

Federation of Bath Residents' Associations

MINUTES

Ordinary Committee Meeting starting at 6.30pm

Thursday 5th December 2024, Widcombe Junior School

Attendees:

Sylvia Sinclair (FoBRA Secretary; SJS Bath Limited); Rachael Hushon (FoBRA Chair; LCA); Jeremy Boss (FoBRA Vice Chair); Jeremy Labram (CRA); Chris Meehan (Bathwick); Rob Richardson (Avondale & Osborne Road); Neil Dickenson (LCA); Michael Wrigley (Widcombe); Jan Shepley (Widcombe); Tony Miles (UOPRA); Mary Stacey (Sydney Buildings); Sally Parkes (SH&SRRA); Suzanne Chase (SH&SRRA); Ceris Humphreys (PERA); Chris Jones (PERA); Poppy Laycock (Bath Spa SU); Mark O'Sullivan (Greenway Lane); Stella Pirie (Entryhill); Ian Tarr (TARA); Julia Perryman (MLBRA); Sabrina Earnshaw (CARA); Stephen Little (RCS); Jill Kingaby (Bear Flat); Stephanie Higgins (LCA); Hakan Aysan (Observer – Ensleigh RA)

Apologies:

Theresa Franklin (CCRA); Patrick Rotheram (Vineyards); Caroline Greenwood (PERA); Malcolm Baldwin (CARA); Julie Ingerfield (Bloomfield Road); Liz Tayler (Entryhill); Elizabeth Curnow (CCRA); David Morgan (Bearflat); Nick Tobin (AB&CPRA); Corinne Evans (Bath University); Richard Wales (Bathwick Hill); David Monson (UOPRA); Alasdair Barron (Bathwick)

Minutes to be approved Committee Meetings June 13th and September 26th

13th June meeting: Proposer: Tony Miles, Seconder: Jeremy Boss

26th September meeting: Proposer: Chris Jones, Seconder: Julia Perryman

Introduction of Observers – Ensleigh RA:

Chair welcomed Hakan Aysan, Chair of Ensleigh RA who are considering joining FoBRA. Ensleigh RA is 3 years old and covers the Ensleigh Estate which is the old MOD site at the top of Lansdown. He mentioned that the nature of the estate gives it a clear geographical area and the RA is open to all residents of the estate and currently represents half of the households with approx. 125 or 130 signed up as members. Their reasons for establishing the RA is information sharing, hosting a summer event and an Xmas market. Chair briefly ran through how FoBRA works and that should Ensleigh RA wish to join, we would vote them in at the March 2025 meeting having reviewed their constitution etc.

Planning Update:

Michael Wrigley gave the Planning update. The papers have previously been distributed. Michael spoke about the key planning item in the report which was the Homebase site. FoBRA has submitted an objection to details in the Homebase application. The concerns

included clarification re Sui Generis status of the Co-living accommodation and about traffic and transport due to lack of info in the application. Concern that some cycle storage could be converted to parking. Lack of affordable housing or family sized housing provided on site, and issues concerning the architectural design including massing, materials and detailed architectural design. Overall, the architectural design is considered underwhelming on such a high profile site. A separate comment was submitted on the on-line presentation of the application on the Council's planning website, especially on the random arrangement of documents and the problem that gives in examining thoroughly any large application.

Chair made general point that UK Corporate investors are moving towards Buy to Let building development and purpose built student housing and away from commercial buildings. This presents an issue for a World heritage city such as Bath as the financial model for such schemes can result in poor quality of build.

Chair mentioned Local Plan webinar which took place 3rd December the planning group will review the document released. Jan Shepley attended webinar which highlighted the impact to B&NES of doubling housing target. Chair said Local plan is the most important document and RAs need to be engaged if your area has a site allocation as later planning approvals will be based off this plan. Chris Jones asked if there are changes to the earlier 160 page Local Plan document from the earlier consultation in 2023/24, the Chair said this is now back in play because of the new Government targets.

Ceris Humphreys asked if Co-living concept (Homebase) is being proposed without proper standards (space etc). Michael Wrigley said that Council is clear it wasn't for student housing or Airbnb.

