

## Recommendations from the 2007 Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

### 1. Design Guide:

- 1a. The master developer or the Council should produce a Design Guide, before the first planning applications are made; this should be formally adopted and then enforced when evaluation applications.
- 1b. The Design Guide should set out an agreed programme for phasing the development, aiming for whole sections to be completed before moving to the next phase.
- 1c. The Design Guide should spell out the approach to crime and safety design issues; encouraging joint working with police and the Council's arts, sports and community teams.
- 1d. The County and District Councils should specify road and footpath materials that are attractive as well as durable and fit for purpose. Planning permission should require the developer to provide and maintain paths and roads to an adoptable standard where houses are occupied.
- 1e. Design aspects not covered in the main Design Guide should be the subject of subsequent design codes.
- 1f. The Council should develop and use a scoring system such as at Huntingdonshire District Council to assess large development and inform the district-wide Design Guide.

### 2. Urban Design:

- 2a. Urban design expertise should be retained and used throughout the pre-planning, planning and construction stages at Arbury Park and future large developments.
- 2b. The urban designer and planning enforcement officer should closely monitor the development at every stage, as resources allow.

### 3. Standard of Planning Applications:

- 3a. SCDC should develop a stronger reputation via pre-application meetings that if proposals are not acceptable they will be refused without negotiation.

### 4. S106 Agreement

- 4a. S106 Officers should provide a communication hub and actively ensure that work progresses in all aspects and in compliance with agreed trigger points.
- 4b. The counting of occupations should be done (at least monthly) by only one party – preferably the planning authority, to avoid duplication – and then shared with parish, City, District and County Council colleagues.
- 4c. S106 negotiations should invite timely input from local stakeholders, whilst retaining probity and confidentiality of negotiations.

### 5. Phased Construction:

- 5a. Large developments should be built according to a phasing plan, starting at one or two points, as appropriate for the size of development, then building outwards. The aim should be for residential streets and areas to be completed in phases so that new residents suffer

minimum disturbance by ongoing building works. However, it should also be noted that phasing could have the effect of slowing down the rate at which affordable homes are built.

- 5b. Commercial and community facilities should be included in the first phase, with an information centre and community development officer being on-site as soon as properties are occupied, perhaps initially in a dual-use community house.
- 5c. These should be funded and put in place at the earliest stage and then reimbursed via the S106 Agreement.

## **6. Community Development:**

- 6a. A community development plan should be produced, in consultation with stakeholders, at a very early stage for each new development. It should be clear who has responsibility for delivery, monitoring and regular updating of the plan.
- 6b. The work of arms-length community development staff should be agreed and managed via a partnership agreement. This should be reviewed quarterly as the number of residents grow.
- 6c. An early priority should be to arrange regular and varied community activities, bringing residents together in small and larger numbers until networks develop and become self-sustaining.
- 6d. Another key service is the initial 'Welcome Pack' which should be supplied to new residents on moving in; inclusion of a current map should be a priority. A fuller 'Information Pack' should be supplied, preferably in person, within three weeks. These packs should provide information that is: timely\*, concise, self-explanatory, accurate; and signposting any further sources of help.  
\*For example information about local surgeries may be needed on day one.
- 6e. All the information should also be available electronically.

## **7. Environmental Health:**

- 7a. Landscaping features such as earth mounds, should be used where possible as a noise barrier; this eliminates the uncertainty about the location, timing and nature of buildings used as a barrier.
- 7b. Noise readings should be taken before and after a barrier is erected, and on both sides of the road. Any expert hired by the Council to verify the findings should be independent of the development.
- 7c. The Highways Agency and developer should communicate and consult fully with the parish and district councils regarding any proposals to alter major roads adjacent to new developments.

## **8. Governance:**

- 8a. The Council should explore every means of securing funding for parish councils to protect them from the financial impact of supporting large new developments. Existing parish residents must not suffer long-term costs because large-scale development has chanced to fall within their boundary.
- 8b. Governance arrangements for new developments should be settled as early as possible to enable early community facilities to be properly managed and to provide existing and new residents with a sense of community identity.

