

South Oxfordshire District Council meeting – 7 October 2021

Question from Councillor Jane Murphy to Councillor Sue Cooper, Leader of the council

Can the Leader confirm that a full consultation process on the size and style of the new HQ building on the gateway site will be undertaken with the residents who border the gateway site on two sides and what further consultation will take place?

Written response

As all members will know, we are always committed to ensuring residents get a positive opportunity to comment, feedback and contribute at the appropriate stages of any project where they have a genuine opportunity to influence the outcomes.

So far, local residents have had the opportunity to comment on extensive local engagement on the Masterplanning work for the Didcot Gateway site – this was advertised via leaflet distribution to residents who lived around the site and further afield in Didcot along with pieces in local newspapers and emails to key stakeholders. We also sent the proposals and engagement questionnaire to people registered for updates on Didcot Garden Town and planning in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts.

Support for the proposals welcomed the new and modern open space and amenities, which gives a good first impression of Didcot for those arriving at the station. Concerns raised focused on the limited amount of on-site parking for new residents and the potential implications of reducing available parking overall. The council is actively working on addressing concerns for parking in a way that ensures there is enough parking for those who need it, while also actively encouraging the use of sustainable public transport where possible. Concerns about building heights have been considered and the updated masterplan seeks to minimise the impact of tall buildings by setting these further back from the road. The updated masterplan also reduces the number and density of buildings to create more open space on the site.

Local residents were also engaged a number of times through the Didcot Garden Town public advisory board, and the town council has received presentations and updates. Local council members from the area have been closely involved in the design process of our new building to ensure that local residents' views are given appropriate attention. We are also hoping to be able to make a presentation on the proposals to Didcot Town Council in mid-October.

Councillor Rouane and Councillor Powell met with members of the local community to discuss the site and our building on Tuesday 5 October. Councillor Rouane in particular has been in frequent contact with members of the community about the Didcot Gateway site for many years.

We will proactively invite local residents to take part in the full planning consultation for the building once an application has been submitted – this will be an opportunity

to comment on material planning considerations such as building height and style, and genuinely influence the outcome of the planning application as set out in the council's Statement of Community Involvement. The Masterplanning proposals for the wider Gateway site will be a supporting document during that planning consultation, so residents can comment on how the building sits within the Gateway development.

The concept designs for the council's building aim to reflect the history of Didcot, and the site layout was redesigned to enhance the welcoming open approach that the Gateway masterplan wants to achieve – this will enhance the open areas on the council's site for the benefit of the public as well as councillors and staff.