



South Norfolk Council news release

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New deal is a big step forward for Queen's Hills

A deal struck between South Norfolk Council, developers at Queen's Hills and Costessey Parish Council has been welcomed as a big step forward for residents.

It will bring them their long-awaited community centre, play areas, a country park and road improvements.

Now it needs to be endorsed by South Norfolk Council's Main Planning Committee at its meeting on 15 September.

The report setting out the details of the deal can be found at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk.

The four areas are among legal commitments signed up to by developers which went with planning permission for the hundreds of new homes at Queen's Hills.

Progress on these was put on hold when the lead developer Cofton went into administration.

New talks between the district council, developers, the parish council and the community have culminated in this deal.

In a joint statement, the district council, parish council and the developers said: "We are delighted to announce great progress in our talks to provide Queen's Hills residents with a new community centre, play areas, a country park and road improvements. The deal is a big step forward for the whole community which means that the need to seek a high court injunction can be set aside. We hope residents will welcome it and we ask South Norfolk planning committee members to endorse it so that these improvements can be delivered for a community which has shown such patience and support during these difficult times."

The report by planning officers to South Norfolk Council's Main Planning Committee on 15 September recommends that Councillors endorse the deal and take a step back from seeking a High Court injunction halting development on the site.

Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Housing and the Built Environment at South Norfolk Council, commenting on the deal, said: "This deal emerges from many hours of negotiations and is a big step forward for the community of Queen's Hills.

"It shows what can be achieved when we work together and it puts power back into the hands of local people by giving them the funding to build their own, long-awaited, community centre.

"The success of the talks on play areas, the country park and road improvements is also very good news, but there is still a huge amount to do.

"For now, the hard work of everyone, including council officers working behind the scenes, has paid off and delivered real benefit for local people as well as a new positive relationship with the developers."

Mike Ashton, Associate Director of Gleeds and project manager on behalf of the Consortium of Developers said: "We're pleased to have taken this positive step towards creating the well-served community that has been promised all along at Queen's Hills, and hope to put behind us the challenges and delays faced since the failure of Cofton.

"With the support of South Norfolk Council, we are very keen to ensure that we can get on with creating first-rate community facilities for Costessey residents. Indeed, to give people the very best resources, the developers are now providing a further £150,000 towards the new community centre, over and above their legal liability of £525,000.

"In addition, we are working with South Norfolk Council to provide improved, modern schemes for the four play areas. The new scheme designs are progressing well and the first of these will start to be built this year. Final planting within the country park will be carried out next spring. The fourth aspect of our fulfilment of the new deal, completion of the roads, is expected to start next year, and we will be accelerating areas of these wherever possible."

This week (Tuesday 7 September) Costessey Parish Councillors gave their approval. Councillor Bill Dinneen, Chair of Costessey Parish Council said: "I want to thank the community of Queen's Hills for bearing with us through this long and uncertain process.

"We now have substantial funding for our much-needed centre, which we can use to build it to a standard we know our community would want to see, and which will serve them well into the future.

"As with all deals there are issues still to be resolved, like strong and secure fencing around the surface water run-off lagoon to make it safe for families and children. But we are delighted with the

progress made so far.”

A spokesperson for the Queen’s Hills Community Group said: “We are pleased to hear that our long overdue facilities will now become a reality. We look forward to working closely with the agencies to assist where necessary in ensuring involvement from the residents in Queen’s Hills”.

Local Costessey Councillor Tim East said: “The provision of the Queen’s Hills community facility represents a huge step forward after much hard work by a lot of people behind the scenes.

“The progress we have made can be measured by the successful culmination of protracted negotiations with the developers, Costessey Parish Council, South Norfolk Council and its local members.

“We have collectively resolved the long-standing problem of the lack of facilities on the Queen’s Hills estate. This is in an effort to respond as quickly as possible to the countless concerns expressed to me and Councillor Vivienne Bell on many occasions by the residents of Queen’s Hills, West Costessey.”

In the report to Councillors on the Committee, officers conclude that significant progress has been made and is continuing to be made, in particular on the Community Centre.

It recommends that the threat of an injunction, subject to the deal being delivered to agreed programmes, can be removed.

It also recommends that to ensure progress is monitored and delivered, the Council continues to hold three-weekly meetings with the developers and that any significant changes are reported back to Councillors if necessary.