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South West Milton Keynes

Community Engagement Strategy

Prepared by Athene Communications – April 2013



Introduction

This document sets out the Community Engagement Strategy that the South West Milton Keynes (SWMK) Consortium (Hallam Land, Taylor Wimpey, Connolly Homes, William Davis Homes, Bellcross Homes) intends to undertake in support of its planning application to develop up to 1,855 homes and associated infrastructure on the land situated between the A421, Whaddon Road and the disused Oxford to Cambridge railway line to the South West of Milton Keynes.

The site comprises part of the previous Salden Chase scheme for which the planning application was formally withdrawn in 2011 at the request of Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC). This new proposal is considerably different but has been shaped by the extensive consultation with councillors and local people undertaken in relation to Salden Chase. It has also been developed in line with the planning policies of AVDC and Milton Keynes Council.

The SWMK Consortium intends to undertake community engagement with Aylesbury Vale District and Milton Keynes stakeholders and residents, in particular those communities which are located closest to the proposed development.

Our overall aim is to create a meaningful dialogue that helps to build a shared, full and accurate understanding of the proposals and also enables the Consortium to hear and respond to people's views and where appropriate to further shape the proposals.

We have developed our proposals in line with the consultation guidance set out in Aylesbury Vale District Council's (AVDC) Adopted Statement of Community Involvement which includes the following main principles of community involvement:

- access to information
- the opportunity to contribute ideas
- the opportunity to take an active part in developing proposals
- the opportunity to be consulted and make representations on formal proposals
- the opportunity to receive feedback and be informed about progress and outcomes.

Given the proximity of the proposed development to Milton Keynes, we have also taken into account Milton Keynes Council's Adopted Statement of Community Involvement. (See below for details).

This Community Engagement Strategy also fully references the Localism Act which outlines the importance of pre-application community engagement for all types of development.

We have already begun pre-application engagement with key stakeholders and propose to launch our full public consultation in May, once our initial pre-application meetings with AVDC and Milton Keynes Council about the masterplan have taken place.



SOUTH WEST MILTON KEYNES SITE – Draft Illustrative Masterplan



Engagement objectives

The Community Engagement Strategy is based on four key objectives designed to meet the requirements of AVDC's Statement of Community Involvement and the Localism Act to ensure that engagement is robust and approached in the right way:

1. **To ensure that communications are clear and transparent and reach the right people.** We want to ensure that people are fully aware about the vision and details of our proposals. The key points that we want to communicate and the ways in which we will communicate them are set out in the sections below.
2. **To provide a variety of mechanisms for people to provide feedback.** We want to ensure that the process is as accessible as possible by providing a number of different ways in which people can submit their comments.
3. **To build constructive links with key stakeholders and local organisations.** We will engage key stakeholders and business organisations from both Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes to ensure that they are fully aware of and able to comment on our proposals.
4. **To respond to feedback.** We want to ensure that we respond to comments that we receive and, where appropriate, explain how they have helped us to further shape our proposals.

Key messages

Key points that we would want to communicate include:

- the reasons why there is a need to build new homes – focusing on national, regional and local needs and the planning policy context of both AVDC and MKC.
- the economic and social benefits of the proposals in terms of new homes, including affordable housing, employment opportunities, investment in infrastructure and in the local neighbourhood.
- details about what is being proposed – ensuring that people have a full picture about what the proposed development entails along with possible impacts and the proposals for mitigation.
- findings from technical and environmental studies that are currently being undertaken.

Our approach - Engagement Strategy

In developing our engagement strategy we have taken into account the importance placed upon pre-application consultation in the Localism Act, as well as the consultation principles and guidance set out in Aylesbury Vale District Council's Adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

In addition, given the proximity to Milton Keynes, we have also considered Milton Keynes Council's Adopted Statement of Community Involvement. This, for example, recommends undertaking a Community Equalities Audit at the start of an engagement process. This is something



that is a standard and integral part of our community engagement process to ensure a full understanding of the local community and stakeholder landscape.

