

METTLE HILL WORKING GROUP

MINUTES

MONDAY 12th JANUARY 2015

In attendance: Philippa Hart (PH), Sheila Watson (SW), Claire ? (C?), Joe Kennedy (JK), Vic Skuse (VS), Simon Parkinson (SP), Andy Young (AY), Julian Fenner (JF)

Apologies received from: Margaret Lynch (ML), Jane Finlay (JF).

- 1. Update on SunEdison.** PH reported that there have been no further developments, either concerning the £50,000 community contribution which will be forthcoming upon completion of the construction of the Bury Lane Solar Farm or following PH sending the plans for Mettle Hill to SunEdison to explore a possible Community owned solar project. Re the former, PH has bid to the parish council for Mettle Hill to be at least one of the recipients of the SunEdison money.

ACTION: PH to press the case for Mettle Hill to benefit from SunEdison grant.

On the latter, there has already been an indication from SunEdison suggestion that they would not consider a 6 acre site as viable for their involvement. We discussed research ML has carried out on the benefit: cost ratio of solar farm feed in: cost of manufacture of solar infrastructure and also on the Reach village community owned solar project, currently the subject of a planning application. As the group had previously decided that solar would not be a good candidate alongside other possible uses of Mettle Hill for a mixed scheme, and as the Reach scheme, for example, is leasing land from a local farmer, it was agreed that discussion of solar scheme be hived off to a different body. Notwithstanding this, it was agreed that any scheme at Mettle Hill will need to satisfy sustainable energy objectives to pass planning.

ACTION: PH to continue work on community owned solar schemes, and liaising with MHWG and with Sustainable Energy Partnership residents, Graham Borgonon and David Smith

- 2. Update on Live/Work.** SW and JK reported as follows:-
Live/Work units, where the applicants are carefully selected and their use of the property for a proper work/live lifestyle, can work well.
The appearance of and size of live/work units can vary enormously, depending on the type of work being carried on and depending on the planning use category. It is common to have a B1/B8 planning use, but a B2 heavier industrial use might also be appropriate. For example, a micro-brewery would require B2.
Demand - this is still difficult to ascertain, and depends on what type of units are on offer. It is accepted that the existing toilet blocks are not suitable for repair/ redevelopment and therefore that investment will be needed to raze the site and restore services.
Cambridge City has more and more small businesses being set up, but by not having an industrial heritage, very few premises are suitable for these start ups, and it is very expensive to live there. We feel confident that a Live/Work model in Meldreth could attract businesses from a wide radius.
It is possible to get a mortgage on a Live/Work unit, although careful consideration needs to be given to the ratio of live to work space. For example mortgage providers tend to want to see a higher balance of the premises being given to live space, although this may be a model of lending more likely to be appropriate to live/work in cities. John Charcol lends.
It was observed that the showmen's site was, in essence, a live/work model.
Thanks to SW's enquiries, we have been offered a free consultation by a representative of a Live/Work consultancy, Tim Buxton. It was agreed to go ahead with this offer.

ACTION: SW to contact Tim Buxton and arrange a meeting. PH and SW to visit Live/Work Units at Thaxted (rescheduled from last meeting)

3. **Update on Chalet Park.** AY, SW and JF have all carried out very useful research, summarised as follows:-

The up-market chalet park lifestyle is growing in popularity, especially towards the >50 end of market where homeowners wish to downsize and release equity in their homes by selling and reducing outgoings.

Landowner provides clear site and arranges services. Purchaser buys chalet home eg a 36x36m 2 bed home on a 100 yr renewable lease can cost c £200,000. Ground rent pa is approx £150.

A six acre site could provide 20 generous sized plots. The yield from ground rent at current average prices would be £36,000. Assuming a turnaround of two plots per year, with current commission where the park owner takes 10% of the sale price, possible up lift of £40,000 p a. The site is managed by a chalet owner who pays to purchase his chalet, but pays no rent.

Clearance of site to meet chalet park requirements will be costly. The village has already paid to purchase the site.

User does not redress the existing trend towards the advanced average age of Meldreth, but does in part address the very high cost of buying a house and of a shortage of smaller houses.

The yield could be used towards transformative projects in Meldreth.

ACTION: AY to investigate financing site clearance, possibly via shares. AY to arrange site visit from chalet park home company.

4. **Update on planning and self build.** JK reported that there will soon be a register on the SCDC website showing all land registered as being suitable for self build in South Cambs. The developed part of the site could provide plots for four self build properties, with two-thirds of the site still be available for either of the uses given under 2 and 3 above. Sale of the plots to self builders could finance development of the rest of the site, and perhaps negate the need, if identified by the village as important, of producing an income on the remainder.

ACTION: PH and JK to look out for the SCDC register going live. More research is needed on Self build models.

5. **Site survey.** JF has kindly carried out a professional survey of the site. This will serve for future planned uses and cost estimates.

ACTION: JF to produce estimates for cost of clearing the site. JF to liaise with VS in this regard.

6. **Other possible uses.** PH reported that a resident has suggested a woodland burial site, on the assumption that there is a demand and that plots are in short supply at the village cemetery. In fact there are several woodland burial sites in the area, the rules are changing such that they will not longer be able to circumnavigate usual cost of interment and even so, there is ample space remaining in the village cemetery, with only two burials having taken place in 2014.

7. **AOB** The Group agreed that we would need to have at least one, probably two more meetings before being in a position to shortlist potential projects. The next step would be to report to the Parish Council and then consult on a village-wide basis.

7. **Date for next meeting. Monday February 16t at 7pm at Vic Skuse's shed.**