

Appendix D

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**TO ACCOMPANY A MASTER
PLAN CONSULTATION EVENT FOR: -**

**A MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
INCLUDING RESIDENTIAL, EMPLOYMENT
AND OPEN SPACE**

AT: -

**VALLEY FARM
OFF STEPPINGLEY ROAD/FROGHALL ROAD
FLITWICK, BEDFORDSHIRE**

ON BEHALF OF: -

ORS PLC

SEPTEMBER 2012

REF: PF/5534

1.0 INTRODUCTION –

Appendix D: Draft Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (“SCI”) has been prepared to accompany Policy MA2 - Land at Steppingley Road and Froghall Road, Flitwick (Valley Farm) Masterplan consultations for: -

“A mixed use development comprising residential development with associated employment provision and open space at Valley Farm Flitwick”.

- 1.2 The SCI describes the process by which efforts have been made to engage with the local community in Flitwick, and the surrounding areas, to establish views on the emerging master plan, which will inform the future proposals for the development of the site. This SCI also details the discussions that have taken place with the local community and summarises the outcomes. The report describes the method used to publicise a public exhibition; the information provided to the public at the exhibition; the method used to gather feedback on the proposal, and a summary of the responses received during and following the exhibition event.
- 1.3 The intention of the public engagement process is to provide local residents and other interested stakeholders with an early opportunity to view the emerging master plan and to make any comments on the content of the proposals.

2.0 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 A public exhibition was held at The Rufus Centre, Flitwick on Friday 7th September and Saturday 8th September 2012, between the hours of 14:00 and 20.00 on the Friday 10:00 and 14:00 on the Saturday.
- 2.2 In addition, the exhibition material was left maintained at an unmanned exhibition in the Rufus Centre between 8th September – 23rd September. It was then relocated to Flitwick Library (a town centre location) for a further two weeks between 24th September – 6th October.
- 2.3 The exhibition was advertised locally and a Public Notice was placed in the Mid Beds & Times Citizen on the 30th August 2012 prior to the event (see **APPENDIX 1**). Letters were also sent to other relevant parties including all District Councillors, Ward Councillors, Flitwick Town Councillors (57 in total) and Nadine Dorries MP the local Member of Parliament for Flitwick (**APPENDIX 2**).
- 2.4 A press release article was issued to Mid Beds & Times Citizen about the exhibition details (**APPENDIX 3**). Public Notices were also placed on notice boards in the following key locations identified in consultation with officers at Central Bedfordshire Council namely; The Rufus Centre, Flitwick Library,

Flitwick Railway Station, and the town centre Tesco supermarket
(APPENDIX 4).

2.5 The event intended to stimulate discussion with the local community in relation to the emerging master plan. The event comprised a series of exhibition boards that displayed the application site and the emerging master plan with explanatory text. A copy of the exhibition material, which comprised nine A1 boards is appended as **(APPENDIX 5).**

2.6 Below is a photo of the of the nine exhibition boards as they were set up at the Rufus Centre manned consultation event:



(The exhibition material from the Rufus Centre public consultation event 7th & 8th Sept 2012).

2.7 The unmanned exhibition was set up in the reception area at the Rufus Centre as shown below:



2.8 A four page booklet summarising the proposed master plan was provided for attendees to take away with them and a copy of this document is included as **(APPENDIX 6)**.

2.9 The exhibition was attended by the following representatives: -

- Kate Sylvester-Kilroy – (Planning Director) Old Road Securities
- Gary Surkitt – Woods Hardwick (Architects/master planner)
- Peter Frampton – Framptons (Planning Consultants)
- Peter Bateman – Framptons (Planning consultants)
- Paget Fulcher – URS Ltd (Highways Consultant)

2.10 In addition to the master plan project team, the event was also manned by a number of representatives from Central Bedfordshire Council over the 2 day exhibition. These included:

- Connie Frost-Bryant – Senior Planning Officer
- Ben King - Senior Strategic Transport Planner
- Carry Murphy – Principal Planning officer
- Tim Cakebread – Planning Officer
- Stuart Robinson – Planning Officer

Website and email

2.11 The Valley Farm emerging master plan was accessible to all interested parties by a dedicated website. The website can be viewed by following the below link:

<http://www.valleyfarmflitwick.co.uk>

2.12 The website advertised the scheme, enabled those using it to view the emerging master plans, outlined key historical and forthcoming events in the evolution of the scheme and provided contact details for both the project team and Local Planning Authority. The website provided the opportunity for interested parties to e-mail comments, questions or observation relating to the scheme to one of two e-mail addresses:

enquiries@framptons-planning.com

comments@valleyfarmflitwick.co.uk

2.13 A printing error was noticed on the summary sheets which were produced for the manned public exhibition events. However, this mistake (which was the insertion of a hyphen in the web address) was noticed and corrected by hand on all sheets prior to any summary sheets being taken away by attendees of the exhibition. Revised summary sheets with the correct web address were provided for the unmanned exhibitions.

