

BARTON FARM FORUM

25 FEBRUARY 2015

BARTON FARM - ANDOVER ROAD ALIGNMENT

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR

Contact Officer: Steve Tilbury Tel No: 01962 848 256

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As part of its work programme the Forum has asked for a report to explain the principles underlying the Barton Farm road network (in particular the realignment of Andover Road) and the way in which the development addresses other transport and access issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the content of the report be noted.

BARTON FARM FORUM

25 FEBRUARY 2015

BARTON FARM ANDOVER ROAD ALIGNMENT

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Work on the design principles underpinning what is now the agreed masterplan for Barton Farm began in earnest early in 2008. Through a series of discussions between the developer, its consultants (principally John Thompson and Partners), officers from the City Council and County Council, agencies with an interest in major development such as the Highways Agency, Natural England and the Environment Agency, and a significant number of local organisations, such as WinACC and the City of Winchester Trust, a very clear set of principles to guide how the new development should relate to the existing urban area of Winchester was established.
- 1.2 The discussion began from a starting point set down by the City Council. This was that Barton Farm should aim to be a thriving 'new suburb' of Winchester. It should not be isolated or set apart, but should operate as the existing suburbs do, relating well to the existing centre of Winchester and to the neighbouring areas of the town.
- 1.3 Although this may sound like a fairly obvious statement of how Barton Farm should function, there are alternative models that were considered, and indeed the idea of deliberately creating a fully functioning 'suburb' taking its cues from existing development has not been a fashionable one in contemporary urban design. However, the concept of a well designed modern suburb is entirely right for the location of Barton Farm. Its scale and relationship to the town centre and to neighbouring areas is very similar to other suburban expansion of Winchester. At its southern end it is within feasible walking distance of the town centre. The northern edge of the development is a continuation of the outer edge of Winchester from Harestock, defined by Wellhouse Lane. Were it not for the barrier the Andover Road presents then Barton Farm would relate very well to the existing areas of Weeke and Harestock, because it is naturally an integral part of the town boundary, rather than a separate entity like King's Worthy or Littleton.
- 1.4 One of the characteristics of a 'good' suburb is that it has a strong sense of place, something that might be called its 'personality'. Members will be familiar with this in Winchester where places such as Stanmore, Weeke, Winnall and St Cross, all have a distinct and well understood character. Not

all the characteristics of a place are necessarily ideals to aspire to, but to have a character, even with some minor flaws, is arguably better for a place than for it to be featureless, anonymous and indistinguishable from similar places elsewhere. The ideal for a new place is for it to be both distinctive and universally admired, whether it is Bourneville in Birmingham or Vauban in the German city of Freiburg, but even if most new places fall short of this ideal, they should at least be planned with this ambition.

2 Barton Farm Master Plan

- 2.1 In 2004/5 CALA Homes and their previous master-planners sought planning permission for Barton Farm based on a master plan which had obvious flaws. Lacking any clear vision it made some of the errors that have been made in other development in the 1980s and 1990s and which are at the heart of their problems today.
- 2.2 These developments accommodated large numbers of houses in cul-de-sacs, each feeding onto secondary roads and then on to one or two 'spine roads' which themselves fulfilled no other function than to provide the means for traffic to permeate the developed area. Frequently spine roads do not actually go anywhere – they simply loop off an existing main road and deposit traffic back onto the same road at each end. Members will no doubt be familiar with the meandering form that these developments can take, with very little to distinguish one part from another. Community facilities are provided in these developments, but they are frequently scattered around rather than being collected together. The superficial explanation for this is that it has to be done to avoid accumulations of traffic in any one area where it might cause inconvenience. But the underlying problem is that the networks of roads and streets creates no meaningful location for a 'hub' – there is simply nowhere to put it which makes any sense in terms of the way people move around. With their community infrastructure scattered around almost at random, medium size and large developments can lack any sense of place. Where so-called 'district centres' are provided with a group of commercial and community uses these are neither prominent nor easily accessible. Masterplans of the 1980s and 1990s often suffered from this American style of suburban layout which promotes (indeed, necessitates) car use and which abandons any sense of 'living somewhere' even though many houses are grouped together.
- 2.3 Providing commercially viable and suitably busy locations for commercial premises and prominent, vibrant locations for community activities is vital to a successful community. Members will be familiar with the complaints about empty shop units or depressing, isolated community facilities which often featured in resident's comments on life in a new communities around the country. This is a product of a well-intentioned, but misguided approach to place facilities in scattered, supposedly accessible locations which actually ensure that they have little natural footfall and are reliant on multiple car journeys for access. In contrast, the layout of Barton Farm is designed to reduce the requirement for multiple car journeys by deliberately creating a single multi-activity hub accessible by walking, cycling, public transport or a

single car journey and visible to passing trade which will also contribute to its commercial success.

