

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

INVESTING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: TOP WIGHAY MASTERPLAN

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve the submission of the application for outline planning permission at Top Wighay Farm for mixed-use development comprising; 805 homes, land for employment purposes (up to 49,500m² of B1/B8 uses), a local centre comprising A1-A5, B1(a) and D1 uses (up to 2,800m²), a 1.5 form entry primary school and associated infrastructure, open space and landscaping.

Information

2. The Council Plan “Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future” sets out an ambitious vision for the future of Nottinghamshire in which the county is at the forefront of modern Britain. We want Nottinghamshire to stand out as: a great place to bring up a family; to fulfil your ambition; to enjoy your later life, and, to start and grow your business.
3. The Council has further defined its ambitions in its Place Strategy 2019-21. By investing in opportunity areas the Council aims to unlock new jobs and deliver better housing. Key activities identified for Investing in Nottinghamshire in 2019/20 in particular will be to begin the development of Top Wighay Farm near Hucknall, including new County Council offices as anchor tenant of the employment space alongside new housing and infrastructure.
4. By embracing the ethos of working with Government in order to bring forward new housing, the Council has been very successful in securing substantial Homes England grant funding to kick start development at Top Wighay Farm. Making the best possible use of the surplus land at Top Wighay Farm will make a critical contribution towards fulfilling the Council’s ambitions for the County and for the housing needs of its communities.

Evolving the Masterplan and the route to secure Outline Planning Permission

5. Gedling Borough Council has identified land at Top Wighay Farm as a strategic location for growth, and as such the land is allocated for residential and employment development in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) September 2014. The Gedling Local Planning Document (Part 2 Local Plan) July 2018 also refers to Top Wighay Farm as a strategic site. In addition, the Linby Neighbourhood Plan was ‘Made’ on the 27th June 2019 following the referendum held on the 2nd May 2019. The application for outline planning permission will refer to the relevant policies including the Linby Neighbourhood Plan. The development site is not located in the Green Belt.
6. Further to the planning policy, Gedling Borough Council produced a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) February 2017, which provides a development brief for the Top

Wighay Farm site. Following the guiding principles of the SPD, Arc Partnership working with the Pegasus Group have developed an Illustrative Masterplan for Top Wighay Farm as shown in Appendix Two of this report. The Masterplan builds upon the work included within the SPD.

7. The vision for the site is to create a distinctive, new development to meet the needs of the local area, and presents the opportunity to create an attractive, sustainable mixed-use community that provides additional housing, new employment opportunities and a new primary school. The guiding principles of the Masterplan are:
 - Build upon the existing landscape character of the site, to create an extensive and diverse framework of green infrastructure throughout the development. This encourages biodiversity and quality landscape creation, alongside a range of play areas.
 - Provide a linear, north-south, green spine along the route of the TWF Drive, connecting a series of green spaces and infrastructure from Wighay Road through to Top Wighay Farm.
 - Create a permeable movement network, with the provision for walking routes within the streets and leisure routes throughout the green infrastructure. This encourages walking and cycling, enhancing connectivity throughout the development
 - Create a multi-purpose green space, including playing fields, equipped play and allotments, that is easily accessible from the surrounding residential parcels
 - Create a vibrant, mixed-use community by positioning the Local Centre with a Primary School at its focal point.
 - Provide appropriate employment development parcels, adjacent to Annesley Road, with the potential for a gateway office building at the site entrance
 - Create desirable frontages onto green spaces, and the open space surrounding the site
 - Provide a mix of housing densities, that responds to the site's setting and immediate context, whilst achieving the required number of dwellings. Higher densities will be positioned along the spine road and adjacent to the other uses, whilst lower densities will be posited overlooking the existing, rural countryside/
 - Create residential parcels that are deliverable and show a commitment to integrated, high-quality landscape and design.
8. Policy Committee (13 November 2019) approved the proposed Masterplan for the Top Wighay Farm project to allow a community engagement exercise to be undertaken prior to submission of the planning application. This engagement exercise entailed a public exhibition which took place on the 19 November 2019. The exhibition material displaying the approved Masterplan which was presented at the Exhibition was also available on the dedicated website. A summary of the responses received from the exercise is provided in Appendix One of this report.
9. The Masterplan presents a vision of the proposed development and, as far as is possible, has included amendments based upon comments provided during the public engagement exercise and observations from County Council members. The Masterplan and associated details are key elements of the application for outline planning permission which is now sufficiently advanced to be submitted to Gedling Borough Council for determination in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended).

