

## **Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal**

### **Update Report 28 November 2023**

The most recent full meetings of the Town Deal Board took place on 28 September 2023 and 20 November 2023. Agendas and minutes can be found on Milton Keynes City Council's website within the ModGov system using the meeting dates or by consulting the Town Deal website at <https://groundbreakingbletchleyandfenny.co.uk/about/meetings>.

At the September meeting feedback was given from the chair of the Community Advisory Board, Cllr Veronica Belcher. The group had met twice at that point and membership of the groups was discussed as it was felt by some to be dominated by councillors. It was agreed to review the membership of the group.

The board received feedback from EWR and noted that requested community engagement event had taken place in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Community Centre.

Concerns and developments relation to the Innovation Hub project were reported and it had become clear that there was a funding gap in delivering the Innovation Hub due to rising costs and the overall viability of the wider development on the former fire station site. The project team had also received feedback that the project would not be of interest to operators in a location like Bletchley as these projects were generally found in city centres. Although some operators were still interested in the project they could not offer meaningful guarantees of rent or the capital input which was necessary to meet the funding gap. It was agreed to continue consideration of options and to hold a further board meeting specifically to progress this matter.

The tendering for demolition of the old Sainsburys site had been completed. Wilko's had closed and MKDP was continuing active management of the Brunel Centre site as vacant possession was not anticipated until 2026/27. Meanwhile the Brunel Centre brief would be out for consultation during October/November 2023. There was discussion of community engagement and consultation on the Town Deal programme and it was agreed that a draft brief would be produced exploring a holistic approach to community engagement across the whole TD programme. (A draft document has been circulated to board members since this meeting.)

An update was provided on the transport hub and outline designs for the thinning of Saxon Street had been sent to board members. The preferred option was to potentially delete the northbound carriage way. These designs would be refined and reviewed alongside traffic data and public engagement was planned. Discussions continued with EWR about an eastern entrance to the railway stations but funding had not been agreed. The board expressed frustration at the lack of progress.

The public realm improvements to Queensway and Aylesbury Street were being developed and a long list of interventions was being considered by highways teams at MKCC. A revised list of options would be brought back to the board at a later date.

The Redway project was progressing and well and on completion of sections 4 and 4 section 2 would be delivered. Unfortunately there were still land use problems with section 5 but work continued.

The Tech Park project was on track.

Block E at Bletchley Park would be used by the international media for the AI summit in November and the wartime building which was handed back in June was being used for the learning programme with schools and young people.

There was no further update on the Fibre project.

Active Marketing of Vacant Sites continued and this project was on track. A contract had been awarded to Whistlejacket London to develop a narrative for Bletchley.

At this meeting it was confirmed that an overarching parking study had been developed and was being discussed with consultants by MKCC.

Unfortunately the heritage lottery fund bid for the Blue Lagoon had been unsuccessful but it was hoped to revisit the bid following further investigation work. There was potential for this as a new strategy had been announced by Heritage Lottery.

The Board noted a budget update on the programme.

At the request of the BFSTC Clerk there was a discussion on the Albert Street toilets and an update on the current situation regarding security of tenure which is well known to Town Councillors. It was agreed to take the discussion outside the board meeting. Other members of the board agreed that refurbishing an inadequate facility was not acceptable and the board should be looking at changing place facilities in the town centre.

At the meeting on 20 November 2023 the board concluded that the Innovation Hub could not be delivered in budget and an alternative project would not be possible as DLUHC would deem it very high risk at this stage in the project. Therefore it was planned to reallocate the funds to other projects. Any projects in receipt of additional funding would need to have a reassessed Benefits Cost Ratio (BCR) to confirm they still represent good value for money. It was confirmed that MKCC would be appointing a retained consultant for business case development, who would be able to assist with re-evaluating BCR's meaning that no additional procurement for this task would be required. Additional approval will also be required from the S151 Officer. A meeting was due to take place on 24 November to obtain this approval.

The next meetings of the board are on 19 December 2023 and 18 March 2024.

Since the board meetings it has been agreed that public consultation on the parking study will take place as follows:

- Wednesday 6th December – 17:30-19:30 – Bletchley Library
- Saturday 9th December – 11am-1pm – Fenny Stratford Community Centre
- Monday 11th December – 9:30-11:30am – Bletchley Library
- Tuesday 12th December – 17:30-19:30 - Institute of Technology

Councillors are encouraged to help promote these sessions and to attend themselves to share their individual views.

D Shephard  
Town Clerk  
28 November 2023