

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee 25 June 2020

**AUTHOR/S:** Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development for  
Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

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<b>Application Number:</b>	S/2423/19/DC
<b>Parish(es):</b>	Longstanton and Oakington
<b>Proposal:</b>	Discharge of Condition 14 of S/2011/14/OL - Town Centre Strategy
<b>Site address:</b>	Phase 2, Land South of Longstanton Road, Northstowe, CB24 3AB
<b>Applicant(s):</b>	Homes England
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Discharge Condition 14 of S/2011/14/OL subject to the implementation of the Strategy.
<b>Key material considerations:</b>	The condition and the outline planning permission The submitted strategy The phasing of the town centre Assessment against the requirements of the Condition
<b>Committee Site Visit:</b>	No
<b>Departure Application:</b>	No
<b>Presenting Officer:</b>	Andrew Thompson – Strategic Sites Team
<b>Application brought to Committee because:</b>	The application in the view of the Joint Director requires the resolution by the Planning Committee.
<b>Date by which decision due:</b>	Extension of time agreed until 26 June 2020

### Executive Summary

1. As part of the outline planning permission a Town Centre Strategy was approved but a condition was added to further detail the early phases of the development of the town centre to ensure that services and facilities can be delivered.
2. The submitted strategy, assessed by the Council's own expertise, sits alongside the outline planning permission and the Strategy approved as part of the outline planning permission. It is important to note that the Strategy forms the overarching

principles, linked to the Design Code and conditions of the outline planning permission but does not prescribe detailed designs.

3. Since the approval of the outline planning, the decline of retail has become more apparent with the continued growth of the online shopping. The level of retail proposed is now lower than originally envisaged in the outline planning permission whilst ensuring that the level of retail can accommodate potential retail refused under S/3187/18/FL (Bar Hill) which was refused as having a negative impact on Northstowe Town Centre.

4. The delivery of the Civic Hub and Market Hall are key to the early delivery of the town centre. The Market Hall will provide an entrepreneurial retail, leisure and working environment aimed at creating a strong development. The Civic Hub will provide library, health and community facilities. Both these facilities will link with the Education Campus which is already well advanced in construction.

5. Public realm and space is also proposed early within the proposals to provide a space as a meeting place and leisure opportunity within the town centre.

6. The Strategy will ensure that the town centre will make provision for such a range of shops, services, cultural, leisure, entertainment and community facilities that will serve the needs of Northstowe and the immediately surrounding area without undermining the vitality and viability of nearby village centres, it will have landmarks (both built and natural) and other points of interest, including public art, to create a legible sense of place whilst being capable of adapting to a changing environment.

7. The town centre strategy has also been supported by a public consultation exercise in April 2019 which generated significant and positive interest in the proposals, a supportive assessment at the Cambridgeshire Design Quality Panel and comments of the Council's own economic advisors have also been factored into the Strategy. Continued engagement on the delivery will form part of the detail for the scheme.

8. The requirements of condition 14 of S/2011/14/OL have therefore been satisfied and it is recommended that the condition is discharged.

### **Relevant Planning History**

9. Northstowe as an entity has existed for approximately 20 years with the current allocation and Area Action Plan being adopted in July 2007. A number of works are ongoing in terms of the wider masterplan.

10. Phase 1 obtained outline planning permission in 2014 for 1,500 homes in a suburban context with associated infrastructure, a local centre and employment also being approved. There have been a number of detailed submissions with reserved matters being granted for 1,278 homes, play areas, parks, the water park and greenways. The primary school and community wing are operational, and the local centre square was completed in 2019.

11. Phase 2 outline planning permission was granted under planning permission reference S/2011/14/OL. This also included the detailed permission for the Southern Access Road West which is nearing completion and the planned connection to the B1050 is imminent.
12. The outline planning permission was varied slightly through four non-material minor amendments. This included:
  - S/2435/17/NM – Minor revision to the Parameter Plans
  - S/2792/18/NM – Amendment to Condition 24 (Landscape Management)
  - S/3255/18/NM – Amendment to the position of the Town Centre Greenway
  - S/3503/19/NM – Inclusion of additional commercial floorspace in Phase 2a
13. The Phase 2 Design Code was approved under planning reference S/2407/17/DC whilst the Phasing Strategy was approved under reference S/2890/18/DC
14. The Education Campus approved under County Council submissions (reference: S/0092/18/CC) is being constructed under a Phased Delivery. The Secondary School and SEND facility have begun work with the Secondary School now open.
15. Other Homes England Works include:
  - Strategic Engineering - S/4208/18/RM
  - Strategic Landscaping - S/1552/19/RM
  - Water Park - S/1002/18/RM
  - Earthworks - S/2940/18/RM
16. Phase 2a has been approved under planning reference S/3499/19/RM and work is due to commence on site.
17. On Phase 3 enabling work and investigation is being carried out and an application in outline for 4,000homes and associated development has also been received and is under consideration (known as Phase 3A). The final submission for 1,000homes (Phase 3B) is also submitted.

