

## **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1 This report on community engagement has been prepared by GKA Limited in support of a joint planning application by Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited (Sainsbury's) and Sime Darby London Limited (SDLL) for the comprehensive redevelopment of the former Lec site, Shripney Road, Bognor Regis.
- 1.2 This report provides an overview of the stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of the redevelopment proposal. It also forms part of a comprehensive package of documents submitted in support of the planning application.
- 1.3 A Development Brief for the site was approved by Arun District Council on 7 July 2008 following nearly two years of hard work and consultation. A priority of the development brief was to identify a substantial development partner who would accord with the 'core' land uses defined within the Brief, by occupying a significant part of the site.
- 1.4 A supermarket was one of the 'core' land uses identified and SDLL has therefore teamed up with Sainsbury's to help deliver the priorities of the Brief and regenerate this predominately derelict, contaminated, brownfield site.
- 1.5 Sainsbury's and SDLL have submitted a joint planning application to bring forward the comprehensive redevelopment of the entire Lec site. Sainsbury's is seeking full, detailed planning permission to provide a supermarket with a net sales area of approximately 55,000 sq ft, car parking for 600 customer vehicles, a 6 pump petrol filling station and jet wash for vehicles on approximately 8 acres of the site. SDLL is seeking outline consent for employment generating uses on around 2.45 acres of the remaining land at the Lec site.
- 1.6 Arun District Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) adopted in July 2006, recognises the need for wider involvement of the community and stakeholders at an early stage in the development control process and the benefits this can bring to the public, local groups and organisations, developers and local authorities.
- 1.7 In line with the requirements of Arun District Council's SCI, SDLL undertook extensive and thorough consultation on the formulation of the Development Brief. Indeed, the full involvement of stakeholders in the consultation process was one of the key factors in the Council supporting the Brief. Sainsbury's and SDLL have continued to work together on bringing the current proposals for the Lec site forward in consultation with the public in order to build on the achievements of the Development Brief consultation.

## **2. Rationale and approach to stakeholder consultation**

- 2.1 It was considered that the proposals to redevelop the former Lec site would be of general interest to the wider Bognor Regis community, but that there would be specific issues of particular relevance to residents and businesses in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 2.2 Sainsbury's and SDLL agreed that all stakeholders which included politicians, interest groups (such as Brighter Bognor, Bognor Regis Ltd, Bognor Regis Chamber of Commerce, Bognor Regis Vision Group, Bognor Regis 21 and the Civic Society), local businesses and residents involved in the consultation on the Development Brief would need to be fully involved in the consultation activities on the current proposals for the site. Therefore, a list of stakeholders was devised along with a consultation area map identifying those living and working in the vicinity of the Lec site that would need to be contacted. A copy of the consultation area map is included at Appendix A.
- 2.3 The agreed approach to the consultation exercise was to build on the work that had already been undertaken in the Development Brief. The stakeholder group that had been part of the early process was asked to be involved once again. The local politicians, district, town and parish councils and the stakeholder group were invited early on in the process by SDLL to a series of events in order to be introduced to their new development partner, Sainsbury's. A formal presentation was given to the Bognor Regis Sub-Committee which included an extensive question and answer session. The wider stakeholder group were invited to a drop-in session where both SDLL and Sainsbury's were represented and once again there was ample opportunity to discuss the proposals in more detail.
- 2.4 To involve the wider community of Bognor Regis effectively it was judged that the most productive way to introduce the proposals was via a public exhibition with representatives of the development team on hand to talk through the plans and to answer any questions raised. All local stakeholders were also invited to attend the public exhibitions.
- 2.5 The exhibition allowed members of the community to view detailed drawings and to discuss any queries or concerns with representatives of Sainsbury's and SDLL's development team. This format also offered an effective medium for feedback from attendees through conversations and feedback forms provided at the event.
- 2.6 Every group that expressed a wish to have a more detailed chance to comment and discuss the proposals with the development team were met with either at one of their regular meetings or as part of a special event, for example, a site visit. Each event was supplemented with briefing leaflets summarising the proposals which attendees could take away and digest at their leisure.