The advice on pages 33 and 34 of AVDC's SCI in relation to Significant Planning Applications, recognises that the approach to community involvement will vary "depending on the nature and scale of the proposed development, and the stage in the development process that the proposal has reached." It also explains that the matrix on page 34 sets out a starting point for discussing consultation requirements and is not a prescriptive requirement.

We have borne in mind this advice and the approaches outlined in the matrix for a tier 1 development in preparing this strategy. We have also considered the extensive consultation that was undertaken for the previous Salden Chase scheme, which included:

- stakeholder presentations
- three detailed stakeholder workshops to shape the masterplan
- a two-day exhibition
- public meetings
- a feedback form
- a website

The engagement strategy for the new proposals includes five key elements:

1. A community audit
2. Pre-application communication and engagement
3. Capturing, tracking and responding to comments
4. Statement of Community Involvement
5. Community feedback



Community audit

The community and stakeholder audit is designed to ensure that we have a detailed understanding of the local community, including more marginalised groups, the local policy framework and stakeholder landscape. This has already informed the development of our engagement strategy and will inform the stakeholder database and communications.

Pre-application communication and engagement

We have developed a tailored approach for communicating with the following stakeholder groups:

1. **Key Stakeholders** - Key AVDC and Milton Keynes stakeholders including councillors, town and parish councils, businesses and other organisations. The engagement will include:
 - written correspondence to stakeholders outlining our proposals and highlighting ways they can provide feedback;
 - joint briefing meetings to be offered to elected members of Aylesbury Vale District Council; Milton Keynes Council, and Bucks County Council;
 - briefings offered for key business stakeholders – AVDC Chamber of Commerce, SEMLEP, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP, Buckingham Business Club;
 - briefings offered for town and parish councils;
 - briefings for residents' associations in the consultation area;

- briefings for representatives of hard to reach groups identified in the Community Audit.

2. Local Community - The 6,000 homes and businesses closest to the site. The map below highlights the proposed areas in which we will directly communicate our proposals. The engagement will include:

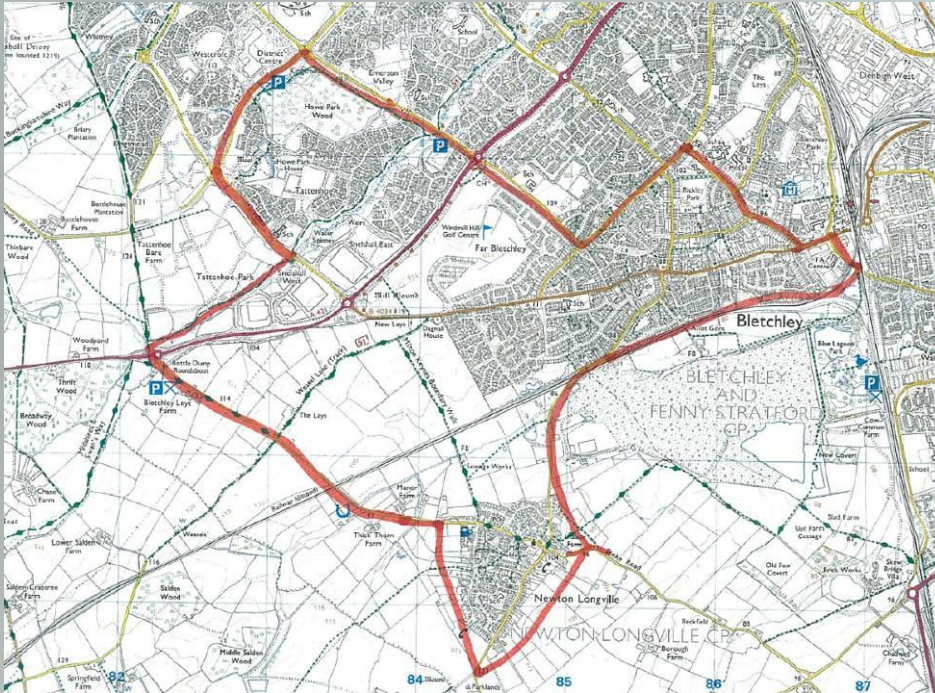
- a newsletter to be delivered to each household providing a summary of the proposals and details of exhibitions and ways to find out more and give feedback;
- posters to be displayed at key community facilities advertising the exhibitions and with brief details about the proposals and how to find out more;
- public exhibitions in Newton Longville and Bletchley (one in each). The exhibitions will be open to all, but will be held in the communities nearest the proposed development recognising the need to make them as accessible as possible to local people. Exhibitions will be staffed by the SWMK Consortium project team and will provide people with an opportunity to find out more about the proposals, raise any questions or concerns with the project team and give their feedback. A hard copy of the proposed masterplan will be available for people to take away with them and copies of the exhibitions boards will be available to download from the website.

