

## **Transcript of the audio recording of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8 July 2014**

### **Extracts from the discussion with A2Dominion relating to Kempton Park**

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#### **Investment in New Homes, Cont'd**

**Mr John Knevett (Chief Commercial Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, A2Dominion):**

We're looking ... We have no control over any of these, but they will be on ... your Planning colleagues will be aware of these:

- \* Staines Central
- \* Stuff that is being discussed at the Elmsleigh Centre
- \* Your own Bridge Street Car Park asset, which I think you'll be maybe bringing to the market soon
- \* And we did bid on Kempton Park – very contentious, but a big bit of Green Belt. Not enjoyed by many, but it's a big bit of Green Belt. And that will be no doubt be something that tests your colleagues in Planning as the winning developer – which is Redrow Homes – brings that, their proposals – post the General Election, I guess.

Ends

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#### **The Future**

**Mr John Knevett:** So, the future. How can we help you unlock some of the issues that we spoke about tonight?

One thing we haven't got a shortage of is access to capital. We've been going for 70 years. Those assets that we had 70 years ago are now worth a lot of money. We can borrow against those assets. We've got the capacity to invest, currently, over £300 million in new provision.

We'd love to spend as much of that as possible in the Borough of Spelthorne. It's where we started 70 years ago. You are our largest partner. And what will restrict that, ultimately is the access to land and planning consent.

If we can unlock those, we will work with you guys to the range of tenures that we spoke about today.

We have the ERS, as a growing portfolio within our business. We have the affordable tenures, We have outright sale. We have shared ownership. We have specialist accommodation for the elderly, and others. So we have a raft of accommodation.

I won't go on any more.

That was just a quick run-through of what we do. I think the important time tonight is for you to ask us questions and perhaps understand that we can work together to solve some of the issues that you have.

Ends

Starts

**Councillor Alfred Friday (Deputy Chair):** I must say I was quite astonished by one of the remarks we heard a bit earlier on in the presentation. Um Mr .... ? Sorry

**John Knevett:** Knevett. John Knevett

**Councillor Alfred Friday:** Mr Knevett made the comment "we even bid for Kempton Park". Let me make it quite clear we have no knowledge of any bids for Kempton Park, we have no knowledge of any building contractors engaged at Kempton Park. You threw in the name of the developer as though we knew what the situation was. I firmly reject that suggestion, and I deeply deplore what you said this evening.

Short silence

**Mr John Knevett:** Yes. You're welcome to your opinion. That's fine.

Ends

Starts

**Councillor Alfred Friday:** Sorry. I've got to come back to Kempton. My question on Kempton Park ... what you said in reply. You said, you had "bid for land at Kempton Park". Can you tell me what you meant by that?

**Mr John Knevett:** Yes indeed. The Jockey Club have put up for sale 70 acres of Kempton Park. Um, I was under the impression that this authority, as the land sits in it, there would have been, um, embryonic planning discussion with your officers, and, indeed, this organ-, this borough has a interest in that land through a Rent Trust Deed, where if there is a change of use you receive, um, substantial sums of money.

I would have thought as an authority, especially the Scrutiny Committee, you might have some knowledge of it.

So when you suggested to me, in quite emotive language, that you hadn't got a clue what I was talking about, I said to you I am very surprised.

And I am very surprised if nobody round this chamber has a clue what Kempton Park is about.

**Councillor Philippa Broom (Chair):** Councillor Evans ...

**Councillor Tim Evans (Cabinet Member for Finance):** Madam Chair, thank you... I was going to follow up on Scrutiny issues on what A2Dominion do.

But that particular remark, Mr Knevett, has made my blood run cold. Because for the last, probably the last 18 months, I and all the other Councillors in Sunbury have been standing up, defending to the death this council, saying there are no planning applications to build on Kempton Park. Kempton Park is Green Belt land.

And if you say there are no planning applications, others then say, yes there are, there are plans going on, and we say, not that I'm aware of. And if there is anybody in this Spelthorne Borough Council – officer or Councillor – who knows that there are planning applications and has been concealing it, I for one am going to be very very upset indeed.