#### **National Guidance and Legislation**

18. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
 Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)  
 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017) (as amended)  
 Climate Act 2008 (as amended)  
 Equalities Act 2010 (as amended)  
 National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)  
 Planning Practice Guidance  
 National Design Guide

#### **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – Adopted September 2018**

19. S/1 Vision

S/2 Objectives of the Local Plan  
 S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
 S/5 Provision of New Jobs and Homes  
 S/6 The Development Strategy to 2031  
 CC/1 Mitigation and Adoption to Climate Change  
 HQ/1 Design Principles  
 NH/6 Green Infrastructure  
 E/10 Shared Social Spaces in Employment Areas  
 E/21 Retail Hierarchy  
 E/22 Applications for new Retail Development  
 SC/4 Meeting Community Needs  
 SC/5 Community Healthcare Provision  
 SC/6 Indoor Community Facilities  
 SC/7 Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments  
 SC/8 Protection of Existing Recreation Areas, Allotments and Community Orchards  
 TI/2: Planning for Sustainable Travel  
 TI/8: Infrastructure and New Developments

**Northstowe Area Action Plan – Adopted 2007**

20. NS/1 The Vision for Northstowe  
 NS/2 Development Principles  
 NS/5 The Town Centre  
 NS/7 Northstowe Housing  
 NS/8 Northstowe Employment  
 NS/9 Community Services, Facilities, Leisure, Arts and Culture  
 NS/10 Road Infrastructure  
 NS/11 Alternative Modes  
 NS/14 Landscaping within Northstowe  
 NS/15 Linking Northstowe to its Surroundings  
 NS/19 Public Open Space and Sports Provision  
 NS/23 An Exemplar in Sustainability  
 NS/25 Strategic Landscaping  
 NS/27 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure  
 NS/28 Timing / Order of Service Provision

**Other Documents**

21. Other documents which are material considerations include:  
 Northstowe Development Framework Document (August 2012)  
 Northstowe Development Framework Document Addendum – An exemplar in sustainable living (October 2012)

**Application Site**

22. Phase 2 sits to the south of Phase 1 which as stated above, is advancing in terms of housing parcels.
23. A number of key roads have been installed on Phase 2 with the Education Campus also advanced in construction with the Secondary School also opening in September 2019. Other key infrastructure, such as the northern greenway and water park are under construction. Homes England's

Temporary Office is located within Phase 2 and is open and operational. Detailed planning permission has also been granted for the first residential development parcel.

24. The Phase 2 site itself is approximately 216 hectares, including the Southern Access Road and bordered to the east by the route of the CGB, and to the west by Longstanton. The area includes the former Oakington Barracks and surrounds the existing settlement of Rampton Drift, comprised of 92 properties, originally built as part of the barracks complex, and other remaining facilities associated with the barracks including the listed pill boxes, green space; and a water tower which is the tallest structure on the site and visible feature in the wider landscape.
25. The development area also includes areas of farmland including Brookfield Farm and Larksfield Farm.
26. To the south of the Phase 2 development area lies the proposed southern access route and land that is identified for future phases of development.
27. Despite the site being low lying and flat existing vegetation and tree belts ensure that the site is largely screened from surrounding villages and farmsteads.

