Meeting Report and Actions

Hi everyone,

Thank you to those who attended the event at the Village Hall this week. VIRTUS genuinely values feedback on the project, how we engage with residents and how we can be a good long-term neighbour to the community.

We recognise the need to engage more proactively and frequently with residents to ensure questions can be asked and a consistent dialogue and communication channel is established between VIRTUS and the wider community. For those who could not attend but wished to receive an update on the meeting, we hope this report proves useful. We have attempted to capture all points raised and have summarised them below. However, please let us know if there are any further questions and we will be happy to respond. Further questions can be sent to community@virtusdcs.com.

As committed to during the meeting, the purpose of this email is to provide a summary of the points raised, share updates where information is readily available today and set out a clear list of follow-up actions.

We will send a follow-up email on 23rd October with updated timelines for all actions outlined in this update.

There is, of course, more detail below on sound; however, we can confirm that our acoustic consultants have been instructed and we are currently awaiting detailed timelines for the extended surveys. As requested, these will cover a broader area.

We will share details of the acoustic survey timeline by 23rd October and provide the findings as soon as they become available. We would welcome the opportunity for the community to propose a 3rd party to work with our acoustic consultants.

We look forward to developing a stronger and more open relationship with the local community and recognise that it is VIRTUS' responsibility to establish trust through transparency and clarity.

Kind regards,
The VIRTUS Team

Summary Meeting Report

1 Construction Programme and Traffic Impacts

We were asked about the construction programme, when works will finish and what this means for heavy vehicle movements.

Construction is planned to finish at the end of 2028, which includes the phased completion of the four separate data centres. As each data centre is completed, the associated site activities will reduce. This will result in a reduction in heavy construction traffic and peak numbers of operatives.

A high-level programme is as follows:

- Site excavations and formation of roads due to complete: March 2027
- First data centre complete: August 2027
- Second data centre complete: December 2027
- Third data centre complete: November 2028
- Fourth and final data centre complete: December 2028

VIRTUS Action

- Publish a clear construction timeline for the project on the Community Hub.
  - In addition to the summary above, this will be updated on the Community Hub by 23rd October.

2 Traffic Management and Driver Behaviour

We heard concerns regarding lorry movements, including vehicle speeds, driving behaviour, chalk spills and incidents involving other road users. Concerns were also raised regarding the second site entrance and its location on a blind corner. Residents also advised that on occasion concerns raised with site entrance teams had not been taken seriously or appropriately addressed.

To date, VIRTUS has put in place traffic management measures to ensure all drivers are briefed before arriving at site and again when leaving site. Now that Haw Lane has fully reopened, all drivers of vehicles that fit under the bridge are instructed by a traffic marshal to turn right as they leave the site. All vehicles leaving site are wheel-washed and a road sweeper operates along Haw Lane throughout the day.

VIRTUS Action

- Brief marshals at the site exit to ensure all lorries are properly sealed to prevent chalk or other debris spilling onto the road.
  - An updated briefing is being prepared and will be in place by 20th October.
- Brief marshals on how to respond appropriately to concerns raised by members of the public and ensure relevant concerns are escalated to the VIRTUS team.
  - An updated briefing is being prepared and will be in place by 20th October.
- Provide clarity to the community on how to report incidents involving vehicles.
  - We have published an article on the Community Hub detailing this process.
- Confirm that lorry drivers are not incentivised to drive at unsafe speeds.
  - VIRTUS contracts contain no incentives for early delivery of the project.
- Arrange a meeting with senior managers from the principal contractors to discuss further measures to improve driving standards.
  - We are arranging this meeting as a matter of urgency and will provide an update on 23rd October.
- Arrange a full safety review of second exit onto Haw Lane by 20th October.

3 Thames Water Works

We took questions regarding previous VIRTUS statements relating to the Thames Water works.

VIRTUS would like to correct the statement made on 9th September that the Thames Water works on Haw Lane were "their work rather than ours and separate from the data centre".

