

## Faith Strategy Group Meeting 26 February 2025

### Attendees

Clare Gibbons – SCDC

Ellen Cox – SCDC

Jawad Nawash – Northstowe Muslims

Rev'd Beth Cope – Northstowe Church Network

Josh Monterio – Emmanuel Church

Aparna Nigam Saxena – Hindu Samaj Northstowe

Priyananda – Savana Trust

Jeetendra Bhattad – Jain Community

### Faith and Community Land, Phase 1

- SCDC launched a competitive bidding process, 23 January. The purpose of the meeting was to allow groups to ask any questions.

Clarification was provided on the following:

- The transfer of the land will not occur until January 2026 at the earliest. Opened the bidding process now so it can be open for a whole year prior to transfer. SCDC have already appointed legal services to carry out the land transfer as this can be a lengthy process. Taking this approach should minimise the time between SCDC taking transfer of the land and passing it on to the successful bidder.
- As part of the bidding pack draft Heads of Terms have been provided giving groups clear intentions on the offer of the land.
- A reminder that faith **and** community groups can bid for the land.
- Part of the building can be sacrosanct and dedicated to worship by the managing group and would not need to be shared. However, the building will also need to provide space for community use which includes other faith groups.
- It was suggested that it would be wise for faith groups to seek pre-app advice – it would be advisable for advice from Environmental Health (noise levels)

and highways advice be within the scope of this pre-app advice, particularly as an event management plan must be submitted as part of the bid.

- Specific officers who will be on the assessment panel cannot be named at this stage, but there will be a range of specialists who can consider the viability of the proposal, including urban design and surveyor expertise.
- CG confirmed she would not be on the panel given her length of involvement with the Faith Strategy group.
- Officers will make a recommendation, if no proposals are robust then the recommendation to Cabinet would be not to award the land at that time. There would be a delay before the process was restarted. The length of delay would be dependent on the quality of the bids received.
- Priyananda, explained that for now they wouldn't be investing in a building but would be interested in accessing space in the building. CG explained there is space currently available for hire including at The Cabin and Northstowe Secondary College. The permanent community building, Unity Centre, will be delivered next year. The governance is not yet finalised, but Northstowe Town Council have previously indicated they intend to put forward a proposal – if they do so then this initial proposal will trigger the Community Asset Transfer policy process, which means the Council must ask if other local community groups wish to submit a proposal. An update will be provided at the Community Forum, Wednesday 5 March.
- Hindu Samaj Northstowe would be interested in collaborating with Suvana Trust.
- BC reminded groups that Northstowe Hub hold a page on faith groups on their website [Faith – Northstowe Hub](#). **Action Faith groups to share contact details with EC to forward on to Northstowe Hub.**
- Discussion was had re. future parcels of land to be made available for faith use. Still unclear on what the provision will be within the Town Centre, other than it is to be an area of serviced land in the town centre, capable of providing between 1000-1050 sq.m gross internal area (could be land or floorspace within a building). EC reminded faith groups they have the opportunity to pose questions to Homes England at the Community Forum.

CG suggested it may also be worth speaking with Capital & Centric, development partner for the Town Centre. Following previous conversation CG/EC have had with them they understand faith groups play an important role in the community.

- Reminder of the allocations secured:
  - Phase 1: 0.25ha adject to Parcel H13 and Bug Hunter Waters (Faith and Community Land).
  - Phase 2 allocation: An area of serviced land in the town centre capable of providing 1000-1050 sqm gross internal area (could be land or floorspace within a building).
  - Phase 3a allocation: 0.15ha of serviced land within the site, adjacent to the Local Centre, or within a secondary mixed-use zone as well as a community garden for remembrance and reflection.
  - Phase 3b allocation: 0.1675ha of serviced land within the site, within or adjacent to the secondary mixed-use zone or adjacent to the primary school.
- BC asked for an update on timescales for the completion of Northstowe. CG will share the housing trajectory once this is provided in April.

#### **Events coming up:**

- HSN are holding Holi Mela 26<sup>th</sup> April and would like to collaborate with community groups.
- Northstowe Muslims – Ramadan begins 1 March, this will be followed by an Eid Feast. More details will be shared.
- Pathfinder Church holding a pancake party on Sunday which is open to all.
- Emmanuel Church holding a craft event Easter Saturday (19 April) which will be open to all.

CG and EC attending Emmanuel Church's service on Sunday and would be open to attending other faith group's services/celebrations.