**9. Delays in moving in:**

- 9a. The S106 agreement should agree a process for accurately setting out building locations.
- 9b. The Cambridgeshire Bus Team and other County Council colleagues should work closely with the planning authority to ensure the location of boundaries are agreed and observed.

**10. Need for a single point of contact, communication and control**

- 10a. The Council and the master developer should ensure that a mechanism is established from the outset to provide a regular forum for all stakeholders to raise and resolve concerns.
- 10b. This forum could be led by a local Member who would be regarded as the champion for the new development, ensuring that co-operation and communication between all stakeholders was maintained. Such member champions should be considered for all new developments.

**11. Affordable Housing:**

- 11a. Future developments should emulate the practice used at Arbury Park of involving a consortium of RSLs in planning and negotiations from the outset.

**12. Building site environment:**

- 12a. The Council should negotiate, via the S106 process, that developers will register the site(s) on a considerate constructors scheme.
- 12b. The master developer, or consortium, should appoint an officer to monitor and oversee the development and be a point of contact for the consortiu.
- 12c. Officers should explore means of ensuring that street trees are planted at an early stage, rather than at the end of the development.

**13. Maps and Road Nameplates:**

- 13a. The successful road-naming process at Arbury Park should be used at future developments.
- 13b. Officers should urgently explore methods for ensuring that road nameplates and current road maps are available for the first residents of a new development. These may include contractually requiring the master developer to
  - Provide road nameplates and locate them as guided by the County's Highways service.
  - Provide simple, timely street maps
  - Deposit electronic plans with Section 38 agreements

**14. Primary School:**

- 14a. When a school is built to serve a large housing development it should be located at the centre of the site with safe walking access from all directions and adequate road crossings.
- 14b. A phasing plan for the development should provide for the school to be fully ready for use as soon as the first residents move in.
- 14c. Planning considerations for a school should ensure an optimum physical size that meets statutory access requirements and yet will not overburden the school budget. The building design should also fit the architectural context of the location. The outdoor space should provide a stimulating environment for playing a learning out of doors.

14d. The County Council should limit initial reception class intake to new schools and phase increases in admissions in line with forecast in-catchment pupil numbers. This would ensure that new schools grow at the same rate as the development and can accommodate all in-catchment pupils as they arrive. This would aid community cohesion.

**15. Health Facilities:**

15a. The PCT should work with relevant surgeries to communicate with incoming residents as soon as a large development begins. Relevant surgeries may not be the nearest, but one more easily reached by public transport.

**16. Utilities:**

16a. Utilities providers should be fully consulted at regional spatial strategy planning stage; not just regarding costs but also feasibility and timescales.

**17. Foul and Surface Water Drainage:**

17a. The District Council's on site planning monitoring officers should alert Anglian Water at an early stage, of any concerns they notice regarding construction of foul and surface water drainage systems\*. This would reduce the delay in their adoption later in the process.  
\*It must be clear that Anglian Water retains responsibility for monitoring and adoption.

17b. Where drainage adoption is delayed, the Council should keep residents informed as to who is responsible for dealing with any concerns.

**Achievements during the Review 2008:**

- Chasing overdue S106 targets and official road signs
- Progress on the Design Guide
- Cabinet restructure to create a portfolio for New Communities; an officer restructure brought together for the first time officers covering planning, community development and economic development headed by a corporate manager for new communities
- Information Pack delivered with the keys on moving in. The Welcome Pack is delivered within three weeks. Residents' survey showed that delivery is well-timed although a third of respondents did not recall receiving the pack.
- A meeting with the head teacher of the school, chair of governors and County Council staff provided a forum in which two families' applications were resolved and a way forward agreed regarding incidents of over-subscription in future
- A forum for parish and district councillors to collaborate
- Discussions progressed regarding to a safer route for cyclists at the nearby A14 interchange
- Refuse bin stores issue raised via the residents' survey has now been resolved