Other consultation events

2.14 The exhibition events took place following a series of stakeholder working groups. These are briefly summarised below:

2.15 West Place Making Committee 25th July 2012, Rufus Centre, Flitwick. This meeting was held following extensive interim meetings with Planning Officers to inform representatives of the major interest groups of the progressive design proposals for the Valley Farm development site, including a presentation of suggested design solutions and a question and answer session.

2.16 Leisure Services/Open Spaces Meeting 5th March 2012, Rufus Centre, Flitwick. As a consequence of the Focus Group workshop, further discussions were held specifically concerning open space and play area provision.

2.17 Focus Groups Workshop 6th February 2012, Rufus Centre, Flitwick.

Following presentation of the initial scheme proposals at the Stakeholder meeting, a day of targeted series of discussions relating to specific ‘topic’ areas was held relating to the site.

2.18 Stakeholder Meeting 11th November 2011, Rufus Centre, Flitwick. This

meeting was held with a purpose to provide a forum where Planning Officers, representatives of the Town Council and other technical professionals and other stakeholders discussed preliminary issues relating to the development proposals for the site.

3.0 ATTENDANCE AND FEEDBACK

3.1 The public exhibition was well attended, attracting a constant flow of members of the public totalling 110 (73 on Friday 7th September and 37 on Saturday 8th September)

Photos of the exhibition in action are below:



The exhibition in the Rufus Centre 7th & 8th September 2012

3.2 Comment forms were provided during the public exhibition to enable residents to reflect on the emerging master plan proposals and submit reasoned comments. An example of the comment form is provided as **APPENDIX 7**.

3.3 At the time of writing this SCI a total of 22 written representations have been received following the consultation event. A full summary of the written representations received is provided in **APPENDIX 8**. (Copies of the original comments are available upon request).

3.4 Those attending the manned exhibition were met at the entrance and a summary of where they lived was taken. The vast majority of those attending were from the MK45 post code. The summary breakdown of those attending the exhibition is included in **APPENDIX 9** of the statement.

3.5 Positive comments received made reference to:

- providing housing (particularly affordable and family accommodation);
- the benefit of bringing jobs to the area through employment provision;
- Provision of additional open and children's play facilities;
- improving linkages through to the town and Ampthill

3.6 The negative comments made reference to:

- the traffic congestion in the town;
- concern over the traffic solution for the bridge on Froghall Road;
- the feeling that this site in addition to Centre Parcs would exacerbate existing traffic problems;
- Pressure on infrastructure such as schools, doctors and town centre parking

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 It is considered that the processes to engage the community concerning this proposal have met best practice guidelines by offering the opportunity for local engagement, and that feedback provided will contribute to the master planning process. A number of events and methods of seeking clarification as well as opportunities to offer comment were provided.
- 4.3 In terms of specific outcomes the main concern from residents living adjacent to the site is the issue of traffic generation and congestion. General concern focused on the adequacy of social infrastructure such as schools and doctors which are perceived to be at capacity.
- 4.4 The positive comments received made reference to the provision of housing, affordable housing and employment land all of which are needed. In terms of the master plan design the majority of comments were positive. Key issues that appear to have been progressed well included the linkages, the emphasis on family housing, the proposed density variations and amount of open space.

Framptons

October 2012

APPENDIX 8

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION COMMENTS

Comment ID	Main Comments
1.	Letter from Nadine Dorries MP apologising for not being able to attend the exhibition, but stating she will visit the unmanned exhibition in due course.
2	The presentation was very informative which has certainly helped with my understanding of the proposals.
3.	Concern expressed about increased traffic, Flitwick is already congested at peak times, school places, concerned about surgery facilities.
4.	Concern expressed about a safe crossing to Flitwick hospital. Needs to be able to accommodate invalid buggies. An Aldi or Lidl would be nice instead of commercial
5.	As a tenant of one of the cottages on Steppingley Road I have concern about access and impact on the garden areas of the cottages.
6.	Concern about the loss of another green space in Flitwick/Amphill. Appreciates the need for affordable housing but queries whether any will be delivered. Likes the idea of a footpath along Froghall Road, but concern about the lights on the bridge which will cause a bottleneck. Supports bus route principle.
7.	Concern that proposals will increase traffic flows in the town. Froghall Lane and the roundabout will be bottlenecks. Concern about impact of Centre Parcs as well. Sees no justification for the loss of green space. Will increase pressure on services and facilities.
8.	No problems provided Doctors, Hospitals and schools etc are considered.
9.	Opposes the whole development. It will put more pressure on inadequate infrastructure especially roads and schools. It is crucial there are no through roads in the estate. There is a reasonable effort to make use of existing vegetation and add to it. It will lessen the gap between Flitwick and Amphill. Put the houses somewhere else. Where was the consultation when the initial

