

Meeting of NDO Steering Committee
Held over two sessions 18 Feb/4 March 2022
Held at Lower Town Farmhouse
Approved out of committee

Present

Giles Baxter (GB) - chair

Simon Russell (SR)

Christopher Purvis (CP) (Joined by Zoom)

Rob Hollin (RH) (18th Feb only, joined By Zoom)

Penny Hill (PH) (18th Feb only)

Chris Neill (CN)

Charles Campion (CC) (Joined by Zoom)

Chris Brotherton (CB)

Sara Ward (SW) representing the GP Partners (Joined by Zoom)

In attendance

Kevin Brady (KB)

- 1) Registration of Interests. Attached. No change.
- 2) Minutes of meeting 23 June 2021. Already agreed out of committee and published.
- 3) Parish Council matters. CN reported that the monitoring officer has responded to the allegations made against GB, CN, and Councillor Glenn Pereira. No further action is to be taken, and the responses have been published. Nothing other than this to report.
- 4) Income and expenditure report. The SG reviewed the income and expenditure report, attached to these minutes, which shows project income and expenditure since the inception of the project in 2017. The SG noted that all invoices are submitted for audit under Parish Council procedures, and that grant applications and expenditure are scrutinised by Locality (who make the award) and Groundwork UK (who administer the award). The SG agreed that the report should be published. **Action GB** [Afternote. To be published once they have been cross checked with the Parish Council accounts].
- 5) Surgery Matters. SW reported on meetings held on 3 occasions with the CCG. The CCG confirmed their support for the scheme and had made an initial financial offer which the partners were reviewing.
- 6) Pre-app advice. GB, CB and KB briefed the meeting on the key points from a meeting with the SODC planning officer held on 27 January 2022:
 - a. The officer had suggested that the NDO should demonstrate how the impact on the openness of the Green Belt has been minimised through the design process. GB, CB and KB reported the helpful guidance from the Landscape Officer about how to reduce the visual impact on the Paddock site, by removing the westernmost plot, and aligning the remaining three with the existing built form, i.e. the same set back from the A415.
 - b. GB, CB and KB suggested that further reduction in the spatial impact on the Allotments site, i.e. reduce the amount of Green Belt land being developed, would be welcomed by the officer.

- c. The Conservation Officer had said that the development was likely to cause ‘less-than-substantial harm’. Any harm that there was would need to be balanced against the planned public benefit.
 - d. The conservation officer suggested that the character of the built form of the village was a linear development along the A415 and the Oxford Road. This was at odds with the SG’s view, as advised by KB that, self evidently, the pattern of development and set back is open, as demonstrated by the ‘black dot’ model.
 - e. GB, CB and KB reported the discussion on Very Special Circumstances, the key points being:
 - i. VSCs would need to demonstrate Public Benefit.
 - ii. VSCs would need to include a robust assessment of Housing Need, beyond that of the surveys and consultations already conducted. GB agreed to request technical support from Locality for a Housing Needs Assessment. **Action GB.** (Afternote: now commissioned from AECOM and Terms of Reference agreed with SODC).
 - iii. VSCs would need to include a robust site assessment. GB reminded the SG that this requirement had already been flagged in Counsel’s advice on the response to the letters of complaint L1 and L2 and in the correspondence between the group of objectors and SODC (known as L3 and L4), and that technical support for such an assessment had been requested from and agreed by Locality, and that the site assessment being conducted by AECOM was already under way. (Afternote: AECOM site visit was conducted on 4th April)
- 7) The SG discussed the design tensions:
- a. Responding to the planning officer’s comments by reducing spatial impact, which suggests a further reduction in housing, vs maintaining the numbers of affordable housing and generating financial benefit which suggests maintaining or increasing housing by increasing density and/or size of the development area
 - b. Responding to the conservation officer’s comments which implied changing the allotments site to linear development, either along the A415 or parallel with Watery Lane as per the original consultation design, or maintaining the current concept for the Allotments, i.e. loosely sited housing around a square/green on the basis that this does conform to the current development pattern.

CB explained that, in anticipation of the SG wishing to explore options particularly for the allotments site, 3 sketches had been prepared:

- c. Option 1: Allotment site as is, but further reducing spatial needs.
- d. Option 2: Allotment site as a linear development along the A415
- e. Option 3: Allotment site as a linear development behind the village hall parallel to the public footpath (in effect a return to the November 2020 concept, albeit smaller in scale).

The SG considered the three options presented, attached. They unanimously agreed that Options 2 and 3 were without merit aesthetically and in the light of residents’ comments from the consultation should not be considered further. They agreed to proceed with option 1 with the following further refinements:

- a. Restrict the boundary of the allotment site development entirely within the existing allotments, and do not ‘landscape’ the northern half

- b. Move the burial garden to the Paddock site
- c. Further mitigate the spatial impact by reducing the number of houses on the Allotment site to 14, which, with the 3 retained on the Paddock site, reduces the total to 17.
- d. Flip the barn style houses and the Georgian style farmhouse on the Paddock Site so that they more closely match the existing buildings as seen when approaching from the west, and align the set back to that of the stone barn of Butts Furlong alongside the site, and Hampden House.

