

## **Gavray Drive Stakeholder Discussion**

**Venue:** Zoom Conference Call

**Date:** 2 December 11:30am

**Attendees:** Pat Clissold (Save Gavray Meadows for Bicester), Pam Roberts (Save Gavray Meadows for Bicester), Dominic Woodfield (Bioscan UK Ltd), Carole Hetherington (Langford Village Community Association), Paul Hollidge (Longfields Primary School and Nursery), Nicholas Dolden (CPRE Oxfordshire), Cllr Dan Sames (Cherwell District Council)

**Apologies:** Caroline Ford (Cherwell District Council), Neil Rowntree (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust)

**Project team attendees:** David McFarlane, SP Broadway (DM); Hoda Taher, SP Broadway (HT); Russell Crow, L&Q Estates (RC); Aritz Kaushik, L&Q Estates (AK); Peter Chambers, David Lock Associates (PC); Sarah Murray, Edge Urban Design (SM); Tom Wigglesworth, EDP (TW); Dave Lawes (Hydrock)

### **Item 1: Welcome**

**1.1.** DM opened the meeting and gave introductions for the benefit of new attendees and apologies for absence were noted.

### **Item 2: About L&Q Estates**

**2.1.** RC explained that L&Q have taken a fresh approach to the latest proposals which now cover the entire Bicester 13 allocation and as a result the ecological management of the site can be delivered.

**2.2.** RC said L&Q are looking to engage fully with all local stakeholders to work together for the best outcome for the site.

### **Item 3: Planning update**

**3.1.** PC explained that the site is allocated in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and a pre-app process is being undertaken with Cherwell District Council (CDC) Officers Caroline Ford and Bernadette Owens. PC added that specific discussions have taken place with Oxfordshire County Council on drainage and a discussion on ecology has taken place with Charlotte Watkins, LP Biodiversity Officer.

**3.2.** PC said that the Environmental Statement Scoping Opinion has been issued by CDC since the last stakeholder discussion. PC added that L&Q had submitted a report setting out what was proposed to be covered in the Environmental Statement which the Council have largely agreed with but they disagreed on noise and air quality and asked for them to be included which L&Q will do.

**3.3.** PC said that the Environmental Statement will include the outcome of surveys and technical work to be submitted with the application. Work on the production of this document is currently being undertaken.

#### **Item 4: Ecology mitigation and management strategy update**

**4.1.** TW explained that detailed survey work on the ecology of the site has been carried out over the years and that these are now being updated but that no significant new discoveries, other than an otter spraint, have been noted. TW added that this will not require the current strategy to be revisited and that delivering a net gain for biodiversity was key to the masterplan design.

**4.2.** TW displayed one of the drawings contained in the Ecological Mitigation and Management Strategy and spoke about the change in the composition of the fields east of the Brook, which have now become dominated by tall vegetation and scrub therefore a key pillar of the proposals is to bring the site back into management. TW said a management scheme has been designed which balances the competing interests between species that require different habitat conditions.

**4.3.** TW said the general feedback received at the last stakeholder discussion has been cautiously optimistic, with useful feedback being provided by two stakeholders and two others outlining their intention to provide feedback. There was overall support for the principle of design and the management proposals, but stakeholders were seeking further assurances about securing management in the long-term. TW explained that discussions with management companies for the site have begun and that two commercial management bodies (The Land Trust and Greenbelt Limited) have provided their proposals and quotes. TW explained that The Land Trust operate on a lump sum endowment model which is invested and returned to the management of the site and Greenbelt Limited operate on a service charge model. Ongoing discussions are taking place with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and CDC also for the management of the site.

**4.4.** RC said L&Q are exploring approximate costs and the Greenbelt Limited model could come to approximately £2.50 a week for residents. RC added that this is expected to be secured through the S106 agreement but this will be discussed with CDC during the application process. A question was asked whether the 4 options for management companies includes The Land Trust? RC answered yes but that cost information from Wildlife Trust and CDC is yet to be received so of the two models that have provided costs, Greenbelt Limited is a model with which L&Q are familiar with and thus may be the preferred choice.

