

Statement of Community Involvement

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust proposals for the Former Shredded Wheat Factory, Welwyn Garden City

18 December 2017

1. Executive Summary

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust are the owners of the Former Shredded Wheat Factory site. This is a full application for the determination of all planning matters.

As part of its commitment to engaging the local community and stakeholders, Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust has taken steps to consult local residents and key stakeholders about its plans for this land.

The client appointed independent specialists Marengo Communications to undertake the consultation on the proposals. These proposals are in line with the requirements set out in Welwyn and Hatfield Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Engagement activity focused on residents who lived near or around the site, local ward councillors, local county councillors. Marengo Communications also sought to engage with the wider community and interest groups. It included individual meetings and site tours, a dedicated website was established, and we ensured local media activity to raise the profile of the project. Marengo Communications also issued a letter to over 4700 households, hosted a public consultation at the Howard Centre and invited feedback through a questionnaire.

Feedback mechanisms included a questionnaire at the public exhibition, but for those unable to attend, we also operated a dedicated freephone information line and an email contact address (to date we have over 100 registrations).

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust will build on the positive engagement with residents and stakeholders as the application continues to progress through the planning process. We are preparing to open an information centre in January 2018 for residents and interested parties to find out more about the project.

2. The Consultation Programme

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust used a range of consultation tools to ensure that residents living near the site and key stakeholders were aware of its proposals and had an opportunity to feedback on the detailed design and layout of the homes.

i. Development Consultation Forum

We were invited by the Council to present our emerging thinking to a meeting of the Development Consultation Forum on 2nd October. This comprised members of the Development Consultation Forum, other Councillors and members of the public. Questions were asked by both Councillors and the public and a commitment was given to public consultation in November.

ii. Immediate and near residents and stakeholder mailing

On 10 November, a letter inviting near and immediate neighbours of the site to a public exhibition was issued to 4770 residential properties. (Appendix 1). Contact was made with Democratic Services regarding Council member liaison and a series of emails were issued to key stakeholders offering briefings (this included local ward/division members).

iii. Project website

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust established a dedicated website (www.thewheatquarter.co.uk) which was advertised in correspondence, on exhibition boards and in media material. The website can be found in Appendix 6.

The website included the following information about the project:

- Information regarding the site
- Outlining proposals for the site
- Indicative design of the homes
- Landscaping
- Benefits to the community
- Involvement in the Centenary

Details of the project website were also included in the newspaper editorial in the Welwyn Hatfield Times.

103 residents have registered with the website to receive further information. An email was sent to all registrations on 19th December.

iv. Public Exhibition

A public exhibition was hosted at the Howard Centre in the centre of Welwyn Garden City. The exhibition was open to the public from 4pm – 8pm on Wednesday 22nd November and 2pm – 7pm on Thursday 23rd November. A preview for Councillors was held from 2pm – 4pm on Wednesday 22nd November.

Over 440 residents, stakeholders and councillors attended, and we received 107 feedback forms (example in Appendix 5).

As well as inviting immediate and near neighbours to a public exhibition hosted at the Howard Centre. Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust also undertook the following actions to ensure local people were made aware of their proposals:

- A press release was issued to the Welwyn and Hatfield Times (covered on 20th November 2017) (see Appendix 3).
- A copy of the Exhibition Boards is included (Appendix 3). to inform them of detailed plans for the site and to request feedback on the proposals and provide contact details for the consultation team.

v. Site Visits

Throughout November and December, Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust representatives hosted briefing tours with Councillors and other interested stakeholders. These meetings provided an opportunity for questions to be asked, the site understood and issues raised.

