**Old River Lane Delivery Board Meeting**

**Teams/ Room 1.15**

**Thursday, 15 May 2025 15:00 – 16:00**

**Minutes of the meeting**

**Present:** Cllr Ben Crystall (BC – Chair), Ben Wood (BW), Cllr Miriam Swainston (MS), James Ellis (JE), Helen Standen (HS), Cllr Carl Brittain (CB), Cllr Sarah Hopewell (SH), Rob Allwood (RA), Cllr Sarah Copley (SC), Cllr Mione Goldspink (MG)

**Apologies:** David Falco

**Declarations of interest:** MS, SC and MG noted their roles on the Town Council.

**Item 1**: Feedback from the Masterplanning Steering Group.

LCA had provided a short written note to the Board on Monday’s meeting, including attendees, format and content of discussion. Feedback was largely positive about the scheme however it was evident that attendees will need more time in the next session to engage and provide views. The public engagement part of masterplanning is due to begin and the steering group will meet again when this closes for final input before the plan goes to the ORL Board for approval and then ultimately as part of Cityheart’s planning application.

MS also attended and feedback that the discussion featured a lot of personal views about the development and the group are still trying to understand the overall constraints on the site which make the proposed layout difficult to change. However MS acknowledged it was the start of the process and many of the attendees were seeing the new plans for the first time. There had been some discussion about the steering group meeting during the public engagement as well as at the end of the process and this might be considered. MS also noted there was a lot of discussion about the public square although felt this should be minimised going forward as there has already been a public consultation on it last summer.

BC asked what the next steps were. BW confirmed LCA were looking to launch the public consultation w/c 9 June with a website and online materials. There would be 2 public facing events on the 26th and 28th June for face to face engagement. BC & SH asked that LCA provide a further update at the June meeting in this regard, particularly with a view to how we can help publicise the events.

**Item 2:** Public square

RA updated the group on the next stages of the public square. We are now in the position of needing to formally engage landscape designers/ architects and other specialist agencies (eg. in regards to lighting) to get the public square design to a point where it can be included in the planning application and also form a schedule of works to be built.

RA informed the group that the Development Agreement makes provision for Cityheart to undertake this work, meeting the Board’s specification/ design requirements. The benefits of this approach are that Cityheart will manage the whole process end to end for the entire site, using specialists already engaged in the ORL project. This potentially saves money as it means economies of scale and no issues with having to reconcile separate design works when integrating the planning application between the Council owned public square and the Cityheart-leased part of the development. RA added we also have the option of procuring these services separately if not in order to guarantee we are achieving best value for money.

CB noted there is a logic to getting Cityheart to manage the overall process but wanted some reassurance the prices for the work were reasonable and in line with market rates. The Board asked for RA to undertake soft market testing on prices with this in mind to reassure the Board value for money is being achieved. RA committed to contact existing/ past contractors from recent capital projects in East Herts and North Herts.

**Item 3:** Water Lane Hall

BW updated the group in regards to the recent survey and ‘walkabout’ for Members, conducted by David Falco. MG reminded the Board we had promised to share the findings with the public and that this needs to be published soon. MS and SC added that the findings of the survey were disappointing in terms of the amount of work that is needed to bring the building up to a decent standard but we need to be honest with the public about its state and the financial position of the council. MG suggested a public meeting be held to inform any interested residents about the position with a view to hearing ideas about how funds could be secured. MS and SC agreed and that they would be happy to be part of this. The Board agreed that the survey and a press statement be published as soon as possible.