

## **Appendix 4 : Land south of the High Street – a recent history**

### **28 November 2019**

CBC officers attended Partnership Committee to discuss LSHS and were asked to bring a draft action plan back to committee at its February 2020 meeting.

### **6 February 2020**

Partnership Committee advised a drop-in session had been arranged by CBC officers for 12 February for members of the public and councillors to give their views on how they would like the town centre to evolve and improve.

### **3 September 2020**

Partnership Committee was advised the event on 12/2/20 had been well attended and a report would be circulated. It was suggested CBC look at multi-use facilities in other towns and questioned whether external consultants or developers might be helpful in bringing together a vision for the site.

### **Autumn 2020**

Informal councillor led working group met on several occasions with CBC officers (no LLTC officer presence).

### **10 December 2020**

Partnership Committee agreed to formalise the informal Members' group into a T&F group to undertake further work and feed this back to both councils via the Partnership Committee.

### **11 January 2021**

First meeting of T&F Group

### **15 February 2021**

T&F Group met with representatives of The Rufus Centre, Flitwick and The Neeld and History Museum, Chippenham

### **22 March 2021**

T&F Group received an "ideas and options" document and a verbal update from CBC on the Options Analysis being undertaken by Cornerstone.

### **6 May 2021**

T&F Group received information about the LB Library & theatre facility and considered a process for a proposed consultation for a facility on LSHS.

## **26 July 2021**

T&F group discussed CBC commissioned research findings and noted the impact of the Covid pandemic on the market. It heard that neither a leisure or cinema led mixed use development was currently a viable option and that it might be several years before the market recovered from the pandemic. The group agreed to proceed with work on community needs for LSHS.

## **23 August 2021**

LLTC Policy + Finance Committee received a document summarising the work of the T&F group and recommended to the Partnership Committee that the group continue, but under P+F and that CBC be asked to support the ongoing work of the group with officer involvement.

## **9 September 2021**

Partnership committee endorsed above recommendations.

## **20 September 2021**

P+F committee requested Terms of Reference be drafted along with resource/budget implications.

## **22 November 2021**

LLTC's Policy & Finance Committee agreed proposed ToR and schedule of meetings for a working party.

## **7 February 2022**

WP met with Peppercorn Group, received an update on CBC's cultural strategy and considered land ownership on LSHS.

## **7 March 2022**

WP met with the Archaeological & Historical Society to learn about its aspirations for a heritage centre and also heard from Luton Cultural Trust.

## **21 April 2022**

WP heard from Bedfordshire Archives and considered council accommodation needs.

## **23 May 2022**

WP met with a local resident to discuss performance space requirements. It also requested that the Town Clerk with Cllr Goodchild seek information on the likely costs and process for creating a Masterplan design for LSHS.

## **20 June 2022**

Policy & Finance Committee agreed to write to CBC to seek information about when the 2012 development brief would be revisited, what CBC's timescale/roadmap was for LSHS and whether a feasibility study for a civic/community building could be funded from S106 developer contributions.

### **25 July 2022**

Policy & Finance Committee received correspondence in reply to the above queries from Cllr K Collins of CBC. Committee agreed to expenditure of £10,520 to instruct a consultant to develop up to 4 high level masterplan options looking at varying potential uses and concepts for LSHS.

### **24 October 2022**

WP received a first proposal for a mixed use residential and commercial scheme from the consultants appointed to undertake a Masterplanning exercise on LSHS. This was discussed and further information given to help inform further iterations.

### **9 January 2023**

WP received an updated presentation for mixed use development with 130 residential dwellings. It also received proposals for land beyond the immediate LSHS area and agreed to not pursue these at this time. WP agreed information to be shared with CBC with a request to meet as soon as possible to discuss LSHS further.

### **13 March 2023**

WP received a further updated presentation for two options for LSHS including 101 residential dwellings with a mix of commercial and retail spaces and a community building. The WP noted the presentation and agreed to focus on financial viability as a next step, to be progressed through the Policy & Finance Committee.

It was noted that CBC had launched a public consultation on 10 March in respect of LSHS, which also sought views on the sufficiency of town centre car parking.

