

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on
Friday, 19 May 2023 at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Fane – Chair

Councillors:	Dr. Martin Cahn	Bill Handley
	Peter Sandford	Dr. Richard Williams
	Anna Bradnam	

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Laurence Damary-Homan and Vanessa Blane (Senior Planning Lawyer),
Laurence Damary-Homan (Democratic Services Officer) and James Tipping
(Principal Planner [Strategic Sites])

Councillors Cllr Ariel Cahn, Cllr Heather Williams, Cllr Sue Ellington, Cllr Brian Milnes, Cllr Dr Lisa Redrup and Cllr Peter McDonald (as local Member) were in attendance remotely.

1. Chair's announcements

With the absence of the Vice-Chair, the Chair proposed that Councillor Dr Martin Cahn assume the role of Vice-Chair for the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Anna Bradnam and agreed by affirmation. The Chair then made several brief housekeeping announcements.

2. Apologies

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Henry Batchelor, Geoff Harvey, Dr Tumi Hawkins and William Jackson-Wood. Councillors Anna Bradnam, Brian Milnes and Dr Lisa Redrup were present as substitutes (Councillors Milnes and Redrup were present virtually).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Members' Briefing on the Proposed Design Guide for the Wellcome Genome Campus (Hinxton) Expansion

The Senior Planning Lawyer made a statement clarifying the purpose of the Briefing. The Principal Planner (Strategic Sites) detailed the reasons for presenting the Briefing to Members and outlined the history of the site. Members were informed that the Briefing was to bring Members up to date with the progress of the development and to provide factual information on the proposed Design Guide.

The Briefing was delivered by a number of representatives of the developer:

- Caroline Foster and Nigel Hugill of Urban & Civic

- Julia Foster and Helen Pearson-Flett of David Lock Associates
- Tony Musson of WilkinsonEyre Architects
- Andrew Thornhill of Churchman Thornhill Finch

The Briefing covered a range of topics, including:

- The original parameter plans from the Outline permission
- Changes to the plans since the granting of the Outline consent
- The phasing of the development process
- The proposed framework plan and design proposals
- Landscaping strategy
- Green space implementation and management
- Sustainability considerations
- Transport corridors and impact on highways
- Infrastructure on-site and links to existing local infrastructure
- Details of engagement with consultants, officers and local communities
- Impact on local communities

Councillor Peter McDonald opened the Members' questions section of the briefing with a statement as local Member. Councillor McDonald commended the developers for their engagement with the local communities and stated that local support for the development was strong as long as residents continued to be consulted as the process progressed. Praise was given for the quality of the Design Guide, the innovative proposals that it included and the commitment to tree translocation on the site. The local Member noted that there may be questions around sustainability, particularly regarding water, and construction management, although it was noted that this was not part of the Design Guide but stated that in his view the developers had seriously considered these issues.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions and received response from the developers, confirming that:

- On-site facilities and green spaces were to be open for community activity, both for residents of the site and the wider community
 - The Design Guide would carry weight as a material planning consideration in the determination of any forthcoming Reserved Matters applications
 - Tree translocation had started and had been initially successful, with a 5-year management plan in place to ensure the screening of the site remains effective
 - The bridges had been proposed in response to the demands of the site and capacity of existing highways; the proposals were responsive to consultations with the County Council and other parties. Members were informed that ongoing monitoring of the highways to assess the effectiveness of the highways strategy would be in place, with further implementation of investment and mitigation strategies to be introduced if required.
 - A travel plan and improvement of public transport links was to be introduced, although it was noted that this needed to be part of a wider, strategic transport strategy for the area
- A question was raised on the links to Whittlesford station and Members were informed that the developers were looking to make links to the stations at Whittlesford and Great Chesterford as strong as possible. The Committee was informed that improvement works to the A1301, which would create cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, was due to commence in 2023, and that other routes to the site, including offroad routes, were being explored alongside the work to improve public transport provision. Councillor Dr Richard Williams made a comment as local Member for Whittlesford, stating that Whittlesford Parish Council would welcome a briefing on the transport links to Whittlesford.

Further questions lead to responses which informed the Committee that:

- Planting on the green space above the car park would have adequate soil depth for root systems to form, with the sustainable drainage system providing irrigation for trees in this area

- The housing on-site was to be owned by Wellcome and would not be open market housing, allowing for a targeted approach to provide housing to match the assessed need. Members were informed that extensive surveying had been conducted to assess housing need and this had shown a mix of need, ranging from family housing to short term accommodation. The Committee was assured that an assessment of housing need in terms of mix and tenure would be ongoing.
- The on-site movement network would support a variety of modes of transport and would be adequately sized to support the range of transport, as well as providing accessibility. Sustainable transport hubs would be implemented across the site to support the movement network. Policies and protocols were to be introduced to encourage active travel and ensure safety.
- The existing primary woodland to the north of the site would be preserved, with the southern woodland having a more varied structure. The ecological interest of both areas of woodland was recognised and supplementary planting would take place to support the woodlands, such as through woodland edge planting.
- Community and cultural spaces would be introduced alongside the health, wellbeing and leisure facilities, both through permanent structures and temporary structures on green spaces. Work was ongoing with officers to identify the most appropriate locations for the facilities to maximise benefit to both those on-site and the wider community, with delivery of these facilities to be completed at an early stage of the development.
- Extensive consultation with local communities and Parish Councils had been undertaken and that liaison with the local Parishes and residents would continue throughout the development process
- Perimeter links and leisure routes would be delivered, utilising both existing and new routes
- Work was ongoing to assess how agroforestry could be best implemented, with the proposal aiming to enable the adjoining tenancy holder to continue to work the land. The spacing of agroforestry was designed to allow the size of currently operating machinery to continue to be used and to also give scope for the management of the arable land to be conducted by various parties or under one overarching management approach.
- Analysis had proved that demand for the work, research and housing requirements was there

A request for information on the details of the granted Outline permission was raised by Members and officers agreed to provide this. Councillor Peter McDonald spoke again as local Member and commented that the community engagement from the developers had been satisfactory and welcomed by the local communities. Further comment was made regarding the finer details of construction, such as traffic management, but the local Member noted that this work was ongoing and not directly linked to the Design Guide. Comment was provided by Members on the successes of the development of the new town in Waterbeach and, in response to a question, the developers confirmed that lessons had been learned through that process and these would be carried forward to inform the development process of the Wellcome Genome Campus expansion.

A brief discussion was held over the use of the phrase “serendipity” throughout the presentation and the developers informed the Committee that, whilst it was not a phrase that was part of the National Planning Policy Framework, it was a core principle which the developers were incorporating into every aspect of the design of the site. Thanks were expressed from Members to the developers for their time and the thorough nature of Briefing, stating that it had been a very useful session.

The Meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.

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