

**Mark Sackett, RPS**

## **Introduction**

Good evening

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you at this Planning Committee Meeting which has been allocated specifically to consider the application by Miller Homes and Bovis Homes for the substantial first phase of development at South Cheltenham.

I am Mark Sackett of RPS and am agent for the application having worked on the proposal since 2008, leading a team of consultants who have advised on the proposals for several years.

The proposal represents a substantial first phase of planned development at South Cheltenham and has been prepared and consulted on extensively.

The application is consistent with the proposed South Cheltenham allocation in the Joint Core Strategy. The Council's recommendation on the application confirms that the proposals do not prejudice delivery of comprehensively designed proposals for the South Cheltenham.

The applicants have consulted widely with local stakeholders, including community groups, parish and ward representatives, service providers and other landowners with interests in the area. This includes the promoters of land west of Farm Lane in Tewkesbury Borough as well as the County Council which owns land within the masterplanned area off Kidnappers Lane in Cheltenham.

Significant changes have been made to the plans in response to comments received from the public. This includes our commitment to create and protect in perpetuity an area of public open space at Lotts Meadow, and the making available of land for delivery of a new GP Surgery.

Since submission of the application in September last year, the very thorough consultative process has allowed all parties to have a say in the proposals including on amended aspects of the plans in response to comments received.

## **The Proposals**

I am sure you will be fully aware of how the proposals relate to the Council's emerging development plan policies.

A key part of our work and role has been to ensure that our clients' proposals conform with the Council's aspirations and requirements for a comprehensively designed and planned proposal, which is sustainable and delivered in accordance with well understood planning principles.

The applicants have sought to engage with all relevant service providers to ensure their requirements are addressed through appropriate and legally compliant conditions and planning obligations.

Our extensive assessment work with the Council's Planning Team and statutory consultees over a long period has enabled all material issues to be addressed during the determination period. In particular, we have ensured that the community facilities within the wider proposals are secured as part of this application.

In addition to up to 650 planned homes, the proposals include:

- proportionate contributions towards primary school provision on site,
- secondary school provision off site,
- reserving of land for primary healthcare facilities within the proposed local centre at the Shurdington Road frontage, together with local scale shopping and further commercial or community floorspace, and
- extensive open space.

In discussions with the local Leckhampton Surgery, the GPs have expressed an interest in acquiring land for a new surgery. It is proposed that land be reserved for a suitable period to allow negotiations over the land to proceed following the grant of planning permission.

The application also includes potential for a Care Home and/or a Cottage Hospital within the local centre as well as offices and business premises to serve the local area.

## **Open Space**

It is significant that this site is not located in the Green Belt or Cotswold AONB. Nevertheless, we recognise the public interest in maintaining a high level of greenspace in the scheme.

This application makes a very significant contribution towards open space provision above the minimum level sought under the Council's adopted policies.

Paragraph 8.2.1 of your officers' report identified a need for a minimum of 2.77 ha of youth/adult greenspace and 0.9 ha for children's outdoor play space. The application actually provides some 14ha of strategic and local open space which is suitable to meet a wide range of recreation needs. This extends to over 40% of the site.

The Council should attach significant weight to the scheme's open space proposals which respond very positively to locally expressed interest in the availability of new public greenspace.

Our proposals would not preclude the possibility of a Local Green Space Designation in future at Lotts Meadow.

### **Affordable Housing and Care**

The proposals address the need for affordable housing in line with the Borough Council's policies.

### **Infrastructure Benefits**

Alongside benefits to the local economy through job creation in the scheme, and the significant additional support for existing and new businesses, the Borough Council would receive a total of over £5.85 million over a six-year period through the Government's New Homes Bonus scheme.

As part of the proposals, the developers will also fund significant transport upgrades to encourage future residents and visitors to travel by foot, cycle and public transport and to encourage existing car drivers to use other means of travel instead. These measures in addition to local junction improvement works will total over £1 million funded by the development.

### **Environmental Assessment**

The proposals have been carefully and thoroughly assessed in respect of potential environmental impacts through the formal EIA regulations procedures. The EIA process has included full and proper consideration of environmental effects and has identified appropriate mitigation measures.

The statutory consultees have not raised objections to the proposals.

## **Transport**

The Highway Authority and Highways Agency have assessed the application on both a stand-alone and cumulative impact basis in the context of the wider South Cheltenham proposals.

Mitigation measures have been identified and agreed with the Highway Authority which will ensure the impacts are safely and appropriately managed.

The Highway Authority's response has confirmed that agreed measures will suitably address the impacts of the proposals on the local road network.

## **Landscape**

On landscape, the proposals have been prepared and assessed on the basis of cumulative and specific impacts. The scheme includes mitigation measures which have been carefully considered and designed in consultation with the Council's professional consultees.

In addition to the extensive work through the planning application, the Applicants have also been assisted by the extensive evidence base assembled by the local authorities for the Joint Core Strategy which has consistently confirmed the suitability of the land for a sustainable urban extension.

## **Flooding Risk**

The Environment Agency has fully considered and agreed the detailed Flood Risk Assessment of the proposals which has also addressed the cumulative impact of the wider South Cheltenham proposals.

The proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage system delivers additional control over the current greenfield conditions – this is a positive outcome from the planning process compared to the current situation on site.

## **Education**

We have maintained a close dialogue with the Education Authority throughout the consideration of the application. The conditions and planning obligations will ensure that necessary new school places are secured and provided in accordance with the requirements of the statutory authorities.

In this case, the Diocese of Gloucester proposes to be the delivery body for a new primary school on site. Additional contributions will be secured from other parts of the South Cheltenham strategic allocation through the planning obligation.

The planning agreement will secure the delivery of required secondary school places. Your officer's report identifies the availability of some spare capacity in the shorter term after the grant of permission but thereafter a series of contributions will be required linked to the rate of development. The developers remain committed to working with the Education Authority to ensure requirements are met as part of the scheme.

### **Library Provision**

A library contribution has been agreed.

### **Noise and Air Quality**

On air quality, as demonstrated through the Environmental Assessment work, and in discussion with the Council's Environmental Protection team, the proposals will result in satisfactory conditions in and around the site.

### **Ecology and Heritage**

On ecology and heritage issues, the application proposals have been assessed in respect of cumulative impact and the direct impact of this application in isolation. The statutory consultees have raised no objections to the proposals and have confirmed identified impacts can be appropriately managed and mitigated.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Applicants commend the very thorough assessment that the local authority and technical statutory consultees have made of the application in bringing the scheme forward for determination today.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the significant number of people who have given up their time and energy to engage constructively with the extensive consultation process which has informed this application. We have found this feedback invaluable in refining and improving our proposals in line with the comments of local people and representative organisations.

The proposals have appropriately considered the cumulative impact of wider development in South Cheltenham and, in the planning balance, there are compelling merits which support and justify the grant of planning permission.

There are no unresolved technical issues which require further consideration prior to the grant of planning permission as outlined in the Council's recommendation on this application.

Accordingly, the Applicants commend the proposed development and invite the Committee to resolve to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a planning obligation which can secure necessary contributions.