Action CB/KB

During the discussion, the SG revisited the reasons why the current design was so different from that consulted upon in the Initial Parish Consultation 2020/2021. KB reminded the SG that their original brief was to provide 25-30 dwellings whilst minimising impact on the openness of the greenbelt (general green belt policy guidance but not specific to this particular site). KB's instinct, based on planning experience in the area, and supported by heritage consultant guidance, was therefore to propose development that stayed to the east of the available fields i.e. to the rear of the Watery Lane dwellings with their very long gardens, thereby retaining the open character of the remaining site especially from the highway. However this layout was never tested through pre-app as it was clearly opposed by some residents for a variety of reasons. The SG felt that some of these reasons should carry considerable weight and directed a move to the revised layout. [Afternote. Coupled with a reduction in number of houses, the revised layout appears to be broadly supported by SODC officers].

Part 2 – 4th March 2022

- 8) Amended Design. The SG considered the amended design for the allotments site, copy attached. They agreed that it met with the direction given on 18th February, and was a significant improvement on previous versions, and agreed that this should now form the basis for developing the draft NDO for consultation under Reg 21, subject to the following further refinements:
- a. Development on the Allotments site to be further set back from the A415 in order to match the set back south of the road, and to further mitigate the impact on Hampden House and Hampden Cottage.
 - b. To show the parking space for the burial garden as 'dedicated field' rather than developed car parking.
- [Afternote. The scheme was further amended as directed, discussed with SODC officers on 10 March, and published as set out in Section 10b below. Copy attached.]
- 9) Viability. CB briefed the SG on the financial implications of the reduction in houses. The SG were asked:
- a. To note that, with only 17 houses, the project was not financially viable if a) benefits to the community were to be maintained at levels already declared, and b) the scheme included Affordable Housing for Shared Ownership/Rent. The value of the scheme to the Landowner, nett of gifts, was also well below the £100K per acre that would be considered the minimum benchmark in a Viability Assessment and therefore by an Inspector.
 - b. To note that the only way to make the scheme commercially viable and the community benefit retained at published levels, was to remove the Affordable Housing. Even then, the margin that would be taken by Thomas Homes would

be very significantly less than the 20% that would normally be considered as commercially viable should capital funding be raised through normal lending facilities, e.g. a bank. However Thomas Homes were well capitalised and could fund the development from reserves; and they have a policy of undertaking one major community project, i.e. not seeking a normal commercial profit, at any one time. This NDO is their current community project.

After discussion, the SG agreed that all 17 houses in the scheme should be market housing, and that a Viability Assessment would be prepared on that basis. **Action GB** to commission a Viability Assessment. [Afternote. At a follow up meeting with SODC officers on 10 March, the impact of including Affordable Housing on the viability of the scheme was raised. SODC officers listened to our representation that to include Affordable Housing would mean increasing above the 17 proposed, which conflicts with the requirements of the Green Belt to minimise spatial use, and the requirements of the Conservation Area to maintain a loose arrangement, ie, low density. Officers concurred that a robust Viability Assessment would be required to make the case to the Inspector. A request for technical support to prepare a viability assessment has since been submitted to Locality and agreed, and an appraisal meeting timetabled for 19th May 2022]

10) Project Timetable. The SG noted/agreed the timetable:

- a. Pre-app. Process considered complete once GB, CB and KB have fed back our proposed changes to the officers, subject to any adverse reactions. [Afternote. The feedback meeting was held on 10th March. The officers were supportive of the changes].
- b. Communications. **Action GB** to update residents on the scheme going forward to Reg 21 via:
 - i. The Bridge Magazine, April edition [Complete]
 - ii. NDO Website [Complete]
 - iii. Village email [Complete]
 - iv. Annual Parish Meeting (25 May 2022)
- c. Regulation 14 and 21 statutory consultations: target date June 2022.
- d. Pre submission consultation by SODC: autumn 2022
- e. Submission for public examination: early 2023
- f. Referendum: April 2023

11) Regulation 21 Consultation. GB and CN would now work up the arrangements for managing the Reg 14/Reg 21 consultation. This would use a micro-site hosted on the PC website. The SG agreed a working assumption that responses would not be anonymous, i.e., names and addresses would be published, in line with normal practice for statutory consultations. **Action GB/CN**

12) AOB. None.

13) DONM: 13 May to agree launch of Reg 14/21 consultation. [Afternote. The documentation will not be ready until the end of May at the earliest so this meeting will be postponed. GB to suggest a new date/time when ready]

Enclosures:

Design option sketches (x 3)

Revised scheme (discussed on 4th March)

Published Scheme (discussed with SODC Officers on 10th March)

Black & White Figure Ground Diagram

Income and Expenditure Report [To follow]

Register of Members' as at 18 Feb 22

Pecuniary Interests

Name	Interest	When registered
Christopher Purvis	Representing the beneficiaries of the DCL Gibbs Settlement	November 2019
Charles Campion	Director of Savills, agents to the DCL Gibbs Settlement	November 2019
Christopher Brotherton	Director of Thomas Homes, the development partner	November 2019
Dr Irene Steinbrecher Dr Estelle James	GP Surgery Partners	November 2019
Sara Ward	Director of Critical Edge Associates Limited, representing the GP Surgery Partners	February 2021
Chris Neill	Owner of the Clifton Hampden Village Store and Post Office (business, not building), who will benefit from shop and post office revenue resulting from the scheme	February 2021

Register of Members' Other Interests

Name	Interest	When registered
Giles Baxter	Ownership of the paddock land known as Site G which shares a short boundary with the Paddock site. There is no identified pecuniary or other benefit to ownership by delivery of the NDO project	December 2020
Chris Neill	Tenant of the post office and shop building, whose ownership will change under the current proposals. There is no identified pecuniary or other benefit from the transfer of ownership.	February 2021