### **5 April 2023**

WP met to discuss and formulate recommendations for a response to CBC's consultation on LSHS. The WP made a recommendation to P+F Committee to authorise expenditure on a public engagement exercise on the Masterplan scenarios developed by the consultants.

### **17 April 2023**

P+F recommendations to Council to authorise expenditure for public engagement and to approve a formal response to the CBC consultation regarding LSHS.

### **23 April 2023**

LLTC agreed a response to the CBC consultation seeking partnership working and objecting to proposals to reduce town centre car parking. The Council deferred a decision on the public engagement regarding LSHS to the next administration following the May 2023 elections, due to concerns regarding potential cost.

### **15 June 2023**

Partnership Committee agreed a Motion in respect of LSHS in which its opposition to the previous CBC administration's proposals for the site were stated and it was agreed to write to

the new CBC Leader seeking commitment to partnership working and meaningful consultation to bring forward ambitious plans for the site.

### **26 June 2023**

LLTC received a Motion presented by Cllr Owen in respect of LSHS and resolved to undertake an informal public engagement exercise and to write to the new Leader of CBC expressing a wish to work in partnership on this matter.

### **17 July 2023**

WP discussed a low-key informal public engagement to seek views from residents. It was agreed to focus on the second illustrative Masterplan for the site, on the basis that the proposed community facility was located near the site of the former Rothschild garden. The WP considered appointing a valuation surveyor, but a 3<sup>rd</sup> quotation was required.

### **20 July 2023**

CBC Full Council voted to approve a Motion in respect of LSHS which called for discussions to begin to bring forward ambitious plans for the site and to investigate potential sources of funding for community infrastructure needs.

### **24 July 2023**

P+F Committee agreed expenditure of up to £10,000 for appointment of a valuation surveyor, subject to a third quotation being sought and to delegate authority to the WP to make this appointment.

### **August 2023**

LLTC published information on its illustrative Masterplan on its website and also held an informal engagement event in the LB Library, seeking resident views.

### **7 November 2023**

An informal Member briefing with CBC officers took place, rescheduled from 18 September 2023.

### **30 November 2023**

WP received feedback on the 157 responses from the public engagement exercise and noted feedback from meetings with landowners on LSHS. The WP also received updated quotes and agreed to appoint a valuation surveyor to undertake a land valuation on LSHS at a cost of £6,500, based on scheme option 2.

### **17 January 2024**

CBC Cllr Watkins and CBC officers met informally with CBC ward councillors with the LLTC Town Clerk also in attendance. CBC officers presented proposals due to go to CBC committee in March and CBC Executive in April. The CBC proposal was to dispose of the land for housing, including two thirds of the current Duncombe Drive car park, but to retain two parcels of land for possible community uses (subject to a third party delivering and running such facilities).

## **26 January 2024**

WP met to discuss the informal meeting held on 17 January 2024. It was agreed a Council meeting should be called to discuss LLTC's position on the proposals.

## **15 February 2024**

LLTC held extraordinary Council meeting to agree to write to CBC setting out the town council's preference for collaborative working with CBC, for a comprehensive rather than piecemeal redevelopment of the site and asking CBC to commit to joint working.

## **4 April 2024**

CBC report presented to CBC Corporate Resources OSC which referenced the 703 responses to public consultation undertaken in Spring 2023 and contained the recommendations outlined to ward members in January. The minutes record that following representations by several councillors, it was proposed to defer the report until October 2024, that meaningful discussions commence between both councils and that all options and key issues be explored before a revised report brought back to committee.

## **29 April 2024**

Cllr Goodchild gave a verbal presentation to LLTC in respect of work done to date and the findings of the valuation surveyor.

## **7 May 2024**

Motion put forward to Partnership Committee to form a second working party to also consider viable options for LSHS in the event that the town council's Masterplan proposal could not proceed.

## **16 May 2024**

P+F Committee agreed to additional expenditure for land valuation report to be updated due to changes proposed by Cllr Goodchild. Committee also agreed for Cllr Goodchild to informally discuss the report findings and work to date with CBC councillors/officers.

