

LAND AT CHESTERTON

COMMUNITY PLANNING WEEKEND REPORT BACK

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14 May 2014



Land at Chesterton Community Planning Weekend at The Ashcroft Centre

LAND AT CHESTERTON COMMUNITY PLANNING WEEKEND

Over 300 people came to the Land at Chesterton Community Planning Weekend on Friday 9 and Saturday 10 May to discuss the proposed creation of a new neighbourhood to the south-west of Cirencester. The new development will include up to 2500 homes, employment, education, health and community uses and is planned to be built over the next 20 years.

Ideas to emerge included: creating high quality open spaces and green routes; providing a range of well designed affordable and open market housing for a balanced community; re-using the listed farm buildings as a community hub with a food, arts and environment focus and facilities for all ages; developing innovative employment uses to complement the new Royal Agricultural University's planned Corinium Campus, and; establishing a Community Forum to enable the community to continue to participate in the development of the plans.

Background

Cotswold District Council (CDC) must provide for the development needs of the district over the next 20 years; including 6900 new homes, more employment opportunities as well as important local services and facilities. To this end, as part of its overall strategy for the district, land at Chesterton has been identified in the CDC's emerging Local Plan as a strategic mixed use neighbourhood, including up to 2500 homes and other uses.

Bathurst Development Ltd has appointed John Thompson & Partners (JTP) as masterplanners, to work with the local community to develop a concept for the new neighbourhood.

The Land at Chesterton Community Planning Weekend was organised by John Thompson & Partners, architects and masterplanners, on behalf of Bathurst Development Ltd. For more information please visit chestertoncirencester.co.uk or contact Danielle Dove, John Thompson & Partners at dd@jtp.co.uk or on Freephone: 0800 0126 730

Community Planning Weekend (9-14 May 2014)

The Community Planning Weekend was an opportunity for the community to discuss the proposal, share local knowledge and participate in planning the new neighbourhood. There were people present over the weekend who will continue to object to the principle of the proposal. Others expressed concerns about the scale of the proposed development and its potential impacts. However, many people took the view that if the development does go ahead they wanted to participate in shaping it so that it can become the best possible addition to Cirencester.

"It's vital to engage people all the way through to the final plan"

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTICIPANT

LAND AT CHESTERTON COMMUNITY FORUM

7pm, Wednesday 18 June 2014

The Ashcroft Centre, Ashcroft Road
Cirencester GL7 1RA

CONCEPTUAL MASTERPLAN



CONCEPTUAL MASTERPLAN KEY

1. New employment use and potential hotel on Tetbury Road
2. Conversion of former steading / depot to accommodate interim community uses / space for young people
3. New access from Tetbury Road serving Land at Chesterton and proposed R.A.U. Corinium Campus Business Park
4. Potential extension to existing cemetery
5. Landscape swathe and public route between new neighbourhoods
6. Secondary access from Tetbury Road
7. Surface water attenuation ponds
8. Tree-lined avenues serving new neighbourhood
9. Community and retail uses around new square
10. New primary school
11. Chesterton Farm complex converted to accommodate community uses, local retail and reinstated orchard
12. Allotments, growing projects and related training
13. Sports and recreation
14. Residential neighbourhoods
15. Heritage Meadow including Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) interpretation display and trail
16. The Cranhams
17. Public Open Space
18. Safeguarded land for potential future rail halt
19. New access from Somerford Road
20. Enhanced planting / allotments / landscape to northern site boundary
21. New employment uses on Somerford Road / Spratsgate Lane / Wilkinson Road

LAND AT CHESTERTON COMMUNITY PLANNING WEEKEND



REPORT BACK PRESENTATION

Following the public workshop days, the JTP team analysed and summarised the outcomes and drew up a conceptual masterplan for the new neighbourhood, which was reported back to the local community on Wednesday 14 May. The design team will move forward to prepare a Masterplan Framework for the site, which will be submitted to CDC in late 2014 or early 2015.

In response to the community's desire to continue to participate in the development of the proposals, it was announced that the first meeting of the Land at Chesterton Community Forum will be held at 7pm on Tuesday 18 June at the Ashcroft Centre.

