

Report February 2010 Cambridgeshire County Councillor John Reynolds

Special Report Northstowe February 2010

Planning Application

Application revisions.

The County Council has co-ordinated the Council's response to the outline application submitted in December 2007. The County Cabinet endorsed the response in April 2008, which included objections to the application on a number of points. Action is required from the applicants to remove objections.

Until early 2009 local authority officers were involved in discussions with the Joint attempt to agree resolution of objections. After early 2009 the Promoters requested a break from the discussions to allow them to consider their relationship. Consequently an application revised in accordance with these discussions has yet to be submitted.

County objections are currently being considered by officers in the light of national and local policy changes that have taken place between Cabinet approval of the response to the December 2007 application and the present day to ensure the actions required of the developer remain justified and reasonable. Where necessary the evidence base to these actions is also being refreshed. This activity will put the County in a strong position for when discussions on the application restart.

The above work will ensure that County Council's position on Northstowe will be up to date and robust in preparation for when work on the outline application restarts.

Design codes

Design codes are a commonly used tool which set out the guiding principles of the detailed design of stages of developments. It is expected that different tiers of design code will be used at Northstowe, with key site-wide design elements set through the outline application, to be supplemented by design codes specific to each phase of Northstowe's delivery.

The Joint Urban Design Team will lead the public sector engagement with developing design codes, working with the Promoters. Detailed work on codes has not started, due to the lack of progress with revision to the planning application.

From preliminary discussions it is anticipated that design codes will be used to tackle a number of issues raised by the County Council in relation to the outline application, including those regarding play spaces, sustainable drainage systems and the transport within Northstowe. It is also likely that the codes will set principles to guide the design of public buildings, including schools and community centres.

Government confirms £6 million cut to the 2010-11 Housing Growth Fund.

Cambridgeshire Horizons is to finalise plans for implementing cuts across projects. Criteria have been agreed by the Horizons Board for how spending will be reprogrammed.

For further information, see the joint press release at:

www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/our_challenge/news/view_horizons_news.aspx?ID392

Promoters for the first primary and secondary schools at Northstowe have been appointed by the County Council's Cabinet. The processes for design and delivery of the first schools are at present on hold due to the delay in overall programme.

There are issues within the current planning application regarding the inadequate size (area) of the school sites that the applicants have proposed. The proposed timing of their opening of the schools requires further discussion.

The Learning and Skills Council's Regional Committee has recently announced that the Cambridge Meridian Education Trust is the successful bidder to provide post-16 education services. This decision concurs with guidance provided by the Recommendation Panel, on which two County Councillors sat.

The Head of Infrastructure Planning in Children and Young People's Services is currently considering the requirements for the County Council to advertise and consult on changes to the secondary school proposal, as the successful post-16 bid is built around a joint secondary/post-16 facility.

Other changes to approaches for providing children and young people's service - in particular pupil yield forecasting – are being considered and will be raised when discussions with Promoters recommence. The Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee in March 2009 considered the matter of pupil yield issues in the context of Northstowe and the Cambridge Fringe developments. It is anticipated that a report into Northstowe's schools will be brought to the Council in early/mid 2010.

Key Issues for the Development

Modelling/Assessment

In support of the planning application the applicants have submitted a Transport Assessment. This includes traffic modelling to assess the overall impact resulting from development traffic on the surrounding trunk road and local road network. All transport consultancy has been on hold since July 2009. The Promoters have not provided a programme for completing outstanding parts of the traffic modelling or the completion, to the satisfaction of the county Council and Highways Agency, of the Transport Assessment.

Willingham Bypass

South Cambridgeshire District Council requested an investigation into the need for a bypass of the village of Willingham to the north of the Northstowe site. Cambridgeshire Horizons provided funding and the County Council commissioned consultants to undertake the study. Once the traffic modelling is completed for Northstowe the modelling outputs in the vicinity of Willingham will be compared against the Willingham Bypass study to ensure the Bypass study remains valid. Further work on the Willingham Bypass traffic modelling will be undertaken if necessary.

A14 Improvements Scheme

Draft Orders for the scheme have been looked at by County Council transport officers to consider implications for Northstowe. A report to Cabinet on 15th December 2009 considered the implications of the Orders and identified that the design of the scheme could be extended to accommodate Northstowe traffic when the town receives planning permission. No major implications for Northstowe were identified, although a proposal was put forward to provide an additional bridleway link in the Northstowe/Bar Hill area.

