

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Northstowe Portfolio Holder 8 September 2010
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Corporate Services)/ Corporate Manager Planning and New Communities

UPDATE REPORT ON NORTHSTOWE

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Northstowe Portfolio Holder to review an update covering:
 - a) Progress with the Northstowe Joint Promoters
 - b) A14 Improvements
 - c) Uttons Drove drainage works
2. This is not a key decision because it only provides an update.

Recommendations and Reasons

3. That the Portfolio Holder notes the current position regarding the development of Northstowe.

Background

4. In July 2007 South Cambridgeshire District Council adopted an Area Action Plan for up to 10,00 homes at the site of a new town to be called Northstowe, adjacent to the villages of Oakington, Westwick and Longstanton. Five months later an outline application (S/7006/07/O) for the new town was submitted by the Joint Promoters Gallagher Longstanton and English Partnerships. Three additional detailed applications (S/7007/07/F, S/7008/07/F and S/7009/07/F) were submitted for strategic drainage infrastructure and road links to the new town from the Bar Hill and Dry Drayton Road junctions of the A14. .
5. Following the consultation process a series of topic based meetings were held with the Joint Promoters during 2008 to consider a range of issues arising from the environmental statement, transport assessment, design and access statement and other matters contained in the 29 supporting documents submitted with the outline application. The Council issued a letter dated 8th May 2008 to the Joint Promoters, detailing areas where changes to the applications would be required or further information was necessary. In late 2008 the Council issued two further letters dated 12th and 22nd December. These letters reiterated the Council's position following the series of meetings with the Joint Promoters.
6. The HCA was created in December 2008 from a merger of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. From 2009 to March 2010, the HCA and Gallagher Ltd were negotiating regarding arrangements for the development of Northstowe. Over the last months, the HCA and Gallagher have agreed that they will continue to work together. Since early 2009 officers have had limited contact with the Joint Promoters and their consultants, whilst they reviewed their relationship.

Considerations

7. Progress with the Northstowe Joint Promoters

7.1 On 19 July, a meeting of the Northstowe Delivery Board was held, the first since December 2009. At the meeting the Joint Promoters gave a verbal update saying that they were committed to working together to bring forward Northstowe. It was agreed that a meeting would be held with representatives from the HCA, Gallagher, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the County Council and Cambridgeshire Horizons to discuss the way forward.

7.2 The follow-up meeting was held on 4 August. At the meeting Gallagher and the HCA outlined how they would like to proceed, and it was agreed that Gallagher would provide a 'Northstowe Delivery Paper' outlining their preferred approach by 14 September. The meeting included a discussion about the potential role of the local authorities in a new joint venture arrangement, particularly taking account of the fact that the County Council owns the 'reserve land' that was identified within the Northstowe Area Action Plan.

8. A14 update

8.1 Improvement works to the A14 have currently been put on hold pending the Government's spending review and no further announcement as to timing of works to the A14 is expected any earlier than 20 October 2010.

8.2 There is a question as to how much development can take place at Northstowe if the A14 upgrade works are delayed and before they are completed. The answer to this is thought to be somewhere between 1800 and 2000 dwellings. This is based on the Structure Plan Examination in Public (some years ago) where it was asserted that about 2000 dwellings could be constructed before the A14 was upgraded and the figure of 1800 dwellings is a figure which is thought to come from the Northstowe Planning Application Transport Assessment. Further information will be available in the Northstowe Delivery Paper which Gallagher is preparing, which will also consider other site constraints and infrastructure thresholds relevant to a first phase development.

9. Uttons Drove Drainage Works

9.1 Over recent months, substantial work has been done to consider how to bring forward the Uttons Drove Drainage works required for the development of 950 new homes at Cambourne, and that could also provide for Northstowe. Two main schemes have been the subject of recent review:

- i. A comprehensive scheme which would cater for Cambourne 950 and the full numbers at Northstowe at a capital cost of about £1.2 million
- ii. A reduced scheme which would cater for Cambourne 950 and about a further 1000 dwellings at Northstowe or other developments in the relevant catchment area at a lower capital cost of £497,000. This option allows for further works to take place later to cater for the full Northstowe number.

- 9.2 At the latest meeting involving SCDC, Cambridgeshire Horizons, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the HCA, Gallagher, it was agreed that option (ii) should be pursued. The Cambourne developers were not present due to illness.
- 9.3 Work is hand to prepare some draft Heads of Terms for agreement by all relevant parties in terms of timing of works and contributions. It is intended that a paper will be prepared for Cabinet as the works include a stretch of Uttons Drove which is the responsibility of SCDC rather than the Environment Agency. It should also be noted that Swavesey Internal Drainage Board are involved in discussion regarding the proposed works.

Implications

10. There are no major implications arising directly from this report, as it just reports recent progress on various matters relating to Northstowe.

Consultations

11. Regular liaison meetings are held with the local County and District Councillors, and Parish Councils surrounding Northstowe. The next meeting of the Northstowe Parish Forum will take place on 13 October.
12. Cambridgeshire Horizons, the County Council and Gallagher were consulted in the production of this report. It was also provided to the Environment Agency and Anglian Water for comment.

Effect on Strategic Aims

13. The delivery of Northstowe is a key priority for the Council.

Conclusions / Summary

14. The positive approach demonstrated recently by the Joint Promoters including the report due from Gallagher is welcomed. Uncertainty regarding improvements to the A14 is a serious concern to all parties, and there is significant lobbying to stress the importance of these improvements and their critical relationship to housing growth in the north west of Cambridge. It is positive that there seems to be near agreement regarding drainage works to enable the development of 950 homes at Cambourne, and it is recognised that there is not an adequate business case for the Northstowe Joint Promoters to invest in enhanced works to Uttons Drove at this stage.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Contact Officer: Jo Mills- Corporate Manager Planning and New Communities
Telephone: (01954) 713350