## **15<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

Letter sent to CBC Director of Place and Communities requesting a meeting to discuss the emerging scope of the Neighbourhood Plan and CBCs land ownership. (reproduced at the end of this document with response)

## **30 September 2024**

The Town Council was asked to consider a Motion submitted by Councillor R Goodchild: *to endorse the necessary amendments to the previously agreed masterplan proposal for Land South in order that the resultant design accurately reflects the basis of the financial viability report and, further instructs the Town Clerk to place an order with our Architect, SGP to carry out the works as described above for a budget price not to exceed £8,225.00. This cost is to be funded from the Professional Fees earmarked reserve reference 9035/920.*

It was resolved to refer the motion to the Land South Working Party and that an officer report be provided to that meeting.

### **28 October 2024**

The Town Council's Land South Working Party met and heard that Councillor Goodchild had shared information with several CBC councillors at an informal meeting held on 15 October 2024.

The working party considered the Motion referred by Council on 30 September 2024 and it was not passed. Instead, three recommendations were made to the parent committee.

### **11 November 2024**

Policy & Finance Committee considered the three recommendations and voted to recommend these on to Council for consideration.

### **25 November 2024**

Council endorsed the first two recommendations made by the working party and P&F Committee:

**RESOLVED to share the presentation and the valuation surveyor's report with Central Bedfordshire Councillors Watkins, Baker and Zerny.**

**RESOLVED to write to the Portfolio Holder at Central Bedfordshire Council to request that a further meeting take place, to include CBC Officers and that this be held as soon as practicable after allowing time for officers to review the Land South presentation and valuation surveyor's report.**

On reaching the third recommendation that the Town Council's Land South Working Party be dissolved and that the work undertaken thus far be referred to the Partnership Committee to take forward (and to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for information and reference), other than the valuation surveyor report due to its confidential nature, a Motion to defer consideration was proposed by Councillor J Symes in accordance with Standing Order 10 (a) (iii). It was suggested this be deferred until either the meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council had taken place or until the scheduled Town Council meeting on 28 April 2025, whichever was the sooner. This proposal was passed

### **28 April 2025**

Town Council meeting – extract of minutes:

Views were expressed both in favour of the Partnership Committee as the most appropriate mechanism to take this matter forward and the opposing view that a Town Council position was needed and this decision could be perceived as the administration stepping back from the previous work undertaken regarding land south of the High Street.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation was agreed (10 in favour, 6 against, 1 abstention).

**RESOLVED** that the Town Council's Land South Working Party be dissolved and that the work undertaken thus far be referred to the Partnership Committee to take forward (and to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for information and reference), other than the valuation surveyor report due to its confidential nature, although it was proposed this could be shared with consultants AECOM to help inform their work, subject to a non disclosure agreement (the contents of which could be approved beforehand by the Policy & Finance Committee by email).

At the same meeting a Motion proposed by Cllr R Goodchild was debated (extract of minutes below):

The Council considered the following Motion proposed by independent Councillor R Goodchild:

*Given the progress in design of Phase 1 of the Land South redevelopment scheme provided by the re-engagement of Travelodge Hotels and support of Central Bedfordshire Council -*

*This Council:*

- 1). Welcomes Central Bedfordshire Council's support for the development of the amended masterplan for the site known as Land South.*
- 2). Re-affirms the unanimous resolution of Council on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 that the redundant Land South site presents a once-only strategic opportunity for redevelopment.*
- 3). Re-affirms its original commitment (agreed in August 2021) to a community led development that consequently formed the basis of the design brief for the creation of our masterplan.*
- 4). Encourages progress of the initial third-party design proposals for Phase 1, (i.e. Hotel, MSCP and Civic Centre), within the parameters of our existing master plan.*
- 5). Agrees to extend our master planner's commission to further develop the Phase 1 outline design to ensure the building configuration and orientation meets the originally intended streetscape and acceptable aesthetic design along this important route from the new square to the park.*
- 6). Agrees to provide funding for the master planners design work outlined in (5) above for the quoted sum of £2,250 from the Professional Fees earmarked reserve 9035/920 (£16,697 available).*

A number of views were expressed along with comments and questions.

Following discussion, the proposal was put to the vote but was not carried (6 in favour, 9 against and 2 abstentions).