	decision to build on the site was made?
10.	Concept looks well thought out. Flitwick TC should ensure that the Rufus Centre is properly integrated with the whole scheme. The commercial element is pointless. It will not be taken up. Make it landscaping instead. Froghall Lane needs work to make it safe for School Children to use.
11.	Interesting proposals look forward to seeing the detail as plans develop.
12.	Concern regarding school places and road infrastructure. Also health may not have capacity for 400 houses.
13.	<p>Having attended the exhibition at the Rufus Centre and being a long standing resident of Flitwick, I would like to provide the following feedback for your consideration :-</p> <p>Traffic / Congestion:- You may be aware of a longstanding focus group in Flitwick called FATCRAG (Flitwick at the Crossroads Action Group) which was formed originally off the back of wider Town Centre development plans - principally what is widely referred to as the Tesco development. A fundamental finding of this action group was the traffic implications of any widescale development and absence of infrastructure to support additional traffic. Whilst the Tesco development is currently on the back burner it could be resurrected at any point in time. We also have the well-publicised Centre Parcs development and there is scepticism that Motorway signage will help avoid increased traffic through the Town Centre. Added to this is the Valley Farm project. Of particular interest is the proposed access road along Steppingley Road (which does not include a roundabout). If the Tesco Development has not been inconclusive in terms of traffic implications and absence of infrastructure to support additional development, then I am not sure how you are going to go about overcoming this issue.</p> <p>- Infrastructure :- Continuation of the above point but more specifically, there is only one way into and out of Flitwick i.e. Steppingley Road and there is only so much that this road can take without causing congestion problems. The other key roads such as Flitwick Road and Froghall Road are only what can best be described as country lanes, yet these are going to be expected to support a significant increase in traffic. The current proposals to have an entry and exit point to the development on Steppingley Road (which does not include a roundabout) exacerbates this problem massively. No exit onto Steppingley Road would greatly assist and 'force' people down to the 'One o One' roundabout thereby sharing the 'burden' of the various pressure points.</p>

	<p>- Wider Town Centre developments - It is widely publicised that Flitwick is the poor relation of the region suffering from an absence of funding / redevelopment of virtually any sorts. You only have to look at the High Street (the other side of the railway line) and absence of any progress / resolution of new leisure centre for confirmation. Adding another 40 houses and additional pressure to existing provisions will only make the matter worse. What proposals are there to tangibly give back / invest in Flitwick as a legacy?</p> <p>- Land - Out of interest who owns / owned the development land ? If this is / was Council owned then this tells me that they are more interested in profits then investment and opens up the question as to why this site was not put forward as a potential site for the Sports Centre ?</p> <p>Whilst I am not against development per say, I do not believe that your proposals address any of the existing traffic, congestion and infrastructure concerns and without any investment / progress then your development will only add to these problems.</p>
14.	<p>Schools – Money provision will not give new school build. It will probably jut change from 3 to 2 tiers that nobody wants.</p> <p>Doctors – at capacity. No mention of burial ground or leisure centre</p> <p>Why was no consideration given to building new house/village on Centre Parcs site. Plans for moving Tesco – revamp of town centre - better facilities. Football centre of excellence. Train station parking/town centre parking.</p>
15.	<p>Please to see new roundabout at Steppingley Hospital. Hopes the development will include small properties (1 and 2 bed) with private outside spaces as well as larger properties (or flats with no private outside space). It makes sense to have the industrial element next to the railway.</p>
16.	<p>No justification for the loss of the Froghall Lane hedge and establishment of two parallel paths. This would remove screening and reduce privacy for occupiers of the farm. Encouraging walkers immediately alongside the road would not be appropriate.</p>
17.	<p>Concern about school places and proximity to schools. Increased traffic on Steppingley Road will result in a constant flow of traffic when added to Centre Parcs traffic. Lack of town centre infrastructure to support an influx of people.</p>