For clarification, the works were carried out by Thames Water to install new metered mains connections to a small number of adjacent properties after it was discovered that they were connected to the site's supply. This arrangement was not compliant with current regulations and VIRTUS therefore funded the works. At the same time, additional work was undertaken to install upgraded fire suppression tanks at the VIRTUS site.

VIRTUS apologises for the incorrect statement.

VIRTUS Actions

- Publish a correction and clarification on the Bledlow Ridge Facebook group.
  - This will be posted on 16th October.
- Implement a new communications strategy.
  - This will be in place by 23rd October and published on the Community Hub.

4 Communications and Community Engagement

We discussed the need for clearer communication channels and processes between VIRTUS and residents, particularly around how concerns are handled and followed up.

VIRTUS understands the frustration experienced by residents when concerns raised by email or social media have not always received clear responses. We are committed to improving

engagement using a range of channels and ensuring that everyone has a clear route to provide feedback to VIRTUS. Communication with VIRTUS should be via community@virtusdcs.com .

- All emails will be acknowledged within three working days and likely responded to fully in this time frame
- Some enquiries may require additional time due to their technical nature, but we will acknowledge receipt and provide updates as appropriate.
- Internal weekly reviews will be held to ensure enquiries are appropriately progressed and closed out.

As part of our wider communications plan, we will explore creating an email newsletter to provide project updates, helping to improve transparency and proactive communication.

The Community Hub is now available online and will be used to publish updates, resources and responses to frequently asked questions.

https://virtuscommunityhub.com/index.php/en/locations/uk/saunderton

Regarding Facebook, VIRTUS will continue to use the platform to share information; however, we are unable to manage discussions through comments or private messages. Please use the email address above, as it is regularly monitored and acknowledgements will be sent within three working days.

5 Visual Appearance and Landscaping

Residents asked what the completed site would look like, whether the published visuals remain accurate and whether the committed landscaping and tree planting would still be undertaken.

VIRTUS can confirm that the published visualisations remain representative of the development currently being constructed.

Landscaping will continue throughout the construction period, with the site being fully landscaped in accordance with the approved planning proposals by the time all the data centres on site are fully complete. VIRTUS will continue to maintain the site thereafter.

VIRTUS is working with Chiltern Rangers to plant an additional 272 trees on the 25 acres of land that will remain undeveloped. This area will be maintained collaboratively by Chiltern Rangers and VIRTUS, with planting designed to enhance local biodiversity. This will also include maintenance of the public footpath network.

VIRTUS Action

- Republish the visuals on the Community Hub.
  - These are available now:
  - https://virtuscommunityhub.com/index.php/en/resources
- Provide regular landscaping updates through the Community Hub.

6 Chiller Gantries and Timber Cladding

We took questions regarding the proposed removal of timber grid structures on the tops of the chiller gantries and whether this could affect sound levels.

Timber façades will remain on the chiller gantries and buildings in accordance with the original planning conditions. The Section 73 application proposes only a minor variation to the colour of the timber due to the originally approved finish no longer being commercially available.

The proposed removal of the timber grid structures on the tops of the chiller gantries will improve operational efficiency, allowing the chillers to operate more efficiently and reducing operational noise.

Each chiller will also incorporate extensive acoustic attenuation measures, with individual units housed within acoustic enclosures designed to minimise noise and eliminate tonal characteristics.

7 Acoustic Modelling and Surveys

There was extensive discussion regarding acoustic modelling, including consideration of local topography, weather conditions, the extent of modelling coverage and the treatment of low-frequency sound.

The acoustic surveys and associated modelling are publicly available through the planning portal. These were undertaken by specialist acoustic consultants in consultation with Buckinghamshire Council and in accordance with relevant British Standards and industry guidance.

Background sound levels were measured through week-long attended and unattended surveys undertaken in July 2024. The measurements recorded background sound levels of approximately 35dB during the day and 31dB at night at locations agreed with Buckinghamshire Council.

The sound modelling was undertaken using a detailed three-dimensional model that specifically accounts for local topography, meteorological conditions and low-frequency noise.

