



**LAND AT WARREN FARM,  
AMPTHILL**

**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**ON BEHALF OF**

**DENISON INVESTMENTS LTD AND CONNOLLY HOMES PLC**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for the development proposals at Warren Farm, Ampthill described in the accompanying planning application. This report outlines the public consultation undertaken on behalf of Denison Investments Ltd and Connolly Homes PLC in relation to both their proposal for residential development at Warren Farm, and the Warren Farm Development Brief.
- 1.2 The consultation primarily took the form of public exhibitions held on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011, with a consultation period running from 7<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December. The SCI highlights the key issues raised and the responses made during this consultation process. Reference is also made to consultations undertaken, and liaison with third parties, in relation to the adopted Development Plan.
- 1.3 Paragraph 41 of PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) advises that *“one of the principles of sustainable development is to involve the community in developing the vision for its area. Communities should be asked to offer ideas about what that vision should be, and how it can be achieved.”*
- 1.4 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement *“in which they set out their policy on involving their community in preparing regional spatial strategies, local development documents and on planning applications”* (PPS1, paragraph 44).
- 1.5 Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) adopted their Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for the north Central Bedfordshire area in (former Mid Beds area) in February 2006. The CBC SCI sets out four key ways the Council would wish to see the Community engaged on major applications (para 6.11):
- *“Developers or landowners take a key role in this [public consultation] as part of their obligation to the local community;*
  - *Consultation carried out at the earliest stage of the application process with local people to explore their reactions and optimise potential community benefits as part of the development;*
  - *Extra effort made to engage with hard to reach groups;*
  - *Exhibitions and/or workshops being held to involve people in a non-confrontational way, if appropriate.”*

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This section of the Statement of Community Consultation describes the public consultation exercise that was undertaken by Denison Investments and Connolly Homes (DI & CH).

### Stakeholder Group

2.2 A Stakeholder Group was set up in June 2011 by Central Bedfordshire Council with assistance from the applicants' and their consultant team. The Stakeholder Group (SG) meets monthly and was set up to inform the local residents and interest groups of what is happening with the site, and its future development.

2.3 The SG is chaired by the local member, Councillor Paul Duckett, and invited attendees are:

- Ampthill Development Action Group (ADAG);
- Local Members Councillor Duckett, Councillor Smith and Councillor Blair;
- Ampthill Town Council;
- The Greensand Trust;
- REVAMP;
- Ampthill Chamber of Commerce and Trade;
- Ampthill Community Action Safety Group;
- Redborne School.

2.4 Representatives from Central Bedfordshire Council and the applicants' team attend every meeting, with some meetings attended by specialist consultants and Council officers to cover topics such as highways and education.

2.5 The Stakeholder Group have been kept fully informed of the process, and the comments and thoughts of the group have been sought throughout in order to help inform the application and development.

### Warren Farm Website

2.6 The Warren Farm website ([www.warrenfarmampthill.com](http://www.warrenfarmampthill.com)) was set up at the start of 2011 to provide a central source for up to date information on what is going on with the development of the site, as well as any investigative works or assessments that might be taking place on the site at any time.

- 2.7 The Warren Farm website has available for download all of the agendas and minutes of the previous Stakeholder Group meetings. The website was also used to assist with the consultation on the Development Brief and public exhibition (detailed below) and had a copy of the exhibition boards, Development Brief and feedback forms available to download.
- 2.8 The website also includes a comments section and email address for people to ask any questions about what is going on with the site.

### Exhibitions

2.9 Public exhibitions were held at Ampthill Town Council on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011 1:00pm – 7:00pm and Redborne Upper School North site on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011 10:00am – 3:30pm. The purpose of the exhibitions was to brief local residents on the scheme proposals in advance of an outline planning application being made in 2012; and to display and answer questions on the Development Brief.

