

Audio Transcript

Land south of Gloucester Road, Almondsbury presentation

00:06 --> 00:31

Chris Brown: Hi, and thank you for watching this presentation about our community Consultation Feedback for Gallagher Development site at the land south of Gloucester Road, Almondsbury.

I'm Chris Brown from Engage Planning, and we undertook this consultation, and we'll be going through many different questions and points raised during the consultation, and my colleague, Oli Haydon will be answering the points raised. Oli, if you'd just like to introduce yourself?

00:31 --> 01:39

Oli Haydon: Thanks, Chris. Hi, everyone. My name's Oli Haydon, I'm a planning associate at Stantec, and I'm part of the team working on the planning application for land south of Gloucester Road in Almondsbury.

As Chris said, this webinar has been prepared to provide local residents and stakeholders with an update on our proposals, and importantly, to respond to some of the main questions and comments raised during our community consultation.

A program of engagement has been carried out before the application was submitted, including consultation with local residents, stakeholders, elected members, and the parish council.

We've been carefully reviewing the feedback received and shared it with our wider project team.

Over the past few years, our project team has been assessing the site and developing proposals for a new neighbourhood that could deliver up to 300 homes, including affordable and age-friendly housing, alongside public open space and other community benefits, which we'll discuss today.

The purpose of today's presentation isn't to repeat every detail contained within the planning application. Instead, we want to explain the proposals in a more clear and accessible way, and answer the topics that local people told us matter most to them. So, thanks again for watching, and we hope you find this presentation informative and helpful.

01:39 --> 01:52

Chris Brown: Great, thanks, Oli. Let's get straight into this, then. One of the questions that we've been asked is, why is this particular site being proposed for development now, and can you explain what the position is in terms of the local planning policies?

01:53 --> 03:24

Oli Haydon: Of course. So, the simple answer is that the site's been identified by South Gloucestershire Council as part of its emerging local plan. The local plan is the document that sets out where new homes, jobs, and infrastructure should go across the district over the coming years.

Land south of Gloucester Road is one of the locations the Council has identified to help meet their future housing needs and support the long-term growth of Almondsbury.

Like many areas across the country, South Gloucestershire faces significant demand for new homes, and the Emerging Local Plan has been prepared to address this need by identifying new locations where the development can be accommodated, alongside supporting critical infrastructure.

As part of preparing the local plan, the Council assessed a large number of potential development sites, and considered whether changes to Greenbelt boundaries would be required to meet future housing and employment needs.

Following that process, a number of sites have been proposed for allocation across the district, including this extension to Almondsbury at land south of Gloucester Road.

The local plan is currently being examined by independent planning inspectors before it can be formally adopted.

However, because it's at quite an advanced stage, it's already an important consideration when planning applications are assessed.

Alongside the local plan, the Council, of course, has to consider national planning policies and its existing adopted policies, too.

The application has now been submitted, but no decision has yet been made. The Council will continue to consult you, local residents, community groups, and technical organisations before reaching a decision, and all comments received are being taken into account.

03:24 --> 03:33

Chris Brown: That's great. Now, this is an outlined planning application, but can you explain what an outline planning application is, and what are reserved matters?

03:34 --> 04:47.

Oli Haydon: Yes, another good question. So, what is exactly being applied for at this stage? So, this application has been submitted in outline. Put simply, an outline planning application is about establishing whether a site is suitable for development in principle before all of the detailed design work is completed.

If outline planning permission were granted, it would fix the key parameters for the development. For this site, it could include the maximum number of homes, the range of other uses that could be provided, and areas that would be developed compared to those that would remain as open space or green infrastructure.

What it doesn't do is approve the final detailed design of the development. Those details are considered through a later stage of the planning process, known as reserved matters applications.

Reserved matters deal with issues such as the appearance of the homes, the final layout of streets and open spaces, landscaping and building heights, parking arrangements, and the mix of house types across the site.

For this particular application, access is the one exception. The proposed vehicle access from Gloucester Road is being submitted for approval now in detail.

Everything else remains subject to future approval through this Reserved Matters process.

The Illustrative Master Plan shows one of the possible ways that a development could come forward, but isn't the final layout, and may evolve through later stages of the planning process.

04:48 --> 05:08

Chris Brown: Thanks, Oli. That's great. Now, some residents have raised affordable housing during the consultation, and affordable housing is proposed as part of this scheme, but what is affordable housing, and how much will there be? And can you also talk about age-friendly homes? They're proposed. Can you explain what this means and why they are needed?