10am 15 ¹	th November
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NAME	PARTY	
Cllr Steve Roberts	Labour	Ward member for Peartree
Cllr Stephen Boulton	Conservative	Chair of Development Management
		Committee and chair of Dev Consult Forum
Cllr Helen Beckett	Labour	Ward member for Peartree
Cllr Bernard Sarson	Conservative	Cabinet Member
Cllr Jonathan Boulton	Conservative	Chairman of Cabinet Housing Panel

12noon 15th November

Cllr Terry Mitchinson	Conservative	Member of Development Management
		Committee
Cllr Barbara Fitzsimon	Conservative	Member of Development Management
		Committee

10am 16th November

Cllr Roger Trigg	Conservative	Cabinet Member
Cllr Harry Bower	Conservative	
Cllr Malcolm Cowan	Lib Dem	Ward member for Peartree

12noon 16th November

Cllr Lynn Chesterman	Labour	
Cllr Alan Chesterman	Labour	
Cllr Mike Larkins	Labour	Member of Development Management
		Committee
Jill Weston	Labour	

11am 23rd November

Will Davis	Apolitical	WGC Society Chairman
Shaun O'Reilly	Apolitical	WGC Society
Lesley Mardell	Apolitical	WGC Society
Elahe Taylor	Apolitical	WGC Society

3.15pm 29th November

Cllr Patricia Mabbott	Conservative	Member of Development Management
		Committee
Cllr Mandy Perkins	Conservative	Cabinet Member
Cllr Helen Bromley	Conservative	Cabinet Member

1.45pm 15th December

Grant Shapps MP	Conservative	Member of Parliament
Nicholas Langley	Conservative	Researcher

Other meetings have taken place with wide ranging issues discussed from the provision of office space for start-ups through to matters relating to youth and community culture; the provision of the Art Hub and associated galleries. Interested stakeholders and consultees including the following:-

Cereal Partners

The team have presented the scheme to the previous occupiers Cereal Partners and are exploring the opportunity to create an exhibition celebrating the history of the site in time for the WGC Centenary.

Digswell Arts Trust

The team have visited the Digswell Arts Centre and are working with the Trust to enable its inclusion in the Wheat Quarter Art Hub.

Gardening for Disabled Trust

Extensive consultation with the Trust has formed an integral part of the design process for the Sensor Garden.

Hatfield House

Have been contacted and preliminary discussions have been held culminating in a site visit.

Oaklands College Students' Union

Senior members of the team have met with representatives of the Student Union and incorporated ideas on play areas, evening trade and art.

Resolve

This local based charity offers key services relating to mental health, drink and drug addiction and, homelessness. The project will be supporting this charity's endeavours with a donation.

University of Hertfordshire

Initial conversations have been held with the University in relation to creative office environments in the Production Hall for incubated new businesses.

Welwyn Garden City Centenary Foundation

On site meetings and discussions have been held with the Foundation. Many of the Foundation's objectives are met by the scheme including; the refurbishment of the Railway Footbridge and Listed Building, provision of Public Art, Sensory Garden

The Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust

A site meeting was held and the scheme presented.

WGC Football Club

The project will be supporting this underfunded Club with a donation

Joy Chance

Joy is a social commentator and has help the team form views on some key local issues and needs including the Living Well Centre.

Phoenix Art Trust

The team have worked with the Trust in a number of locations and they have contributed to the Art Hub concept and will be a participant.

Welwyn Garden City BID

A meeting was held with the BID Development Board to discuss the BID's objectives and areas where the scheme could be supportive. Improving the visitor and local resident experience in WGC, accessibility (footbridge) and evening trade are key areas where the site can deliver real improvements.

vi. Feedback Methods

Stakeholders and the local community were encouraged at the public exhibition and via invitation letters to provide feedback using the following channels:

- By phone: 0800 6895209
- By email: <u>info@thewheatquarter.co.uk</u>
- In person: Feedback forms at the public consultation

These feedback mechanisms are managed by Marengo Communications, which is coordinating and analysing the consultation responses on behalf of Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust. These responses are being used by the applicant and its project team to further shape the proposal for the site.

3. Feedback

i. Feedback from meetings

This section details the key feedback received during meetings with near and immediate neighbours and key stakeholders during the consultation.