3. Wider Community - The wider Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes communities. The engagement will include:

- Posters to be displayed at key community facilities advertising the exhibitions and with brief details about the proposals and how to find out more information;
- proposals and exhibitions will be advertised in the Bucks Herald and Milton Keynes Citizen. Media releases will also outline the proposed development and advertise and promote events;
- a stand-alone website, www.southwestmiltonkeynes.co.uk, which provides full details about the proposals and enable feedback to be submitted online;
- a Freephone number, Freepost address, and dedicated email address will be established to allow people to provide their comments and ask questions.



Map showing 6,000 closest homes and businesses to proposed site:



Capturing, tracking and responding to feedback

There will be a range of ways in which feedback can be provided:

- Through the stakeholder briefings
- In person, at the exhibitions
- Via the website
- By email
- By calling the Freephone number
- By writing to the Freepost address

All feedback will be recorded and acknowledged. All feedback will be considered by the SWMK Consortium project team and where appropriate, a written response will be provided.

An overview of feedback and responses will be presented in the Statement of Community Involvement, explaining how the comments have helped to further shape the proposals or why they have not been able to be addressed.

Community feedback

At the time of submission of the planning application, a summary of the Statement of Community Involvement will be issued to all stakeholders. The summary will also be incorporated into a newsletter to be delivered to the local community (the 6,000 homes and businesses closest to the proposed site) and made available on the website. Key elements will also be communicated via the local media.



Timeline

Pre-application communication and stakeholder engagement began in December 2012. In developing the timeline we have sought to ensure that promotion of the public consultation starts after the Buckinghamshire County Council elections on 2 May 2013. We have also avoided holding briefings or exhibitions during the school half term. The table below shows the timeline for engagement activities:

Activity	Detail	Date
Community Audit	Community and Stakeholder Audit completed to ensure a detailed understanding of the local community, policy framework, and stakeholder landscape.	December 2012
Engagement with key stakeholders (prior to launch of public consultation)	Letter summarising the proposals and flagging proposed public consultation.	January, February 2013
	Meetings with key elected members, parish councils, business leaders.	April – May 2013
	Briefings for elected members, stakeholder briefings.	
Promotion of public consultation	Launch of stand-alone website	April 2013
	Widespread promotion of the consultation period through a range of channels – letters to stakeholders, online, in the media, advertising, through posters, leaflet to 6,000 homes and businesses closest to the proposed site.	w/c 6 May-w/c 3 June 2013
Four week public consultation: 20 May – 14 June 2013	Councillor briefings	20 and 21 May 2013
	Stakeholder briefings	22 May and 3 June 2013

	<p>Public Exhibition 1 Public Exhibition 2</p> <p>Maintenance of the website and continued monitoring of and responses to feedback and queries via e-mail, Freephone number and Freepost address.</p>	<p>8 June 2013 – Newton Longville 14 June 2013 - Bletchley</p>
Post consultation	<p>Consultation analysis. Feedback to the project team on the engagement findings.</p>	<p>June 2013</p>
Submission of application and Statement of Community Involvement		<p>To be confirmed</p>
Community feedback	<p>Summary sent to stakeholders and 6,000 homes and businesses closest to the proposed site. Also made available on the website and key elements communicated via local media.</p>	<p>To be confirmed</p>