2.10 The exhibition was advertised in the following ways:

- i Posters (Appendix 2) were displayed around the site and in the town at the following locations:
  - Lamp post Oliver Street/ The Stables junction 1 @ A4
  - Lamp post Abbey Lane/ Osier Link junction 1 @ A4
  - Gate to site on Flitwick Road 1 @ A4
  - Central Beds Council Offices at Technology House 2 @ A3
  - Central Beds Council Offices at Chicksands
  - Ampthill Town Council Offices 1 @ A3
  - Ampthill Town Council - supplied for Notice Boards 3 @ A5
  - Ampthill Library 1 @ A3 + 1 @ A4
  - Redborne School -
    - Reception 'North School 1 @ A3
    - Entrance at South School 1 @ A3
  - Waitrose Community Notice board 1 @ A3
  - Doctors Surgeries Oliver Street:
    - Greensand Surgery 1 @ A3 - Waiting area/reception
    - Greensand Surgery 1 @ A4 - Staff room
    - Houghton Close Surgery 1 @ A3 - Waiting area/reception
  - Cambridge Wine Merchants, Church Street 1 @ A4
  - Community Contact Point (old Magistrates Courts) 1 @ A4

- ii An advert on the Warren Farm website
- iii An advert on the Central Bedfordshire Council website
- iv An advert in the Beds on Sunday newspaper
- v An advert in the Fuddler publication
- vi An advert on the Ampthill Town Council website

2.11 The exhibition displayed nine boards (Appendix 6) that contained information on the proposed development, while a team of consultants was on hand to answer questions and collect feedback. The consultants present included Masterplanners, Planners, Transport Engineers and Drainage/Utility consultants and all were able to provide technical information as well as dealing with general queries and questions.

2.12 Over the course of the two days, approximately 173 visitors attended the exhibitions; 55 people attended the Friday exhibition; 118 people attended the Saturday exhibition. Feedback forms were made available at the exhibition for people to complete and either leave with the consultant team, or take away and complete and return by the 5<sup>th</sup> December. The form, alongside the displayed material, was also made available on the Warren Farm website for people to download and email or post back.

2.13 The exhibition was also attended by a representative of the REVAMP group who asked the following question of attendees: *“How would you spend the New Homes Bonus arising from the Warren Farm and Ampthill Heights developments?”*. A summary of the responses is included in **Appendix XX**. REVAMP worked alongside Ampthill Town Council to prepare the current Ampthill Town Plan and are currently working towards a new Town Plan, which they hope this consultation process will help to inform.

### 3.0 RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

3.1 This section of the Statement of Community Consultation highlights the comments that resulted from the public exhibitions.

3.2 In total, 44 feedback forms were completed and either returned at the exhibition or posted back at a later date. A further 26 responses were received by email, including one response from Ampthill Development Action Group which makes reference to an ADAG petition with close to 2,000 signatories.

3.3 The completed feedback forms highlight a number of issues and comments regarding the proposed development at Warren Farm. The following sections summarise these comments.

#### Question 1

“What type of development would you like to see at Warren Farm, e.g. starter homes, 2/3 storey houses?”

- A mix of types and sizes – town houses, bungalows, traditional looking houses;
- Housing for the elderly – bungalows, sheltered accommodation, open space;
- Quality 2/3 storey houses;
- A general store;
- Extension to the school [Redborne];
- Creation of a new managed open space area for Ampthill;
- Starter homes for first time buyers;
- No development;
- No 3 storey development, just 2 storey and bungalows;
- Houses to 'look old' in keeping with the town;
- Garages and parking to be included with the houses;
- Do not want to see development like Ampthill Heights design;
- A maximum of 200 dwellings and less than 35% affordable housing;
- Mixed in character with Ampthill;
- Mixed 3/4 bedroom houses;
- No more than 50 houses;
- A large proportion of the affordable housing should be for elderly residents;

3.4 Question 2:

What concerns do you have about development at Warren Farm?

- Infrastructure at Ampthill cannot cope with proposed housing;
- Whether there would be sufficient mains water and foul water disposal capacity;
- Too big;
- Oliver Street could become more of a 'rat run';
- Traffic through Ampthill Town Centre;
- School capacity;
- Doctor and midwife capacity;
- This development, combined with others, will destroy the semi-rural nature of Ampthill;
- Transport and parking problems in the town;
- Extra traffic on the junction of Abbey Lane onto Maulden Road;
- Not enough access points for cars – Lammas Way should be used;
- Extra junction near school increases traffic risk significantly;
- 410 houses is already too much;
- Schools are already full;
- Loss of the rural environment;
- Fallowfield will become congested and noisy;
- Lack of allotment space;
- Overcrowding green spaces;
- It will force Redborne Upper School to close the farm;
- Loss of privacy and value for existing residents adjoining the site;
- Not keen on 3 storey houses;
- The access at Flitwick Road needs a roundabout;

3.5 Question 3:

What do you think could be improved as a result of the development and how, e.g. safe access to the school?