Points raised in meetings included:

- The principle of development;
- The proposed density of the site;
- Infrastructure provision within the town;
- Parking and the level of parking provision on site;
- The number and design of the affordable homes;
- Developer contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on local infrastructure;
- Highways concerns;

ii. Exhibition feedback

- We received 107 feedback forms at the exhibition, and a further four afterwards.
- The form asked two open questions about the proposals and one closed question, asking the resident if they supported the proposals or not. The feedback form can be found in Appendix 5.
- The two open questions asked residents for their general views of the proposals and anything not considered in the design of the plans. Most of the responses to these questions were positive or not answered, however there were some issues raised:
 - The proposed density of the site;
 - Infrastructure provision within the town;
 - Parking and the level of parking provision on site;
 - The number and design of the affordable homes;
 - The balance of retail and residential development;
 - Vehicular access onto and public transport access to and from the site;
 - Desire for a museum about Welwyn Garden City;
 - The footbridge to the Howard Centre;
 - The design of the proposals.
- A closed question also asked whether the resident supported the proposals or not. 34 either didn't answer the question or said they did not know. Of those who answered:
 - 57 (74%) said that they supported the proposals
 - 20 (26%) said that they did not support the proposals

4. Our Responses to Key Issues Raised

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust considered all feedback made during its consultation. It continues to take the feedback on board from the points raised by ongoing stakeholder meetings. The table below explains how the proposals have addressed the issues raised. The key points raised locally are summarised below, with the applicants response against each issue also included.

Table 1: Developer's Response

Issue	Key Comments	Developer's Response
Principle of development	Why does WGC need the extra housing?	Assessment carried out by the local council suggests that many more homes are needed than are currently being built. The site is an opportunity to bring a brownfield derelict site back to use and contribute towards providing much needed housing in the area. It could also mean saving some greenbelt and greenfield sites from development.
Density	The site appears too dense	 We are seeking to maximise the use of this brownfield, extremely sustainable site adjacent to the railway station. We have reduced the height of 17 of the buildings previously consented and increased just two by one storey and further reduced the 'massing' of many of the blocks.
Infrastructure	Is there existing capacity within local schools / train services and core town facilities?	The applicants are discussing this issue with the local authority. It is very important that the town is able to meet the growth identified within the Local Plan and we are keen to support that.
Parking	Concern about underprovision of parking	We believe that many residents will simply not own a car given the extreme sustainability of the site.

Issue	Key Comments	Developer's Response
Affordable Homes	The previous proposals only allowed for 8%, how many will you deliver?	We are aiming for policy compliance of around 30% affordable homes. Increasing the density of the site and creating more appropriate sized units allows for more affordable homes.
Balance of retail, residential and public spaces	How will long term management of public areas be guaranteed? How many shops and community facilities do you propose to build alongside the homes?	We propose to introduce a management charge to create long term sustainability for the site, this will include upkeep to gardens and buildings. We believe there is scope for some complimentary shops and restaurants / cafes. We do not believe the site should compete with the Town Centre and instead offer a different approach with art galleries, the civic building and office space.
The Footbridge	Are you going to upgrade it? Will you be incuding a lift for disabled access?	We are committed to fully refurbishing the footbridge subject to Network Rail allowing us to do so. This would involve creating a new wider stepped access way, installing new lighting and an Equality Act compliant passenger lift. We have offered to work in collaboration with the Train Operating Company who are looking to upgrade the Railway Station by March 2019. The upgraded connectivity offered by the bridge is critical for both the new and existing community.
Construction Timescale	Will elements of the site be ready for the Centenary?	Given we have not yet submitted the application, we cannot make guarantees. We and our partners want to commence the refurbishment of the bridge and Listed building together with affordable housing on the southern site by August/September 2018 to meet Centenary timelines for 2020.

5. Conclusion

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trusts commitment through the consultation process has been demonstrated in a way that meets the requirements of the council's Statement of Community Involvement.

The engagement has been over and above what is set out in the Council's SCI. This level of engagement has meant that Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust is now in a position to fully understand the issues from residents and stakeholders which has helped to finalise its plans.

