

**Local Allocation LA2 the Old Town, Hemel Hempstead
Dacorum room, Civic Centre, Hemel Hempstead**

Minutes

Meeting Date

8 May 2013

Attendees

Present: John Chapman (DBC Strategic Planning and Regeneration)
 Hilary Satchwell (Tibbalds)
 Lizzie Cowan (Tibbalds)
 Roger Hands (Dacorum Heritage Trust and Dacorum Environment Forum Water Group)
 Rick Ronald (Neighbourhood Action Group)
 Pat Nesbit (Local Resident)
 Jill Nesbit (Local Resident)
 Brenda Mariner (Local Resident)
 David Lewis (Local Resident)
 Karen Smith (Local Resident)
 Jeanette Corfield (Local Resident)
 Rose Campbell (DBC Strategic Planning and Regeneration)
 Loretta Asare (DBC Strategic Planning and Regeneration)

Apologies: None

Discussion	Action
<p>Purpose of the Meeting</p> <p>John Chapman said that the Council realises that many local residents are opposed to housing development on site LA2 (i.e. land between Cherry Bounce, Fletcher Way and Townsend). However, housing was proposed in the Council's Core Strategy and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the site should be planned. The Council wants to tap into local knowledge, to help establish planning principles for the site in the Site Allocations document and the more detailed masterplan.</p>	
<p>Context for the Masterplan</p> <p>John Chapman gave a presentation covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal in the Dacorum Core Strategy (which the Council hopes to adopt in late summer or early autumn 2013) for 80 homes on LA2. • The forthcoming Site Allocations document and the masterplan for the site. • The application from a local resident for the site to be registered as a town or village green, which the Council will be opposing. 	
<p>Site context</p> <p>Lizzie Cowan from Tibbalds gave a presentation, based on the Deliverability Study produced by Tibbalds for the Council in August 2012. Tibbalds explained that they want everyone's input on what should be included in the masterplan for the site.</p>	

Discussion	Action
<p>Questions and discussion</p> <p><u>Overall approach to development of the site</u></p> <p>Jeanette Corfield, Karen Smith and Brenda Mariner said Framework Diagram Approach 2 is preferable to Approach 1. This is because Approach 2 provides a larger, more useable area of open space, retains more trees and has less of an impact on residents living on the Townsend estate. Rick Ronald also favoured Approach 2, as it is a bit like the existing development in the Old Town.</p> <p><u>Green Belt boundary</u></p> <p>John Chapman said that the Council expects the revised Green Belt boundary to go along Fletcher Way. This will be shown in the Site Allocations document.</p> <p>Roger Hands said any land removed from the Green Belt should ideally be replaced by the designation of new Green Belt land elsewhere. He is concerned that housing development on the Old Town site will harm the approach to the Old Town.</p> <p>John Chapman said new landscaping along Fletcher Way could help minimise the impact on the approach to the Old Town. Jeanette Corfield, Jill Nesbit and David Lewis said the land on the other side of Fletcher Way would be a better site for housing than the LA2 site. John Chapman said the Council considered the land across Fletcher Way in the early stages of preparing the Core Strategy, however, it was rejected for various reasons. In particular, it would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • result in Hemel Hempstead joining onto Piccotts End; • have an impact on the local nature reserve next to Link Road; and • cause more harm than LA2 to the open countryside to the north. <p>Also, the Riding Stables occupy part of this land and their lease has many years to run.</p> <p><u>Design / layout / housing mix</u></p> <p>Rick Ronald said that by the time the site is developed the Code for Sustainable Homes will require new housing to be zero carbon. This will add greatly to house building costs and may make housing on LA2 unviable, despite what the Council's viability study for the site says. The steep slope will also add to the costs of developing the site.</p> <p>John Chapman said that the site is Council owned, there are no exceptional costs associated with development and the viability study shows that the viability of the site is good. The Code for Sustainable Homes will not make housing unviable.</p> <p>Jill Nesbit asked how far the housing would be set back from the footpath next to Cherry Bounce/Cherry Bank. The trees behind the big house at the High Street/Fletcher Way junction go further up the hill than shown on Tibbalds's plan. Tibbalds responded by saying that these points will be considered in the masterplan.</p> <p>Rick Ronald said that some shared ownership housing should be provided, as this would help people trying to get on to the property ladder.</p>	