- A good access to the school site for walking and cycle;
- Nothing – it will ruin a lovely town;
- A roundabout on Flitwick Road;
- Extra car parking at the health centre for the extra patients;
- Safe children's access to Redborne School;
- Direct traffic through Maulden to Ampthill up Church Road;
- The proposed footpath strategy and road improvements could be beneficial;
- A road or pedestrian access through Lamas Way;
- Lots of landscaping and play areas;



- More car parks;
- A separate school at upper level to serve Flitwick;
- School extension;
- Money towards community projects e.g. Parkside Hall;
- Reduced housing density;
- Pedestrian/cycle links to local amenities to encourage walking;
- Removal of sewerage pump house;
- Improved sewers;
- A running track;
- No access onto Flitwick Road;
- New Homes Bonus could provide funding for traffic management, parking and community facilities;
- Staggered barriers at the bottom of Lammas Way for pedestrian safety;

3.6 Question 4:

How important is it to provide connections from the site to the surrounding area?

- Very important;
- Traffic nightmare at present – would only be far worse;
- Provided they do not become rat runs then it is a good idea;
- Crucial but depends on ‘connections’;
- Very important but not via Flitwick Road – instead a new access directly onto the A507;
- Essential;
- Do not open Lammas Way to vehicular access as it would turn surrounding roads into a rat run;
- Very important to integrate the town to the new development;
- Connections very important but not many mews style areas;
- A safe route to the town centre by foot and cycle;
- Priority routes for emergency vehicles on Oliver Street and no parking in Oliver Street;
- Only one vehicular access to the site, which would be via Flitwick Road;
- Needs to be part of Ampthill unlike Ampthill Heights which is like its own village;
- Extremely important to ensure residents feel part of the community they are joining;
- Not important – would prefer no access to Lammas Way (not as proposed);
- Access and egress should be directly onto the A507;

3.7 Question 5:

Do you have any further comments?

- The link road through the site needs careful design to stop it being used as a short cut;
- Loss of existing outlook and devaluation of existing properties;
- The site plan does not correctly show the boundary in relation to the stream along the boundary of the existing properties;
- Ampthill will be ruined/spoilt by this development;
- This development is unnecessary;
- 20mph speed limit on new development;
- Better public transport needed for the area including cyclepaths between Ampthill and Flitwick;
- Ampthill cannot cope with this development without ruining the town centre and access to Bedford;
- Town and roads will become overloaded;
- Will the doctors/dental surgeries be enlarged, with an increase in staff?
- There should be a link road to the A507 from Hazelwood Lane;
- Proposed housing and footpath strategy will be beneficial;
- Where is the developers' grant money [s106] given to Central Beds? What benefits will the community see from this money? Recommend that this money is administered by the developers, not CBC to provide items such as a cycleway from Ampthill to Flitwick Station and a roundabout on Flitwick Road and at Steppingley Road by Steppingley Hospital;
- Include shops to replace those on Russell Drive;
- Keep the area as green space;
- The overall worry is drainage/sewerage which is already bad;
- The infrastructure cannot cope with 400 more houses;
- Money to set up a youth club;
- Old people's home;
- Excited to see the development and will consider moving here from Flitwick;
- In favour of Abbey Lane/Oliver Street realignment proposal;
- Will be more difficult to park or attend the medical centre in Oliver Street;
- Should not be building against the wishes of Ampthill residents;
- More car parking on edge of Ampthill town centre;
- Rebuilding of Parkside community centre;
- Not enough money from developers is put into overcrowding issues in Ampthill – where is the New Homes Bonus money going – should be spent in Ampthill;
- Lack of space allocated for allotments;
- Do not want pedestrian/cycle access via Lammas Way;

- Do not want the A Level Environmental Studies course to close at Redborne school if the farm is lost;
- Positive use of spare land – could some be used for 'green space';
- No pathway through the Stables as it is a road with no paths;
- The stream should stay as it is and not be piped;
- Density is too high – should be approximately 300 dwellings;

3.8 Additional responses were received which did not specifically respond to the questions on the feedback form. These responses raised the following points:

- There should be a landscaped nature strip at the northern boundary of the site which follows the line of the existing gas main and informal footpath; it should be unlit and include a footpath and should not be routed through the Stables;
- Houses on the northern boundary should be side on to existing housing;
- A major proportion of the affordable housing should be for the ageing population and should be in the northern part of the development;
- Play areas should be in the centre of the new development or at the southern end, away from existing housing;
- New fencing should be provided for existing houses backing onto the development;
- The density should be reduced to a maximum of 350 dwellings with ample parking provision;
- Main road access should be directly from the A507;
- The development should not start until the dates shown in the housing trajectory and should not commence until the Ampthill Heights, Limes and Greensand Woods developments are completed and sold;
- The access road to the tidy tip should be re-aligned to reduce the risk of accidents;
- All funds generated by the development (S106 or anything else) should be clearly identified, made transparent and used in Ampthill;
- The visibility splays at the Tidy Tip should be improved;
- The Flitwick Road junction needs to be a roundabout;
- There should be additional retail opportunities;
- Why do CBC want building work to start in 2013 instead of 2020?
- Residents do not agree with the Core Strategy or the allocated numbers and it should be a minimum of 250 dwellings, not 410;
- The Transport Assessment needs to cover all areas impacted including Flitwick and the M1;
- Ampthill does not have sufficient infrastructure and services to cope currently;

- There should be a minimum of 1 off road parking space per bedroom;
- There should be no development on the green belt;
- Support the general principles set out in the Development Brief and the additional housing will help to maintain the viability of Ampthill as a commercial centre;
- Council should maximise linkages to nearby facilities and in particular the residential areas to the north of the site;
- The development will be cramped and out of keeping with the surrounding area;
- Ampthill Heights is a depressing development – this scheme should have more of a “garden city” feel with front gardens and proper driveways;
- What is CBC’s plan for the New Homes Bonus money resulting from the Ampthill Heights and Warren Farm developments (circa £5.5 million)?
- In favour of the proposed Abbey Lane/Oliver Street realignment;
- How many people in the area are in favour of the development?
- Should be garden to garden development along the boundary between the new houses and Fallowfields;
- Pedestrian/cycle routes through Lammas Way and the Stables are a good idea;
- Should be 4, 5 and 6 bedroom houses;
- There are naturally seeded oak trees on site which should not be destroyed;
- Important to retain natural green spaces in addition to open play areas;
- Should not be pedestrian access to the Stables;
- The development should be well integrated with the existing community;
- Planning permission should not be granted until such time as there is a north/south Ampthill bypass built;
- Lack of town centre car parks;
- Schools and emergency services cannot cope;
- What are the employment prospects to support the inhabitants of the development;
- There should be a maximum number of dwellings, rather than a minimum number;
- Will the pressures of the residents on Coopers Hill and Flitwick Moor take account of the impact of Centre Parcs as well?
- Great care needs to be taken in considering the design of the new link road and its impact upon the amenity of existing residents;
- Transport Assessment should take into account all other existing and planned developments such as Centre Parcs and Steppingley Road;

- What contingencies are in place for possible disturbance to existing residents during the construction period?
- Welcome the green space and possible green space enhancements and connections;
- Development Brief needs to mention the wider Green Infrastructure network, ecological constraints and opportunities and connectivity and access to green infrastructure;

#### 4.0 ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK

- 4.1 The high level of attendance and interaction by those who did attend the exhibition showed that there is a good level of interest and understanding in the scheme proposals and the Development Brief.
- 4.2 Whilst there were a number of responses questioning the need for the proposals or requesting that development does not go ahead – many did not have regard to the allocation of the site in the Site Allocations DPD and are not reflective of the relatively low levels of relevant responses to the various stages of public consultation on the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD.
- 4.3 The completed feedback forms and further responses highlight what local residents consider are the key issues regarding the proposed development at Warren Farm.

#### Development Brief Considerations

- 4.4 The consultation on the Development Brief received very little direct feedback – the overwhelming majority of comments were either about the principle of development itself, or what residents would like to see included within the application and the development.
- 4.5 Comments of relevance to the Development Brief include access to and from the site (opportunities and constraints); housing numbers; density; and proportion of affordable housing.

4.6 *to be updated pre application submission, post CBC consideration of Development Brief:* The Development Brief has been updated to reflect these comments. The second section on Background now includes additional information on the public consultation exercise carried out.

4.7 Given the overarching nature of the Development Brief, and its aims in identifying opportunities and constraints but not prescriptively detailing how the development should be set out, it is considered that no additional changes to the Development Brief are required resulting from the consultation. The comments relating to density and housing numbers do not comply with the adopted Site Allocations DPD (Policy HA4) which the Development Brief should be compliant with. The Development Brief has therefore not been amended in respect to those points.

#### Outline Planning Application Considerations

4.8