With hundreds of responses and contact details now logged, we are confident that we have a sound platform for ongoing engagement. We welcome the overt support of approximately 75% of respondents (of those who chose to answer the quession) relating to the plans.

Importantly this consultation has helped Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust understand local people's views, which have been reflected in its responses to the feedback it has received.

Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited and Metropolitan Housing Trust is keen to continue to keep people informed on progress on this project and intends to keep existing communication channels open to enable that dialogue to continue after the planning application has been considered.

Appendix 1: Letter to Neighbours



10th November 2017

Dear Resident

As you may be aware, Plutus Estates recently acquired the former Shredded Wheat Factory site from Tesco. This took place in early July and since then we have been working hard in consultation with stakeholders to make improvements to the scheme and bring forward appropriate potential revisions as part of our fresh proposals.

We appreciate that this is a hugely important site for Welwyn Garden City and we are seeking to deliver an excellent scheme that meets the aspirations of local residents. We are also in the process of preparing the site for partial demolition and the retention and refurbishment of the main listed buildings and we are keen to ensure local residents are kept fully informed.

We presented our initial thoughts to the Council's Development Consultation Forum just last month and are now ready to share, through a public exhibition, our emerging proposals. We will be hosting a public event in the Howard Centre, on Wednesday 22nd November from 4pm – 8pm and Thursday 23nd from 2pm – 7pm. We will be based in a unit adjacent to Pandora on the ground floor in the main atrium.

We will have information boards and members of the team will be on hand to answer questions, for more information please email: <u>info@thewheatquarter.co.uk</u> or call Marengo Communications on 0800 6895209.

Yours sincerely

Andy Martin

Marengo Communications

For and on behalf of The Wheat Quarter

Appendix 2: Press Coverage

http://www.whtimes.co.uk/news/plans-for-1-500-homes-at-former-shredded-wheat-site-to-be-unveiled-1-5287096

Plans for 1,500 homes at former Shredded Wheat site to be unveiled

PUBLISHED: 10:36 20 November 2017

Chris Flanagan



Aerial view of the Shredded Wheat factory in the 1980s. Picture credit: Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust.

Fresh plans for around 1,500 homes in Welwyn Garden City will go under the microscope at a public consultation this

week.

The proposals for the former Shredded Wheat site in Broadwater Road will be displayed on Wednesday from 4pm to 9pm and from 2pm to 7pm the following day at a vacant unit adjacent to Pandora in The Howard Centre.

John West, development manager for ZM Land, said: "We appreciate that this is a hugely important site for Welwyn Garden City and will be bringing forward exciting proposals.

"We are also in the process of demolishing parts of the site and are keen to ensure local residents are kept informed.

"We believe the site can deliver more for local residents including; affordable housing, employment, art hub, wellness centre and new community facilities including a Civic

Building designed by Louis de Soissons Architects, the same practice who designed the original building.

"We look forward to working with the Centenary Foundation to support the delivery of their vision."

Appendix 3: Exhibition Boards

BOARDS 1 & 2



Welcome

Welcome to today's exhibition regarding the former Shredded Wheat Factory. Please take a look at the information we have provided on these exhibition boards and speak with a member of the team, who will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Who are we?

ZM Land and Capital and Plutus Estates (WGC) Ltd

ZM Land and Capital are the development manager for Plutus Estates (WGC) Limited the owners of the Former Shredded Wheat Factory site. ZM Land and Capital has over 30 years' experience in the successful delivery of complex mixed use development projects.

Metropolitan

Metropolitan is one of the UK's leading providers of affordable housing and care and support services. They own and manage a large portfolio of nearly 38,000 homes, including 500 new homes which they are delivering on the nearby Rank Xerox site.

The Site





Why are we creating new plans?

We believe the site can deliver more for local residents including affordable housing sustainable employment, an Art Hub, Museum, Wellness Centre, Public Art and a new community building. We look forward to working with the Centenary Foundation to support the delivery of their vision.

We are determined to echo the original principles on which Welwyn Garden City was founded – combining the benefits of healthy living with industry.