05:09 --> 05:57

Oli Haydon: Sure. So, to begin, affordable housing is housing that's provided for people whose needs are not met by the open market. This can include affordable rent, social rent, or shared ownership homes.

Our proposals include 40% affordable housing across the development. These homes would be integrated throughout the site to help create a more balanced and mixed community. The final mix would be agreed with the Council as the scheme progresses.

Age-friendly homes are homes designed to support people as they get older. They can include accessible homes, bungalows, retirement accommodation, or other specialist housing.

South Gloucestershire's Emerging Local Plan identifies a need for more housing to support an aging population.

So, the proposals, therefore, include an area that could accommodate age-friendly housing, helping people remain within their local community as their needs change over time.

05:59 --> 06:14

Chris Brown: That's great, thanks, Oli. Now, if you could move on to access and movement plans for the site. So, concerns have been raised about the impact of more traffic in terms of congestion and road safety. So, what assessments have been done, and what plans are there around this?

06:15 --> 06:52

Oli Haydon: Sure, so yeah, as you said, traffic and road safety were among the most common issues raised during our consultation. The application is supported by a detailed transport assessment that looks at existing traffic conditions, future traffic levels, and the likely impacts of the development on the surrounding road network.

The proposed vehicle access would be taken from Gloucester Road via a new junction designed to accommodate development traffic safely and efficiently. Their findings indicate that the access arrangements can operate without causing any unacceptable impacts on highway safety or capacity.

The proposals will also be reviewed by the Council and its highway advisors before any decision is made.

06:53 --> 07:01

Chris Brown: Great, and many people raised, comments about the need for public transport improvements and better pedestrian and cycle access. What's being proposed for that?

07:02 --> 07:30

Oli Haydon: Sure, so a key objective of these proposals is to make it easier for people to walk, cycle, and use public transport. The plans include walking and cycling routes throughout the site, improved links to existing footpaths, connections towards Florence Park, and integration with the planned improvements along the A38.

The development also includes a proposed mobility hub, which could provide facilities such as cycle storage, car club spaces, electric vehicle charging, and real-time public transport information.

07:31 --> 07:48

Chris Brown: Great, thanks. As with most development plans, many residents have understandably raised concerns about the possible impact on local services, in particular doctors and schools, and whether they can cope with the new homes. How will this be handled, and will there be any funding for improvements?

07:49 --> 09:01

Oli Haydon: Sure, so, yeah, it's understandable that people want to know whether local infrastructure can keep pace with this growth.

As part of the planning process, the Council consults organisations responsible for education, healthcare, transport, and other public services.

They assess the impact of the development and identify whether improvements or additional capacity are needed. The Council has also prepared an infrastructure delivery plan, often referred to as the IDP. This looks at the infrastructure needed to support planned growth across South Gloucestershire, including schools, healthcare facilities, transport improvements, community facilities, and utilities.

The purpose of the IDP is to help ensure that development is supported by the infrastructure required to serve both existing and future residents.

Often, as will be the case here, developers can be required to make financial contributions through legal agreements linked to any planning permission.

These contributions can help fund infrastructure improvements identified by the service providers and the Council, ensuring that the impacts of the development are appropriately assessed as communities grow.

This whole process helps make sure that infrastructure requirements are assessed alongside new development proposals, rather than an afterthought after the development has taken place.

09:01 --> 09:13

Chris Brown: And within the site, there is a proposed area for retail or commercial space. Some suggestions have been made for possible uses for this space. What is the plan, and what options are there for the use of this area?

09:13 --> 09:31

Oli Haydon: Sure, so the proposals, yeah, they do include a space close to Gloucester Road for small-scale local services or facilities. At this stage, the intention is to provide a flexible space that could accommodate uses such as a convenience store, cafe, or small workspace, but the final use would depend on future demand and market interest.

09:32 --> 09:44

Chris Brown: Great, thanks, Oli. Now, in the consultation, some comments were raised about the loss of habitats and the impact on wildlife. What assessments have been done, and what will be the impact on biodiversity and ecology?

09:45 --> 10:23

Oli Haydon: Yeah, so protecting and enhancing nature has been an important part of developing these proposals. The application's supported by ecological surveys and assessments, which have looked at habitats and species on and around the site. These studies help identify potential mitigation measures.

Many of the site's hedgerows and mature trees are proposed to be retained and incorporated into this wider network of green spaces, wildlife corridors, landscaped areas.