### **Consultation Responses**

28. Prior to submission public consultation took place over 24-25 April 2019 at the Pathfinder Community Wing. Whilst attendance numbers were not recorded there were at least a hundred attendees. Feedback from the events have been attached at Appendix A5 from the Strategy which includes feedback received from the consultation and the actions resulting. There were no significant negative comments with the majority of the points being around providing more clarity and detail around the proposals.
29. In addition to promotion on the Northstowe website and social media channels, the consultation headlined the BBC Look East local TV news coverage and was positively received by an independent consultant the BBC asked to comment on the plans.
30. The Strategy was also reported to the Cambridgeshire Design Quality Panel – reported in detail in the main body of the report.
31. Consultation responses to the application:  
Longstanton Parish Council – Noted the receipt but raise no comment

Oakington and Westwick Parish Council – No comment

Planning Policy – Note the alterations to the outline planning permission levels and sought increased levels of employment/job creation clarification. This has been incorporated into the Strategy.

Urban Design – Note the submission. An update to the Design Code would be beneficial once the Strategy has been approved.

32. During the application process only one comment from a local resident has been received stating that the waterways and rills within the town park and greenways linking the high street and education campus should be designed for children to play in, as well as being features. This will make them like Freiburg and will bring enjoyment into the streets and spaces. Or like the Diana fountain, with which a moving body of water that you can interact.
33. The Council has also engaged Savills as independent advisors on the Strategy. Their comments and clarification has been sought throughout and they have provided detailed comments via email and in discussion. The full consideration is set out in the main body of the report.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### The Condition and Outline Planning Permission

34. The starting point for the consideration of the application is the wording and detail specified by Condition 14 of the outline planning permission. This states:

Notwithstanding the submitted Town Centre Strategy dated August 2014 an updated Town Centre Strategy to provide more detail on the layout and distribution of activities and enable the early delivery of the town centre shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the first occupation of any dwellings. The approved updated Town Centre Strategy shall be implemented in its entirety and in accordance with the approved phasing plan of the strategy. Each Reserved Matters application for development in the defined town centre shall be in accordance with the approved updated Town Centre Strategy. Any variation to the approved strategy shall be first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

35. The condition was added to ensure the delivery of an adequate town centre in accordance with Northstowe Area Action Plan Policy NS/5.

#### **The Outline Town Centre Strategy**

36. It is noteworthy that the outline Town Centre Strategy was based on the following 10 principles:

1. Aesthetically distinctive

The tallest buildings and highest density housing will be built in the town centre. Accommodation within the town centre will create a resident community bringing activity to the streets and using bars and restaurants during the evenings. The frontages of commercial buildings on the ground floor of residential buildings will add variety and interest to the street as well as being easily accessible

2. Connected to nature

The town centre will have a symbiotic relationship with the landscape. This is achieved in the masterplan with natural elements flowing from the wider

landscape into the heart of the town centre. A landscaped route will run east-to-west through Northstowe, linking the water park on the eastern edge to the town square. From the town square, visitors will be able to travel along an avenue with cycle/ pedestrian paths and swales, passing the education and recreational facilities, leading to the water park. Later in the development of Phase 2, the route will continue to connect the town square with the water tower area and enhance cycle and pedestrian links to Longstanton.

### 3. Offering something different

In order to offer something different, there should be an emphasis on encouraging small and medium enterprises to provide retail, service and leisure opportunities in addition to the national operators you may expect in a town centre of this size. The town square provides an opportunity for an outdoor marketplace and live events which over time can build Northstowe's reputation for creativity.

### 4. Active and clear marketing of the town centre

As the town centre develops and Northstowe begins to form into a significant centre of activity, the perception of the place will become defined more and more by visitor's experiences and word-of-mouth rather than informative marketing. The key to the success of the town centre is to ensure that the quality of the place exceeds the expectations of visitors who have been attracted to visit by marketing efforts.

### 5. Active town square

The town square will be a catalyst for creativity at Northstowe. Acting as the main gathering point for residents and visitors alike, the square can become a hub of activity that breeds the innovation and dynamism called for in the Northstowe Economic Development Strategy.

### 6. Designing in flexibility

The town centre will grow and evolve alongside the rest of Northstowe for decades. It will succeed by being agile enough to adapt to changes in the way we live and do business. The Northstowe Economic Development Strategy calls for Northstowe to be an incubator of new talent and ideas and a collaborative and flexible business environment.

### 7. Refining the town centre by engaging residents and visitors

Capitalising on this flexibility to introduce 'meanwhile' uses, pilot projects and other opportunities can give the town centre a distinct advantage and character in contrast to nearby destinations. These projects will offer opportunities to engage local people in the design of temporary projects and build a sense of ownership. Initially, a range of events, services and uses may co-locate inside buildings in the centre. This would maximise the use of these structures and allow uses to be trialled to establish demand before investing in dedicated buildings. The co-location of facilities would promote cross-discipline working, create buzz and save cost. Over time, visitors would be attracted from further afield to come and experience the events and activities in the town centre.