We are proposing to increase the amount of homes, including most importantly affordable homes, as well as create a new civic quarter and introduce public art. This together with a refined strategy for the Listed Buildings and community/ commercial heart, will create a destination in which people want to live, work and spend their leisure time.

We believe this will create a better development for the town.





BOARDS 3 & 4



We're on site

Many local residents and Councillors have told us how important it is to get on with this site and start building homes as quickly as possible. Subject to achieving planning consent in time, we are hoping to start construction in September 2018.

In the meantime, we are moving ahead with clearing the site and, preparing for demolition and the first phase of development.

It is very important for the listed buildings to be properly cared for as they can deteriorate very quickly. We are halting further unnecessary decay to the listed buildings and carrying out a full environmental clean.

Site clearance work has now started and is due to completed by Spring 2018 so that the land is ready for redevelopment.







Affordable housing

The previous planning permission was for 850 homes, of which just 50 were classed as 'affordable'. This equated to under 6% of all homes proposed.

We are seeking to increase the amount of homes on the site. Our current plan is to create over 1,400 homes and a significant increase in affordable housing (circa 30%).

Whilst we are optimising the development capacity of the site, we are actually managing to reduce the storey height on 17 of the 19 buildings across the site, whilst raising the storey height on just 2 buildings by one extra floor.





BOARDS 5 & 6

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The Factory **Buildings & Silos**

We propose to transform the existing spaces into a vibrant cultural, commercial, museum & art and leisure hub; providing a real sense of place and destination to this side of Welwyn Garden City.

Current proposed uses are:

- * Flexible We-Work office spaces
- · Café & Bar with Art Studio and Art Spaces
- International Art centre including Permanant Gallery space, artist venue & space for working / Teaching / printing / studios
- · Gym / Pool
- · Digital Library / Digital & Editing facilities
- Restaurants
- · Creche / Nursery
- Projection displays onto the silos
 Large Public Art Installations
- Vintage & Racing Motorbike Museum





The Civic Building

Louis de Soissons Architects were appointed as architects for Welwyn Garden City in 1920 and the practice was significantly involved in the town's development over the next 60 years. The practice designed the concrete Shredded Wheat factory. We have commissioned Louis de Soissons Architects for the Civic Building to provide a genuine Community Facility linked to an Alternative Heath Centre.

Connectivity

Our ambitious plans include refurbishment and improvements to the current footbridge which connects the Wheat Quarter to the Railway Station and Town Centre. The works include refurbishing the structure and walkway, making the bridge fully accessible for the disabled with the provision of a new passenge lift, and updating all the lighting across the length of the bridge from The Howard Centre to The Wheat Quarter.

We are proposing an increase in both parking and cycling provision across the site. The commercial parking provision remains unchanged from the previous scheme and the per dwelling parking ratio will be reduced to reflect the highly sustainable nature of the site, crucially, residents will be able to utilise a private electric car club as well as enhanced levels of cycle provision.

As part of our masterplanning exercise we have also looked at pedestrian and cycling routes into, through and around the site and propose to encourage more environmentally-friendly travel by introducing more cycling parking spaces.



BOARDS 7 & 8



Landscaping & public realm

Public open space comprises just under half of the total area and making best use of it will be fundamental to successful redevelopment. We are proposing both formal and informal areas of green space and urban realm, as well as semi-private open space such as communal roof terraces for residents.

A public square, allotments, children's play areas, roof gardens and a skate park are just a few of the things we are proposing.



Disabled & Sensory Garden

We are proposing a dedicated space for a disabled and sensory garden, this will include; raised beds at wheelchair level, a Chamomile lawn, directional paving for the visually impaired.

a planting strategy incorporating sound, smell and colour.





Concept plan



Next Steps

We are planning to submit a detailed planning application shortly, but before we do, we would appreciate your feedback. By submitting a detailed planning application, we would anticipate starting on site once approval is granted which could make it possible to start in Autumn 2018.

