

Meeting Notes		
Project: Bonhay Meadows		
Purpose: Presentation of development vision to EA Flood Risk Advisor for preliminary discussion		
DATE: 21/10/21	TIME: 1400 – 1500	LOCATION: Teams online meeting
Attendees:	[REDACTED] – ECL – SE3 Design – EA, Coastal & Flood Risk Advisor – Awcock Ward Partnership engineering consultants	

## Meeting Purpose

- For ECL to show/explain the updated ideas and ‘vision’ which SE3 Design have prepared for the site following Initial Pre Application advice (March 2021), and which incorporates use of the EA owned strip of land between the ECC site and the river.
- To update [REDACTED] on actions since the last meeting with him and to feed back on conversations with the EA Biodiversity Advisor and ECC Public & Green Spaces.

## Notes of points discussed

### 1.0 Background/work to date

- 1.1 [REDACTED] gave a brief update of work done to date.
- 1.2 [REDACTED] pulled up the SE3 Design drawings on screen and explained what he has been doing from a design perspective, to see what could fit on the site.
- 1.3 [REDACTED] emphasised that what he was showing is NOT a full design; it’s an appraisal/ proposal to get feedback from all the parties interested in the site – noting there are many stakeholders and partners, some of whom support development and some of whom oppose development. The appraisal process that’s been done so far has identified opportunities and challenges on the site and set these out on paper so that people can give their views and discuss possibilities.
- 1.4 [REDACTED] explained that the initial proposals SE3 Design prepared were restricted to the red line boundary (land owned by ECC), but because the site is by the river and the green space is looked at as a single green space, the ECL Team believe we should look at the site more holistically and see how it impacts the strip along the riverside – planting/ landscaping opportunities – benefits/ challenges etc.

### 2.0 Constraints

- 2.1 [REDACTED] showed a plan of Bonhay Meadows with the site constraints and flood zone plotted on. [REDACTED] noted that mostly the area proposed for development is currently in Flood Zone 2, with a smaller section in Flood Zone 3a.

2.2 ■ talked through other constraints which SE3 have marked on the plan of the site. These include tree constraints, Conservation Area constraints, Traffic, SWW attenuation tank, access requirements to the SWW and Flood Defence which needs to be maintained.

2.3 ■ noted that the above constraints limit the space for development to quite a small area which is mainly to the south, but with some opportunity to the north of the site.

### 3.0 Proposals/ 'Vision' ideas

3.1 ■ noted the site benefits a riverside location and good solar daylight penetration.

3.2 SE3 proposal maintains the flood protection – based on EA advice that there is an opportunity to integrate the flood defence into the structure if building is kept above flood barrier levels (inhabited spaces as a higher level).

3.3 ■ explained the proposal is to maintain a line of flood defence under our buildings and maintain the existing flood gate/ possible realign/ relocate it slightly according to the position of the building to the north.

3.4 ■ confirmed that the layout proposed for any development will also account for the requirement that EA vehicle access to the riverside and SWW equipment needs to be maintained.

3.5 ■ showed two design ideas that SE3 have drawn for discussion, emphasising that what is shown are just possible 'visions' for the site not a developed design. ■ explained that the first option only looks as the buildings in isolation, without looking at the site as a whole and considering outside spaces. The second option maximise views and makes different qualities of use across the site, responding to outside spaces and picks up the external areas to maximise river frontage.

3.6 ■ explained that SE3 Design 'vision' has been informed by conversations with ECC Public and Green Space team aspirations and also by thinking about how we can give something back when we redevelop the site for the community (Improve surveillance/ community/ create a destination).

3.7 ■ showed some precedent images of other Cities opening up waterfrontage to make the water surface more accessible to all people – ■ noted that in Exeter we already have this at the canal basin, but not so much upriver.

3.8 ■ explained that SE3 have been looking at whether there is an opportunity to combine the sites in a simple way (i.e., the ECC Bonhay Meadows site and the EA owned strip of land between Bonhay Meadow and the river's edge.)