#### 8. Integrating clean technology

Sustainability is integral to the design of Northstowe, and the town centre is no exception. Buildings, spaces and public art should be used to educate everyone in a fun and interactive way about the effective use of natural resources and the benefits of the latest sustainable technologies.

#### 9. Sustainable travel

The Phase 2 masterplan places the town centre in a highly accessible location within Northstowe. It is situated in the geographical centre of the town, benefiting from easy access from the A14, an existing population in local villages and a dedicated bus route with links to other towns in Cambridgeshire.

#### 10. Flexibility for business and new ways of working.

Northstowe should encourage the provision of flexible business space to aid SME and 'third place' working, increasing the amount of people working within the town centre on a day-to-day basis. Third place working will help retain workers who live locally but have their main place of work outside Northstowe. Encouraging workers to stay in Northstowe will contribute to the vibrancy and viability of the town centre.

37. Employment floorspace has been considered as an integrated part of the town centre, rather than being 'zoned' encouraging a greater variety of uses and architecture. The town centre will feature a range of unit types and sizes, aimed at attracting different types of businesses to serve Northstowe. It will also ensure that the businesses created by the entrepreneurial attitude called for in the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) can be accommodated within Northstowe throughout their development.

#### **Policy NS/5 of the Northstowe Area Action Plan**

38. Setting aside the geographical elements of the Town Centre which have been satisfied by the Outline Planning Permission for Phase 2, Policy NS/5 (Northstowe Area Action Plan, 2007) states:

*The town centre will make provision for such a range of shops, services, cultural, leisure, entertainment and community facilities that will serve the needs of Northstowe and the immediately surrounding area without undermining the vitality and viability of nearby village centres and market towns or compete with Cambridge, having regard to the sequential test. It should have landmarks (both built and natural) and other points of interest, including public art, to create a legible sense of place.*

*Parking provision for cars and cycles will be included in the form of public car and cycle parks for the town centre of a size consistent with its role as a small market town.*

This is further supported by the Policy's supporting text:

*Developed as a compact town, most parts of Northstowe will be relatively close to the town centre which will help to ensure the success of the town centre and allow a sustainable town to be developed with the car as least*

*preferred mode of transport – i.e. maximise access by walking, cycle and public transport.*

*Placing the town centre on the dedicated local busway through Northstowe will increase accessibility to those parts of the town furthest from the centre. The town centre will also provide shops and facilities not found in surrounding villages and therefore access by road to car parks and by footpaths and cycleways will also be important.*

*A long-term view needs to be taken of the development of Northstowe. Once established, like any town Northstowe will be home to generations of residents. It is therefore important to ensure that the best possible plan is produced to ensure that it serves its residents as well as is possible.*

*Creating an attractive and successful town centre for Northstowe will be challenging. The centres of Cambridgeshire's market towns have grown up over many centuries and their variety and number of shops and commercial premises owes much to the age of both the businesses and the buildings in which they are located.*

*The town centre will be the main defining feature of Northstowe by which it will be judged by its residents and visitors. It will be crucial to create a town centre where people want to be even when the shops are shut because it has the best environment in the whole town and provides a range of opportunities to socialise into the evening. It is also important that it offers locations and facilities to hold community events. The mix of uses will be crucial to this as will be creating a town centre where people live and will help support many of its facilities. Creating attractive landmark buildings and spaces will also be vital in order that Northstowe town centre will be a place worthy of its residents.*

*Town centre uses will include shops, restaurants, public houses / bars commercial services (such as banks, building societies, post office) commercial leisure uses such as a cinema, library and lifelong learning centre, health facilities, cultural facilities, places of worship and public services including the administrative buildings for Northstowe (a Town Council will be needed) (see also chapter on Community Facilities, Leisure, Art and Culture including Community Development). Locating employment opportunities in and well related to the town centre will ensure that people working in Northstowe will have safe and convenient access to its shops and facilities and help support a viable and vital town centre.*

### **The Submitted Strategy**

39. The submitted strategy sets out a position based on the outline planning permission and taking account of matters which were not factored in the original planning policy. The decline in retail and the growth in online shopping and technological advances in the workplace that were not factored into the policy.