Please either complete a feedback form, visit our website www.chewheatquarter.co.uk or email Info@chewheatquarter.co.uk

BOARDS 9 & 10



Supporting the Centenary



The Centenary Foundation has aspirations for Welwyn Garden City's Centenary Celebration in 2020. Our proposals create an opportunity to deliver a significant proportion of their vision:

- Understanding of the heritage bringing the Listed Buildings fully back into use by making them fit for purpose while respecting their heritage and fabric
- Art and Sculpture Exhibition creating an Art Hub showcasing local and international artists.
- Centenary Sport for all our proposals include gym facilities and dance studios
- Festival of Music and Performance Arts our proposals include a new performance and events space and music studios
- The Centenary in the Public Realm our exciting art works will be strategically placed throughout the site and around the Wheat Quarter
- 6) Refurbishment of the Railway Station and Footbridge we are liaising with Network Rail and the Train Operating Company to enable the refurbishment of the footbridge to include new DDA compliant access, a new stairway and passenger lift
- Garden for the Disabled (Sensory Garden) we are working with the Gardening for Disabled Trust to deliver a community Sensory Garden.



Motorbike Museum









Public Art

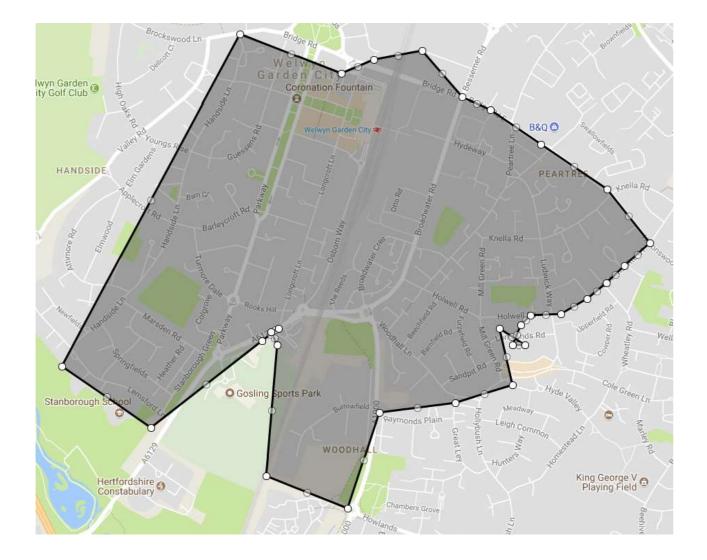




BOARD 11



Appendix 4: Distribution Map

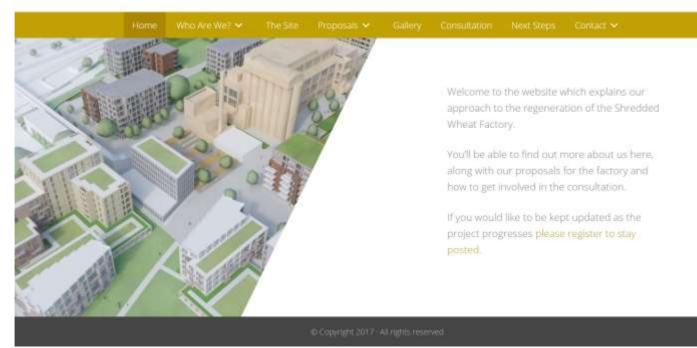


Appendix 5: Feedback Form

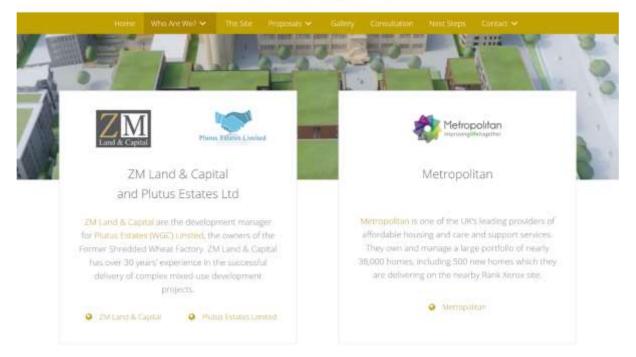
