



ENVIRONMENTAL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27th February 2007

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor I Beech (Chair) and Councillors Chalk, Hunt and Pulsford.

Officers:

R Bamford and J Prendergrast.

Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer:

S Skinner.

52. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Dudley.

Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Cllr Hartnett also tendered his apologies.

53. QUORUM

There being no quorum at 7.00 p.m. the start of the meeting was delayed until 7.25 p.m.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of the Party Whip.

55. DISTRICT CENTRES - DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Ruth gave preamble to the report

Officers introduced the report and went through salient points of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) They further advised that current plans were at this stage only initial sketches.

Officers responded to Members' queries, providing a range of clarifications and explanations.

It was confirmed that the Council had employed GVA Grimley for their expertise in retail issue GVA Grimley had confirmed that there was a need for retail and that the market was currently buoyant. They had suggested that 4-6 new retail units be constructed and that they also

now advised that an additional 1,000 to 1,500 sq ft be set aside for a pharmacy.

Parking was discussed. It was confirmed that the Council as landlord could set the level but needed to consider the economic viability of the land use. Currently there was too much, it was in the wrong place and so was underused other than at school pick up times. Some dedicated space would be allocated for the supermarket, but possibly only 10-12 spaces.

There were crime risk concerns regarding canopies and a lack of visibility meaning camera sightlines were blocked. Officers confirmed that nothing was yet fixed in design terms at this point. Members expressed serious concerns re the existing ingrained crime culture in the area.

With regard to passing traffic, the need to secure some passing traffic near shops was recognised as were traffic management solutions so as to secure safety for pedestrians. It was confirmed that the nature of quality and design could bring about reductions of speed.

It was suggested that sections of the bus route be opened up. Various options were considered, such as roundabouts and traffic light controlled junctions. Gordon Anstis House, for example could be better accessed, via some opening up of the bus route and the same could be said of the school entrance. Members favoured a traffic island, if this could be achieved as this would also be more environmentally friendly than traffic lights. Officers agreed to pursue this further.

Concerns were expressed regarding the proposed “apartments” over shops. The Committee was advised that these would be appropriately designed and laid out. Anti-social behaviour limitation would be part of the design brief. Officers advised of potential usefulness of a visit to Castle Vale to see similar works already undertaken there.

Finally, some textual amendments were noted for correction.

It was confirmed that a Period of public consultation would take place from 23rd March to 4th May. Members noted the forthcoming Election Period and its impact on this process and queried what the possibility might be of running the consultation period after 4th May, to avoid the problems of the election period. Officer explained the importance of the timescales to possible receipt of Planning Grant which was still an unknown factor at this stage.

It was agreed that the Chair would present the Committee’s views to the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as recorded in the preamble above, it be RECOMMENDED that the draft District Centre Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A), its accompanying statement of conformity with the Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix B) and the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix C) be approved for publication for the purposes of public consultation.

56. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS - SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISALS

Officers introduced the Sustainability Appraisals to each of the SPD's. Each SPD should achieve all of the 22 objectives listed within the Appraisal. Officers drew the Committee's attention to their intentions in producing these Sustainability implications for all the Planning documents going to the Executive Committee on 7th March and Council on 12th March 2007.

RESOLVED that

Members noted the Officer's report.

57. CHURCH HILL CENTRE - DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - LAND ASSEMBLY ISSUES

Officers provided an illustrated presentation and Members noted some draft recommendations proposed, in consultation with the Chair.

Officers were reported to be pleased with the report to date from GVA Grimley and had confidence in the material they were producing.

GVA Grimleys had suggested:

1. The need for clear development vision
2. The need for clear through route – "High Street", so long as it did not become a "rat run".
3. The need to create a sustainable development
4. The need to be well balanced for local community
5. Economic, social and environmental attributes needed to have equal weight.
6. The integrated sports development with Church Hill Community Centre was a very good idea. Such schemes work if there were high level of community involvement.
7. The need to change present access routes and encourage access to the centre via a new route, including the need to relocate pedestrian crossings to encourage more sensible pedestrian flow.

8. There needed to be pride in the development and ownership by the local community.
9. It was highly important that there were clear Member champions to promote this with the whole community. The community needed to be 100% behind it and to be heard to say so.

The Best Practice advice for a successful project as advised by the council's consultants, GVA Grimley based on their past experience and research were :-

1. *Clear attention to what is possible within the framework of the local retail market place and available catchment.*
2. *Distinct leadership in the regeneration initiative from the Council.*
3. *Involving local residents and respecting their needs and aspirations.*
4. *Strong, positive vision for local quality of life, with the retail strategy embedded in the local regeneration or neighbourhood strategy*
5. *Organisational innovation, possibly delegated from the local authority to a regeneration company or development consultancy with dedicated Council Officer.*
6. *Use of public money to reinforce the potential achievement in the market place, in this case the RBC land possibly offered at very low value or nil will show the RBC commitment, and will ensure that the extra community facilities can be provided.*
7. *Promotion of the locality as a high quality destination through environmental enhancements.*
8. *It's not just about good housing design but a variety of local recourses which make a vibrant locality.*
9. *A thriving community life needs appropriate recourses, facilities and meeting places.*
10. *Innovative measures to consult with and involve young people in regeneration activities, and a broadening of the social regeneration agenda to reflect the concerns of the young.*
11. *Providing a range of different places for meeting and socialising, opportunities for fostering the "weak links" so essential to local life, e.g. pubs/restaurants, cafes, sitting out areas (incl. seats in public spaces), play areas, meeting places*

for teenagers and sports and social facilities which can both cater for individual groups and mixing between groups.

13. *Improved landscaping throughout the site to rationalise pedestrian and vehicular movement and create a sense of space. The design of the through road with careful surface treatments will contribute to slowing traffic with possibly width restrictions, etc...*
14. *To achieve a high value, quality and sustainable development of new homes for the residents of Church Hill that will provide lifetime use, with some affordable housing (kept to a low number) such as flats (flats to buy or on shared ownership schemes) but these must be mixed in with the remaining private housing. What Church Hill needs in this area is to restore a balance of private/social housing , by providing an influx of new private housing as the area to the west and east is very predominately social housing and short term rental units of accommodation. Private housing is also the key to the viability of the scheme with the other development costs."*

Members had some concerns about how to change the culture and attitudes in the area necessary to make this a success. Issues of social mix were considered and members noted that an increase of home ownership in the area would assist in this. Church Hill Centre is very much focussed on the rented property market, hence the need for greater balance in the market. This could include shared ownership housing, and other forms of property purchase.

There was a need to involve people, especially young people which might require the use innovative consultation methods. The Council needed to establish how it could connect and foster the weak ties with the community which were causing some of the problems. Provision of the necessary facilities would get problem groups away from the shops and into facilities they could identify for themselves. Landscaping amendments would also assist with the improvements to the area.

Members also considered viability issues as a number of new factors had come into the equation including:

- Replacement of YMCA building / Sports Hall (there was considerable interest in this as the Hall was currently not of a regulation size for certain sporting activities). There was land for this purpose adjacent to the Community Centre (illustrated at the meeting).
- New outdoor play and congregating areas could also be located in the vicinity. Detailed sketch plans were considered to indicate the benefits of better designed and controlled areas

around the Community Centre, with fenced areas and new pedestrian access routes.

- Cost of provision of new “High Street” route meant that there was a lot for developers to take on board before they could turn a profit and this has to be considered in relation to any social housing aspirations.

Members supported the proposal , particularly with regard to the “passive surveillance” of young people within appropriately controlled areas.

Members noted the need to “re-assemble” the Council’s land holdings in the area, some of which had been disposed of as part of the Council’s earlier Focus on the Future reviews. Some owners had already declared an interest in joining the Partnership for the redevelopment. A capital bid for £41,000 was to be submitted to the Council at the end of March.

Officers recommended maintaining a long leasehold arrangement for disposal of the site, so that the Council retain a significant interest and degree of control of the land over a long period. In essence, this was about creating a completely new identity for Church Hill.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **all the Council-owned land within the Church Hill Centre, edged by the thick black line shown on the attached plan, be declared surplus to current District Centre uses;**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **Officers be authorised to negotiate and explore the land assembly options for the Church Hill study area to include other owners, to achieve the most viable redevelopment scheme for the Council;**
- 3) **Officers be authorised, subject to the necessary budgetary approval, to appoint consultants to prepare development briefs and legal documentation and, via the consultants, to investigate fully the possibilities for the scheme which may include competition between prospective development partners;**
- 4) **Officers be authorised to gather views from the dentist, doctors, chemist, public house (Brewery), YMCA, Worcestershire NHS Community & Mental Health Trust, Redditch & Bromsgrove Primary Care Trust and Worcestershire County Council and other current occupiers;**

- 5) **Officers be authorised to consider the options for replacing the YMCA sports hall building on land adjacent to the Church Hill Community Centre, including the options of enhancing that site with new outdoor play equipment and possibly youth shelter type of equipment; and**
- 6) **Officers prepare a first draft report on the financial viability, given the aspirations drawn from the consultation envisaged above, to include new housing, replacement retail and community facilities.**

58. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The programme of future work was noted by Members, without amendment.

59. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that, under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Minute 60 – Church Hill Centre - Draft Supplementary Planning Document – Confidential Land Assembly Issues

SUMMARY OF CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

60. CHURCH HILL CENTRE - DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – CONFIDENTIAL LAND ASSEMBLY ISSUES

Members considered a number of detailed land assembly issues related to the Church Hill Centre Draft Supplementary Planning Document.

60. CHURCH HILL CENTRE - DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – CONFIDENTIAL LAND ASSEMBLY ISSUES

Further to the previous item on this matter, Officers advised of landholdings in the ownership of the Worcestershire NHS Trust. The PCT believe that the present surgery needed to expand, or new facilities needed to be identified in the area.

The PCT had approached the NHS Trust and terms for the purchase of the land had been agreed. This has led to liaison with the Lead Doctor, who was very sympathetic to the whole idea of Church Hill Redevelopment. However their timescales were different to the Council's.

Sites A and B on the plan displayed at the meeting were looked at as potential sites for a new surgery. The doctor had also spoken to the dentist on 1st floor at YMCA and apparently they were keen to look at a new combined premises comprising a seven consulting room surgery. Site B was marginally bigger, and more suitable.

There was obviously an issue for the Council should it need to commit to any scheme at such an early stage and the possible implications were detailed. They were seeking the Council's early decision, but were keen not to have public disclosure at this stage.

Members believed the Council should continue with its own plans at this stage but seek to accommodate the doctors and dentist's interests as far as possible.

Officers finally advised of the next stages of the potential redevelopment involving competition and consideration of best designs.

The meeting commenced at 7.25 p.m.
and closed at 10.00 p.m.

.....
CHAIR