Proctor

(for SO18 Big Local Partnership Committee).

**SO18 BIG LOCAL  
#Speak Up SO18 Youth Forum**



Stephen Harrison  
Planning and Sustainability  
Southampton City Council  
Civic Centre  
Southampton  
SO14 7LS

30<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Dear Mr Harrison,

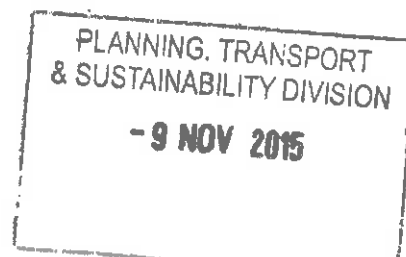
Speak Up SO18 is a group of young people from Townhill Park and Harefield who want to make the area a better place and make sure young people get involved in it. At our last meeting, we looked at and discussed the plans for the regeneration of Meggeson Avenue area of Townhill Park including possible new shops and the play area and park. I am writing to let you know what we thought of the design.

- ✓ Most people think it is a great idea to give the area a better play area and better local shops.
- ✓ We all liked the idea of a café with seats outside, especially near the play area, so adults could chat while children play safely. We think that people will use it if the prices are kept low, as lots of people in the area don't have much money.
- ✓ The idea of roof gardens on the blocks of flats is really good as long as the barriers are high enough to be safe and small children can't climb up them.
- ✗ We were worried that things don't last very long in this area and could be easily vandalised. Some people even thought it was a waste of money.
- ✓ We thought it would be a good idea if you involved children and young people in making the area look nice, for example involve them in planting flower beds, painting murals or creating mosaics etc. Then they would be less likely to vandalise it.
- ✓ For young people to feel safe, it would need to attract more people to be there and to have lots of lighting. For example on Weston Shore there is a great shelter with different colour lighting that attracts lots of children when they turn it on.

We hope you find our ideas helpful. If you would like us to be involved any more by giving our opinions or asking other young people for theirs please contact us through our youth worker Tracey Hemmerdinger at [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Speak Up member



SO18 Big Local is a project of TWICS (charity no. 1085977), Swaythling Neighbourhood Centre, Hampton Park Way, Swaythling. SO17 3AT. Tel: 023 81671111.



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