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Feedback Form	2. In these anything that your think we have not considered to the plane?
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NORE	
ADMAPSS	
POST DUDE	
PIGINE MINIBER	
EMAN-	3. Are you supportive of our plans for The Shruhdod Whast Factory?
What are previews as our proposals for the redevalopment of The Shendiled Wheet Factory?	Yan 🔲 Yan 🗌
	Thank you list taking the time to give as your localback no our proposals. Please either put it in the halbet her provided at the consultation event is return it to so at
	indu@thewheatquarter.cn.ak
	**
	The Wavel Questwor c/w 20M Land & Capital, 2 Faircon Gata, Shite Park, Weiveys Garden City, AL7 1TW.
	If you have any questions alread atthat the proposals or the consultation, then pieces don't besture to call us on SBME 68% 525% .

Appendix 6: Project website











Why are we creating new plans?

We believe the site can deliver more for local residents including; alforduble housing, sustainable employment, an Art Hub, Museum, Wellness Centre, Public Art and a new community building. We look forward to working with the Centersary Foundation to support the delivery of their vision.

We are determined to echo the original principles on which Welwyn Garden City was founded - combining the benefits of healthy living with industry.

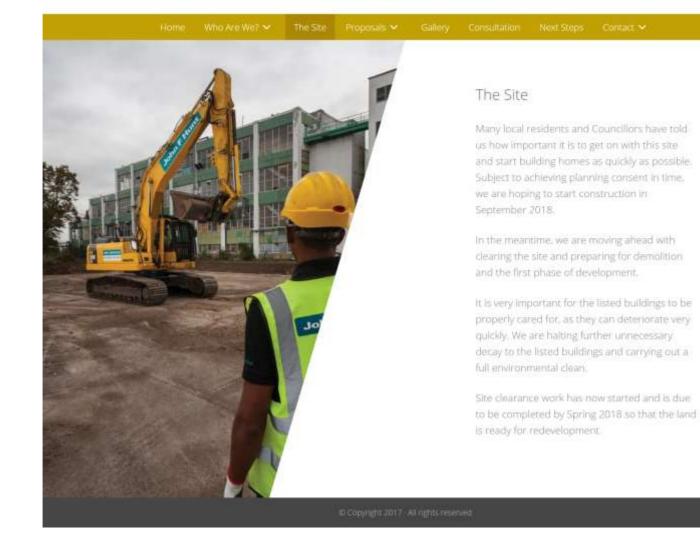
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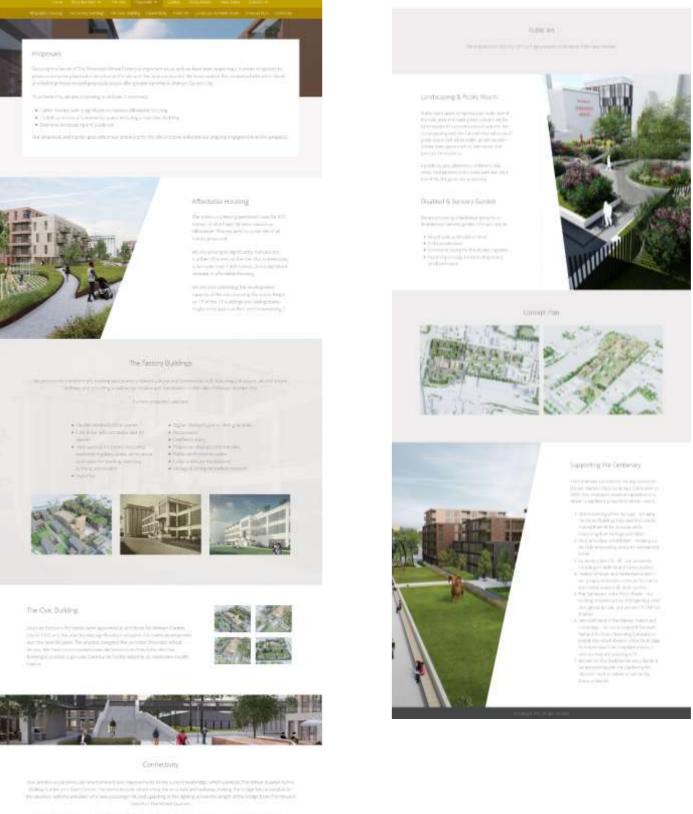
We believe this will create a better development for the town.