18.	<p>Further to the public exhibition and website information, my comments are as follows :</p> <p>Why is the proposed housing development not 3-4 storey town houses (similar to <i>The Wixams</i>, which helps density-wise, but also for car parking provision at ground level)?;</p> <p>Sufficient off-road car parking (assuming ratio of at least 2 cars per household);</p> <p>Properties to be built to latest eco/sustainability standards;</p> <p>Clarity over proposed bus route - where from & to (given narrow low-height Froghall Road railway bridge & the current use on route 42 of double-deck vehicles by both Stagecoach & Grant Palmer);</p> <p>Safe walking/cycling route through the Valley Farm development - and including satisfactory links under Froghall Road bridge to Doo Little & Redborne Upper School, including a crossing (pelican/signalised) over the A507 bypass to the Ampthill "side of the road"; satisfactory route also from Valley Farm to Flitwick railway station & town centre;</p> <p>How will road traffic be regulated through the proposed <i>contra-flow</i> Froghall Road railway bridge - signalisation/lights?;</p> <p>Footpath/cycleway adjacent to bypass to Ampthill Heights/Greensand Woods developments, plus Warren Farm and Centre Parcs;</p> <p>Consistency in road speed limits - should be 20 mph in "Home Zone"/residential area of Valley Farm development and 30 mph elsewhere (including at the proposed Steppingley Hospital crossroads roundabout where the 30 mph restriction currently comes off just past the Rufus Centre);</p> <p>Less (noise) sensitive retailing development [Aldi or Lidl?] next to railway embankment on east side of the Valley Farm development;</p> <p>Overall the development is bland, lacking in vision and detail. It does not do justice to the concept of a '<i>Masterplan</i>' especially given that if constructed it will increase Flitwick's population significantly. More detailed information is required, including likely Section 106 <i>development gain conditions</i> &/or a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment.</p> <p>More specifically of particular concern, is :</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No immediate infrastructure such as shops, a school or a surgery/health centre within the Valley farm development - so that residents will by implication have to travel into town for basic amenities, putting additional pressure on already inadequate facilities. Schoolchildren in particular will have a very difficult journey; <i>Safe Routes</i> to all schools? · The prospect of traffic gridlock along Froghall Road, not least because it is narrow and is to be controlled <i>one-way</i> under the railway bridge – backing up both ways to the proposed Steppingley Hospital crossroads roundabout to the west and the junction with the A507 bypass to the east, being a distinct possibility given likely traffic flows. Where is the traffic modelling for the proposed contra-flow? · Although a potential bus route is identified , it would be helpful to know if appropriate discussions have been undertaken with service providers (Stagecoach, Grant Palmer, Flittabus & Centre Parcs) and whether their reaction is positive in principle – a plus point would be the possibility of being able to access both the Valley Farm site - and the Rufus and Leisure Centres by public transport. · Little if any information has been provided on the types and density of housing proposed, and also the type of commercial/mixed-use uses envisaged. The latter looks perilously close to the railway embankment and it is to be hoped that Network Rail have been consulted for a full safety assessment to be made. This safety assessment to include the Froghall Road railway bridge which is <i>sub-standard</i> - low-height, limited-headroom and approached by blind-bends on either side. The bridge could easily be subject to "bridge strikes" putting the railway (Midland Main Line) out of action. Is the road to be straightened as well as the introduction of signalised "contra-flow" control? In addition to Network Rail, have CBC (Highways) & their contractors Amey been consulted? <p>It is hoped that these comments will be fully taken into account both by Old Road Securities PLC, Framptons, their respective consultants (URS, etc.) and Central Beds. Council (CBC).</p> <p>Finally are ORS going to adopt the "Code for Sustainable Homes" for the proposed new houses to be built at Valley Farm?</p>
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19.	400 houses means 800 more cars on the road and 100 people (approx.) Can infrastructure cope with this? Low voltage may be an issue as Flitwick already has low voltage. Proposals will cause traffic jams. Will commercial vehicles fit under the bridge? Number of access points questioned as it may be too permeable to plan out crime. A preference for brownfield development over agricultural land is expressed.
20.	<p>Members of FATCRAG have visited the exhibition relating to the proposed Valley Farm Development in Flitwick and would make the following consensual comments:</p> <p>Overall we find the development pedestrian and lacking vision and detail. It does not do justice to the concept of a 'Masterplan' especially given that if constructed it will increase Flitwick's population significantly. We need far more information.</p> <p>More specifically, there are aspects of particular concern, namely,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No immediate infrastructure such as shops, a school or a surgery so that residents will have to travel into town for basic amenities putting additional pressure on already inadequate facilities. Schoolchildren in particular will have a difficult journey. • The prospect of traffic gridlock along Froghall Road not least because it is narrow and is to be controlled one-way under the railway bridge – backing up both ways to the Steppingley Road roundabout to the west and the junction with the A507 to the east is a distinct possibility. • Although a potential bus route is identified, it would be helpful to know if appropriate discussions have been undertaken with providers and whether their reaction is positive in principle – a plus point would be the possibility of being able to access both the site and the Rufus and Leisure Centres by public transport. • Little information provided on the types and density of housing proposed, and also the type of commercial uses envisaged. The latter looks perilously close to the railway embankment and we would wish to be assured that a full safety assessment has been made.