3.9 ■ described what was shown on screen, explaining the residential/ commercial blocks are placed at the higher level, with terracing down to the river to create visual surveillance over the river. ■ suggested the potential for something like a mobile coffee van to be located on the terracing – and perhaps incorporating a simple pier to give public access down on to the river for water sports and activities. ■ noted we are aware water depth is poor at this location, highlighting that at this stage of the process the project team is thinking about what the development can offer for people in St David's area of Exeter. The vision is to make the space at the embankment more accessible at lower levels and create an access to the water

somehow – a destination, public open space – with potential to connect the development to existing cycle routes.

#### 4.0 Flood Risk response

- 4.1 ■ noted it was useful to see the plans and have ■ explain the vision as it helps him understand some of the ideas being considered.
- 4.2 ■ noted that from an EA Flood Risk Advisor point of view there is nothing in the proposals he would see as a ‘show stoppers’, but highlighted that he is only commenting for the EA from a flood risk perspective and that the EA Estates/Assets/Biodiversity Teams might have different opinions.
- 4.3 With regard to development at the river’s edge/into the river, ■ advised that anything that would slow water down would be a no, but noted that until proposals are modelled, he doesn’t know what the effect is - how big a pier could be, how far it could stick out.
- 4.4 ■ commented that development of terracing to the lower area should not cause too many problems – noting it may produce eddies etc in the flow of flood water (this runs at 800 cubic meters per second). ■ noted it is beneficial that the site is located on the inside of the river bend, however, any terracing would need to be sloped properly and will inevitably get some browning and mud. ■ noted the designers will need to take care not to create an area that attracts geese or swans to cluster/ poop as it is very smelly and cleaning is expensive! ■ observed that trees/ planting incorporated into the terracing could act as a debris trap and would need consideration at the design stage. ■ suggested that the EA has probably considered/ looked at ideas like this in other locations for improvement projects they have done and ruled out inclusion on the grounds of cost/maintenance overhead or similar.
- 4.5 ■ noted that the proposals maintain access with a clear vehicular route down to the river channel. ■ was concerned with the positioning of the northern building as currently shown as it creates a sharp turn down to the river channel if a flatbed lorry carrying equipment needed to get access. ■ advised the building shape may need to change to enable access, noting that as long as the EA can get through the gate and turn to get down to the river channel a building at this end of the site would be ok.
- 4.6 ■ noted that flood resilience techniques would need to be incorporated into the building construction, especially with commercial use on the ground floor. ■ advised the EA would need to think about what to do if the defence requires further adaptation in 40/50 years and ensure this is incorporated into any development design ( ■ noted this doesn’t rule things out, just need to think about it, suggesting more freeboard in the ground floor would likely be requested.)
- 4.7 ■ noted that the EA are expecting to receive the modelling of how the new defence performs in December and explained to IA that once complete the Model will be openly available for use/ adaptation to show that any development on the site doesn’t affect the flood defence system.
- 4.8 ■ suggested that there is precedent for EA Estates giving up land/ selling land for improvements. ■ noted that key for this proposal will be establishing appropriate liability for maintenance of the defence and EA confidence that a responsible body will look after the

defence, noting it may be a requirement that it is the Council, rather than just the owners of the building.

4.9 ■ suggested he could see added benefits to flood risk and biodiversity in the proposals shown.

4.10 ■ noted that the EA will not permit increasing flood risk.

## 5.0 Moving forward

5.1 ■ added that the EA are working with ECC on the new Local Plan and Level 2 SRFA allocation for sites, noting that if a site is allocated with the aid of a SFRA the sequential test is not required, but the proposal would still have to pass the exception test. ■ noted that the timescales that ECC are working to for the local plan do not fit with the target programme for this site.

5.3 ■ suggested that as a next step ECL should write to the EA Sustainable Places team ([spdc@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:spdc@environment-agency.gov.uk)) and request they provide a preliminary opinion (the info submitted will be passed to 4 – 5 departments within the EA).

■ suggested ECL could offer the EA departments to spend 15 – 20 mins to talk them through the ‘vision’ on screen in a similar format to TG presentation today.

It was noted that the EA preliminary response could be used in the public consultation process to show we are consulting with them.

Notes by ■ – 03/11/2021