

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF SOUTH SIDE WORKING PARTY**  
**MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023 AT 10.30 AM**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Present: Councillors   | R Goodchild<br>V Harvey<br>T Morris<br>S Owen<br>C Palmer (Chair)   |
| Also in attendance:    | M Saccoccio, Town Clerk<br>S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk<br>L Salmon, Head of Cultural & Economic Services<br>P Brown (Peppercorn Group) |
| Remotely:              | S Hancox, Consultant, Stephen George and Partners<br>C Anderton, Stephen George and Partners<br>P Brown, Stephen George and Partners      |
| Members of the public: | 1   |
| Members of the press   | 0   |

**49/SSWP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Dodwell and P Carberry.

**50/SSWP DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the Leighton Buzzard Society and the Leighton Buzzard Archaeological and Historical Society and Councillor Harvey also declared a personal interest as a member of the South Beds Friends of the Earth.

**51/SSWP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; 15 minutes total)**

A member of the public spoke briefly to express disappointment that there seemed to be a lack of family experiences/activities included in options under discussion for land south of the High Street.

**52/SSWP MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the South Side Working Party meeting held on 9 January 2023.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the South Side Working Party meeting**

**held on 9 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.**

(b) Updates from the previous meeting: these would be covered during the rest of the agenda.

## **53/SSWP MASTERPLANNING UPDATE**

Representatives of Stephen George and Partners briefly revisited the presentation given at the previous meeting on potential options for land south of the High Street. The presentation had included an analysis of the site and its opportunities, considered car parking and vehicular/pedestrian access as well as connections through to the High Street and had included a mix of residential, commercial, retail and community options (i.e. a Peppercorn Centre community building). The presentation had included a new multi-storey car park on the site of the current Duncombe Drive car park, a new “main square” and an acknowledgement of the former Rothschild garden. The residential options had been presented as contemporary town centre living and numerous examples of multi-function community spaces had been reviewed.

Consultants went on to give an updated presentation for two further potential options for uses of land south of the High Street. The drawings included 101 residential units in a mix of town houses and apartments including above retail units, with a mix of commercial and retail spaces and a larger community centre of 2700 square metres, which would incorporate the 1200 square metres originally put forward by the Peppercorn Group as well as potential for additional community uses. The indicative drawings showed this in one building which was the focal point of the main square, but it was clarified that this could be split into two separate buildings if preferred.

The presentation included a detailed breakdown of the possible sizes of each unit as well as the scale and massing, with buildings at two storeys on the north side and three storeys on the south side, with the community building at 2.5 storeys.

As requested by the group, two options had also been drawn up for land near the access road; one for 34 dwellings and one for a 65-bed hotel with 45 parking spaces. It was however understood that this land was not available and should be excluded from future considerations.

Group members thanked consultants for their work and expressed a need to better understand the financial viability going forward. Consultants advised that the indicative drawings were now detailed enough to enable work to be done on a financial model and suggested that input from a quantity surveyor would be needed to better understand the ground constraints, phasing and timescales. A detailed brief would be needed including exactly what the space requirements were, operating hours of

different functions etc.

Representatives of Stephen George and Partners were thanked for attending the meeting.

#### **54/SSWP CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE UPDATE**

Meeting invitations had been issued to Central Bedfordshire Council but no representation was present.

It was agreed that the latest slides should be shared with the local authority for transparency.

The public consultation launched by Central Bedfordshire Council on 10 March was briefly discussed and it was noted that four opportunities for public engagement were in place; two on market days and two online events. Cllr Palmer had created an informal paper on initial thoughts about the Central Bedfordshire proposals and working party members were invited to add to this.

Mr Brown reported that the Peppercorn Group had been invited to a meeting with Cllr K Collins in respect of the consultation.

It was agreed that the working party should consider a formal response to the consultation at its next meeting and make recommendations to Policy & Finance Committee thereafter.

#### **55/SSWP ANY OTHER UPDATES**

The working party received a report prepared by Councillor R Goodchild in respect of an implementation plan. This paper would help inform proposed future work around financial viability modelling.

The working party considered next steps and noted that the Council was now in its last few weeks of the current administration as well as now being in the pre-election period of sensitivity regarding council communications.

Councillor Harvey stressed that previous pieces of work should be taken into account such as the GVA report commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council in 2016 and the Into Places town centre report commissioned by the town council in 2021. Councillor Harvey advised she was unhappy with the level of residential use and wanted to better understand how much residential would be necessary to help provide community facilities.

Councillor Owen proposed that town council thinking should be shared but concerns were raised that given the current Central Bedfordshire Council consultation, this could be confusing for residents.

It was agreed to:

- (a) Seek approval from Policy & Finance Committee for costs to hold a face-to-face meeting with representatives of Stephen George & Partners, to discuss and fine-tune potential options for uses of land south of the High Street.
- (b) At the same meeting, to work towards creating a brief for land valuers so that likely costs could be sought for the next phase of work.
- (c) At the same meeting, to use the informal paper issued by Cllr Palmer (with input from other Members) to discuss and formulate a proposed formal town council response to the current Central Bedfordshire consultation on land south of the High Street, to be recommended on to Policy & Finance Committee and Council.
- (d) Write to the other land owners on the site to advise them of the ongoing town council work and invite them to engage with the council if wished.

In order to fit in with the committee cycle for the final few weeks of the current term, it was hoped that a meeting could be arranged in late March/early April.

The meeting closed at 12.16 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023.

Chair

TBA