40. The Strategy sets out that in order to establish a new framework for the town centre within the Town Centre Strategy, the key priorities for Northstowe have been identified as:

Flexibility – ensuring every piece of the town centre and commercial space can have alternative futures

Destination – establishing Northstowe town centre as a destination for residents, workers and visitors, beyond convenience

Enterprise – supporting and creating local business activity and providing opportunities for small and growing businesses as a core element of town centre activity.

41. The Strategy encapsulates the following key elements across its four sections:

#### 1: Town Centre Vision

Establishing the key principles and unique selling points of Northstowe and how these shape the town centre:

- An ethos as much as a place
- Meeting a full range of needs
- A destination and departure point
- A place of enterprise and experience, as well as providing places to shop

#### 2: Why this approach?

Exploring the range of factors shaping the approach to developing the strategy for Northstowe Town Centre:

- Rapidly changing strategic commercial market context (retail, food & beverage and leisure trends)
- An opportunity for local distinctiveness (in the context of the wider offer and hierarchy), reflecting the strength of existing places, gaps in the existing offer in the wider area, and displacement resulting from the increasing pressure on Cambridge
- A different mix of residents, accommodating a distinctive population base from the wider area, which drives needs across the income and generational spectrums
- An opportunity to capture a more diverse range of spending, rather than relying the core retail offer which is already well catered for in the wider area.

#### 3: A flexible mix and environment

Setting out the proposed mix, scale and nature of the town centre area which focuses on the following key elements:

- Scale of non-residential uses, which establishes the proportional mix of uses, efficiency of the layout and creating the right commercial environment

- Indicative spatial plan, presenting the key masterplan diagrams for the town centre and the flexibility this accommodates for the evolving nature of uses over time
- The high street, providing an appropriate sense of scale and promoting the activity and vibrancy of spaces
- Highlighting the proposed green spaces and their purpose, as part of the wider green network, taking the form of town gardens and a town park
- The scale, nature and timing of parking provision in the town centre

#### 4: Making it happen

Setting out the approach to delivering the strategy over time as housing is delivered and the weight of Northstowe residents increases:

- The fixed elements of the town centre where we know when and where they are coming forward
- Driving forward demand related to the evolution of the town centre audience and the relationship of different uses
- Unlocking the potential of the town centre by tapping into the spirit and nature of the local area
- Actively managing and curating town centre uses and activity across the town over time

#### **The Phasing of the Town Centre**

42. There are four stages/phases to the development of the Town Centre which overlap:
43. Stage A – The blocks within the first stage are all delivered adjacent to one another and the education campus to form a legible place from day one. Commencing work in 2021 the aim is for the first buildings are Town Park (Phase 1 – the links/linear park known as the Town Gardens and some of the play equipment) in 2022, Market Hall in 2022, and the Civic Hub (containing library, community and health facilities) is aimed to be open in 2023.
44. Infrastructure work such as the busway would commence in c.2021. The guided bus has one stop in the early phases within the town centre which stops adjacent to the civic hub which includes the health centre. The local bus runs along Primary Road with one stop between the town centre and the education campus. Key cycling connections run along these bus routes and along the green corridor. Two bike parking areas will be provided. One adjacent to the school and the other on the high street in front of the civic hub.
45. Temporary surface car parking will be located within the same parcel of the future MSCP with one way access to this for vehicles from Primary Road
46. Stage B - The completion of the Town Park and other commercial (leisure and employment) and residential buildings anticipated in 2025 around the town park will completing this set piece public realm around the southern area of the town centre linking east/west routes and southern greenways. Work is due to overlap with Stage A and is due to commence in 2023.

