

Otterpool Park Working Group

Held at: Zoom Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 20 May 2020

Present: Councillors Gary Fuller, Michelle Keutenius, Jim Martin, David Monk (Chairman), Terence Mullard

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Andy Jarrett (Chief Strategic Development Officer), John Bunnett (Development Director), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Dave Shore (Strategic Development Projects Manager), Julia Wallace (Masterplanning Project Manager) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)

Others Present: Councillors Ian Meyers, Tim Prater, Connor McConville and Lesley Whybrow

Brandon Murray, Arcadis
Mark Hanton,
Liz Smith, Purcell UK

21. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

22. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2020 were approved.

23. **Biodiversity**

Brandon Murray, from Arcadis, presented members with his findings on ecology and biodiversity in respect of the site, its setting, habitats, survey results and assessment overall. In looking at the area as a whole, the impact of the development and how changes can be controlled.

A dedicated Species Survey has taken place revealing the different species on the site which would need a mitigation approach to protect main areas, the possibility of moving species to new areas and compensation of sites by retaining key areas and adding additional buffers designed using existing green space and hedgerows.

The next steps would be to look at the proposals for the site and how we can maximise the most value for biodiversity, the surveys give a good indication that at least 20% increase can be achieved throughout the site with potential for more as works progress.

With a biodiversity action plan officers can continue to monitor outcomes through the planning process.

24. **Westenhanger Castle and Park**

Liz Smith, Purcell Heritage Architects and Consultants, presented members with draft options for Westenhanger Castle and estate and how the castle may be used in the future, with its heritage assets, ancient monuments, standing assets and archeology of the site.

She outlined draft options for future use of the castle.

All the options allow for the site to be conserved but a hybrid use of the site between community and commercial uses would make most sense.

Mark Hanton, Landscape Architect, presented members with draft ideas for the landscaping of the park which would fit alongside Purcell's vision for the castle and estate.

Looking at key characteristics, current proposals and next steps he informed members that particular attention needs to be paid to the following:

- Site – situation, history, vegetation and constraints
- Key elements – road network, footpaths, cycle routes, heritage trails, play areas and green space
- Aims and objectives – celebrating, promoting and enhancing heritage, landscape and bringing people together

The next steps will be to coordinate with Purcell's work to refine materials and designs for the landscaping.

Due to a number of issues raised by members it was agreed that a meeting be arranged to address work on the castle and park in more detail, including timelines and an indication of costs for each of the proposed options.