

Northfleet Harbourside Steering Group

Wednesday, 06 September 2023

19:30pm

Present:

Cllr Lenny Rolles (Chair)

Councillors: Alison Williams

Tom Reynolds	Assistant Director (Strategic Regeneration)
Damian Irvine	CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited
Simon Mole	Montagu Evans (Developers Consultant)
Raj Gupta	Town Legal LLP
Greg Attwood	Chief Development Officer, KEH Group
Ben Clarke	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes

There were no minutes to sign as it was the first formal meeting of the Northfleet Harbourside Steering Group.

The Chair confirmed that there had been no previous meetings of the Steering Group; only a site visit to the proposed development area in June 2022 by the Chair and Cllr Williams had taken place to date.

3. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Alison Williams declared an interest as she was the ward Councillor for Northfleet & Springhead.

The Cllr also noted that she sits on the planning committee.

4. Terms of Reference

Members were presented with the draft terms of reference for the Northfleet Harbourside Steering Group.

The Assistant Director (Strategic Regeneration) directed the group to the draft terms of reference and explained that the document held key points regarding the:

- Project objectives
- Timeframe for delivering the project objectives
- Commencement and duration of the Group
- Membership, roles, and responsibilities
- Governance/Finance
- Dissolution of the group

The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited advised that some of the information within the draft terms was outdated and provided the group with the following up to date information:

- CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited advised that it was anticipated that works on the site will commence in Autumn **2024**. The building will be in phases and will take approximately **8-10 years** to complete in total

The update would be made to the ToR.

The group noted the terms of reference.

5. Developer Overview and Update

The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited, the developer, delivered a presentation outlining key aspects of the project to the Group.

Following the presentation, the Chair and Cllr Williams had their questions answered:

- The developer noted a specific study on the potential economic Gross Value Added (GVA) to Gravesham following completion of the development had not been completed but there were similar high levels studies that could be circulated to the group outside the meeting. Developer to share studies with the Group.
- The developer confirmed the 3000 news jobs referenced in the presentation excludes the construction phase. the jobs referenced are an estimate of the built phase and potential retail and commercial roles. The Developer team noted that during the construction phase there would be thousands of different jobs. The Chair noted that if the development progressed, data should be regularly gathered/reported to highlight the increase in/range of jobs in the area. This should include the wider residual/supply chain jobs created to facilitate the delivery of the development.
- The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited noted the total size of proposed commercial space was just under 150,000sq ft which included office space, community space, retail and the hotel.
- The developer stated that 10% (350 properties) of residential properties would be affordable homes; the viability study conducted demonstrated that the scheme couldn't support affordable housing, but the developer had decided to incorporate this into the scheme.
- The developer added that one of the main alterations to the original development scheme, following dialogue as part of the planning process, was the to de-culvert the river Ebbsfleet; the developer noted there had been strong pushback from waterways and highlighted that this decision would deliver wider benefits for the Northfleet Community.

The Chair asked that any presentations in the future be shared earlier so that they could be attached to the agenda pack.

6. Developer Next steps

The Montague Evans Development Consultant delivered a presentation to the Group outlining possible next steps, if the scheme was consented. This included proposed phasing plans, re-routing of the road network and a summary of engagement with landowners.

Following the presentation, the Chair and Cllr Williams had their questions answered:

- Montagu Evans (ME) noted that within the development redline boundary there were 65 'visible' property interests and a number of non-visible interests that related to assets like public highway - totalling just under 100 registered property interests (including land holders and lease holders).
- The split of uses were noted as; four residential, three retail, one petrol station, two car dealerships and everything else was industrial.
- ME noted all property owners and occupiers within the red line boundary of the development had been written to and several face to face meetings had taken place to date.
- The developer said, there were four residential properties within the red line boundary; three tenancies and one owner and they had all been engaged.
- ME noted that a consultation specialist had led community engagement on the planning application.
- Data had been accumulated from the public consultation; the developer noted so far there hadn't been any major complaints or opposition groups formed which was unusual for a development of this size. The initial consultation raised no significant concerns and all questions asked were given satisfactory answers.
- If planning approval was granted, the next phase of consultation would be initiated with regular drop-in sessions. The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited stressed that as a Football Club it was vital to engage with the public and that was the plan going forward.
- The planning application submitted was an outline application; a 'Reserved Matters' stage would follow if the outline application is granted.
- The developer noted that discussions on a possible section 106, should the scheme be granted, had been commenced.
- The developer undated on thoughts around a temporary ground during the construction on Northfleet Harbourside, if planning was granted. The developer's preference was to upgrade a local football site which could then be used by the Borough once the new stadium was built. Alternatively, a site would have to be found outside of the Borough and incur costly lease fees which was not ideal. The Chair noted the positive social value aspect of upgrading a local site for temporary use by EUFC and asked that the Group be kept up to speed on progress. The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited advised that it all depended on the timeline of planning and what league EUFC were in at the time (as different leagues have different requirements of stadia).
- The developer outlined that there were two key phases: Phase one would see the development of the football stadium, commercial/retail units and a handful of residential units. The developer noted that it was essential that the infrastructure and retail was created before the residential to avoid residents living in a building site for an extended length of time; the football stadium was the main driver of the development. The second Phase would see the delivery of the residential/riverside development.

The developer noted that the key benefits to the Borough would be seen during phase one as that was where the skills and employment would start to develop; once the retail units were open, footfall to the area would increase.

- The developer confirmed that updates to the road network would be undertaken in phase 1 and noted that it was important to the existing industrial companies to have the corridors in place to enable use of transport from day one.
- The developer team confirmed that potential terrorist and security concerns had been considered as part of the development of the project and would be developed further as part of the Reserved Matters phase; initial conversations had been had around parking control due to the potential security concerns. The developer stated that it was envisaged that parking would have to be development controlled/managed with ANPR cameras in place. The pickup and drop off points would need to be carefully located.

The developer re-iterated their commitment to community engagement and was content for Members to forward any concerned residents' questions to himself. The developer was eager to receive feedback from local residents and was happy to walk them through the proposed scheme.

Following concern raised by the Chair, the CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited confirmed that their plan was to acquire land through amicable discussions with the landowners – the need for compulsory purchase is seen as an absolute last resort. The Chair noted that, should planning permission be granted, the use of CP powers is not a 'silver bullet' and would require the council's approval following due-diligence and appropriate agreement of terms. This would also require further governance/legal processes and attract cost and risk. It was discussed that this could also delay the development timeline.

The Chair requested further detail on the phasing and programme at the next meeting, should planning be granted. The Chief Development Officer (KEH Group), who has been in post a matter of days, advised that he was currently writing the business plan and would revert with more detail on phasing/land assembly in due course, but the expectation was that the project would be moved ahead quickly if permission were to be secured. The developer agreed to create a summary document and bring it to the next Group meeting.

The CEO of Ebbsfleet United Football Club Limited gave a verbal update outlining the next steps for the timeline of the project and stressed the importance of an October planning decision. The developer also highlighted the closer to Christmas the date of determination, the less opportunity there is to conclude the section 106 in 2023 and this would likely slip into early 2024 (if approval is achieved).

The Chair asked that the next meeting follow a planning decision on the scheme.

The Chair further added that a meeting will be held once every meeting Cycle, but more could be arranged - if required. There are five Cycles and this would therefore see meets every 2-3 months.

The Chair thanked the group's members for attending the meeting.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 20:43pm.