47. Stage C - commencing c.2026 – Stage B offers the first expansion of the town centre and begins to broaden its offer in terms of both the scale and mix of residential and non-residential space. It builds out from the intense cluster of activity established in Stage A to link the town centre to the new Town Park and onwards to new residential development to the west.
48. This stage would complete large elements of the northern section of the town centre with the inclusion Stage C sees significant growth in the town centre, building out from the existing phase 1 components. This diversifies the mix of uses along the high street, catering for a much wider audience base. This town centre growth happens alongside the delivery of a significant number of new homes within the Town's wider phase 2.
49. The workspace offer is a key element of the town centre's second phase, providing both office and creative workspace typologies that appeal to a broad range of small business requirements. The workspace offer and other business uses (such as conferencing facilities) will grow and strengthen over time as town centre footfall increases and continues to drive commercial demand, taking advantage of the wide range of town centre uses and supporting amenities that will have been established in Stage A and Stage B.
50. Retail & leisure spaces would increase comparison, and convenience retail space alongside local services. These spaces could come forward through a curated approach to delivering meanwhile and/or pop up units and subsequently grow into a more established form over time as footfall levels increase, providing more passing trade.
51. The block at the north of the high street shows the potential for a hotel element within it, however this will need to be considered flexibly in terms of the form, nature and timing of this use. It may initially take a part or full building within the block, but may come forward towards the end of Stage B or moving into the later Stage C.
52. The key to this element is the flexibility to accommodate a range of different types depending on how town centre activity and value drives investor and occupier demand, as well as the ability for the block and northern mix to come forward without a hotel.
53. A new bus stop is introduced in the heart of the High Street to promote access to new retail, leisure and workspace provision. At this stage the busway would be open with further surface level car parks which would be temporary in nature.
54. Stage D – commencing by c. 2031 - Stage D strengthens and consolidates of the full range of residential and commercial components. The residential development in the wider town maximises the audience of Stage D residents, and the increased and diversified commercial offer draws more and more workers and visitors to the town centre as it continues to evolve and grow. Multi-storey car parking would replace surface level car parks with the

potential to consider whether this would be needed or alternative uses of the site based on technologies of the time.

### **Cambridgeshire Design Quality Panel**

55. In November 2018, the updated Town Centre Strategy was presented to the Cambridgeshire Design Quality Panel. The panel found that the proposals were very encouraging and the reduction in retail and carparking welcomed. Posing support to create a Northstowe as a place to live in the future. The Panel suggested that there was an opportunity to make Northstowe different from other new towns.
56. The Panel made the following comments and suggestions, and where possible these have been included in the latest Strategy. Other details which require more detailed design work with development partners.
57. Future design should create an environment that promotes a strong core for the healthy new town which includes a hierarchy of open space, integration and flexibility to the built form for all users and creating a place built for pedestrian and cycling connectivity and not being dominated by the car.
58. The Panel considered that are very important to understand the viability of the town and that it would be better to have a small number of occupied commercial units rather than a greater number of half occupied units.
59. The Panel understand the need for some flexibility, and the commitment, now included, to starting to define and provide certainty on several aspects of the development in order that quality can be embedded into the design.

### **Assessment against the requirements of the condition**

60. The condition requires the submitted Strategy to provide more detail on the layout and distribution of activities and enable the early delivery of the town centre.
61. In setting out the requirements of the condition the Strategy envisions the delivery of the first buildings which would build on the delivery of the education campus which has already commenced work. The Town Centre delivery is anticipated to commence from the southern area around the education campus and further northern sections. The creation of this as an area of completed development would allow for early and clear identification of the town centre creating a potential destination for residents, visitors and users of the development.
62. It is noted that the first residential phase (Phase 2a, approved under S/3499/19/RM) would also include a small element of commercial space (568sqm) which would also potentially create additional jobs.
63. The early phases (Stages A and B) include key and important buildings which would provide a range of opportunities for commercial activity and community uses to establish. Linkages and the public realm would also be established providing a strong link and setting to the wider town centre.

64. The latter phases would also need to retain flexibility and also take account of links to Phase 3A in particular. Changes in technology and matters such as autonomous cars may impact on the type and amount of car parking necessary to be provided and the second surface level/multi-storey may not be necessary.
65. Whilst not definitive the Strategy includes an indicative Town Centre Floorspace table (below) and how this would come forward in terms of jobs. The table seeks to build on the Economic Development Strategy and outline planning permission.
66. Indicative Floorspace Table

	Outline Permission (sqm)	Minimum Floorspace (sqm)	Maximum Floorspace (sqm)
<b>B Use Employment</b>			
Workspace (B1)	16,200	10,460	16,200
Market Hall (B1a, B1c)	-	2,270	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>16,200</b>	<b>12,730</b>	<b>16,200</b>
<b>Non B Use Employment</b>			
Retail (A1)	35,000	7,375	12,000
Market Hall (non-B uses)	-	4,540	6,810
Leisure	13,500	11,900	13,500
Hotel	-	8,350	8,350
Civic Hub & Other Community Uses*	9,000	5,232	9,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>57,500</b>	<b>37,397</b>	<b>49,660</b>
<b>TOTAL Floorspace</b>	<b>73,700</b>	<b>50,127</b>	<b>67,324</b>