- 2.7 The local media including radio and press were used where possible to help keep the general public aware of progress and to inform as to the development intentions for the Lec site.
- 2.8 The Sime Darby website ([www.simedarby.co.uk](http://www.simedarby.co.uk)) was kept up to date throughout and continues to inform the community of progress on the former Lec site.

### **3. Consultation methodology**

- 3.1 A concentrated series of activities were undertaken to engage with the local community. These are detailed below.

#### Briefing for local stakeholders (politicians and interest groups)

- 3.2 In consultation with Arun District Council, it was agreed that the introduction of Sainsbury's and a brief presentation of Sainsbury's and SDLL's proposals should be given to members of the Bognor Regis Sub-Committee on Monday 3 November at Bognor Regis Town Hall. The presentation gave Sub-Committee members the opportunity to ask any questions or raise issues of concern regarding the broad proposals. A report of the session was circulated to the attendees.
- 3.3 On Tuesday 5 November, further members of Arun District Council and the wider stakeholder group involved in the consultation on the Development Brief for the Lec site were invited to attend a 'drop-in session' at the Regis Centre. The drop-in session was an informal event which gave invitees the opportunity to view the proposals and ask any questions regarding the plans. The full development team were on hand in order to cover all aspects as necessary. Comments were encouraged on A1 sheets as part of the exhibition or in A4 loose leaf format if preferred. All comments were recorded.
- 3.4 Additional presentations on the proposals were also given to Bognor Regis Town Council, Bersted Parish Council, Bognor Regis Ltd, Brighter Bognor and Bognor Regis Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of these presentations was to enable any questions to be raised in respect of the proposals. For Bognor Regis Town Council and Bersted Parish Council the presentations were given to their planning committees and formed part of a scheduled meeting. Bognor Regis Ltd requested a presentation at the start of a scheduled meeting.
- 3.5 For all three groups the questions and answers were recorded in a report to be circulated to attendees. Brighter Bognor and the Chamber of Commerce asked if they could have a site visit and this was arranged accordingly. Both groups were given a tour of the site and then had an informal presentation plus a chance to ask questions after. Reports of these sessions were also recorded and circulated.

#### Briefing for Arun District Councillors

- 3.6 A letter was issued on 12 November 2008 to all members of Arun District Council, West Sussex County Council members for Bersted, Bersted Ward Councillors, Bognor Regis Town Councillors, Felpham Parish Councillors and to the clerks of Bersted Parish Council and Middleton on Sea

Parish Council. Additionally a letter was issued on the same date to local MP, Nick Gibb. The aim of these letters was to provide an overview of the key elements of the scheme and advise of the public exhibition arrangements. A sample copy of the letter to politicians is provided at Appendix B.

- 3.7 Those local politicians and interest groups who had already received a presentation from Sainsbury's and SDLL or attended the drop-in session at the Regis Centre were also invited to attend the public exhibitions.

#### Briefing for the households and businesses

- 3.8 On 12 November 2008, letters were issued to the 1,176 households and businesses within the identified consultation area to provide some background information to the proposals and to invite recipients to attend a public exhibition.
- 3.9 For ease of communication, a wide range of contact options were provided in the letter which included a community information line telephone number and email address should members of the local community wish to discuss any aspect of the proposals or to advise if they were unable to attend the exhibition. The opportunity to make alternative arrangements to view the plans was also offered. The letter also drew people's attention to the website where the detailed proposals could be viewed and comments made.
- 3.10 A sample copy of the letter issued to the local community is included at Appendix C.