And the proposals are also designed to deliver biodiversity net gain, or BNG. This means the development must leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than before through new habitats, planting, and long-term management.

10:24 --> 10:30

Chris Brown: And, are open spaces planned in the site, and what will happen to the existing walking routes through the site?

10:30 --> 11:20

Oli Haydon: Yeah, so a significant part of the site is proposed to remain as green space. The plans include formal and informal open space, children's play areas, recreation space, landscape corridors, areas for nature conservation and sustainable drainage. Existing hedgerows and trees would be retained where possible.

The proposals could include things such as allotments and community orchards, creating opportunities for recreation and community use, and these areas would be supported by long-term management arrangements.

Maintaining the walking connections that we know that local people use has been an important consideration throughout the process. The existing public right-of-way crossing the site would be retained and enhanced, while many of the informal routes currently used by residents would be maintained through the new layout.

The proposals also include improved connections towards Almondsbury Village, Florence Park, and the wider public rights-of-way network.

11:21 --> 11:31

Chris Brown: Great, thanks for covering that. If we can move on to the site drainage plans, what are the plans for surface water drainage on the site, and is there any flood risk here?

11:32 --> 12:10

Oli Haydon: Okay, so flood risk and drainage have been assessed as part of preparing this application. So, the site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest category of flood risk defined by the Environment Agency.

The proposals include sustainable drainage systems, which are often known as SUDs. These systems are designed to capture and manage rainfall on-site, slowing the flow of water and releasing it more gradually.

Features on site include ponds, swales, drainage basins, and these can provide attractive green spaces and more habitat opportunities for wildlife.

The overall aim is to ensure that the development manages rainfall more responsibly and doesn't increase flood risk on-site or off-site.

12:11 --> 12:22

Chris Brown: And also, several people have raised concerns in respect of the nearby Air Ambulance site, including about the air pollution and noise pollution.

How will the Air Ambulance be affected, and what assessments have been done?

12:23 --> 13:04

Oli Haydon: Yeah, so given the site's proximity to the Great Western Air Ambulance and the National Police Air Service Base, noise and air quality have been considered carefully throughout the design process.

We've done specialist noise impact and air quality assessments. These have been undertaken to understand the existing conditions and any potential effects on the proposed development and future residents.

These assessments have taken into account, as well, road traffic on the A38, M4, and M5, as well as helicopter activity. The proposals have been designed on the basis that these important operations should continue.

The technical work will be reviewed by the Council and relevant consultees before any decision is made, and of course, it's available for anyone to review themselves online.

13:05 --> 13:20

Chris Brown: That's helpful, thanks. And finally, some residents are concerned about how these proposals will impact the character of Almondsbury, and the neighbouring areas to the site. What's being done in regard of the character of the area?

13:20 --> 14:09

Oli Haydon: Yeah, so we recognise that Almondsbury has a strong identity and a distinct character, and preserving that sense of place has been an important consideration in developing these proposals.

The plans have been informed by landscape, heritage, and design assessments, alongside feedback received during the whole consultation process.

The aim is to create a development that responds positively to its surroundings, rather than feeling separate or isolated from them.

A key part of this approach is retaining existing hedgerows, trees, and green spaces alongside creating new landscaped areas and green corridors throughout the site.

As this is an outline application, the detailed design of the homes and streets hasn't yet been fixed. If planning permission is granted, those details would be developed through a future Reserved Matters application, which would come with its own consultation process.

14:09 --> 14:21

Chris Brown: Great, thanks, Oli for answering all these queries raised during the consultation.

And thank you all for watching this presentation. We hope that it's helpful. Oli, would you like to just sum up?

14:22 --> 15:14

Oli Haydon: Sure thing. So, yeah, thanks everyone for taking the time to watch this presentation and engaging with us throughout the whole process. We hope it's helped explain the proposals and address some of the questions raised during the consultation process.

The planning application has now been submitted to South Gloucestershire Council, and all of these supporting documents and reports are available to view on the Council's planning portal.

These documents provide much more detail on the topics that we've briefly discussed today.

As the application progresses, the Council will continue consulting statutory organisations and considering comments submitted by local residents and stakeholders before reaching a decision.

We also want to continue engaging with the Council and key stakeholders throughout that process. So, all I can say is, thanks again for your interest in the proposals for land south of Gloucester Road, Almondsbury. We appreciate the time that people have taken to engage with the consultation and share their views to date.

15:15 --> 15:18

Chris Brown: Great, thank you everybody, thank you very much, and goodbye.