<b>Phase 2 Jobs</b>			
Education Campus and Primary Schools	375	375	375
Town Centre Employment	2008	1,160	1,522
Homeworking	892	892	892
<b>Total Jobs</b>	<b>3,275</b>	<b>2,427</b>	<b>2,789</b>

67. The proposals seek to establish the delivery to the initial phases, in particular Stage A, and the Civic Hub and Market Hall and the public realm (Town Square) by 2022/23.
68. The levels of floorspace are therefore capable of change as the Town Centre develops and the proposals and community become established and new uses come forward. The outline planning permission of 78,700sqm of commercial floorspace and a total of 2008 jobs although home working was not accounted for in the town centre/economic development strategy of the outline planning permission.
69. The Strategy seeks to balance a changed retail market whilst taking account of the outline planning permission of 10,000sqm of convenience retail and 25,000sqm of comparison retail. The Town Centre could also cater for the aims and objectives of the refused application and the potential for occupiers under S/3187/18/FL which sought planning permission for 10,467sqm of retail floorspace for next, boots and an M&S (food).
70. Later phases are based on submitted Strategy provide suitable basis for a design-led block structure but there could be additional floorspace through the use of upper floors and potential use of taller buildings than initially indicated in the outline parameter plans. This would need to be balanced against the delivery of other uses, e.g. faith and community buildings but also the capacity to deliver residential development and not to undermine this total.

#### **The Council's Town Centre Strategy Advisor**

71. The Council engaged Savills to act as its Advisor to the town centre strategy and to advise on commercial aspects of the submission. They have been involved in the submission and revisions and provided comments to the drafts prior to this final submission.
72. Savills, at an early stage agrees that a significant reduction in floor space from the maximum parameters is required to reach a more realistic proposition for the final 'built-out' stage of the town centre. It is recommended that the Strategy be kept as a live document and under review so it can continue to be updated with the latest market information to inform any other changes.
73. Some changes secured through the negotiation process includes minor textual clarification but also include some of the following key elements:
  - Ensuring that the environment comes as much from the delivery of a mix of uses in each stage as it does the quality of the public realm that joins them together and ensuring both commercial and residential uses are delivered in tandem which will help create a dynamism within the town centre throughout the day and night. (Page 8)
  - The town centre is not only needed to meet the retail needs of Northstowe residents, but can play a more strategic role as a new urban centre in the

wider region – offering opportunities for new businesses to start, locate and grow in the region in an environment that is different from other developments. Through integrating uses it can create a place where people can both live and work in a new urban centre. (Page 14)

- Making this work in Northstowe will require a range of tactics and approaches to come together. As noted in the latest London Residential Development bulletin by Savills there is need to curate a high quality mixed retail and leisure offer in new development in order to help residential succeed—the two have to come forward together for places to succeed at each step of delivery. It considers it important for this to be a focus in early phases of large schemes in order to establish a sense of place in locations where the market is weak, needs establishing or perceptions of place need to be changed to attract occupiers and residents. (Page 36)
- To ensure the Market Hall is at the heart of the town centre from the beginning Homes England are committed to finding a partner who can curate and manage it over the long term. Contractual commitments to Homes England will ensure the vision is realised and maintained (Page 39)
- Core uses (e.g. some retail, parks, commercial and community uses) are planned to be delivered early, alongside the first phases of residential, attracting footfall and meeting residents' needs. (pages 50-51)
- Creating a sequenced approach to the build-up of commercial activity, alongside new homes, within the town centre will unlock commercial demand by creating early activity and developing this over time as the town centre matures. This will grow the resident base (the captive audience for the town centre who are likely to have the greatest spend levels within the town centre), alongside a more diverse town centre audience that draws in residents from neighbouring areas, people coming to work in Northstowe, and visitors coming to enjoy the retail and leisure offer. (Pages 59-64)
- Homes England's 'curator' role will guide an all-encompassing approach towards delivering the town centre and supporting its growth and evolution over time. It will also help to ensure there is in built flexibility with management that guides the direction of growth within the framework of the fixed town centre elements, whilst avoiding being over-prescriptive. The detailed mechanisms for this will be evolved with the delivery partners. At this stage no approach or intervention is considered 'off the table' and all routes will be subject to future consideration by Homes England.

