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BY EMAIL & POST

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Dear Patsy

Hanchett End, Haverhill – Draft Concept Statement

You will be aware that discussions have taken place with Ian Poole, Chris Rand and Ray Keeley this year regarding the Council's proposed Concept Statement for the Strategic Employment site at Hanchett End, Haverhill. With an understanding that the Officer's report to the forthcoming Haverhill Area Working Party meeting, states that officers will report our comments orally, I was keen to directly relay our thoughts to you, your officers and members ahead of Thursday's meeting. In light of the discussions, I attach the last draft of the Concept Statement submitted to your officers at the end of February.

This is undoubtedly an important site for Haverhill and has the potential to provide an unrivalled, prominent and attractive Greenfield Research/Business Park environment at the entrance to the town from Cambridge. An enhanced gateway to Haverhill could therefore be created through a combination of landscaping, buildings and artwork and Carisbrooke is confident that this vision can be delivered working in partnership with the council and the local community. However, it is necessary that all involved understand the current situation and potential obstacles to achieving this.

• **Financial considerations**

Irrespective of the type of development proposed, the costs of developing the site are high. Firstly, services such as gas and electricity have to be brought to the site from elsewhere and offsite facilities need to be enhanced to provide the necessary capacities. Secondly, the site is physically challenging to develop due to its topography meaning that ways have to be found to 'cut and fill'/ create development platforms whilst keeping the surplus fill arising onsite. The total cost of creating a fully landscaped environment is currently being finalised but is expected to be in excess of £4m. This in addition to the cost of buying the land.

• **Aspiration versus allocation**

The site currently suffers from a conflict between aspiration and allocation. As you will be aware, the land has been allocated for B1 (offices, Research and development and light industrial) and B8 (Warehousing) uses for some time. This means that notwithstanding the vision of a technology park, Carisbrooke could legitimately propose warehouse development of up to 500,000 sq ft (2.5 times the size of the Culina Warehouse) on this site. This approach is obviously not what is envisaged by the community but is a possibility given the current



allocation. A site in the South East of England capable of accommodating such a building is a rarity and there are compelling financial reasons to pursue this option.

It would be fair to state that Haverhill does not have a well established office sector and we are unaware of any new office development that has taken place locally in the last ten years other than as an ancillary use to another form of development, like manufacturing.

It should be noted that Carisbrooke previously obtained detailed planning consent for a small office village (Boudicca Court) on the Business Park and despite extensive marketing there was little interest. Current office rentals in the town for relatively poor quality accommodation are very low, between £5-10 per sq ft. Such office demand as there has been in Haverhill has come from local professional services such as solicitors, accountants and insurance brokers. However, this group has tended to go to the outlying villages where attractive farm building conversions have met the demand. Blois Meadow at Steeple Bumpstead is a notable example of this with office rentals currently standing at between £10-12 per sq ft. On their own rental levels such as these do not justify or support the necessary infrastructure expenditure for a research Park or individual building development. Essentially there is no proven viable market for an office or Research Park. To take a scheme of this kind forward, it would involve a big leap of faith, a deep pocket and no certainty of any kind of payback.

This problem was identified in the PACEC report commissioned by the SDA into the site during the height of the market in 2006. The report stated in both its executive summary and chapter 7 (viability appraisal) that a technology park project was high risk due to high upfront costs (which it underestimated). Furthermore, the report therefore discusses pump priming by means of either public funding or considering alternative forms of development on the remaining ten acres. Residential development is specifically mentioned twice within this report.

- **Moving forward – Carisbrooke's vision**

We have obviously been discussing this site with your officers and while the proposed draft Concept plan tabled takes on board some of the issues, it does not yet go far enough to facilitate what we all wish to see to happen. As worded it takes away the right to pursue B8 but yet does not suggest anything definitive regarding higher value uses to pump prime the scheme. We consider it totally unfair to expect Carisbrooke to surrender part of the allocation in return for ambiguous phrasing that provides little, if any certainty.

We have been and are proposing that the Concept statement should mirror the recommendations of the PACEC report in so much that two thirds (20 acres) of the 30 acre site are dedicated as a Research Park and to facilitate that the other third (10 acres) is given over to a range of higher value uses such as residential, retail, Hotel, Pub, Restaurant etc. There should be no fixed allocations between these uses with the market determining matters. However, there needs to be tight control on the design detail to ensure the creation of appropriate gateway to the town. We need the certainty of this split allocation to enable the site to be moved forward as a Research Park.

With this certainty we will by Section 106 agreement give up the right to B8 use on the site instead committing the 20 acres to only being developed for B1 Research Park and supporting



uses. Carisbrooke will also commit, following the granting of outline planning permission, to immediately creating a fully serviced environment for the Research Park.

Hopeful of concluding an understanding with the Council, we have already taken the first steps towards positioning the site as a research park - the Haverhill Research Park - and have developed an initial website at www.haverhillresearchpark.com. To support our work, we have appointed renowned science park experts, Carter Jonas (who have St John's Innovation centre, Granta Park and Chesterford Research Park among their credits) to work alongside Cheffins. On their recommendation, we have enrolled the scheme as a member of UKSPA (UK Science Park association). The agents have also just submitted their initial thoughts on the research required to help position the site as a Science park, a copy of which is attached.

We have discussed our vision with the local business community via the likes of Haverhill Enterprise and The Chamber of Commerce and have received a positive response to date. We hope the above activity demonstrates our good faith but to see matters progressed, the support of the council is vital. It our belief that that most effective way to help assist with the development of this project would be by issuing a revised concept statement that allows a master plan and outline application to be submitted for development along the lines outlined. At the present time and for the reasons explained, I am unable to support the draft Concept Statement proposed.

I hope this clearly outlines our current position and the rationale behind it but should you have any questions or wish to discuss matters, then I would be pleased to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

N. S. RUMSEY
Carisbrooke Investments