

## Shaping The Vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Garden Village at Whetstone Pastures

### Notes following Zoom meeting on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 7.30pm

In attendance:

Tritax Symmetry	Jonathan Wallis (JW)
	Charlie Mackaness (CM)
	Sinead Turnbull (ST) Planning Director
Savills	Andrew Raven (AR) Master Plan Architect
Framptons	Julie Thomas (JT) Planner
UK Networks Communications	Alun Hayes (AH)
	Laura Tickle (LT)
Willoughby Waterleys Parish Council	Councillor David Campbell Kelly (DCK)
	Councillor Philip Day (PD)
	Councillor Arthur Lyons (AL)
	Councillor Emma Clanfield (EC)
	Councillor Philip Leech (PL)
	Jackie Jackson (Parish Clerk)

DCK introduced the members of the Parish Council and JW introduced the members of his team

DCK stated that the Parish Councillors were not there to form opinions but were only there for information gathering at the present time and it should be noted that no planning case has been proven, a Local Plan Review was pending, and no planning application was so far submitted.

JW outlined the purpose of the workshop, format, background on the Garden Village, where the process is currently up to, core themes and next steps.

DCK said parishioners had been invited to submit questions to Councillors and he would like the opportunity to raise some of these at the end of the meeting if not covered by the discussion. JW acknowledged and said it should be an open discussion between all parties.

JW said it was a Draft Vision only at the start of the process and nothing was cast in stone. They were consulting and engaging with stakeholders for feedback. This was the first of a stage of a process and there is no end game and although the consultation ended on 24<sup>th</sup> January it was not the end and feedback would be continuously considered.

AH – Stated his role was that of Community Engagement and that it was proposed that the meeting would be recorded. The Council agreed and it was confirmed a copy would be made available. Detailed feedback can be made following the workshop and a further discussion was arranged with the residents through WWRA. AH shared a series of slides and said they would be made available to the Parish Council following the workshop.

JT - Planning Director for Framptons (Independent Planning Consultants) and resident of South Leicestershire since 1977. Explained a Garden Village allows to plan for development rather than being unplanned development where existing communities are under pressure.

ST – The site is intersected by the M1 motorway and was awarded Garden Village status in 2018. Land falls within Blaby District and adjoining Harborough District which would be for possible expansion of the development. A final Vision document incorporating ideas will be produced in April/May and a Concept Framework for the site will be produced. There would be opportunities to engage through the Local Plan process.

DCK stated the dates for the Concept Framework document were shown as late 2020/ early 2021, which was inconsistent with the programme outlined and reality. AH said detailed technical work is on-going at present. Surveys have been carried out over the past 6-9 months. Concept Framework is evidence gathering which takes between 12-18 months and is ongoing. The output will be a document which is not yet in place.

- DCK asked if it would be ready early 2021.

JW was felt it was more likely to be mid-2021.

AR – Savills Master Planning Team based in Oxford. Survey work will form detailed proposals as they come forward, but matters were currently at an early stage. Feedback was requested on core themes which may in time form development principles. He stated the aim was to make WP a unique place. Uniqueness can be based on building details and materials etc and he was keen to know of local landscape features, i.e. brook, history of site, buildings, spaces in order to make WP a unique place. Have ideas but keen to see if there was any local inspiration.

- DCK commented that because it is so standalone there is no good reason as to why anything local should try to be matched.

AR stated that a development such as WP can take on its own character but feels it can draw on local history and will be carrying out consultations on spaces, buildings.

AH - comments had been received via the website – people not completely opposed but many ideas have come forward and shared a slide of positive comments received.

- DCK asked if a housebuilder was on board yet giving input and design as they would undoubtedly have their own ideas. AR confirmed no-one at present. Central Government guidelines for Better Building but were also looking at what Princes Foundation did in Nansledan near Newquay which is based on local materials, landscapes features, colours etc.

AH stated it was likely that several national housebuilders would be involved due to size of the development at WP. JT - Tritax would be looking at to create a sensitive development with variations but this was at an early stage at the moment but any input welcome. Consulting will take place on house types.

## **Community**

AR – Core theme is to build a strong community and New Lubbesthorpe have Community Officers in place to help form clubs and to help people moving in, to orientate themselves, travel options. Keen to put such things in place at an early stage such as:

- Are their local amenities, public areas, open space that need to be maintained, perhaps under a stewardship body.
- Community needs to work at the beginning which is why a local school is so important and needs to be discussed with Local Authority.
- DCK said such things would be very important at the outset and need to be in place from the beginning to set the tone and no point in trying to add at a later stage.

AH - Understanding how surrounding facilities work needs to be built in, for example a school needs to be in place early so that people can use it immediately.