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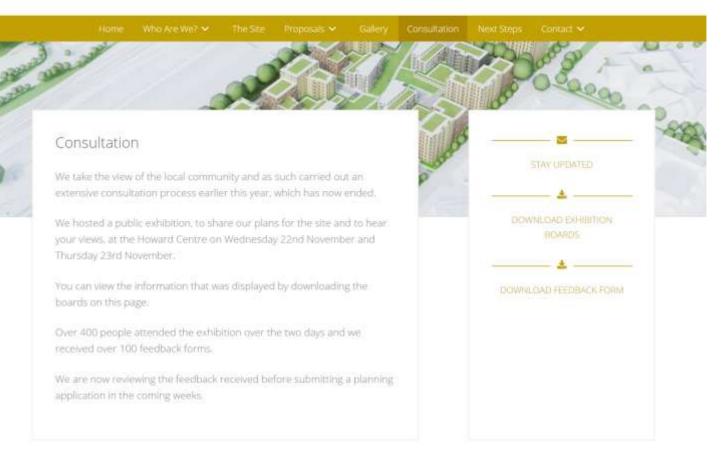
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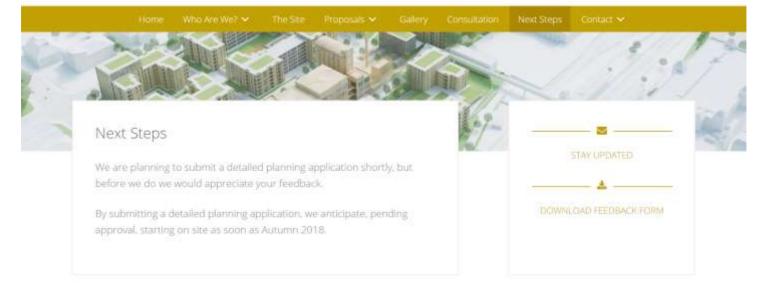


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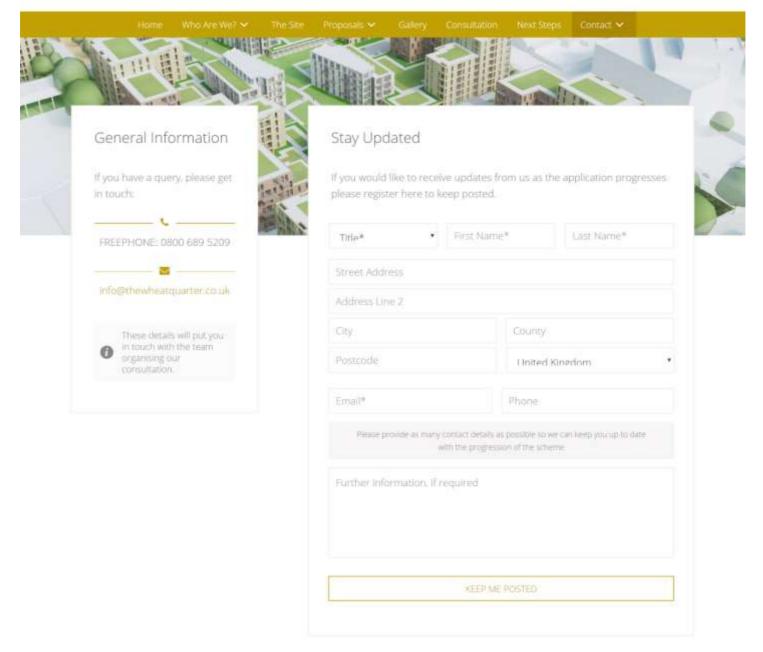
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