Other Options Considered

10. As Top Wighay Farm has a planning designation for various forms of development, predominately residential, no other options for the site are being considered at the present time. Top Wighay Farm is identified in the Council's strategic land disposal programme with the opportunity for significant capital receipts over forthcoming years. If the scheme is not undertaken, then the housing numbers for the local plan will be jeopardised by 805 units; the Council's asset will not realise any benefit; the new proposed office will not be delivered and the Council's policy objectives will not be realised.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. To enable the sale of a surplus asset and to secure capital receipts to the County Council and to provide much needed housing for this location.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION

1) To approve the submission of the application for outline planning permission at Top Wighay Farm for mixed-use development comprising:

- 805 homes;
- land for employment purposes (up to 49,500m² of B1/B8 uses);
- a local centre comprising A1-A5, B1(a) and D1 uses (up to 2,800m²);
- a 1.5 form entry primary school and
- associated infrastructure, open space and landscaping.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Derek Higton, Service Director, Place & Communities, Tel: 0115 9773498

Constitutional Comments (SDS 20/12/2019)

13. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Policy Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (GB 19/12/2019)

14. A variation to the capital programme of £10.3m was approved at Policy Committee in June 2019 to undertake detailed design and construction of highways infrastructure and related work associated with the Top Wighay Farm project. Any further capital expenditure

required to be undertaken as a result of the Masterplan set out in this report will be subject to the usual capital approval processes.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- Electoral Division(s): Newstead
- Member(s): Councillor Chris Barnfather

Appendix One

Summary of Responses

1. A Statement of Community Involvement containing the views expressed during the community engagement exercise will be submitted as part of the application for outline planning permission. A summary of the main comments raised and how these may be addressed is presented below.

Transport

2. Out of the comments received, the majority were in relation to transport. The topics which reoccurred throughout the comments were: amount of traffic increase/congestion; lack of safe pedestrian crossing points; and, pressure on public transport. The majority of comments were concerned about the increase of cars on the existing roads. Comments stated that there was already congestion on the roads and that the proposed development would only exacerbate it. Comments queried what infrastructure would be put in place to alleviate congestion in the area that would be increased by the proposed development. Comments highlighted an issue with speeding, with some asking what traffic calming would be implemented. The Transport Assessment produced in support of this application indicates that the proposals would not result in significant adverse impacts on the local highway network, subject to mitigation measures.
3. Comments particularly highlighted transport issues along Annesley Road and Wighay Road, not only due to traffic, but due to the lack of a safe pedestrian crossing facility. The proposed development will be accessed via the A611/Annesley Road roundabout and a new signal controlled junction on the A611 to the northwest. The infrastructure for the access from the existing road network is currently under consideration by Nottinghamshire County Council as a separate planning application.
4. Comments were concerned that there appeared to be no public transport provision. It was stated that the bus services cannot cope and that the Tram Park and Ride was running at full capacity. As part of the proposed development, discussions will take place with operators to ensure bus services are provided through the site in order to provide services for the residents, school, shops and employment sites.
5. Residents from the adjacent Strata housing development raised concerns about the proposed pedestrian accesses into the site from their development. During revisions of the masterplan these points have been considered.

Planning and design

6. There was only one comment relating to planning and design, questioning whether similar sized houses would be built near the existing Strata development. Housing details will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage of the planning process.

Environment

7. The main concern raised was flooding, including: how the development will reduce the risk of flooding, concerns that the land already floods, and any proposed development will also flood, and will the drainage areas hold enough water to prevent flooding in existing developments. One comment asked for the drainage areas to look attractive.

The planning application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment, which demonstrates how the development can take place without increasing flood risk for existing and future residents. Multiple surface water attenuation ponds are shown across the site on the illustrative masterplan.

8. Some comments were against the development on undeveloped land, particularly green belt land. Comments also queried whether certain trees and hedgerows were to be retained. Concerns were raised over the impact of the proposals on the environment through: the loss of fields, loss of trees, pollution and the impact on wildlife. The application has taken into account the concerns raised regarding trees and hedgerows. There are no Tree Preservation Orders on site, and hedgerows are to be retained where possible, except when to allow for access and highway safety purposes. Whilst some comments raised concern over development in the green belt, the site is not situated within the green belt.

Housing

9. Most comments were against the increase of new housing particularly in Hucknall. One comment did support new housing. One comment suggested renovating existing vacant houses, and another comment suggested reusing boarded up council estates. This site is allocated in the development plan for residential development and therefore can be considered as policy compliant.

Facilities and Services

10. Most comments highlighted the current pressure on services and how the new development will increase this, particularly secondary schools and doctors. Comments were asking whether the new residents would be directed to Hucknall (Ashfield) services, as Hucknall's services have already taken an increase in population. Comments believed new development in Gedling should use services in Gedling. Questions were raised about what was being done to increase the provision of services and facilities in the area.
11. Discussions have taken place with the Local Education Authority with regard to the proposed location of the primary school which is an integral element of the development proposed. Further discussions will take place regarding secondary school capacity. Local Health Providers will be consulted in order to assess the most appropriate way to consider health care provision.
12. Land within the site is set aside to form part of a new local centre to provide services and facilities for the proposed development. Occupiers would be identified at a detailed stage, subject to planning permission being granted.