Mark O'Sullivan spoke re Local Plan. He said that it seems that Bath's WHS designation depends on green infrastructure in city. Yet Local Plan shows developments being crammed in and he fears that there is little open space in all of these developments. He mentioned that in the C18th century in Bath there was high density alongside areas of trees and this is now missing in the Local Plan which represents a failing to maintain the green infrastructure within city. Stephen Little asked if council should be pleading to Government that Bath is a special case and not have to have level of housing due to its special designation.

Ian Tarr mentioned current planning application of two office buildings in city centre into short lets. Ian asked council if anything can be done at planning other than objecting.

Julia Perryman queried the lack of social social housing on the Homebase site. Response from Michael was that there is not any specified in planning application and this was pointed out in FoBRA's response.

Transport Group Update:

Ceris circulated report prior to the meeting. She mentioned the Bath River Line project phase one. Which has two events in the new year.

In relation to this the Chair mentioned security for women in cycling provision and riverside walks and that provision should be safe and natural surveillance.

Sylvia Sinclair spoke about Bristol Airport current consultation with regards to 25% increase in night time flights and impact that has on residents of Bath as many flights are now appearing to track over Bath rather than further north where it is less densely populated. Michael Wrigley said expansion in general is a concern with regards to access with more capacity comes more traffic and that there is no meaningful public transport plan to accompany the expansion. Rob Robertson said he has emailed Wera Hobhouse re concerns of noise from night flights to Bath residents.

WHAB Update:

Jeremy Boss gave the WHAB update and said there hasn't been a meeting since note was shared. He said there is a WH masterplan that runs alongside of local plan. This has been approved and been through the WHAB a few times and appears to be a good document. Chair asked if green infrastructure is it adequately reflected. Mark O'Sullivan to look into this. Chair said she has spoken to the new Chair of WHAB to request an audit of historic assets such as railings/metal work across the city as they are degrading, this will establish who is responsible for them and what is the maintenance plan. Cllr McCabe said there is a plan by BANES to do audit of street assets (which would include railings) and RAs could participate.

Noise Management Policy Update:

Awaiting update.

A.O.B:

IAG Update

Sabrina Ernschaw attended the last Independent Advisory Group meeting 2nd December 2024. This is a group which interfaces the public and community groups with Avon and Somerset Police. 3 main points from the meeting were:

Shoplifting – police have encouraged people to report

Increase of violent crime – people using hammers

Bog island incident – attempted murder (two were unknown to each other)

Police walk and talk sessions – violence against young woman.

Benji Orford of Bath University said he has been added in Bath nighttime industry committee. Chair asked if student reps would attend IAG meetings with Sabrina Ernschaw. Benji Orford said he is happy to attend and Poppy Laycock Bath Spa University said she would attend too.

Chair also mentioned that the Police are keen to have neighbourhood watch schemes in areas, please contact her for information.

Other A.O.B

Mary Stacey asked about an issue with culverts in Sydney buildings with recent rain and vaults flooding. Open culvert in the street and not sure who is responsible for it (the Chair subsequently sent a link to the RA detailing responsibility for culverts lies with the land owner, in their case it seems to be the Local Authority). Ian Tarr mentioned the Empire building in the city whose apartment owners found themselves responsible for fixing a void under street which was part of previous building. Sometimes there is uncertainty over who owns these vaults and other similar historic items.

Sally Parkes mentioned issue in Sion Hill with a number of building works going on with heavy building traffic of concern to neighbouring cellars under the road. Only suggestion is that during planning app to request smaller lorries in application.

Sylvia Sinclair said that St James's Square has recently had remedial pavement works due to works done by Virgin Media to lay fibre. Virgin's contractor used heavy machinery not suitable for the environment with vaults below. She recommended all RAs be extra vigilant when any utility provider is doing works to your area to ensure that they are not using heavy machinery (diggers etc) where there are vaults below.

Sylvia Sinclair mentioned recent emails from a few RAs regarding banking charges as it seems some of the High Street banks who previously offered free banking services to organisations such as RAs are now charging fees. Sylvia suggested RAs speak to the Bath Building Society who offer free banking services to organisations such as ours. Stephen Little said that Metro Bank also provides free banking services to his RA.

Chair finished the meeting by advising that the Council environment team has emailed RAs whose details are available on the FoBRA website so in the public domain. She said that we do not share any other details or mailing lists that we hold and if you would like your details on the FoBRA website (or you need to update them for your RA), you need to email Sylvia with the new contact person and they need to give their permission for such details to be shared and visible in the public domain.