

NORTH WEST BICESTER

EXEMPLAR LOCAL CENTRE: MARKETING STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

Planning permission was granted in July 2012 (LPA Reference 10/01780/HYBRID) for the Exemplar in the northern part of the NW Bicester Eco-Town area ('the Exemplar'). The Exemplar comprises 393 new homes, land for a new primary school as well as local facilities such as shops and a nursery ('the Local Centre') along with the eco-business centre. Full planning permission was secured for the residential element of the planning application and outline permission for the commercial uses. The planning permission required the Applicant to submit Reserved Matters for the Local Centre (Condition 40).

To inform the design of a viable commercial centre, the Applicant appointed Meeson Williams Phillips as agency consultants. Having reviewed the proposals approved as part of application 10/01780/HYBRID, it became apparent that the quantum and mix of uses would not create a viable/ vibrant local centre. The mix and quantum of proposed uses has therefore been adjusted. The proposals now fall outside the parameters approved as part of the Exemplar application. In our meeting with CDC on 3 March 2015, Officers advised that the proposals could not be dealt with under Reserved Matters and required a new planning application. A separate planning application has therefore been prepared.

The Eight Schedule of the Exemplar Section 106 Agreement requires a strategy for the marketing of the retail store, offices, nursery, pubic house and ancillary retail stores to be submitted for approval in conjunction with planning applications for these uses. This Marketing Strategy has been prepared accordingly, and sets out the Marketing Strategy for the commercial uses proposed as part of this application.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for:

"Development of a new local centre comprising a 503 sqm convenience store (Use Class A1), 444 sqm of retail units (flexible Use Class A1/A3/A5), 664 sqm pub (Use Class A4), 523 sqm community hall (Use Class D1), 869 sqm nursery (Use Class D1), 614sqm of commercial units (flexible Use Class A2/ B1/ D1) with associated access, servicing, landscaping and parking."

OVERVIEW

The marketing strategy is based on A2Dominion Developments Ltd building out the Exemplar local centre, and to lease or sell the units on commercial terms to individual occupiers.

The timing of the development is dictated by the triggers in the Eight Schedule of the Exemplar Section 106 Agreement namely:

1. Convenience store to be substantially completed prior to the occupation of the 250th dwelling;
2. The Community Hall substantially completed prior to the occupation of the 250th dwelling;
3. The offices, nursery and ancillary retail stores substantially completed prior to the occupation of the 350th dwelling.
4. The public house will be available for use as a public house and marketed for such until the public house is developed or for no less than five years following completion of the development (whichever is sooner).

The objective of the marketing strategy is to secure the occupation of as many units as possible as close as practical to the dates of substantial completion (as defined in the Section 106 Agreement) by way of pre-leasing/sale agreements. The commercial terms will need to include incentive packages to allow for periods of trading up whilst the catchment population figures reach sustainable levels. This is because the Exemplar Local Centre is at the beginning of the NW Bicester development and the population will not be sufficient on the date of completion of the local centre to support the commercial units.

As well as the local catchment population, the number of visitors to the Exemplar local centre will be dependant upon when the Eco Business Centre, Community Hall, Day Nursery, Offices/D1 Uses and Primary School open (scheduled for September 2016).

Closed confidential discussions with targeted occupiers have been on going and once planning permission is secured, then the open marketing campaign will commence.

MARKETING STRATEGY

We set out below the expected targets, resources and activities within the marketing strategy.

MARKETING STRATEGIES BY USE

Children's Day Nursery (Use Class D1)

The marketing strategy is a targeted approach, with on going discussions underway with regional and national operators. In addition to our targeted approaches, enquiries will also reach us via NW Bicester website and information line, events, press coverage and advertising.

Convenience Store (Use Class A1)

The convenience store is important to the economic vitality of the local centre and it would be a priority to secure an operator at an early stage. The marketing strategy will be direct targeted approaches, and discussions are underway with operators.

Retail Units (Use Class A1/ A3/ A5)

The hot food (A5) operators will be a mixture of national and local businesses and the strategy will be a mixture of direct approaches and receiving enquiries through websites and advertising. We expect that there will be competition for these units and a selection process will be required. Enquiries have already been received through the NW Bicester website.

The A1 retail demand is expected to be from local businesses (eg hairdressing), sourced by direct approaches via the website or through advertising/PR.

The inclusion of A3 use is to allow for provision of a café, subject to demand. It is expected to be a local independent operator connecting through the website, local PR or advertising.

Pub (Use Class A4)

The marketing strategy is direct approach only and discussions are underway with targeted local and national operators.

Commercial Units (Use Class A2/ B1/ D1)

The D1 use demand will be local, and enquiries have already been received through the NW Bicester website and information line.

Demand for B1 offices will be limited with occupiers for the B1 offices expected to be from local businesses where the key staff live on NW Bicester or companies or charities linked to green technology or services. The marketing strategy will therefore be to attract enquiries through the websites, local advertising and PR.

The A2 use would relate to demand for an Estate Agency in the ground floor office, servicing house sales on NW Bicester. This is expected to be by direct approach.

Marketing Resources

As referred above, the resources available are as follows:-

1. Marketing Literature: There will be an interactive PDF brochure produced, available for uploading on various websites and direct mail.
2. NW Bicester Website: The Exemplar Local Centre will be publicised on NW Bicester website with the PDF brochure available for downloading and an enquiry form.
3. Meeson Williams Phillips Website: The PDF brochure will be listed on the Meeson Williams Phillips website as marketing agents.
4. Commercial Property Listing Websites: The PDF brochure will be uploaded to the various commercial listing websites available to use such as Zoopla and EG Property.
5. Press Releases: There will be a series of press releases issued in national, trade and local press at the launch of the scheme and subsequently at notable stages in the development process.
6. Advertising: National property press (such as Estates Gazette and Property Week), trade and local press (Oxford Times and Bicester Advertiser).
7. Direct Approaches: As explained above in many instances the direct approach to target occupiers would be the primary strategy.
8. Awareness raising via Bicester Vision Business Partnership and Banbury and Bicester Chamber of Commerce
9. Events: The Exemplar local centre will be mentioned and promoted at NW Bicester events and seminars, business breakfasts in Banbury and Bicester whenever appropriate.
10. NW Bicester information line.

Activities

The marketing activities will occur in the following order:

1. Continued closed confidential discussions with the target occupiers.
2. Preparation of the marketing literature, to be available once planning permission is secured for open marketing.
3. Following receipt of planning permission to launch the scheme openly on the market via websites, national and local press and advertising, events etc.
4. Throughout the marketing campaign to run on going events, advertising and press coverage.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The marketing strategy is geared to secure pre-leasing/sale agreements prior to the substantial completion of the development, with as many units as possible being occupied from there on. Incentive packages will be offered as part of the lease/sale contracts to allow for trading up whilst catchment population figures grow.

The national and local interest in NW Bicester will generate direct enquiries from companies wishing to be represented here, combined with the open marketing campaign and specific targeting will maximise chances of success.