77. Homes England are committed to working with their delivery partners to consider all options for pump priming the commercial provision within the town centre. Interventions which have been successful elsewhere which could be used at Northstowe include:
- An enhanced level of fit out to be provided in commercial space;
  - The use of void space for meanwhile activity or pop up retail at nominal rent;
  - The use of innovative (risk sharing) letting models;
  - Discounted rents for particular activities or occupiers (e.g. third sector occupiers);
  - Flexible leases that are tailored to specific business needs;
  - Extended rent free periods for particular businesses/activities;
  - Provision of business support services and advice for start-ups and independents;
  - The creation of a recyclable investment pot accessible to local businesses who may struggle for 'market' finance; or
  - Early identification of specific operators to help create 'purpose built' spaces.

(Pages 82-83)

78. It is further noted that the Council's Economic Advisor encourages that Northstowe shouldn't be afraid to importing something to help establish/differentiate it and act as a catalyst for other activity.
79. An entrepreneurial spirit and creative ethos in the town can only be developed by coordination across the whole town centre, ensuring that public realm, commercial space and activity programmes all link to create a consistent place and image.
80. Going forward it is recognised that continued opportunities exist to collaborate on this long-term approach with the range of relevant actors including; South Cambs District Council, the County, the Combined Authority and the procured delivery partner.
81. A town centre specific sub-group to the Economic Leadership Group would, for example, allow opportunities for shared intervention and investment to be identified and approaches to delivery agreed – providing all stakeholders with a meaningful input into the future success of Northstowe Town Centre. On agreement to the strategy this would be set up.
82. Overall, the Council's Advisor has been actively engaged in providing commercial advice and providing appropriate and significant alterations to the Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

83. The Strategy as submitted therefore has addressed through the plans for Stage A in particular and the requirements of the condition and will establish a suitable basis for the development of the town centre.
84. It is noted that the Strategy is the starting point for the delivery of the Town Centre and key elements. The Strategy does not however sit alone with further conditions of the outline planning permission and s106 elements also to be delivered. The adopted design code, streets and busway conditions will also form part of the overall design solution which include the design, layout, and street space as well as the style and appearance of buildings which can adapt to climate change and a changing town centre.
85. The creation of a Town Centre Delivery Group will be the next step and work has already commenced on the delivery of the Civic Hub and establishing early developments. Further engagement with all Stakeholders, including local residents, will be important in creating a successful and vibrant place.
86. It is too early to understand fully the implications of the 2019 Coronavirus but early indications from anecdotal research being carried out, for example by the RTPi and TCPA, is that homeworking will be more prevalent in the future than prior to the pandemic and that smaller independent uses, alongside a vibrant environment will be important lessons and that retail will continue to adapt in the retail world. Leisure and community space will also likely to become more important.
87. Flexibility and adaptability incorporated in this Strategy from an early stage will therefore become fundamental and guiding principles.
88. The requirements of Condition 14 have therefore been met and the condition can be discharged.

### **Recommendation**

89. Recommend Discharge of Condition 14 with the following supporting text.
90. The submitted Town Centre Strategy provides a suitable basis for the early delivery of community buildings (known as the Civic Hub) and the first commercial building (the Market Hall) and in particular Stage A of the submitted Strategy in accordance with the requirements of Condition 14 of S/2011/14/OL.
91. Indicative floorspace figures provide an initial basis for consideration of the capacity of the town centre but with appropriate flexibility in the delivery to allow for changes in technology and new uses as well as delivering significant employment provision. It is also noted that the town centre is capable of accommodating the level of comparison retail floorspace under planning reference S/3187/18/FL in a sustainable town centre location. The proposals would also deliver other aspects including community uses, residential, public realm, leisure and other commercial floorspace through promoting flexibility in uses. The town centre strategy works with the creation of the education campus.

92. The town centre strategy also includes the opportunity to deliver a range of uses and temporary facilities to create new markets and provide innovation and enterprise, particularly to the SME market.
93. The discharge of the condition does not grant Reserved Matters or detailed consent for any building but does agree a Strategy for early phases which builds on the approved outline planning permission and should be read in conjunction with the Town Centre Strategy approved as part of outline planning permission reference S/2011/14/OL.