

Minutes of the meeting of the **PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP (ST JAMES'S AREA DEVELOPMENT)** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 31 January 2011 at 11.00 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor F J W Scales

Councillors: B W Bano
N J Collor
G Cowan
C J Meredith
S R Nicholas
R S Walkden

Also Present: Mr John Laker (Bond City Limited)
Mr Maximilian Lyons (Lyons Sleeman Hoare Architects)

Officers: Chief Executive
Director of Development and Public Protection
Director of Regeneration
Solicitor
Democratic Support Officer

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors R S Walkden and C J Meredith commented that, as members of both the Project Advisory Group (PAG) and the Planning Committee, they were mindful of the potential conflict that could arise when any planning application for the St James's area development came before the Planning Committee. The Solicitor advised that they were not necessarily precluded from participating in consideration of the planning application, provided they approached it with an open mind and were willing to consider fresh arguments put forward at the Committee meeting.

2 DOVER TOWN CENTRE - REVISED PROPOSALS

The Chairman explained that the PAG's role was to act in the interests of the Council as landowner of the development site.

The Director of Regeneration presented the report and referred Members to plans on display, advising that a good deal of progress had been made since the Council meeting of 3 November 2010 at which the arrangement with Bond City Limited (BCL) had been extended. Working with the architects, BCL had developed proposals for discussion with working groups involving key stakeholders such as English Heritage, Kent County Council and the Council's Planning team, whose input on development management and conservation issues, amongst other things, had been sought. Restaurateurs and retailers had also been consulted in order to ensure that the proposals were commercially viable, functional and marketable. Stakeholders had indicated their strong support for the scheme. Design and transportation were key considerations, as was the ability of the scheme to meet the requirements of the retail market. This process would, therefore, involve a number of iterations as design and commercial requirements evolved. Members were advised that there had been substantial changes in the residential capabilities of the area, with the Local Development Framework Core Strategy designations at the Waterfront and Connaught Barracks.

Mr Lyons from Lyons Sleeman Hoare advised that the previous scheme had received planning consent, but reservations had been expressed about the design. To address these, the architects had drawn upon an historical plan of the area from 1937. Some aspects of the old street pattern, as well as street frontages and names, had been incorporated into the scheme in order to create a more sympathetic environment for the listed buildings.

The new development moved away from one large anchor retail unit to several smaller ones, with around eight shops proposed along the Townwall Street frontage. The amount of residential accommodation had been reduced to enhance the viability of the scheme. [Text Redacted]. There would be a landscaped town square with castle views for restaurant, leisure and family use. In keeping with the road's heritage, a new town wall with planting would be recreated on Townwall Street. The aim was to have focal buildings with character that would entice passing traffic to stop.

[Text Redacted] It was anticipated that a planning application would be submitted in June 2011, with the aim of a resolution to grant planning permission in September 2011. Work was expected to begin in mid-2012 and be completed by the end of 2013, if an uncontested Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process was followed (albeit that there would still be a road stopping-up process to follow).

The Director for Development and Public Protection advised that reactions from two key agencies – English Heritage and Kent County Council - in relation to the emerging revised approach were encouraging, but progression of the timetable would be subject to external factors, such as the CPO relating to Burlington House and legal agreements. The CPO could take up to 12 months to complete if objections were received. With extant planning permission for 590 car parking spaces, but only 450 proposed, it was hopeful that the Highways Agency would not oppose the granting of planning permission.

In terms of archaeology, the Director of Regeneration advised that the County Archaeologist was aware of the work that had been carried out with trials and mapping on site. Discussions had taken place, and it was hoped that mitigation measures, involving the foundation designs, would be utilised to preserve the archaeology.

PAG Members welcomed the new scheme which they regarded as a significant improvement on the previous one. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that any development at Dolphin House addressed concerns surrounding the connectivity of the scheme with the existing town centre. It was agreed that the PAG should meet again before submission of the planning application, at which time the financial appraisals for the scheme would also be discussed.

It was agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

That, on the basis of the current evolving multi-user retailer approach, the emerging concept plans be used to inform the next stage of the design process.

The meeting ended at 12.17 pm.