- In previous workshops hubs were raised and how existing communities get drawn in and the design team was what the needs of the existing community as well as those of the new community.
- Healthcare infrastructure would be looked at along with connectivity with local villages, cycle paths. The meeting was assured that the needs of existing community will be taken into account.

## Health

AR - Covid had meant that people were working at home. Active travel links to wider employment would be considered. Would also seek to encourage active travel/lifestyles. Integration of green spaces, sports, recreation, dog walking routes, 5k routes in terms of physical infrastructure.

- Mental health and education could be opportunities to introduce stewardship, community farming, work with primary schools, education on healthy eating.
- Existing landowners have passion and working with farming and working with developers as to how their legacy could be incorporated.
- AL asked if the developer would be leaving a green wedge between the development and the Conservation Village of Willoughby Waterleys. AR said this would be taken into consideration and landscape and topography required good urban design and planning and will be in the Concept Framework document. All detailed planning work will be converted into a draft Master Plan which will focus initially on usage rather than detail.

AH – Many comments received around the themes mentioned also negative comments received.

- DCK commented that a Doctors surgery would be needed to be included, which was accepted.

## Environment

AR - There was potential to link the site into the natural environment to allow nearby settlements to connect into the infrastructure at Whetstone Pastures. Not many natural assets but some small copses, railway line across the northern end of site and Whetstone brook.

- The intention would be to retain as much as possible of existing landscape. There should be net bio-diversity gain and creation of new wildlife habitats to replace the loss.
- DCK stated there were 2 old railway lines - one to the north and one parallel to the M1 and they could be good opportunities for them to be used for cycle paths to connect to say, Cosby and/or Countesthorpe and felt this should be explored. AR - These areas would be looked at and also the areas that can't be developed such as where the gas pipeline lay. Areas of railway line lend itself to conversion or cycleway or wildlife area but whilst the site has roads, paths and asked whether it was seen as an amenity at the moment or an untapped resource. Balance needs to be between being a community trying to limit its effect and burden on external areas but also to invite people in, to enjoy the facilities.
- DCK commented that as the public rights of way were protected, they could be enhanced green spaces. JW asked if these areas were seen as an amenity at present or as an untapped resource. DCK said rights of way are well used and would have to be retained. AR - Hopes to increase footpaths running through areas and increasing green spaces.
- DCK raised the fact that otters are believed to be on the site. JW said the watercourse had been surveyed but made no comment about otters.

## Sustainable Movement

AR - Stated that there were predominantly footpaths rather than bridleways cross the site.

- The intention within the village is to try and minimise movement by private vehicles and maximise travel by foot or bike. Part of such strategy links jobs with homes and design would be based on historic model of village with crossroads of routes with most people living within 5 min walking distance of village centres so that local needs are serviced.
- Urban design is extremely difficult as so much is changing at the moment. In the next 5 – 20 years (timescales for allocations and build) within 10 years autonomous vehicles may be used and future transport strategy will be looked at to see that it is delivered now and in the future.
- Home working or working in local hubs would be increasingly important and invited thoughts.
- DCK – The point of most concern to parishioners is sustainability. How the loss of 1000 acres of green fields in the middle of open countryside and away from existing settlements can be described as sustainable. It was likely that the majority of people living in the development will not work in logistic park and they will drive out to work. How can that be described as sustainable?
- DCK gave details being considered at the Chelmsford Garden Village with self-parking cars that drop you at your house and then the car goes to an off-site car park. This is just an example of changes that will need to be considered through the life cycle of such a large-scale development.

AR – These are difficult to design for and raise a number of issues as the key problem with vehicles has previously been air quality but electric vehicle may help that but will not help with congestion.

- Car parking is difficult in design. Other schemes have limited parking for each house, but it could be convertible, i.e. parking in public areas that could be made over to greens or public buildings.  
JW – At the moment can only build in flexibility so as not to hinder advances that will take place in years to come.
- DCK stated that Blaby have parking standards, County Council have highways standards on road widths, path sizes. Has there been discussion on relaxation from these standards in the Garden Village? JW said that a workshop had taken place with stakeholders and a departure from local standards had proved successful in other garden villages. Discussions ongoing
- DCK reiterated parishioners concerns over sustainability and this was acknowledged. JW confirmed that as a responsible developer, it is a major point of concern. Last year they were the first developer from logistics point of view to commit to carbon zero.
- PL asked if a list of precedents be provided where they have worked well. JW said that although it was future gazing a list of developments could be provided to show as to how it can be delivered.

## Logistics

JW acknowledged that not everyone will work at the logistics park but data would be used to support this. There was a huge demand for the logistics due to the massive increase in on-line purchasing. There would be a mix of employment and WP could also accommodate office workspaces, small and medium enterprises. On-line shopping will continue but the Garden community will not be limited to that type of employment.

