

Dorchester Town Council

Special Planning and Environment Committee

8 September 2014

Present: Councillors, K. Armitage, A. Canning, T. Harries, S. Hosford (Chair), S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, P. Mann (Mayor), R. Potter, M. Rennie, D. Roberts and D. Taylor

Apologies: Councillors V. Allan, C. Biggs, R. Biggs, T. James and T. Jones

Also attending Councillors D. Barrett and G. Jones.

Mr G. Cosgrave, M. Hawthorne and K. Neill-Smith of Simons Developments

40. **Charles Street Development Scheme –application WD/D/14/002002**

Councillors S. Jones and R. Potter identified their roles as members of West Dorset District Council's Development Control Committee, and identified that they were attending the Committee as observers only.

Representatives of Simons Developments gave a presentation updating the Committee on changes that had been introduced to their recently submitted application to vary their outline planning consent originally approved in 2010.

Members asked for clarification on a number of points, being the nature and use of the service access road, the entrance and exit to the car park, the opportunity to create a sense of place consistent with Dorchester's heritage, opportunities to boost tourism, pedestrianised areas, the implications for light and space, the comparison with a similar project in Carmarthen, the need for an economic impact study and bicycle racks.

Several Members raised issues related to how archaeology works would be undertaken, public access to the site during these works and how any finds would be available for display after the exercise. Mr Cosgrave confirmed that a strategy was to be developed with the County Archaeologist with regard to these issues.

Many Members raised questions and made points regarding the need for affordable housing on site. Mr Hawthorne provided information about the mix of properties that might be provided, but emphasised the developer's concern that any provision of affordable housing might threaten the scheme's financial viability.

Several members raised questions regarding plans for alternative parking provision during construction of the scheme. The Chairman confirmed that this was not a planning consideration. Mr Cosgrove recognised the issue as important to Simon's reputation and confirmed that they were nonetheless in discussions with the District Council about possible options.

A Member raised a question about the use of potential S106 monies arising from the development, focusing particularly on the needs of improving the connections with

Hardy Arcade and South Street and environmental enhancement of that area. Mr Cosgrave advised that a sum may have been included in the developer's viability assessment for the site. Another Member noted that other organisations would have their own priorities for any sums arising from planning gain.

There was discussion about how the District Council, as car park owner, would manage the different parking needs of shoppers and residents of the site.

The Chairman invited comments from members of the public. Comments and questions were received regarding the Town Council's role in ensuring appropriate arrangements are made for archaeology on and from the site, the timing of the consultation exercise and its proximity to the submission of the application, the issues raised by a local retailer to the scheme, the way retail in Dorchester had become dispersed over time, the implications for the current Waitrose and Marks and Spencer's sites, and whether the application sufficiently incorporated heritage and helped Dorchester to strengthen its heritage brand.

Following discussion it was

Resolved:

- i) That the Committee offers positive support for the application with the following conditions:
 - a) The District Council should not relax the Local Plan Affordable Housing requirements, nor consider a commuted sum, in order to facilitate the implementation of the scheme due to the need to provide affordable housing in the town;
 - b) Before construction works start, the District Council should develop and implement a robust strategy to provide adequate alternative parking for the town centre;
 - c) Consideration be given to ring-fencing all Section 106 monies resulting from the scheme for environmental improvement works in the South Street area.

- ii) That the Town Council contacts the County Archaeologist to discuss their views regarding the management of archaeological investigations to facilitate public access during construction and the conservation and display of archaeological finds after the investigations are completed.

- iii) That separate discussions are held with the District Council concerning the management of parking spaces on the site to maximise access to the public during trading hours

Chairman