#### Press release

- 3.11 The first press release announcing Sainsbury's and SDLL's partnership in bringing redevelopment proposals forward was issued to the press on 28 October. The press release included information on the proposals and the dates for the public exhibitions in order to publicise the forthcoming event.
- 3.12 Further press releases were issued on 10 and 20 November in order to provide additional information on the proposals and again publicise the arrangements for the public exhibitions. Press releases were issued to the Bognor Regis Observer, Spirit FM and BBC Southern Counties Radio. Copies of the press releases and associated press coverage is provided at Appendix D. Also included at Appendix D is press coverage generated by the release of the headline results of the public exhibitions and by presentations and meetings with local groups.

Press advert

- 3.13 A press advert was published in The Bognor Regis Observer on 20 November 2008 informing the wider community of the proposals and inviting them to attend the public exhibitions. A copy of the press advert is included at Appendix E.

Poster

- 3.14 A number of posters were displayed in prominent positions around Bognor Regis to advertise the public exhibitions. A copy is included below.

**Sainsbury's Bognor Regis:  
Plans for the Former Lec Site**

Sime Darby London Ltd, owner of the former Lec site on Shripney Road, has teamed up with Sainsbury's to create proposals for a high quality mixed-use scheme including a new Sainsbury's foodstore.

The proposals, which would deliver the objectives of a Development Brief agreed with Arun District Council, would bring valuable employment opportunities to Bognor and regenerate this gateway site.

It is unlikely that planning permission will be granted for both Sainsbury's and Asda in Bognor. It is important that people are aware of this and of what is being proposed.

**PUBLIC EXHIBITION**

Sime Darby and Sainsbury's are hosting a public exhibition of the plans at The Regis Centre, Belmont Street on:

- THURSDAY 20 NOVEMBER - 4PM TO 8PM
- FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER - 4PM TO 8PM
- SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER - 10AM TO 2PM

Please come along to find out more and let us know your views.

The proposed new Sainsbury's viewed from the A29 Shripney Road

For further information, call 0845 602 1151 or e-mail [m.twomey@gka.co.uk](mailto:m.twomey@gka.co.uk).

**Sime Darby** **Sainsbury's**

Public exhibition

- 3.15 The public exhibition was held at the Regis Centre on Belmont Street, Bognor Regis. This location was chosen because of its popularity and ease of access from the town centre. The Regis Centre is also easily accessible for disabled persons and those with mobility difficulties. The exhibitions spanned three days including Saturday (dates and times are outlined below) in order to provide maximum opportunities to attend.

- Thursday 20 November – 4pm to 8pm
- Friday 21 November 4pm to 8pm
- Saturday 22 November– 10am to 2pm

3.16 In order to clearly and effectively communicate key details of the scheme, eleven large display boards provided a comprehensive overview of the proposals. A copy of the exhibition boards is included at Appendix F.



3.17 Visitors were invited to register their attendance at the exhibition and were given the opportunity to fill in a comments sheet in order to provide any written comments on the proposal or to request further information. It was decided to ask a mix of open and closed questions in order to gain the most useful feedback on the proposals. A sample copy of the comments form is included at Appendix G.

3.18 To encourage responses the comments forms could be returned to members of the development team at the exhibition, via a freepost address or via email.

3.19 Once again there were members of the whole development team on hand throughout the three day session. This meant that anyone with specific questions could be provided with a personal response from the relevant team member.

#### 4. Community participation and feedback

##### Public exhibition attendance and participation

- 4.1 Approximately 400 people are estimated to have visited the exhibition over the three day period.



- 4.2 In order to encourage feedback on the proposed scheme, attendees were invited to complete a comments sheet. 153 comments sheets were returned during the exhibition.
- 4.3 Some visitors took comments forms away from the exhibition with a view to sending them on at a later date. A total of 21 comments forms were received following the exhibition up to Friday 12 December.
- 4.4 The development team who attended the exhibition were asked to actively talk to visitors and to report back their impressions of how people were reacting. Although this evidence is anecdotal it can provide really useful interactive information quickly. Verbal feedback received at the exhibition was generally very positive, although those who had concerns with the proposals were more likely to put their comments in writing.
- 4.5 Of those that expressed specific concerns the design team felt that they could dispel them once the proposals were understood. Items that were repeatedly mentioned were the fact that two supermarkets were now wanting to come to the town, the traffic situation along the A29 and the way the proposed new Sainsbury's was going to look. The need to do something with the site was also a frequently mentioned topic and there can be seen to be a real desire to have the 'eyesore' that is currently the Lec site tidied up.

