
August 2019



Outline application (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for the partial re-development of the Meadway Centre Precinct, Tilehurst, Reading

Statement of Community Involvement

On Behalf of
Chillingham Limited

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared to support an outline planning application for the partial re-development of the Meadway Centre Precinct, Tilehurst, Reading.
- 1.2 The SCI sets out: -
 - 1. The background to the site and why it has been brought forward for development;
 - 2. Relevant national and local guidance on community involvement;
 - 3. The applicant's approach to community involvement in respect of the planning application submission;
 - 4. The specific feedback from the community and a response where required.
- 1.3 The SCI forms part of a comprehensive package of documents submitted in support of the applicant's planning application and is intended to be read in conjunction with them.

2.0 The Proposed Development

- 2.1 The proposed development comprises of the re-development of the Meadway Shopping Centre in Tilehurst, Reading.
- 2.2 The site owners, Chillingham Ltd have been working in collaboration with the Council to look at options to re-develop the site having achieved a retail expansion planning consent in 2017 (Ref: 15/0945).
- 2.3 The proposed development does not include the Asda site to the south as this is under separate land ownership.
- 2.4 Reading Borough Council adopted The Meadway Centre Planning Brief in 2013 which sets out options for re-development of the precinct. Given differing land ownerships, the current proposals seek to implement Option 2 of the Planning Brief which seeks partial re-development of the precinct.
- 2.5 A Planning consent was achieved in 2017 (Ref: 15/0945) expanding the retail element of the site, particularly to the rear of the site, with a new retaining wall alignment to the west. This proposed to refurbish and extend the retail streetscape, maintaining the existing two-sided precinct, with the shop frontages onto Honey End Lane. This also proposed to maintain and refurbish the existing 27 residential units over the shops.
- 2.6 The priorities of re-developing the site are to re-house the existing residents and to retain the key shop tenants – or relocate these key shops within the proposals. The precinct will remain accessible and trading for the duration of the phase's redevelopment.

3.0 Guidance on Community Engagement

National Guidance

- 3.1 Community engagement forms an increasingly important component of the planning process and has a key role to play in delivering the Government's objectives for sustainable development. In particular, paragraphs 39 & 40 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF3) (February 2019) sets out the importance of community consultation.

Paragraph 39 states: -

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

Paragraph 40 states: -

“Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.

Local Guidance

- 3.2 At a local level, Reading Council adopted their Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in March 2014.
- 3.3 The Council has recently undertaken consultation on its SCI between 22nd March 2019 and 10th May 2019 to establish whether it is necessary to update the SCI. Until this progresses, the adopted 2014 SCI sets out guidance on Community Engagement and development proposals.
- 3.4 Paragraph 7.3 of the Council's SCI sets out guidance for the level of Community Engagement that is required dependent upon the scale of development proposed. Paragraph 7.4 further sets out guidance to developers with regards how to undertake community engagement. This includes engaging in pre-application discussions with Council Planning Officers prior to submitting an application and also undertaking engagement with Councillors and residents through circulation of information and a drop-in consultation event.
- 3.5 Paragraph 7.3 goes on to confirm that developers will be expected to prepare a public report of community involvement for submission with a significant or sensitive planning application detailing the extent of the community involvement exercise carried out, reporting all views and responses and indicating the actions or changes that have been carried out or that it is

proposed are carried out in order to meet the views and concerns raised by the community involvement.

- 3.6 This SCI seeks to meet the requirements of the NPPF3 and the Council's SCI by detailing what public engagement has been undertaken prior to the submission of a planning application. Full details of engagement undertaken are detailed in Section 4 of this Statement.

4.0 Community Involvement Strategy

- 4.1 In preparing a strategy for community involvement for the proposed development, the overall aim was to provide Council Officers, Councillors and residents with an opportunity to view, understand, comment on and influence the proposals prior to the submission of an outline planning application as far as was possible.
- 4.2 As previously discussed, the current proposals build upon the planning consent (Ref: 15/0945). Therefore, certain aspects of the site design and development have already been agreed.
- 4.3 Consultation undertaken is also an opportunity for the project team to discuss any concerns raised prior to an application submission. Achieving this would ensure that the key objectives and requirements of the NPPF3 and the Council's SCI were met.
- 4.4 In this context, the objective of the consultation undertaken was to seek feedback from Council Officers, Councillors and local residents on the proposed development in order to shape the final proposals prior to an application being submitted.

Council Officers

- 4.5 The applicants have been working collaboratively with the Council and its Officers for an extended period of time in shaping the current application proposals.
- 4.6 The proposed development has been shaped in accordance with the Council's Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013).
- 4.7 Pre-application meetings have been undertaken in May 2018 to discuss proposals to create a more cohesive Community District Centre to build upon the 2017 planning permission with the proposals amended in response to advice received from Officers.

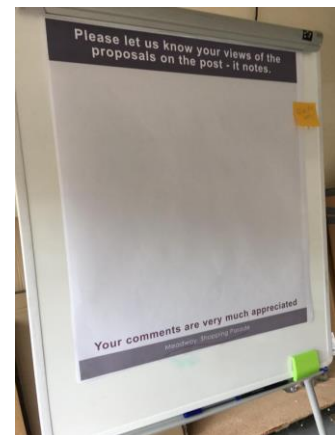
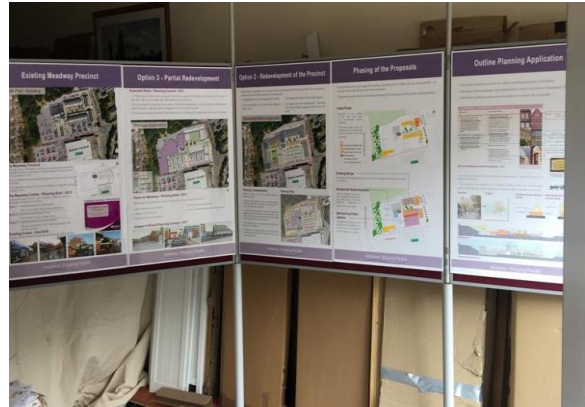
Councillors

- 4.8 The development project team met with Local Councillors in September 2018 and presented the current proposals, also answering any questions arising. Written feedback was requested to help shape the current proposals.

