

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 APRIL 2012 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE

Present: Cllr Mrs W Smith (Chair), Cllr Mrs J Lawrence, Cllr D Lawrence, Cllr G Wilson, Cllr P Vickers, Cllr S Watkins, Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr Mrs M Russell, Cllr D Albone, Cllr B Briars, Cllr R Skinner, Cllr I Bond
Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Sue Crowther – Administrative Assistant
Martin Thomas – Chamber of Trade
Jonathan Spaven – Director of Properties – Matalan - plus one other representative
Tim Walton – Chief Executive of LXB Properties – plus 3 other representatives
Members of the public - 4

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr T Woodward and Cllr P Woodward

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(a) Prejudicial interests in any agenda item – there were no prejudicial interests declared

(b) Personal interests in any agenda item - Cllr PF Vickers registered an interest as a member of the Central Bedfordshire Management Development Committee in respect of planning applications listed on the agenda.

Cllr G Wilson registered an interest in item 4a – Planning application.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Jonathan Spaven – Director of Property at Matalan addressed the meeting regarding the proposed redevelopment of London Road Retail Park, Biggleswade. He said that Matalan employ 67 local staff, and 21,851 from Biggleswade and the local area hold Matalan loyalty cards. They are happy with what they have in Biggleswade, their lease expires in 2025.

Matalan will not go onto the new retail park.

Homebase, Argos and Halfords all object to the redevelopment, they are happy where they are.

The statement ‘the majority are in favour’, is not true.

Matalan has been threatened with ‘Compulsory Purchase Order’ if they don’t agree to the new space. They are happy for the Planning to be done properly.

Tim Walton – Chief Executive of LXB thanked Town Council for their support. He said that the final plans will go to Planning Committee meeting at CBC in April or May. Marks and Spencer have signed up for a 65,000 sq ft store. The whole site will be retail. The new application has asked for 10% increase in floor space.

They are involved in detailed discussions with CBC regarding the road network. An agreement has been reached with CBC and Land East of Biggleswade Consortium to sort out roads. Talks about the dulling of London Road and improvements to the A1 are still ongoing but should start in 2013.

Next year an extension of the retail park is planned, which will mean more jobs, we are working hard behind the scenes to help resolve issues with existing retailers.

Martin Thomas – Chamber of Trade said that with regards to the first application it now appears that the existing tenants are not as happy as we were first told.

The Masterplan highlighted the towns shortcomings, including parking which we are very concerned about in the Town Centre. LXB have not talked to the Chamber of Trade.

We now have this letter from Homebase and Argos who may possibly leave the town, along with Matalan. If they do leave, we would lose their trade altogether.

The money for dulling of London Road will come from the developers.

The new development will impact on the Town Centre; more parking is needed to enjoy all that LXB and M & S will bring to the town.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

a. CB/12/01150/FULL – 4 Jasmine Close, Biggleswade

Loft conversion with raised roof and installation of velux windows to front and rear elevations.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise no objection to this application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations. In addition, the Council is to ensure that their guidelines on the size of the proposed extension to the principle dwelling are complied with in order to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents. Town Council ask that CBC monitor carefully the impact on the adjoining property.

b. CB/12/01216/FULL – New Spring Pumping Station, London Road, Biggleswade

Erection of three new water treatment kiosks and one shower unit.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise no objection to this application

5. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Request from East Beds Macmillan Cancer Support Fund Raising Group

Town Council had received a request from the above fund raising group to hold a bucket collection in Biggleswade some time this year and set in a list of possible dates. They would like Council to choose a date.

The list of dates was attached, along with the Charity Stall bookings for those dates, for Members to consider which date would be the most appropriate.

It was **RESOLVED** to grant permission and that they be supplied with the list of Charity Stall holder bookings to enable them to choose a suitable date.

b. Installation of Parkour

At a meeting of the Public Land and Open Spaces Committee of the 10th January 2012 It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council find out what equipment is available and the costs involved of installation and maintenance and that outstanding 106 monies are utilised for this project.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer any decision until more information is available and possibly a visit to view some of the equipment.

c. Proposed redevelopment of London Road, Biggleswade

Members were asked to consider correspondence received raising concerns regarding the proposed redevelopment of London Road Retail Park.

Cllr Mrs W Smith that the original plan has already gone through Town Council and will go to CBC end of April.

Cllr D Lawrence said that we need a successful Town Centre and Retail Park and made the following proposals:

1. No general food outlets should be permitted with exceptions only for snacks and special premium foods.

2. Only large retail outlets greater than 500 sq metres shall be allowed and there will be no permission to subdivide
3. Only retail will be allowable and all service facilities should remain in the Town Centre e.g. banks, pharmacies, post offices etc.
4. That parking and bussing arrangements should be established together with the Town Centre for mutual benefit.