Responses to questions

- 4.6 Question 1 – Do you broadly support the redevelopment proposals for the former Lec site?  
(please tick one box)

Yes	165	95%
No	5	3%
Not sure	4	2%

- Question 2 – It is unlikely that planning permission will be granted for both Sainsbury's on the former Lec site and Asda at Oldlands Farm. Given this, do you believe that the former Lec site is more suitable for a new supermarket than the site at Oldlands Farm?

Yes	138	79%
No	20	12%
Not sure	13	8%
Didn't reply	3	2%

- Question 3 – What type of employment uses should be considered for the retained land?

Trade counter	70	28%
Industrial	63	26%
Office	58	24%
Additional suggestions / not sure	44	18%
Didn't respond	11	4%

The percentages in questions 1, 2 and 3 have been rounded up to provide a whole number.

- 4.7 Whilst 174 comments forms were received in total, there was more than one choice of answer for question 3. Therefore, there are more than 174 responses to this question.
- 4.8 There were, in fact, 246 responses to the retained land options. On that basis, the results of this question have been expressed as percentages of the 246 responses received and not as a percentage of the overall number of comments forms received.

Other suggestions

- 4.9 Other suggestions for employment uses that should be considered for the retained land raised twice or more is included below.

Retail	7
Not sure	4
Mixed use and starter	3
Start-up and enterprise	3
Trade and industrial	2
Mix of all three options	2
Local small industries	2

4.10 A comprehensive list of all other suggestions raised in response to this question is provided at Appendix H.

## 5. Detailed analysis of the issues raised during consultation

5.1 This section provides a breakdown of the comments raised in respect of the proposals at the public exhibitions.

### The main positive issues

5.2 The positive issues raised twice or more in the comments forms (in descending order of frequency raised) are as follows:

- It is better to redevelop a brownfield site rather than a greenfield one (13)
- Tesco need competition in Bognor Regis (12)
- Welcome the redevelopment of the eyesore Lec site (11)
- Sainsbury's is welcomed back to Bognor Regis (7)
- Sainsbury's is a better alternative to Tesco than Asda / Sainsbury's is better than Asda (7)
- Thoroughly approve of / in support of Sainsbury's proposals for the Lec site (5)
- Bognor Regis needs a Sainsbury's on this site (3)
- Welcome the development as soon as possible (3)
- Good luck (3)
- A prestigious gateway is needed for Bognor Regis (2)
- Sainsbury's is good competition to Tesco (2)
- Sainsbury's training schemes will be welcomed in this area where educational standards and ongoing curricular studies is low (2)

A comprehensive list of all positive issues raised is provided at Appendix I.

### Negative issues / concerns

5.3 The negative issues raised twice or more in the comments forms (in descending order of frequency raised) are as follows:

- Concerned about traffic on the A29 (6)
- Concerned about implications of proposed traffic lights on the A29 (3)
- Dislike bland, basic store design (3)
- There is already sufficient / too many supermarkets in the area (2)

A comprehensive list of negative issues raised is provided at Appendix J.

Neutral / other issues

5.4 Other issues raised twice or more in the comments forms (in descending order of frequency raised) are as follows:

- Welcome both Sainsbury's and Asda to Bognor Regis (9)
- Why can't there be both Sainsbury's and Asda in Bognor Regis? (5)
- Suggest roundabout access to new store (4)
- The site is currently poorly served by public transport which will need to be improved (4)
- Two new supermarkets in Bognor would provide better competition to Tesco / there is room for two new supermarkets on Bognor (4)
- Pedestrian crossings to the new store should be carefully considered (3)
- Do not want traffic congestion like currently experienced at Tesco, therefore access needs to be carefully considered (2)
- The plants / foliage on the A29 should be retained (2)
- Asda (2) \*
- Suggest inclusion of jetwash at Sainsbury's petrol station (2)

\* This comment was submitted on two comments forms as simply "Asda". It is considered as neither positive nor negative and so has been included in this section.

