



To: Shareholder and Joint Venture Group
Date: Wednesday 1st March 2023
Report of: Sarah Knight, Head of Development
Title of Report: Quarterly Progress Report relating to Barton Oxford LLP

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report provides an update into the activities of Barton Oxford LLP (BOLLP) over the past quarter.
Recommendation(s):	
There is a resolution to:	
1. Note the contents of the report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and background

1. This is the fourteenth report to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group covering the period since the previous update in November 2022.
2. After an economically “bumpy” 2022, economists predict a shallow but lengthy recession. The national housing market is cooling in the face of higher mortgage rates, the cost of living crisis and poor consumer confidence with Savills predicting a 10% drop in house prices in 2023. Construction output is expected to fall this year with private housing output being particularly hard hit – quarter 4 of 2022 saw a start in this trend with residential work starting on site showing a 35% decrease against the preceding quarter and 15% lower than the same period a year before.
3. Anecdotally, local agents report that the Oxford housing market continues to perform well with Oxford residential property continuing to hold its price. New homes enquiry and viewing levels do not seem to be affected although there are some offers being made below guide prices and the bidding wars of the last two years are definitely calmed. In the resales market, there seem to be fewer properties coming to the market so stock levels are down keeping viewing and enquiry levels high.
4. As noted below, delivery has slowed against original forecasts on the phases at Barton Park. Some of this reflects the economic picture detailed above.

Progress Update on individual phases

First Phase (Developer: Hill)

5. This phase of 237 homes with 95 affordable is now completed with no significant issues to report.

Second Phase (Developer: Redrow)

6. This phase is to deliver 207 homes in total of which 83 are affordable. As at the end of January, Redrow had completed 46 private homes and 31 affordable homes. The next affordable homes are now expected to handover in May 2023. The handovers are slower than previously forecast as Redrow appear to be slowing down their build rate across the site.

Third Phase (Developer: Countryside/Vistry)

7. In November 2022 a takeover of Countryside by the housebuilder, Vistry was completed. This has resulted in some changes of personnel and movement of schemes between offices. We understand that the Barton Park development will now be delivered by the Vistry Thames Valley office.
8. This transaction appears to have slowed work down on site. As at the end of January, no ground workers had been on site since Christmas. They do have a sales office on site which they are in the process of setting up to utilities. At the start of February, they were reportedly starting to mobilise on site in the next 2 to 4 weeks.
9. The affordable homes (both the S106 homes for Oxford City Council and the “additional” affordable homes that Places for People are buying that were reported to a previous shareholder meeting) are both in contract and will be delivered. However, it is anticipated that the first handovers will be delayed.

Final Phase (Barton 3B)

10. Work is ongoing with the successful bidder on this site who are still proposing a 100% affordable scheme with high levels of sustainability. Their pre-application work with the Local Planning Authority is progressing and the scheme has been reviewed by Oxford Design Panel. There are ongoing discussions about their carbon reduction agenda and the Local Planning Authority’s design aspirations and the Barton Design Code (specifically around the use of timber)
11. A planning case last summer, known as “The Hillside case” has an impact on Barton phase 3B in relation to the overall outline Barton consent. The Hillside case relates to outline planning applications and the subsequent reserved matters applications on multi-phased developments. Since this judgement, there is a risk that a planning application at phase 3B is seen as a “drop in” application – one that overlaps but may be inconsistent with the previous reserved matters consents. This could potentially jeopardise the reserved matters consent of the other housebuilders (if they needed to vary them). If

this happened, the LLP could end up in breach of its obligations under the sales of phases made to date. Although the proposal was always that phase 3B was submitted as a full planning consent, based on advice from consultants, the LLP are proposing to change the boundary of the original outline consent to avoid any risks around this. Discussions are due to be held with the LPA on this shortly.

12. Due to the two elements outlined above, work on the transaction between the LLP and the prospective purchaser of Phase 3B has slowed against the originally anticipated programme.

Wider infrastructure

13. The adoption of the main junction continues to await a final decision from County. This is expected any time and only awaiting a final Land Registry check.

Community Employment Plan

14. After being revived in the second half of last year, the merger between Vistry and Countryside has slowed their involvement in the Community Employment Plan. The last steering group meeting was cancelled in response to these changes. However, work has continued with the Economic Development Team and the OXLEP to keep this under review. Quarterly updates will commence later in the year with the LLP now actively gathering information for the end of March from Vistry and Redrow. The importance of this work will continue to be re-iterated to housebuilders at Barton Park.

Events and publicity

15. BICEP meetings continue to happen on a quarterly basis. Issues that are raised “on the ground” are getting dealt with through these – for example the installation of a notice board. There has been some discussion about outstanding maintenance work at the pavilion but the majority of these have now been resolved. There have been some issues around litter, unauthorised access and standard of the grass pitch – these are all being addressed. As well as BICEP, there has been a quarterly facilities steering group held involving the club, local health partners, the school and the neighbourhood centre which has been really positive in helping connect the different groups and some key initiative around health and wellbeing.
16. In November, Barton Park had a visit from Professor Chris Whitty, England’s Chief Medical Officer. This was part of a tour of projects participating in Oxfordshire’s Healthy Placeshaping programme. Barton Park was also visited by South Korean academic researchers who were interested in Healthy Aging. This had been organised by Oxford Brookes University.

17. In response to feedback at the last Shareholder meeting, Officers are looking to put some positive publicity together about the scheme and are working with the Council's Communications Team on this. It is intended to base this around the next handover of affordable homes to tie it in with some strong video footage of new homes and hopefully some residents' testimonials. The next handovers of affordable homes were anticipated in February but, as detailed above, have been postponed to May. Plans will be made to coincide with these.

Land North of Baywater Brook

18. Dorchester Group submitted their planning application in December for 1,450 new homes at the land North of Bayswater Brook. Discussion continue between them and the LLP on pedestrian and cycle links through the linear park. A financial contribution has been agreed, subject to contract, for the land uptake. Heads of terms on this agreement are being finalised.

19. A proportion of this will contribute to future maintenance and therefore reduce the service charge for Barton Park residents. Discussions are being held with First Port (the managing agent) on how this will be implemented to ensure residents benefit from this.

Financial Implications

20. There are no new financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications

21. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

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