Residents

- 4.9 In order to obtain the views of local residents, a pamphlet was sent to properties within the immediate area of The Meadway Centre inviting residents to a drop-in consultation event which was held at one of the Units within the north side of the shopping precinct. The drop-in event was held on Tuesday 7th May 2019 between 1pm and 6:30pm.
- 4.10 Members of the project development team were on hand to discuss proposals with interested parties and to answer any questions.

- 4.11 Residents were encouraged to provide written feedback to the proposals through the completion of comment forms that were provided. Residents unable to attend the drop-in event in person were encouraged to forward their comments via post or email to the applicant's Planning Agents, ID Planning.
- 4.12 The images below show the public drop in event:



Feedback

- 4.13 This section sets out what assessment works have been undertaken to support the planning application and also to address any comments or concerns raised during the consultation process.
- 4.14 Approximately 45-50 interested parties attended the drop-in consultation event and 7 feedback forms were completed and returned to the project team.
- 4.15 **The following comments were received in support of the proposals:**
- I'm all for this, the sooner the better
 - Can't wait to see a thriving precinct again
 - Option 2 would open up the area and hopefully encourage a wider variety of shops
 - The housing is badly needed and welcomed
 - I hope all goes well, it should be a huge improvement

4.16 The following comments were received that raised concerns or questions with regards to the proposals:

- Height of the buildings to the rear of Stoneham Close is a concern.
- Loss of light to existing properties from proposed height of new buildings
- The site is being overdeveloped
- Additional noise from vehicles and construction
- Development is too close to the rear of properties on Stoneham Close
- Safety of cutting so far into the bank when clay /subsidence problems may occur
- Worried children will gain access to rear of properties on Stoneham Close should the retaining wall be amended

Response to Concerns Raised

4.17 The following seeks to respond to concerns raised during the consultation process.

4.18 The current proposals seek to build upon and enhance the outline planning permission from 2017 (Ref:15/0945). Some concerns raised during this consultation process have already been investigated and addressed through the approval of the 2017 permission including the positioning of the retaining wall and the proposed cut and fill. A Ground Investigation and Engineering assessment has been undertaken as part of this application so there are no concerns with regards the safety of the retaining wall or any associated cut and fill works on it.

4.19 The height of the buildings and density of development proposed is in accordance with the Planning Brief for the Meadway Centre which was adopted by the Council in November 2013. The Brief states that District Centres such as the Meadway Centre should make best use of land through higher density development and as a District Centre, it is appropriate for uses to be mixed vertically. The height of the buildings proposed is proportionate to other development in the locality and is not considered to be excessive.

4.20 The distance between the proposed development and the rear of properties on Stoneham Close is in excess of 54 metres. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application demonstrates that due to varying ground levels, if you were stood to the rear of properties on Stoneham Close, with rear fencing, there is limited visibility of the development proposals at a distance in excess of 50 metres.

4.21 The woodland area between Stoneham Close and the proposed development area is to be retained and enhanced including planting of 12 new large canopy trees that will act as a strong natural barrier helping to screen existing and proposed development. The new retaining wall will also assist in screening development.

4.22 The final proposed development has been shaped over a significant period of time following consultation with the Council Officers, Councillors and residents. The design and level of development has continuously evolved into the scheme that is now submitted for approval. The site is not being overdeveloped but makes best use of the land available which is required by local and national planning policy.

- 4.23 The centre already has a number of vehicle traffic movements on a daily basis due to its nature. A Transport Assessment is submitted with the application which looks at the effect additional traffic will have on the local road network. The Highways Authority are also consulted as part of the proposals. With regards noise from construction, this can be managed via an appropriately worded planning condition. Construction hours are highly regulated so as to minimise disturbance to nearby properties. Also, the nature of construction works is that they are temporary not a permanent feature.
- 4.24 The fear of crime from persons entering the rear of properties on Stoneham Close is unfounded as there is a retaining wall and a woodland area. The Police's Designing out Crime Officer is a consultee and will be consulted on the proposed development. They can suggest amendments be made to the site design to make it more secure if they feel there is a need to do so.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Chillingham Limited have adopted a proactive and collaborative approach to undertaking consultation with Councillors, Officers and residents prior to the submission of the outline planning application to re-develop the Meadway Shopping Precinct. The aim of the consultation undertaken was to meet the requirements of the NPPF3 and the guidance within the Council's SCI.
- 5.2 In doing so, the applicant has ensured that all interested parties have had the opportunity to view the proposals and provide comment if they so wished.
- 5.3 Comments and concerns raised during the public consultation process have been considered and assessed through the submitted technical reports and where applicable, amendments have been made to the proposals. A number of concerns raised have already been investigated and considered under the 2017 planning permission for the centre (Ref: 15/0945).
- 5.4 The technical reports undertaken to support the planning application have concluded that there are no technical constraints which would prevent the re-development of the site.