21.	<p>Houses have to be built somewhere and the Valley Farm site is as good as any. It was difficult to judge the effect that this development will have without a plan showing in detail where the houses will be sited.</p> <p>More houses will have an impact on schools and the local doctors surgery. This is a matter for the Central Beds Council if they allow this development to go ahead. The main problem is that the doctors surgery appears to be working at full capacity, as are the local infants schools.</p> <p>My only objection to this development is the need to restrict traffic to one way working controlled by traffic lights at the railway bridge in Fordfield Road. This is a busy little road used by locals to avoid the centre of Flitwick and to avoid using Windmill Road.</p> <p>Some years ago a housing development was allowed off Windmill Road, and the footpath by the road at the railway bridge was widened. To allow this to happen, the road was narrowed to a single carriageway with priority given to traffic travelling West.</p> <p>A consequence of the Valley farm development is to do the same to the railway bridge on Fordfield Road, but with traffic lights. The need for residents to drive from one side of the railway to the other is self-evident and the Fordfield Road bridge needs to be two way.</p> <p>A new pedestrian tunnel under the railway track is required connecting the Valley Farm estate with The Meadows, a cul-de-sac on the other side of the railway.</p>
22.	<p>We attended the Exhibition at The Rufus Centre and are writing to register our comments, suggestions and objections. We have absolutely no confidence that any of these will be taken into account as, from our conversations at the Exhibition, this development is clearly a done deal. The planners have made their plans so local Council Tax Payers will no doubt be ignored. Indeed, we raised many of these objections at the last "Which Other Bits Of Flitwick Can We Build On" Exhibition at The Rufus Centre a few years ago. This is clearly just a tick box exercise in public consultation.</p> <p>The Exhibition contained absolutely no details of the impact of this major development on Flitwick by way of:</p> <p>* schools: Lower Schools are already full to bursting.</p>

- * doctors: the car park is already inadequate.
- * parking in Flitwick.
- * traffic: adding this development to existing traffic volumes + the additional traffic from the new housing estates in Ampthill and the Center Parcs development will not exactly enhance our quality of life.
- * shops - no doubt an inevitable consequence of the extra housing will be the expansion of Tesco.

The Exhibition provided no details whatsoever of the type of housing to be built on the site. To say that it will include green spaces is just totally laughable: the whole area is currently one big green space!

As regards the planned road layout:

- * to show the new Steppingley Road roundabout as part of the new estate is grossly misleading as this is being funded by Center Parcs as a condition of their development.
- * siting two mini roundabouts (one of which is far too close to the proposed railway bridge one way system) on the already narrow Froghall Road is crazy. Mini roundabouts just do not work; you only need to look at the tyre marks over every single one - people just drive over them. If the estate has to have an exit on Froghall Road, reduce it to one exit and make it a T Junction like the one proposed on Steppingley Road.
- * reducing the railway bridge to one way traffic is guaranteed to add to traffic chaos. Froghall Road is currently the only viable through route from West to East. The fact that you have to put a footpath under the bridge is precisely why you should not build on this site!
- * whenever it rains, Froghall Road floods on the Ampthill side of the railway bridge. Adding extra run off from the new estate will only compound this problem.
- * the traffic projections mentioned to us were grossly optimistic and did not appear to take into account the Ampthill/Center Parcs developments. You only need to look at the queues during the current roadworks along Fordfield Road & Steppingley Road to understand the potential impact of increased traffic volumes.

	<p>Whilst it is clearly too late to stop the estate being built, I do hope you will think again about the road layout and do something to improve services for existing residents - and the newcomers; after all, the houses will not sell if education, youth and medical facilities are inadequate.</p>
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