"The houses have got to go somewhere - if we don't build houses, where are our children going to live?"



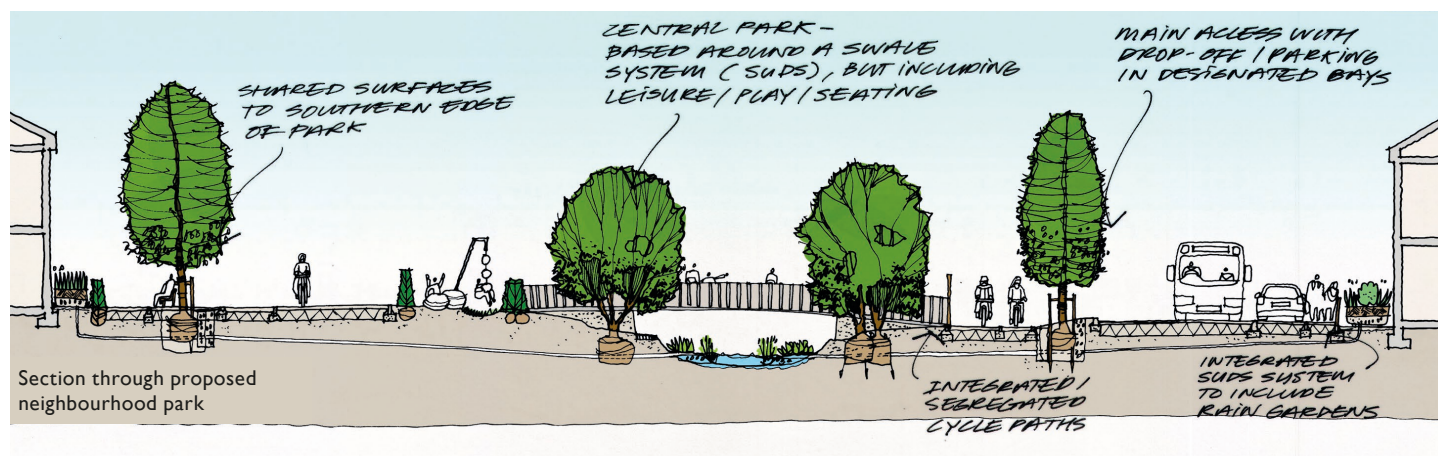
COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTICIPANT

"WE are the next generation - can you work out how this scheme can help US?"

YOUNG PERSON AT THE EVENT

"The Trust is of the view that there could be considerable environmental enhancement both on and beyond the site as a result of the proposed development"

COLIN STUDHOLME, DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



KEY THEMES

OPPOSITION TO DEVELOPMENT

Cotswold District Council has identified Land at Chesterton in the draft Local Plan as appropriate for the development of a new neighbourhood. Many people who participated in the community planning process object in principle to up to 2500 new homes and other uses on this land and felt that their objections had not been listened to in earlier Local Plan consultations. It was stated by the design team that participation during the Community Planning Weekend would not be taken as support for the proposed development. Many participated in workshops and hands-on planning groups on the basis that if the development does go ahead they wanted to ensure it was the best possible addition to Cirencester.

“Do we need all of that in one place? I know it’s going to be developed over many years - but it’s just too much!”

QUALITY OF LIFE

Cirencester is a beautiful, historic Cotswolds market town. Those who live and work here are passionate that new development should not impact negatively on the town’s character or their quality of life. People accept there is housing need, especially to enable young families to get on the housing ladder. However, there is concern about the scale of change and whether what will be built could be bland and over-dense. Some people felt that aspects of recent developments in the town did not inspire confidence in contemporary housing layout and design.

“We don’t want to lose the feel of a small market town”

IMPACT ON LOCAL RESIDENTS

Chesterton should be advantaged not disadvantaged by the new development. Existing residents do not want to have their lives disturbed, so issues such as construction noise, traffic and phasing will need careful consideration. Consideration should also be given to providing existing Chesterton residents backing onto the site a buffer zone of planting and open space to the rear of their properties. Lessons learned from previous housing schemes should help deliver a more integrated community.