Note:

1. A very limited condition
2. Guarantees continuity in Town Centre of small retail stores
3. Town Centre remains the service centre
4. Common agreements limited to the two Biggleswade retail centres could benefit both

Cllr Mrs M Russell seconded these proposals.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that the copy of the letter that was attached to the agenda says that the LXB proposals are flawed. Stevenage Borough Council have already put in an objection to CBC. Boots and New Look may be relocated to the new development.

We already have parking problems in the Town Centre. We are hearing about section106 agreement which gives us £100k for improvements, which is peanuts, we need more money for the Town Centre.

The A1 south is not as we had hoped and we should argue against traffic lights on the A1.

The plans on CBC website shows 2 accesses and egresses with roundabouts, the original plans only had one entrance. There is no point in dualling London Road as the traffic would be stop, start, stop, start.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that she had read an article about Mr Wrigley, Non-Executive and Chairman of LXB, and his vision for the future. He said that shops on the high street are irrelevant to what people want and should be turned into housing. This is the LXB vision. If we agree to their plans the Town Centre will be turned into housing and the Centre of Town will be out of Town.

Cllr Mrs Wendy Smith said that Cllr D Lawrence would be able to speak at the CBC meeting due to be held on 25 April. The initial plan was passed by this Council with no objections.

Cllr D Albone said he agreed that Town Council should write to CBC or send a representative to speak on Town Council's behalf. At the LXB presentation we were led to believe that current retailers were in support, this turns out to not be the case.

There is no point in dualling of London Road; pedestrian access would be more difficult. The letter refers to an audit carried out that doesn't agree with the LXB audit, this should be made public as soon as possible as we were told this development would not be to the detriment of the Town Centre, this is not the case. The Section 106 money of £100k gets virtually nothing for the Town Centre.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence said that dualling of the road is part of the Land East of Biggleswade. LXB refers to the 'A1 M, the A1 is not a motorway.

The letter says 'shopping centre' Biggleswade already has a shopping centre on the Market Square.

Homebase and Argos need large warehousing as well as M & S. We don't want restaurants on the new development, only snacks or food at M & S. We already have 3 supermarkets and don't need another one outside the town. Up at land east there will only be a small number of shops, such as a newsagent, such as up on Saxon Gate estate.

We don't want the development to be different to the original plans submitted and suggested that Town Council supports the proposals put forward by Cllr D Lawrence with a letter to CBC and any radical changes to the plans should come back to Town Council. The additional 250 jobs would be good for the Town.

Cllr B Briars asked if the majority of the 250 jobs be part-time. The revised plan is not what was passed by Town Council with 2 additional roundabouts, altered pedestrian access, we may have been misled.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said if we are not careful this will undermine work on Master Plan. Take Bonds Lane, we were on the verge on development at one time, but this will not happen if we get an out of Town development.

Cllr Mr H Ramsay said that that Town Council should look at the plans again.

Cllr B Briars replied that Town Council cannot do that, we can just make points, C.B.C need to be told what we know now, and that existing retailers are unhappy with the new development.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence said that Land of East of Biggleswade consortium was to carry out dualling of London Road and a feeder road, but this has never happened.

Cllr P Vickers said that the application is due to be considered by CBC Development Control Committee on 25 April, and unless things change it will be recommended for approval, but with conditions.

It was **RESOLVED** that Town Council write to CBC endorsing the proposals by Cllr D Lawrence as well as expressing their concerns with the plans that may have been amended, and for a representative of Town Council to attend the meeting on 25 April.

6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Biggleswade History Society newsletter

Town Council received a copy of Biggleswade History Society Newsletter and a copy was attached to this agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** that this be noted.

7. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Tim Walton – LXB – said that they want to work with Town Centre retailers. Boots are to stay in the Town as well as the new retail park.

No services are planned for the new area, no retailer smaller than 5,000 sq feet and only food at M & S such as snacks, party food etc.

They will work with other parties with regards to the roads, all trying to find a solution towards no traffic lights on the A1. There is no proposal for a Food Store. In answer to the question of the 250 jobs, they will be full time.

A member of the public said that he is worried about the Town Centre if Boots, etc move out of the town.

Cllr Mrs W Smith said that Town Council also has the same worries. A consultation is expected, a full report should say where they get the information from.

Martin Thomas – Chamber of Trade said that consultants Jones, Lane and Lesale were appointed by CBC regarding development of the Town Centre and Bonds Lane and highlighted shortfalls. Could Town Council get a copy of the report.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked if Town Council should issue a press release highlighting some of the discussions here tonight.

Cllr Mrs W Smith said that she would be reluctant until the full report has been seen.

Cllr P Vickers said that this Council has already passed a resolution, the rest is discussion only. It is highly dangerous to attach conditions until the report is seen.

Cllr D Lawrence agreed that we need an Independent Statement.

Martin Thomas said that we don't want unspecified comments in a press release.

8. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be moved that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council resolve to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.