5.5 A comprehensive list of other issues raised is provided at Appendix K.

## **6. Response to issues raised**

6.1 The following section includes responses to the main issues that were raised by consultation respondents.

### Traffic impact

6.2 The potential increase in traffic is often an issue frequently raised during the consultation process. Sainsbury's and SDLL's transport consultants have undertaken a Transport Assessment in support of the planning application which demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity on the local road network to accommodate the predicted vehicle movements that would be generated by the new Sainsbury's store and employment uses on the retained land.

6.3 This is partly because a new Sainsbury's store in this location would not generate as many new shopping trips as a new supermarket with no local competitors. Therefore, a significant number of shoppers already on the local road network would be diverted from Tesco on the Shripney Road in particular, to the new Sainsbury's store.

6.4 It is acknowledged that the majority of shopping trips would be undertaken by car. However, in order to reduce reliance on private car use, there are a number of measures to help reduce car journeys to the store and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport. These include:

- A home delivery service where customers from Bognor Regis can order goods online for home delivery. The goods will be delivered from either the new Sainsbury's store at the Lec site or the existing stores in Rustington and Chichester.
- The improvements of bicycle routes in the vicinity of the site and the provision of bicycle stands close to the pedestrian entrance to the store.

6.5 In terms of managing staff travel patterns, Sainsbury's is proposing to implement a Green Travel Plan which would encourage, promote and monitor the use of more sustainable modes of transport for staff. SDLL will adopt a similar approach to manage the travel patterns of staff employed within the retained land schemes.

6.6 Sainsbury's would look to recruit the majority of its staff from within the local community thus further reducing the need to travel to work by car. The creation of new formalised pedestrian crossings on the A29 would also improve access to the store for staff and customers of Sainsbury's and the retained land development who would be accessing the site on foot.

#### New access arrangements from the A29

- 6.7 The proposed access arrangements were the subject of much discussion with both the stakeholder group and the general public. There were no conclusive answers. A number of people were against traffic signals on this stretch of the road as they claim it would form more delays at peak times. However, there were others who thought that some kind of traffic control was essential. The need for a safe crossing place was also raised, as there have been serious accidents in the past. Towards the end of the consultation process the new road layout at the Sainsbury's store in Rustington had been implemented and there were positive anecdotal comments as to how well this has been working.
- 6.8 As part of the proposals, Sainsbury's and SDLL have been working with West Sussex County Council in order to consider a range of options to provide safe and easy access into the site from the A29. The important factors to consider in the creation of these new arrangements are the safety of all road users, minimising congestion to through traffic on the A29 and to ensure that customer traffic and vehicles accessing / exiting the development site can do so easily.
- 6.9 West Sussex County Council will formally decide which option is the most appropriate access arrangement. However, the current proposal which in Sainsbury's and SDLL's consideration would be the best option for all road users would be to create a right turn filter lane on the northbound carriageway of the A29. There would be signals on the southbound carriageway only which would enable the safe right turn of vehicles into the site and allow vehicles to turn left out of the site and safely to join the A29.
- 6.10 There would be no signals on the northbound carriageway and signals would only turn red on the southbound carriageway when vehicles are waiting to turn right into the site from the A29, or waiting to join the A29 from Sainsbury's and the retained land.