“If you live in a place and like it the way it is, why should you want it to change?”

TRAFFIC AND GETTING AROUND

With people in the area being largely car-dependent, traffic is both an existing and future concern. It was felt that the surrounding roads, which already suffer congestion at peak times, will not take any significant increase in vehicles without road improvements. In addition, there is a perceived lack of town centre car parking to accommodate present and future demand. Residents in Siddington are concerned about potential rat-running through their village. There is also concern that additional congestion along Love Lane might have an adverse impact on local business.

A new development will bring the potential for improved bus, pedestrian and cycle links, particularly between the new community and the town. However, even with such measures, traffic and parking mitigation remain key issues.

“Your proposal is dead in the water if you can’t sort out the traffic congestion problem that you are going to exacerbate.”

OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The response to the existing landscape and planning of open space is key to the design of the development, incorporating existing landscape features, leisure and play areas, with a new network of footpaths and cycleways linking the new neighbourhood to Chesterton, the town centre and existing rural tracks, as well as to the university and nearby educational institutions. Careful planning and management can ensure overall positive environmental outcomes for people and nature on and beyond the site.

“Public space is so important - it can be transformational and lift people’s spirits.”

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

It was felt important to incorporate community facilities at an early stage and there is an opportunity for ‘meanwhile uses’ to be established early on. Transforming the existing farm buildings in a ‘community hub’, with facilities for all ages, emerged as an identified focus for integration and building community. Food production, gardening, arts and craft projects could be initiated to respond positively to the neighbourhood’s rural character. Local employment must be encouraged and there were suggestions for an innovation hub and apprenticeship schemes.

“Something new here, which can be used by everybody, would be good for the whole town.”

KEY THEMES

QUALITY OF DESIGN

A number of people were concerned about housing design and layout, reflecting their opinion of recent developments in Cirencester, and therefore wanted reassurance about how quality could be guaranteed. A variety of styles would reflect the way the town itself has changed over time. A mechanism needs to be established to ensure design quality will be delivered over the long term. Traditional Cotswold stone remains popular with most residents and there is scope for a modern and eco approach to housing design. Matters relating to drainage, flooding, sewage, the gas pipeline and overhead pylons need to be properly investigated during the coming months.

“Create something funky - a bit ‘edgy’ - and resonance with other things in the town is important.”

EDUCATION & INTEGRATION

At least one new primary school will be required if the new development proceeds. There were concerns that Chesterton Primary School should not be threatened by the provision of a new school in the vicinity. A financial contribution will be required to deliver adequate provision of places at secondary level, most likely through the expansion of Deer Park School.

The proximity of Deer Park School, Cirencester College and the Royal Agricultural University provides the opportunity to put in place a combined strategy for access and parking. New housing for staff and accommodation for students would also be of benefit to the University. To ensure the health and wellbeing of Cirencester as a whole, future, existing and new communities should be brought together by the sharing of enhanced existing facilities and the creation of new ones.

“The new community mustn’t be added on to the existing community but become part of it.”

FUTURE-PROOFING LONG TERM PROJECTS

There are several long term projects that are desirable but expensive, which would benefit the new neighbourhood and Cirencester as a whole. These include the ‘pigs might fly’ bridge across the ring road, reinstatement of Chesterton rail halt and the former railway route to Kemble, and a link with the restored Thames & Severn Canal. Although the proposed development would not be able to pay for such costly infrastructure, it was felt important to make sure that the masterplan layout did not preclude these aspirations being achieved in the future.

“Because it’s on Bathurst land, there’s a good opportunity to think about the long term quality of the development.”

CONTINUING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Drawing up the concept masterplan with the local community, in parallel with the draft Local Plan process can encourage open dialogue and confront difficult challenges in the early stages of the masterplanning process. Cirencester must become a beneficiary of the new neighbourhood, which can contribute to resolving town-wide issues and thereby provide a beneficial legacy for Cirencester.

At the Community Planning Weekend participants wanted to continue to be involved in the development of the proposals through a community forum.

“We need to stay involved to make sure that what is planned IS needed!”