Discussion	Action
<p>The Core Strategy proposes that 40% of the housing on LA2 should be 'affordable'. The Council's general policy is that 75% of new affordable housing should be rented housing and 25% should be shared ownership, but this varies from site to site.</p> <p>Rick Ronald asked how the Council knew that the new homes will be good quality? Tibbalds responded by saying that there are a number of ways the Council will ensure this, including the guidance in the masterplan.</p> <p>Pat Nesbit said that flats would not be appropriate on the site, as they might attract unwanted youths who would hang around and cause problems. Rick Ronald suggested that flats could be designed as maisonettes, rather than built in blocks. Good quality houses are needed and there was a concern about flats. Local residents want more two to three bedroom dwellings.</p> <p>Tibbalds said flats don't have to look much different from houses. They would be designed so that they are safe and secure. The masterplan can contain development principles for flats.</p> <p>Roger Hands said good quality housing is needed and the design should be influenced by the Old Town Conservation Area. The Council has produced good guidance on the conservation area.</p> <p><u>Landscaping, open space and ecology</u></p> <p>Karen Smith said many of the trees should be kept and this should be stated in the masterplan. Tibbalds agreed. All the trees are rated A, B or C. This grading system is used to help decide which trees should be retained.</p> <p>Roger Hands said open space is very important – Framework Diagram Approach 2 provides the biggest open space and would be easier to protect in the future.</p> <p>Hilary Satchwell said there could be a 'Principles Plan' in the masterplan. For example, this could say whether it is better to have one or two areas of open space.</p> <p>Karen Smith said there is a bat colony near the site and Jeanette Corfield said the Council should look into where the bats live, as there are many of them and asked whether it could be a problem moving them. Lizzie Cowan said that an ecology survey will be needed at the planning application stage. Hilary Satchwell added that the masterplan will include a list of documents to be provided with the planning application and this will need to include a bat survey.</p> <p><u>Access and movement</u></p> <p>Jeanette Corfield asked where will the access roads into the site from Fletcher Way be located. Tibbalds said there will be a primary access road and probably a secondary access. The Framework Diagrams show possible locations.</p> <p>Rick Ronald asked how safe the new access roads need to be. Karen Smith also said the roads are in a poor state and housing development will mean extra traffic. Fletcher Way is quite dangerous, especially in winter when it is icy. Tibbalds said this is a matter for County Council as a highway authority. The detailed design of the access roads will be considered at the planning application stage. Some measures may be needed to ensure safety.</p> <p>David Lewis said road works have started in the Old Town and this will affect traffic in the area. Tibbalds were aware of this and the implications will be considered when the masterplan is drawn up.</p>	

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<p>Roger Hands said sufficient car parking should be provided for the new housing. Will the homes have garages? On-street parking should be avoided as it looks untidy. Tibbalds said that new development on the site will need to provide sufficient parking to meet the parking standards, the masterplan will make this explicit. It is likely that there would be a variety of parking on site, some will be in garages and allocated parking spaces either in the curtilage of new homes, on street or in parking courts.</p> <p>Rick Ronald, Karen Smith, David Lewis said the surface of the footpath running up the hill by Cherry Bounce and Cherry Bank should be improved (including street lighting), but should look as natural as possible. This should be stated in the masterplan. Rick Ronald also said there is no footpath on the far side of Fletcher Way. Tibbalds said it is probably not necessary to provide one.</p> <p>Jill Nesbit said there she had been informed that there is a covenant on the footpath by flint wall. Lizzie Cowan said she was not aware of any covenant.</p> <p>Jeanette Corfield said there is a shortage of parking for people living in Lavender Walk. She is concerned that the possible emergency access to the new housing may remove parking spaces currently used by residents.</p> <p>Hilary Satchwell said an emergency access might be needed. John Chapman said the need for parking spaces for Lavender Walk residents will be taken into account when decisions are made about the emergency access.</p>	
<p><u>Community facilities, infrastructure and contributions</u></p> <p>All the local residents: There is no need for a community centre on LA2 as there is already one nearby.</p> <p>Roger Hands: There is a general concern about water resources. Sustainable drainage systems should be provided on LA2 and the site should drain into the aquifer.</p> <p>Tibbalds: This will be considered in the masterplan.</p> <p><u>Other issues</u></p> <p>Roger Hands asked whether the target housing number for Hemel Hempstead is determined by the County Council. John Chapman said the County Council used to prepare the County Structure Plan, which included housing targets for each District or Borough. However, Dacorum Borough Council is now responsible for setting its own housing target.</p> <p>The timing of the development is a key issue for local residents and John Chapman said current indications are that LA2 will not be developed until after 2021. The position will be clarified in the Site Allocations document. However, the timing may change in the future if circumstances change.</p>	
<p>Summary and next steps</p> <p>John Chapman outlined the next steps in the planning of LA2. He emphasised that there will be an opportunity for everyone to comment on the draft version of the Site Allocations document (which will include planning guidelines for LA2) and the draft masterplan for LA2. These documents were likely to be published in late 2013. The exhibition on the Site Allocations document will include information on LA2.</p>	