As committed, VIRTUS will now expand the acoustic modelling to provide greater clarity on impacts across the wider area. Requests have already been received for modelling to cover Bledlow Ridge, Loosley Row, Saunderton Lee, Lacey Green, Bradenham and Longwick.

Residents who wish additional locations to be included should email community@virtusdcs.com by 23rd October.

Following that date, we will publish a map showing the locations proposed for inclusion in the expanded modelling exercise.

VIRTUS Action

- Proceed with the expanded surveys and modelling.
  - Consultants have already been instructed and we are actively seeking a confirmed programme for the survey.
- Notify all residents who registered for updates from the 14th October community event when the findings are published on the Community Hub.
- Arrange a further community meeting once the results are available, with an independent acoustic specialist present to explain the findings and answer questions.

8 Green Belt and Planning Policy

Questions were raised regarding references within the emerging local plan to protecting green belt areas from commercial development.

VIRTUS Action

- Consult planning advisers regarding the point raised and provide a clarification.
  - We will confirm our position in the 23rd October update.

9 2008 Planning Application and Diesel Use

It was suggested that the 2008 planning application specified that diesel would not be used on site.

VIRTUS Action

- Consult planning advisers regarding the provisions of the 2008 planning permission.
  - We will confirm our position in the 23rd October update.

10 Section 73 Application

Questions were raised regarding whether the proposed acoustic variation could be separated from other amendments included within the Section 73 application.

The proposed changes to sound limits form part of a wider Section 73 application and we need to take planning advice, including input from Buckinghamshire Council, regarding how such matters can be managed procedurally.

VIRTUS Action

- Provide an update on this matter by 30th October.

11 Glazing, Birds and Bats

Residents raised questions regarding the proposed glazing to the office buildings and whether reflections or lighting could affect birds and bats.

VIRTUS has applied for additional glazing to two office buildings to ensure compliance with current workplace health and safety standards. As part of the proposal, automatic blinds will be installed and maintained to prevent light spill during night-time hours.

All comments received through the planning consultation process have been reviewed and addressed as part of the application.

12 Temporary Cabins and Land Use

A question was raised regarding the use of part of the site for temporary cabins and whether this was compatible with previous planning designations.

VIRTUS Action

- Investigate the matter with our planning consultants and provide an update.
  - We will include this in the 23rd October update.

13 Molins Buildings

There were discussions regarding the remaining Molins buildings, whether they are listed and their future use.

Neither the office building nor the ballroom is listed.

The smaller office building has been made watertight and may be used for office space once the site becomes operational.

The ballroom has suffered significant internal damage through historic trespass and vandalism. VIRTUS has committed to improving the appearance of the buildings externally and remains open to suggestions from the community regarding potential future uses for the ballroom. Suggestions can be sent to community@virtusdcs.com.

14 Generator Use and Testing

Several questions were raised relating to generator operation and concerns that some data centre operators use generators when electricity prices are high.

The generators installed on site are standby generators and are only used in the event of a loss of mains power. They are not used as a routine source of power generation for commercial purposes.

Generators are tested individually throughout the year for periods of up to 15 minutes, with only one generator being tested at any one time.

An extended annual test of up to 120 minutes is also undertaken.

All testing is carried out in accordance with Buckinghamshire Council requirements and only between 10:00 and 16:00 on weekdays.

15 Transparency and Future Engagement

Residents expressed a desire for clearer, more in-depth communication, defined points of contact and a comprehensive engagement strategy.

VIRTUS recognises the need for clearer and more proactive engagement with the local community. We acknowledge that we have not always met the standards expected by residents and are committed to improving this.

The new Community Hub will become the central source of project information, updates, resources and answers to frequently asked questions, while also providing a route for residents to submit feedback directly to VIRTUS.

We are also committed to holding community engagement events more regularly. While a quarterly meeting was initially proposed, we remain open to more frequent engagement if residents feel that would be beneficial.

VIRTUS Action

- Organise a another community meeting once the expanded acoustic modelling results are available, with an acoustic expert in attendance.
- Continue exploring options for a community email newsletter and publish details on how residents can subscribe via local communications, social media channels and the parish Contact Magazine once available.