## **25 June 2025**

Resolution passed by the Partnership (Joint) Committee:

**RESOLVED** that:

**This Committee recognises the strategic importance of Land South of the High Street for the town.**

**The Committee recognises and thanks all members and past Chairs of the Town Council's Land South Working Party including officers who offered valuable support. Particular, thanks are given to Cllr Goodchild for his continued drive and determination to see the potential of Land South unlocked.**

**This Committee commits to working in the spirit of Partnership that is intended of this committee with both LLTC and CBC Councillors working together to help realise the potential of Land South.**

#### **4 September 2025**

Extract of minutes of Partnership (Joint) Committee:

*It was agreed that the Working Party should convene and scope its objectives and engage with Central Bedfordshire Council and relevant land owners to explore feasible regeneration pathways and report back to the Partnership Committee on progress and recommendations.*

#### **October – November 2025**

Formal Regulation 14 consultation on draft LSHS policy for inclusion in the Leighton-Linslade Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **12 December 2025**

First formal meeting of Partnership LSHS working party held. CBC portfolio holder and officers from Assets invited to attend. Cllr S Watkins attended as portfolio holder. Extract of minutes:

*The working party heard from Councillor Watkins that there was no specific plan for the site by Central Bedfordshire Council as majority landowner, but that any proposals would need to take into account there was no possibility of any capital outlay from the council.*

*The group discussed elements of proposals for the site with emphasis on community facilities, traffic management and access onto Church Square. It was agreed that a comprehensive plan was needed before these elements could be reviewed in any detail.*

*Some queries raised included the status of discussions with other landowners, support for community groups to explore potential funding streams and resources/funding available from either council for any further work.*

*The group emphasised their wish for partnership working and joined up thinking.*

**RESOLVED that next steps would be:**

- 1) To arrange a meeting with Sandy Town Council to learn from their recent experience.**
- 2) To review potential masterplan/s alongside the emerging Neighbourhood Plan policy.**
- 3) To determine the community element requirements for the site.**

### **17 December 2025**

Neighbourhood Plan steering group met to review Reg 14 feedback. Re LSHS, the comprehensive response submitted by consultants acting on behalf of CBC as landowners was reviewed and agreed to delay plan progression in order to meet with CBC to try to reach agreed policy wording.

### **19<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

Correspondence from CBC Neighbourhood Plan Officer to confirm that lack of availability for in-person meeting resulting in cancellation.

### **20<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

Correspondence from CBC Assets & Capital Delivery – Development Team to request resolution via email (with on-line meeting as needed) to resolve LSHS policy wording. Briefing note agreed with Chair of LLNP Steering Group and sent to CBC and their appointed Planning Consultant to seek to suggest revised wording accommodating CBC requests to changes to policy wording, wherever possible.

### **20<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

Correspondence from CBC appointed Planning Consultant maintaining objection to Policy LL5.

### **26 March 2026**

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group met. As it had not been possible to meet with CBC representatives despite requests to do so, but a further formal response from consultants had been received on behalf of CBC as landowner, this was further reviewed and revised. Steering Group reached agreement on wording for LSHS. A formal recommendation made to the Town Council to endorse the draft Plan for the next stage i.e. submission to the planning authority. (Followed by approval of the Submission version of the Plan at Policy and Finance Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> April and the Town Council on the 27 April 2026.)

Lorna Carver  
Director of Place and Communities  
Central Bedfordshire Council

**BY EMAIL**

Date 15<sup>th</sup> July  
Our Ref 4023\_021

Dear Lorna,

**Leighton Linslade Neighbourhood Plan**

Leighton Linslade Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (LLNP) and has appointed ONH to provide professional planning advice and support for the project.

The Town Council has agreed its initial intentions for the scope of the Plan and is now starting to work through the early research and evidence gathering stages wishes.

As part of the stakeholder mapping exercise, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has identified yourself as a key stakeholder of influence. As such, it is hoped that in shaping the policy areas for the LLNP, particularly the policies relating to town centre renewal, land south of the High Street, brownfield and employment opportunities and infrastructure, we can work with yourself and Central Bedfordshire Council to consider mutually beneficially opportunities where the Neighbourhood Plan could possibly align workstreams with CBC, to assist in delivering its strategy and objectives for the town where they pertain to planning.