I think we need to clarify this. So I'm grateful to Mr Knevett for bringing the point up. He didn't know we didn't know.

And I think this is the most worrying thing I've heard during the course of this entire evening. And I do think we need to get to the bottom of it.

**Mr John Knevett:** I didn't know you didn't know! That sums it up!

(laughter)

**Councillor Richard Dunn:** I think personally there should be an enquiry into this.

**Councillor Ian Harvey:** It's my ward and I'm horrified.

**Councillor Richard Dunn:** Everyone's horrified. You've seen this Keep Kempton Park Green, haven't you?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Yeah.

**Councillor Richard Dunn:** You've seen all the stuff that's on there?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Yeah.

**Councillor Richard Dunn:** How much more's going to come?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** I can't answer that question, Councillor Dunn. Don't look at me ...

**Councillor Richard Dunn:** Every day there's something. And you say, what?! And everyone's denying it! There's got to be some enquiry.

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Councillor Evans, how do you suggest we, um ...

**Councillor Tim Evans:** I want to have a statement from, certainly from the Chief Executive of this Council, and probably from the Leader of this Council, that they are unaware of this, or they are aware, one or the other ...

**Mr Terry Collier (Chief Finance Officer, Assistant Chief Executive, Spelthorne Borough Council):** ... ? As far as I am aware, officers were unaware of the proposals ...? certainly I had no knowledge ... discussed ? ...

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** OK, then so we will have as an Action Point, then, that we want a clear unambiguous statement ...

**Councillor Tim Evans:** And is the land still up for sale? I mean what ...

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** You just said that Redrow had bid ...

**Councillor Tim Evans:** ...The Jockey Club had put 70 acres of land up for sale?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** But, you just said that Redrow had bid successfully, yeah?...

**Mr John Knevett:** Yes. They will only buy it at the time of any journey through a planning system. They have won the opportunity to buy that land off The Jockey Club ...

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** So they've got an option, basically, have they?

**Mr John Knevett:** Yes they have. That's the simplest way to ... and Simon, do you want to add anything to that? Simon is our Development Managing Director of the South East who'll know what the exact terms would be ...

**Voice in background:** Can you give us that name again?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** I beg your pardon. Whose?

**Voice in background:** Can you give us that name again?

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Redrow. They're a north Walian company, originally, aren't they?

**Mr Simon Potts (Executive Director (Commercial) South East, A2Dominion):** R-E-D-RO-W Homes. Good evening ...

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Steve is the bloke who founded it.

**Mr John Knevett:** Steve Morgan.

**Simon Potts:** Yes. Steve Morgan. Basically The Jockey Club went out to a number of developers to seek offers for the site. Offers were made, and The Jockey Club have accepted an offer from the house-builder to actively promote the site for residential development. That is a long process. Clearly they've got to negotiate with the local population and community. They've also got to seek to get the land that they've secured an option on changed from Green Belt land to non-Green Belt land. Now, we all know that's a very long

and difficult process with no certainty of it ever happening. So, the position is it's at an early stage, no planning application has been made on that land at the moment. But it is being considered, and it will be no doubt worked up by whoever's got the opportunity to promote it.

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** OK? ... Councillor Evans, yes ...

**Councillor Tim Evans:** I'm sorry, but I ... on this particular ... but this is absolutely crucial. There is no planning application, we know that. But if there were to be a planning application, it could not be, could not possibly be passed because, not possibly be passed, because it is Green Belt land. Unless we change our Local Plan, which we are not about to do, as far as I'm aware. Unless we change that Local Plan, there will be no planning application, there can't be one, on that land.

We may of course, be instructed by the central government to do something different ... but we haven't got there yet.

**Mr Simon Potts:** With Green Belt land, there needs to be special circumstances to basically change the use over from Green Belt to non-Green Belt ...

**Councillor Tim Evans:** The profits of Redrow or The Jockey Club are not special circumstances.

**Mr Simon Potts:** That would be something for the government to determine ...

**Councillor Philippa Broom:** Right! What? Oh, Terry, yeah ...

**Mr Terry Collier:** ...message from ...? saying that ... the transaction with Redrow was in the public domain. We were aware of the connection, but the key point about the planning application ...

Ends