#### Design issues

- 6.11 There is widespread recognition that the Lec site, being a key gateway site into Bognor Regis by road and rail, is in need of regeneration. Therefore a high quality contemporary design with landmark features has been created for the proposed Sainsbury's store. This includes a significant amount of glazing in order to maximise natural light within the store and to increase interest and activity into the key elevations of the store. The designs shown gave rise to lively debate with some liking the approach to design and others not.
- 6.12 There would be scope for including some artwork panels on the exterior of the building, potentially on the elevation of the store fronting the A29 in order to further increase interest in this

key elevation. There is also the potential for including specific signage for the new store such as "Sainsbury's in Bognor Regis" given the gateway nature of the site, to give the development an identity and to give the town some ownership of the scheme.

#### Retail need

- 6.13 Feedback from Sainsbury's and SDLL's public exhibitions and the public consultation by SDLL on the Development Brief for the former Lec site earlier this year confirm that there is public demand for more choice in terms of supermarket provision in Bognor. However, owing to planning policy it is unlikely that more than one new foodstore would be granted planning permission in Bognor in the foreseeable future. It is interesting to note that when the consultation work for the development brief began early in 2008 the need for a second supermarket was expressed very strongly and the Lec site was felt to be a good location.
- 6.14 A retail study has been undertaken by Sainsbury's in support of the planning application for a new foodstore on the former Lec site. In addition, Asda has undertaken a similar study for its Oldlands Farm proposals. Independently, the Council has undertaken a retail assessment for Bognor Regis. All three studies identify that there is only capacity to support one more new foodstore in Bognor.

#### Why the Lec site is the best location for a new foodstore

- 6.15 For a brownfield site such as the former Lec site it is best that it is redeveloped comprehensively. It is evident from consultation feedback that people are keen to have a new gateway to the town. Sainsbury's and SDLL's proposals will deliver this, along with the sustainable redevelopment of the whole site, provide more choice in terms of supermarket provision in Bognor and have a range of wider spin-off regenerative benefits that can be delivered to the site and the wider community.
- 6.16 The results of the consultation demonstrated that respondents recognise the need to redevelop the former Lec site given that it is an unsightly area on one of the key routes into town. The site comprises brownfield, predominately derelict land and is contaminated owing to its historic uses. The expensive nature of developing a site such as this means it has to have a high value end use. It is likely that only a retail development could generate the necessary level of funding to enable this. Should Sainsbury's not be granted planning permission there is little certainty regarding the future of the Lec site.
- 6.17 The redevelopment of this site provides a better and more sustainable alternative to the proposed Asda scheme on greenfield land at Oldlands Farm. Furthermore, the site is also closer to the urban centre and urban population and is already being used for employment purposes.

- 6.18 A considerable amount of work was undertaken to create the original Development Brief which was agreed with Arun District Council this year. The consultation exercise was designed to test what people would like to see on the site and a food store was identified as being one of the potential acceptable uses of the site.

Accessibility of the site to public transport

- 6.19 Sainsbury's and SDLL's transport consultants are currently in discussions with West Sussex County Council regarding improvements to bus services that currently serve the area surrounding the site. Such measures could be achieved through financial contributions as part of a Section 106 package should the planning application be approved.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 In accordance with good practice and Sainsbury's and SDLL's commitment to community consultation, a thorough engagement exercise has been undertaken in order to introduce the proposals for the former Lec site to the wider Bognor Regis community and encourage feedback and comments on the scheme.
- 7.2 The consultation has resulted in constructive discussions and feedback with members of the local community, including local politicians and interest groups.
- 7.3 The general tone of the exhibition was supportive towards the need for regenerating the former Lec site and towards the proposals. In particular, there was strong support for redevelopment of this brownfield site before greenfield land at Oldlands Farm.
- 7.4 However, a number of specific issues were raised specifically regarding traffic, access and retail need. Sainsbury's and SDLL have sought to respond as fully as possible to these issues verbally at the public exhibitions as they were raised, at the various presentations and meetings held with politicians and local interest groups and through subsequent written correspondence with all consultees.
- 7.5 Sainsbury's and SDLL are keen to maintain an ongoing dialogue with all members of the local community who have an interest in the future of the site and to discuss and address any new issues raised during the planning process.

ENDS