**4.5.** A stakeholder asked for clarification on how Greenbelt Limited operate. RC said that each resident will pay a service charge per week or year and that residents will be aware of this when purchasing properties. The stakeholder asked whether this is just for the management of the wildlife or for the play area? RC said the money will go towards the maintenance of all open space on the site. The stakeholder said the onus being put on residents and not the developers is *'quite unfair'*. Another stakeholder commented that this is a commonly used model. TW explained that the 4 companies mentioned have been approached because they have specific experience at managing areas of ecological interest.

**4.6.** TW said the one area that could benefit from stakeholder input is whether anyone has knowledge of local grazier schemes?

**4.7.** A stakeholder asked whether residents will have access to the managed sites? RC said that existing residents in the area will also benefit from access to the site. The stakeholder also asked whether the existing path around the edge of the site will remain? RC said yes and that the management of the site will include the upkeep of the pathed area.

**4.8.** A stakeholder commented that this would work out to about £26,000 a year. Another stakeholder asked whether these costings will be made available to view as the yearly figure sounds '*lower*' than expected? The stakeholder added that information about Greenbelt Limited would be useful to understand how much has been allocated to the wildlife management elements and asked what level of control the chosen management company would have once they are in control? RC said L&Q will circulate cost breakdowns by Greenbelt Limited and The Land Trust to stakeholders. RC added that the site will be sold to a housebuilder who would then be expected to work with the management company. TW added that the management plan will form part of the S106 agreement. A stakeholder said they would be concerned that there is a risk of the management plan not being met once the land is sold to a housebuilder and added that an endowment with the S106 will offer more security for the local wildlife site. Another stakeholder commented that they have had '*bitter*' experience with management companies who do the bare minimum and therefore would like to see real '*concrete commitments*' from L&Q. RC said that management companies are commonly used to maintain sites and that if Greenbelt Limited were to stop upkeeping of the site, they would stop being paid so there is incentive for them to manage the site well. RC said he will share Greenbelt Limited's plans with stakeholders. The stakeholder said the creation of a management committee made up of local residents and external advisors could work well for the upkeep of the site and RC is happy to put this concept to the management companies.

**4.9.** A stakeholder asked whether there will be provision for regular monitoring or surveying of the CTA? TW said yes as one of the key elements of the management plan is a periodic review and monitoring to ensure the management objectives are being met. The stakeholder commented that Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre review Local Wildlife Sites on a 5-year cycle. TW said this type of record keeping is a passive process as there is no direct link between the record centre and influencing the management of the site.

**4.10** TW said in his presentation at the last stakeholder discussion, he provided a summary of the preliminary biodiversity calculations for the site which showed that a net gain of over 10% will be achieved. A stakeholder commented that he believes net gain is achievable and will provide his written feedback soon.

## **Item 5: Community input and open discussion**

**5.1.** RC said the potential for C2 extra care housing is still being explored and hopefully more will be known early next year.

**5.2.** A stakeholder asked whether the proposals will include plans for educational use? RC said there is nothing specific but there has been a suggestion to provide a guided walk and information boards. Another stakeholder said that it is clear from the response to the Scoping

Report that Langford residents and wider Bicester residents value the area for teaching their children about wildlife. RC said he will take into consideration any comments that are made as matters are progressed and welcomed any ideas from stakeholders in this regard.

#### **Item 6: Next steps**

**6.1.** DM said L&Q are intending to send leaflets on their proposals to residents living in the area. A stakeholder asked for new Langford to not be missed out in the radius for the leaflet drop.

**6.2.** RC said a planning application will likely be submitted in March 2021 as most of the work will be completed by February. RC said he welcomes any comments from stakeholders outside of the group discussions and that another stakeholder update will not be likely until the end of the public consultation period in February.

**6.3.** A stakeholder asked whether the S106 agreement will include funding for the Langford Community Hall? PC said that full S106 requirements are yet to be determined. It is expected that the S106 content will be discussed in detail with CDC once the application is submitted.

**6.4.** A stakeholder said that he noticed reference to fly tipping on some of the application documents and asked for clarification on this. Another stakeholder said the fly tipping is not related to the invertebrate mats left around.

**6.5.** A stakeholder asked when updated plans about the relative distribution on houses either side of the brook will be made available? RC said a high level masterplan will be included on the consultation leaflet in January.