AH – Logistics operations depend on artificial intelligence but also provide hi-tech jobs and there would be infrastructure built in for home working etc by way of increased broadband speeds etc.

- DCK asked re timescales on delivery, commenting that the Magna Park complex had taken decades and asked how long would 4 million sq ft take? Also, to note that unemployment was not a problem within the local area where will people come from to go into the new jobs created?

JW responded that the average take-up for a scheme of such nature would be ½ million sq ft per annum, therefore 4 million in 8 years but this was market led and could change rapidly. 50 million sq ft had been taken up in 2020 and due to the recent Covid situation, 7 years on-line sales growth had taken place in the past 9 months. Tritax had 4000 acres being promoted over 19 local authorities. Covid had brought significant levels of unemployment, with Leicester South having the highest increase in the 16 – 25 age range at 192%. DCK commented that if that was correct, it is was from a very low base.

- DCK asked if anyone was currently on board with the logistics. JW said that is commercial, but Tritax were not averse to carrying out speculative development.

### **Climate Mitigation**

AR- The national requirement is to be carbon zero target by 2050 and there were National guidelines on housebuilding that had to be adhered to.

- How to deliver energy on site and how to save energy across the development, innovative water management. The Future Homes Standard would be applied which meant no gas. Heating could be via ground source heat pumps or even air/water could be used. Efficiency would be paramount.
- On behalf of a parishioner, DCK asked how it was planned for light pollution to be mitigated. AR stated with development of LED's lighting would be more controllable and targeted. There would be less light spill or reflection at night. It was felt to be a good question and it was acknowledged that lights could be off early evening as not everywhere needed to be lit at all times. Bath City has its own lighting scheme and something similar could be considered and will be taken into consideration.

### **Summary**

JW - This a very important stage for the local community and there is a keenness to consult and engage throughout the process and would welcome questions.

- DCK asked in order to minimise impact from the development, was it accepted that no logistics could be occupied without the new motorway junction being opened? JW said this was a very fair comment and accepted that end users would want such infrastructure to be in place at the outset and that this would need to be the case.
- DCK - What timetable is envisaged, as Blaby District had no housing requirement before 2031?

JW stated that they were not currently consulting on timescales only on the Vision Document but running in line with Blaby Local Plan but asked ST to comment further.

ST Within the next 12 months, but only after site surveys were carried out and on-going data collection analysed, would they produce the Concept Framework document. That evidence would then be used to produce a Master Plan which would need to demonstrate deliverability and viability. The information will be feed into evidence based for the final Local Plan submission likely Q1 2022 to Blaby District Council, provided the Local Plan timetable is adhered to.

- EC commented that she felt it was a great vision but asked how many such places actually come to fruition as the Vision?

AR said it was very rare for everything to work as originally expected and dedication was needed to keep a vision on track. It required collaborative efforts and it would be the developers putting most work into the process to ensure a good, high quality design, stewardship and to create a better place and hopes a great Vision can be put together.

- EC also brought up the issue of motorway noise and asked if the Tritax team were aware of just how noisy it was especially with the prevailing west winder and how unfair this would be to residents of the new development. AR replied that yes, they were aware of this, and it could be mitigated in several ways including land form, building design, road materials, buffers etc.
- AL asked when a plan would be available to show broadly where the logistics would be sited in relation to the residential.

ST The first draft Master Plan would be worked on during the current year

- DCK said he had other questions to raise as follows and asked for them to be noted:
  - There was concern that the area had a lot of equestrian use and about construction traffic access routes.
  - There was concern over the traffic surveys not just from the development but the change in traffic flow that would be caused to local villages by the construction of the new motorway junction. Would the impact of the proposed new junction be considered far afield? JW said it would and ST said a regional transport model had been created for the County which looks as wide as it has to go. Leicestershire County Council and Highways England will be consulted from both a local highway view and major trunk roads.
  - Co2 footprint – 80 tonnes per house how will it be offset?
  - The leaflet provided, shows the site as being 6 miles from Leicester but it is actually 9 miles and it was felt that the plan was extremely poor due to its size.
  - Pollution
  - A46 expressway – the County Council have not given up on the Strategic Growth Plan initiatives and are still considering alternative roads. How might Whetstone Pastures feed into alternative strategic local roads? JW said a study is currently being held with local authorities are they are feeding into it. Various scenarios were being modelled to be fed into the Local Plan. It was far too early to talk about financing.
  - There was no doubt that Willoughby Waterleys would be adversely affected by the proposed development and DCK asked if consideration had been given to the development being restricted to the west side of Willoughby Road and be screened along the roadside. DCK asked for thoughts. JW said that this would be looked at and was pleased to receive such comments. Certain numbers have to be met to make the scheme viable.

No further questions.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm