



Mexborough Advisory Forum
Meeting Minutes: Wednesday 18 October 2017

Date and Time	Wednesday 18th October 2017, 11am – 1pm	
Venue	Mexborough Business Centre, College Road, S64 9JP.	
Attendees	Thomas Barry (Chair)	DfT Deputy Director, Land and Property policy
	Emma Silverton	DfT, Senior Policy Advisor, Land and Property policy
	Roy Cahill	DfT, Senior Policy Advisor, Land and Property policy
	Leonie Dubois	HS2 Ltd Head of Consultation & Engagement
	Michael Haughton	HS2 Ltd Doncaster Senior Engagement Advisor
	Julie Gell	Mexborough Community Representative
	Mrs Sue Douglas	Shimmer estate Resident
	Mr Pete Douglas	Shimmer estate Resident
	Deborah Fazan	HS2 Residents' Commissioner
	Lynsey Tod	Ed Miliband's Office
	Cllr Andy Pickering	Mexborough Ward Councillor
	Cllr Bev Chapman	Mexborough Ward Councillor
	Neil Firth	Doncaster MBC – Head of Service, Major Projects
	Dave Pownall	Doncaster MBC – Project Manager
Michael Eckett	HS2 Ltd Deputy Head of Land and Property	
Apologies	Cllr Chris McGuinness	Doncaster Council. Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment
	Mayor Ros Jones	Elected Mayor, Doncaster
	Cllr Sean Gibbons	Doncaster Council Mexborough First Councillor
	Marie Kiddell	Homes & Communities Agency
	Dilys Jones	Homes & Communities Agency
Agenda		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions (& Chair introduction) 2. Agree Mexborough Advisory Forum Terms of Reference 3. Strategic Land and Property issues for discussion by Mexborough Advisory Forum 4. Delivery of Shimmer estate of comparable property commitment 		

1. Introductions (& Chair introduction)

- 1.1. Thomas Barry (TB) chaired the meeting and introduced the objectives of the Mexborough Advisory Forum. The Forum's objectives were to help deliver the commitment made by the Secretary of State (SoS) to support those property owners from the Shimmer Estate that may need help to secure a local comparable property, and to understand what wider strategic issues relating to HS2 property compensation were of concern to Mexborough residents.
- 1.2. The Forum would examine what practically and legally could be done to fulfil the SoS's commitment, as well as foster better communication and trust between the HS2 Ltd, the DfT and local residents.

2. Mexborough Advisory Forum Terms of Reference

- 2.1. The draft Terms of Reference of the Forum were introduced. While efforts had been made to invite a number of local residents, the Forum was keen to enable greater community participation, and it was suggested that holding meetings outside working hours may mean others could attend. Members agreed that the Forum would address strategic issues of concern to the Mexborough area rather than individual cases.

Actions

- **A1: Michael Haughton (MH), with the help of members of the Forum, to identify other Shimmer residents to be invited to participate in future Forum meetings.**
- **A2: DfT to organise the next Forum meeting, potentially out of office hours, in order to ensure participation and diversity of attendees.**

3. Engagement and Communication Concerns

- 3.1. Concerns were raised about the accuracy of information given about HS2 proposals, and that there were people who were still not aware of what was happening in the Mexborough area. Members noted comments that the existing means of communication from HS2 Ltd did not always reach certain people within the community such as those who did not have (or did not want) access to internet and elderly people. Some local residents may prefer face-to-face meetings with HS2 Ltd rather than information events, and some members suggested holding smaller meetings.
- 3.2. Members also raised concerns about the lack of information about the existing property compensation schemes available to homeowners. They said that the language used in the information provided was often complex and that the HS2 help-line available had little knowledge of local issues and often gave inconsistent messages to local residents.

Actions

- **A3: The HS2 stakeholder engagement manager for Doncaster, Michael Houghton, to talk to local residents to identify the best means of engagement.**
- **A4: HS2 engagement team to conduct local surgeries and one-to-one meetings to reach other members of the community, including elderly people.**
- **A5: Leoni Dubois to follow-up with the HS2 help-line regarding consistency of information.**
- **A6: Leoni Dubois and Michael Haughton to hold meetings with local councils and stakeholders to address issues of miscommunication about HS2.**
- **A7: Monthly newsletter to keep Mexborough residents informed about Forum's discussion and information related to available support and further developments.**

4. Strategic Land and Property Issues (Property Compensation Options)

- 4.1. Emma Silverton (ES) and Thomas Barry (TB) explained the existing property compensation options already available to homeowners on the Shimmer Estate, including the cash offer of £30k.
- 4.2. They explained the options being explored by DfT and HS2 Ltd to help Shimmer homeowners secure a local comparable property, which were based on the existing Department for Communities and Local Government's Help to Buy schemes. They explained why it was not possible to offer a cash 'top up' option to close the gap between an existing property and a local alternative on the basis that property compensation options needed to be in accordance with wider housing and compensation policy. A home swap option was being explored would allow those wishing to remain on the estate to move to another property on the development that was less impacted, and retain the £30k cash offer.
- 4.3. Concerns were raised about the existing Help to Buy scheme property options, as there was potential for them to leave some property owners who were currently mortgage free with debt. ES reiterated that it was committed to delivering additional support to those who needed it which would not leave homeowners financially worse off.
- 4.4. There was some discussion about what "comparable" meant: the group agreed that it would be a home of equivalent size and with the same number of bedrooms and comparable local amenities.
- 4.5. Concerns about the "home swap" option were raised by some members of the Forum, who asserted that Shimmer residents might not be able to live in the Estate during the HS2 construction period, and therefore would not be able to take up this option.

Actions

- **A8: HS2 engagement team to send a questionnaire to Shimmer homeowners in order to understand their housing needs, and inform the design of new property options.**

- **A9: DfT Property team to continue to explore property options for Shimmer residents to deliver commitments.**
- **A10: Leoni Dubois to clarify whether Shimmer residents would still be able to live on the estate during the HS2 construction period and therefore be able to take up the home swap option.**

5. Property Valuations

- 5.1. Michael Eckett (ME) clarified that in the case of homeowners needing to move their mortgage from one property to another: if the mortgage can be ported HS2 Ltd would pay the valuation and administration fee. If the mortgage could not be ported, then HS2 Ltd would pay the early redemption fee.
- 5.2. ME explained the background to the property valuations from the Carter Jonas report. Concerns about the inability of local homeowners to find a local comparable property and about the difference in valuations between Carter Jonas and independent surveyors were raised by Forum members. They commented that if Carter Jonas's valuations were closer to the independent valuations this could solve the issue for Shimmer Estate homeowners, and therefore recommended that Carter Jonas valuations should be reviewed. In response to further questions about the price paid for properties bought direct from Strata Homes, TB confirmed that purchases were made in accordance with the compensation code at a market rate.

Actions

- **A11: ME to consider sharing relevant statutory blight statistics with Neil Firth.**
- **A12: ME to explore whether Carter Jonas valuations could be independently assessed or verified.**
- **A13: ME to confirm whether the price paid for properties acquired by the Government directly from Strata Homes were made available to Carter Jonas.**

6. Next Meeting

- 6.1. Forum members agreed that the meetings will take place once a month.