We want to ensure that in shaping the policies and particularly any site-specific allocation policies, they are ambitious and reflect the needs and wants of the Town Council and the wider community yet are entirely plausible, deliverable and achievable. As such your assistance in helping us manage expectations would be very much appreciated.

As such, I am writing to seek to arrange a meeting to discuss the Neighbourhood Plan with you, where its work could add value to CBCs objectives and seek to ensure there is cooperation and collaboration between the Town Council and CBC. I am particularly keen to have a better appreciation of the realities of CBCs asset management and direction of travel for Leighton Linslade as well as any developing policies at CBC which may be assisted by our workstreams, such as deign coding and town centre masterplanning.

I appreciate you are incredibly busy, so will be guided by your availability if you are happy to offer some dates.

If you think it may be appropriate to extend the conversation to include other key CBC officers, then this is of course welcomed and can be arranged as either a virtual or face-to-face meeting, whichever works best for you.

Kind regards



Leah Coney  
Planning and Development Manager.

**From:** Nicola Johnstone on behalf of Lorna Carver  
**Date:** Friday, 26 July 2024 at 15:23  
**To:** Leah Coney  
**Cc:** Jane Hubbard <Jane.Hubbard@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Leighton Linslade Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Leah,

Thank you for your email and attached letter. It is good to hear that the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing well.

The neighbourhood plan is obviously intended to be locally-led, and the Council, as planning authority, has a role to play in terms of ensuring the strategy meets the basic conditions and complies with statutory requirements. As such, there does need to be a degree of separation between the Council's role in this regard and any involvement in the plan-making process. The Council have an adopted Local Plan, which sets out our policies and objectives for the whole area, and you will hopefully be aware that we are just in the early stages of starting to prepare a new Local Plan. The neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the adopted plan.

In terms of fulfilling the Council's role in supporting neighbourhood plans, we do have a dedicated Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Jane Hubbard, who would be more than happy to meet with you to provide technical support and advice. Jane can also provide advice as to how our emerging plan should be considered when progressing your neighbourhood plan.

I will ask Jane to get in touch with you to have an initial discussion.

Kind Regards,

Lorna

**Lorna Carver**  
Director of Place and Communities

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**From:** Leah Coney  
**Date:** Friday, 26 July 2024 at 16:32  
**To:** Lorna Carver  
**Cc:** Jane Hubbard  
**Subject:** Re: Leighton Linslade Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Lorna,

Thank you for taking the time to respond. We always advise our clients to ensure that they are in conformity with adopted plans and meet basic conditions and of course appreciate that Neighbourhood Plans must be locally led by the community. The PPG on Neighbourhood Planning is clear that there should be proactive information sharing between the LPA and NP groups and constructive engagement

and we find that maintaining a dialogue is key to ensuring smooth project progression and as such I would be pleased to meet with Jane to discuss the emerging Local Plan, sharing of evidence bases and so on.

My request to you is really about establishing a dialogue with CBC as a landowner and having a conversation about future asset management. The Town Council has aspirations for the Plan which include key locations which are currently owned by CBC and as such I believe it is not in the interests of the Neighbourhood Plan to progress policy ideas in these areas in a vacuum, without a clear understanding of the realities of what is achievable and deliverable, particularly in this case around the creation of additional social infrastructure, town centre regeneration and land south of the high street. We do not wish the plan to become an exercise in frustration whereby significant local effort is spent developing policy content only to find that there are fundamental issues which cannot be reconciled.

I would rather manage expectations now than wait until the Neighbourhood Plan has progressed to the Reg 14 stage when CBC are formally responding, hence my request for a meeting if at all possible, either with yourself or an appropriate member of your team before the shape of the Plan starts to develop further. It occurs to me that you may not have been passed a copy of the scoping document for the Plan, so you can see the policy areas under consideration, so please find this enclosed as I trust it may be helpful. It is policy area LL4 where your contribution would be most appreciated as well as LL1 and LL10.

Kind Regards

Leah

Leah Coney MA(Oxon) AssocRTPI, MCiLEX CiLCA  
Planning and Development Manager  
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