

As ward councillor for Queen Edith's, I wanted to speak to Committee today because I want to make it clear that this is not a trivial piece of box-ticking. On the contrary, in seeking to discharge Condition 35, we are acknowledging the failure of our planning system to deliver sustainable development at the site known as Netherhall Farm or GB1.

It is critical for the sustainability of GB1 that a northern active-travel route between the site and the rest of Queen Edith's should be delivered. Without it, GB1 is cut off from primary and secondary schools, and local amenities such as the pharmacy and GP surgeries. It will be less safe and considerably less convenient for residents living on GB1 to walk or cycle to access those amenities; and they will be more inclined to drive to reach them. This will put further pressure on an already over-loaded local road network, increase the development's carbon footprint, and harm local air quality.

This concern was recognised by the February 2021 meeting of the Planning Committee which mandated the reinstatement of Condition 35 to mitigate the impact of the development. Agreeing to the discharge of Condition 35 today means that the stated objective of councillors on that occasion – the delivery of the northern active-travel route – will not be achieved. It also brings into question the compliance of GB1 with Policy 80 of the adopted 2018 Local Plan.

There are three aspects to which I'd like to draw your attention.

The first relates to the actions of the site promoter, CEG. The [feasibility statement](#) submitted by Lichfields in support of the discharge of Condition 35 says that CEG only became aware during the pre-application consultation phase that "there was some local support for the inclusion of a link on the northern edge of the site". That is simply not true:

1. Appendix B (the Proposals Schedule) to both the [adopted 2018 Local Plan](#) and to the preceding [Draft Local Plan](#) requires that "pedestrian and cycle access to the local centre in Wulfstan Way be investigated". It is reasonable to assume that any promoter pursuing the development of a proposed site would be familiar with the details of the proposals schedule relating to that site - and that information was freely available to CEG in the Draft Local Plan submitted for inspection in March 2014.
2. in my capacity as Chair of the QE Community Forum, I was in regular contact with CEG staff from 2016, first with Stephen King, then Jon Allen, then Victoria Walker and the need for this northern access was something I raised with them from the very start. If I recall correctly, the previous speaker, Ms Prior, was present at some of those meetings.

Since the need for the northern access was identified in the emerging Local Plan in 2014 and emphasised by me in regular personal contact with CEG staff from 2016 onwards, CEG had ample time to work out how to achieve it in advance of submitting the application for Outline Planning Approval in 2020. And opportunities did exist: for example, at least four properties in suitable locations on Beaumont Road were sold on the open market during that period; and more options could perhaps have been created by pro-actively contacting residents and asking if they were willing to sell at a premium, as is standard practice within

the development industry. *So I would ask Committee members to bear this in mind when considering the assertion of 'non-feasibility' within the Lichfield's report.*

The second aspect relates to consideration of the application for Outline Planning

Approval. I spoke at Planning Committee in February 2021 when the application was considered, alongside then ward Councillor Colin McGerty and Matt Danish from CamCycle. We all made representations that the northern active-travel access was required in order for development at GB1 to be considered compliant with Policy 80 of the 2018 Local Plan, which is entitled 'Supporting sustainable access to development'.

Paragraphs b2-4 (page 230) are particularly relevant and describe prioritising walking and cycling access in new developments by:

2. conveniently linking the development with the surrounding walking, cycling and public transport networks;
3. prioritising networks of public transport, pedestrian and cycle movement so these are the best and safest means of moving around Cambridge. Areas where public transport, pedestrian and cycle movement is difficult or dangerous will be improved and, where possible, have further capacity for these sustainable modes provided;
4. ensuring accessibility for those with impaired mobility; and

This is expanded in paragraph 9.5 (page 230): "Good, easy access to a high quality and efficient transport network is **essential** to support new development and **ensure** that it is sustainable."

The responsibility of the developer for achieving compliance is spelt out in paragraph 9.14 (page 233): "Developers will be required to fund high-quality paths, both along the identified routes, and any others that may be suitable for accessing the particular development."

That's what the Policy requires. However, the wording of Condition 35 as drafted at Committee in February 2021 only required the applicant to provide "details of the work undertaken to seek a link" and "to determine the feasibility of implementing such a link", **not the actual delivery of the link.**

Councillors' clear intent in requesting Condition 35 was that all best efforts should be made to achieve sustainable development, compliant with Policy 80. *So I would ask the Councillors here today who also attended that meeting whether they understood then what is stated in the report from Officer Truett today, namely that "it is not considered reasonable to require an applicant to implement a path on land outside the applicant's ownership"? Did members understand how trivial it would be for the developer to frustrate the intent of Condition 35 as it was worded?*

The third aspect relates to the role and responsibilities of the landowner. I would not usually raise this at Planning Committee but the application for discharge of Condition 35 is in the name of GSTC Property Investment Limited. The [Guys and St Thomas' Charity](#) claims that it manages its land and property to "help us achieve the greatest possible impact on

health” and was a key contributor to the development of the [THRIVES](#) framework, a tool for integrating health and wellbeing into new developments created in 2020 in collaboration with built environment and health practitioners at the UCL Institute of Environmental Design and Engineering. The THRIVES framework seeks to raise awareness that “health impacts often occur far away from new development or many years after construction, requiring design teams to think of impact beyond the property boundaries”. *I would ask councillors to consider whether, despite the worthy rhetoric, the discharge of Condition 35 requested by GSTC will concretise negative health impacts into our community for decades to come precisely because the planning process has failed “to think beyond the property boundaries”.*

To conclude. As I see it, there are four scenarios regarding the sustainable development of GB1 and its compliance with Policy 80:

1. the northern access route is still deliverable, if CEG makes better ‘best’ efforts. If this is the case, Condition 35 should not be discharged today
2. the northern access could have been delivered if Condition 35 had been more tightly worded
3. the northern access could have been delivered if the Local Plan policy re GB1 had been more tightly worded, for example ‘required’ not ‘investigated’
4. the northern access could never have been delivered because there is no planning means by which this requirement could be enforced on the developer.

Today’s application requires Committee to decide on the first of these points and I do understand that in all likelihood Condition 35 will be discharged this afternoon, for the reasons laid out in Officer Truett’s report.

However, if this is the outcome, then it is also imperative that officers and members identify which of Scenarios 2, 3 and 4 has caused us to arrive at this situation, and undertake to learn from that. We need to acknowledge that, in this instance, the planning system has not worked to serve the interests of current residents of Queen Edith’s, or the future residents of GB1. The success of the planning system must be judged by deeds not words; we cannot just call a development sustainable, it has to be sustainable. And GB1, without the northern access, is not compliant with Policy 80 of the 2018 Local Plan and I do not believe it can honestly be described as sustainable.

I apologise for the length of this contribution but I am both disappointed and angered by where we find ourselves.