- 2.4 The 2005 Barton Farm Master Plan was not able to reconcile the scale of the development (which is substantial) with the need to integrate it with the existing city centre. As a result, in this early plan, Barton Farm is cut off from neighbouring areas and essential community facilities, such as Henry Beaufort School. There is no meaningful 'central place' and the facilities are scattered meaning that car use is promoted. Overall it does not replicate the qualities of Winchester's suburbs; it looks like a modern addition with the design flaws of a previous generation of masterplanning.
- 2.5 In 2008 John Thompson and Partners reviewed the masterplan with Council officers and other experts and reached the same conclusion. The proposed solution was the creation of a new route for a 'new' Andover Road to carry vehicular traffic whilst retaining the old route for cycling and walking.
- 2.6 Through this approach, two important outcomes are achieved. Firstly a barrier to the integration of Barton Farm with Week and Harestock is removed. Instead of complex and difficult arrangements to cross a broad road which is designed for fast moving traffic, cycling and walking to Henry Beaufort, to the shops and facilities at Weeke and to the town centre is made easier, safer and more pleasant. Secondly, and just as importantly, the new Andover Road provides an arterial route for all forms of transport, specifically public transport, which establishes an obvious location for a collection of community and service users – the heart of the new suburb. It is the 'spine road' for Barton Farm, but it is has a proper function of enabling people to reach a real destination rather than simply providing something from which to hang other streets.
- 2.7 All of Winchester's other radial routes have a similar pattern. Romsey Road provides access to Stanmore and Kings School and then comes into Winchester town centre through a collection of busy institutional sites. The Stockbridge Road and St Cross Road run through areas of housing, some fronting the road, with retail and other commercial uses scattered between them. The Andover Road is unique in not having any development on one side and in being dual carriage way for part of its length. There is, therefore, nothing out of character to Winchester for a radial route to run through a suburban area – all of them already do with the exception of the Andover Road itself. It is the absence of development alongside which makes the Andover Road unusual, not its function.
- 2.8 It would not, of course, be possible to consider this option were it the case that the Andover Road carries too much traffic for it to be successfully and safely moved at slower speeds.
- 2.9 This was the subject of detailed traffic modelling and the subsequent Transport Assessment was carefully scrutinised by Hampshire County Council as the highway authority. The evidence was scrutinised at the inquiry into the planning application held in 2011.

- 2.10 The County Council's conclusions were that the road can be effectively and safely realigned without detriment either to the traffic flow into the city and without creating unsafe conditions when combined with shared space principles around the community buildings. Vehicular access to properties on the Andover Road is retained because this is essential, but the volume of movements will be very low. There will be some increase in average journey time into the town centre after the development is complete. But it is important that the correct comparison is made between alternatives which incorporate the Barton Farm traffic flows rather than with today's figures without Barton Farm at all. The Inspector who considered the planning appeal in 2011 was satisfied with the evidence provided both regarding the impact on traffic flows, the safety of the concept, and the urban design consequences.
- 2.11 The Barton Farm Section 106 agreement provides for an extensive range of contributions towards transport planning measures, including some off site improvements. Hampshire County Council is currently reviewing how to best to make use of the funding available so as to improve the accessibility and integration of Barton Farm and to mitigate the impact of additional traffic on the town centre and surrounding areas.
- 2.12 The realigned layout is not designed to create a development which is car dependent, in fact quite the opposite. By locating all community facilities together the need for trips across the development to get to more than one location (shop, school, nursery for instance) in a short space of time – one of the reasons that people use cars for short journeys – will be reduced. The realignment increases also opportunities for walking and cycling to Henry Beaufort School.
- 2.13 The realigned Andover Road will be the primary route for peak time bus services and there will be stops at convenient intervals along the route particularly adjacent to the community core. This provides highly visible public transport infrastructure and busy stops which can be confidently used. The secondary route within the development will accommodate primarily off peak services. These bus services will also be supported by the additional car parking at the 'Park and Ride Lite' which will provide convenient car parking for people who want to combine a car journey with a bus trip for the final leg into town, saving parking charges and reducing congestion.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 The realignment of the Andover Road has two very specific and important purposes. Firstly, it will increase the prospects for the physical and social integration of Barton Farm with neighbouring parts of Winchester by removing a significant barrier between two communities. Secondly, it means that there is a purposeful street through Barton Farm which helps to define its layout and in particular the location of key community infrastructure. This is the way that most successful places have grown organically over the years represents a conscious decision to replicate this model.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 4.1 The creation of a successful high quality new development at Barton Farm is one of the City Council's most important long term projects.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 There are no resource implications to the report.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 6.1 There are no risk management issues arising from the report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None