The Joint Promoters have also indicated that they are scrutinising the Orders.

The Cabinet report on the A14 Orders can be seen here:

<http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/db/council2.nsf/c3cf865e3cc1131380256a6b0037e439/669dc34b467d81e1802576860057b0f0?OpenDocument>

The County Council -led work looking at securing a suitable digital communications infrastructure for Northstowe is on hold. The Promoters have stated that they do not wish to participate in discussions until the future of their relationship has been confirmed.

Renewables East

Renewables East have been commissioned by Cambridgeshire Horizons to produce a report considering the technical, financial and social feasibility of options for meeting challenging renewable energy standards.

The report has been revised by Renewables East based on comments received from partners.

The Low Carbon Development Initiative

This is being promoted by Horizons as a vehicle for bringing forward renewable energy provision, has been awarded an initial £50,000 from the HGF pot. It will be looking at growth areas across the County, though is initially expected to have a strong focus on Northstowe. Progress on this Initiative is expected in early 2010 and could complete by Spring 2011 at the earliest.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Electoral Arrangements Committee intend to review governance boundaries for Northstowe and the surrounding area. This recognises the need to take into account significant changes in population that will occur as the new town grows to its full size.

Officers across the County Council have been consulted on the implications for the delivery of County services. No major implications were identified. Local and Lead Members will be kept informed when the review restarts - no timetable is currently available. Public consultation will be required as part of the boundary review process.

Innovative waste collection HGF project

A project is underway to consider technical options for improving the waste collection systems at Northstowe. This will include maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of waste collection, as well as looking at impacts on matters such as urban design. A report will be produced outlining an assessment of different collection systems and is intended to influence the Promoters' decision on waste collection methods for the town.

The consultants have been appointed and are being managed by Horizons. The New Communities Service is ensuring that expert views from the County Council waste officers are fed into the assessment process. A draft final report was received in early 2010.

Waste and minerals local development framework

The Waste and Minerals LDF and design guide were approved for consultation by Cabinet on 13th October.

The Northstowe Delivery Board has been briefed by CCC waste officers on the links between the draft LDF and the new town. The LDF reconfirms the policy requirement for a household waste recycling facility within the town site, and also the requirements for management of waste during the construction phases.

Communities and Local Government announced on 1st December 2009 that Northstowe had been included on a short list of second wave eco towns.

The local authorities and Horizons are identifying the actions necessary to deliver Northstowe as an eco town, and will submit a proposal to CLG for funding to undertake necessary investigative and feasibility works. It is anticipated that this will be completed in the early months of 2010.

Technical work has started with a comparative assessment of the eco towns criteria against both existing local planning policy and the December 2007 outline application.

We do not yet have an indication of timing of a Government decision on the final selection of second wave eco towns.

Project Management

The Northstowe Delivery Board

Overall progress with bringing forward the development, both through planning permission and delivery stages, awaits the completion of joint venture discussions between the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Gallagher Estates.

The Northstowe Delivery Board continues to meet to ensure communication between the involved parties. On 1st December 2009 the Board heard from the Joint Promoters that negotiations on the future relationship between HCA and Gallagher are expected to be resolved by the end of this financial year. Any financial deal that emerges will need Treasury approval.

The Northstowe Delivery Board is accountable for achieving the delivery of the new town. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire Horizons and consists of senior officers from key partner organisations. The Board is administered by Cambridgeshire Horizons, with support from officers at the County and District Councils, working jointly in topic based groups.

The Delivery Board has been made aware of potential pressure on officer resource when work restarts, as a consequence of local authority restructuring.

A number of member processes have been established in relation to Northstowe. This includes the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee, which will determine the outline planning application and the Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee, which explores strategic issues to ensure growth is approached in an integrated manner across authorities. Within the County Council, Policy Development Groups are providing guidance on a number of Northstowe matters. Cabinet will make decisions in relation to consultation responses to planning applications, the funding package and on other matters, for instance the decision in 2009 on appointing the providers of the first primary school.

Yours

John Reynolds

I am available for consultation by phone, letter or e-mail. I can be contacted at the address or telephone number below. Please let me know if you would like these regular updates by email.

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