

**Minutes of the Environment & Planning Committee  
held remotely on 29 October 2020 at 6.30pm**

**Present:** Cllr Irven, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Johnson, and Cllr Westcott (Chair)

**In attendance:** Sarah Reed, Town Clerk

**20/92B To receive apologies for absence:** Cllr Murphy proposed that *'the apologies from Cllrs Bowden, Campbell, and Ellwood are accepted'*. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.

**20/93B To receive Declarations of Interest:**

| Name         | Minute No: | Description of Interest             | Personal / Prejudicial | Action Taken  |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Cllr Johnson | 20/95B     | Rental user of West Street Car Park | Personal               | Councillor remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting |

**20/94B Exclusion of Press and Public**  
*"That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw"* (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

Cllr Westcott proposed that *'in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted that Standing Order 1c is invoked and the public are instructed to withdraw from the meeting'*.  
 Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried

See Excluded Notes **20/36EX**

**20/95B West Street Car Park:**  
 (i) Unauthorised vehicles – Update report from the Clerk with recommendations- the Clerk presented a report detailing the situation regarding unauthorised vehicles who continue to park illegally in the car park and informed members of the advice received from both the Councils Solicitor and the Police. Members noted the contents of the report.

**20/96B Matters for the next meeting** - liaise with the Clerk

**Plans to be discussed:**

**20/97B To address items received from the Planning Authority requiring attention prior to the next Somerset West & Taunton Council/Somerset County Council/ Planning Meetings:** Nothing to report.

**3/37/19/02 Former Wansborough Paper Mill, Brendon Road, Watchet, TA23 0AY**  
 Outline Planning Application with all matters reserved for the erection of up to 350 no. dwellings (C3 use), up to 80 sheltered and assisted living apartments (C2 use); local centre including Aparthotel with associated leisure facilities (up to 2650 square metres), business units within use classes B1 and B2 (up to 5000 square metres), visitor interpretation centre/community building, public car park and all associated road, foot path, drainage and engineering works (including an accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment)

1. Referring back to the comments made previously in August 2019 and the responses received from Tameer Homes at that time, it would seem that a Viability Study had been

commissioned by Tameer Homes from Three Dragons and this has presumably informed the amended proposals before us.

1.1 We specifically asked for the area for B1 / B2 employment land be increased since the area previously supported 176 job when the Paper Mill closed. The amount of such land has actually been reduced which is most worrying.

1.2 The Job Provision shown in the table on page 12 of the Supporting Planning Statement Addendum document relies on jobs from B1, B2, A1, A3, C1 and C2 classes which is a good diversification of employment types which is welcomed but we would wish to see the proportion of jobs from B1 / B2 being higher as these are employment categories not well represented in Watchet or the West Somerset area.

1.3 We were concerned that the junction improvements at the co-op junction in Williton could be funded by contributions pooled from different developments in the Watchet / Williton area. We were assured this was possible but share the concerns expressed by Williton Parish Council in their comments dated 5 October 2020 that such pooled contributions could be repaid if the new junction was not built within five years. We would ask that it be conditioned that this junction must be complex within three years if the application is approved.

1.4 Concerns were expressed about the management of drainage on the site with culverted streams and the nearby water course of the Washford River. This together with the management of sewage treatment from so many homes was a cause of concern. Wessex Water have referred to odour issues due to the nearness of the sewage treatment works but provide little detail on the connection to the site for water or the routes of sewage and drainage from the site at this outline stage. This means our concerns remain unaddressed.

1.5 Concern was expressed about the number and quality of the homes in the plans. We welcome the reduction in number and the variation in the mix of homes in the new plans. We regard this site as crucial for delivering the largest possible number of affordable and social housing units amounts the many sites around Watchet in the planning system.

## **2. The new plans make changes to what was proposed previously:**

2.1 The Council is very disappointed that the proposals for a care home have been removed. The Stoates Mill site was originally proposed for a care home and this was dropped in favour of residential development. The demand for such provision in the Watchet / Williton area is a growing market in the foreseeable future and there is inadequate provision in the area at present.

2.2 There is a new civic building proposed in the place of the care home. Whilst this is welcomed, there are already approved plans for a civic building associated with the Watchet Bowling Club and we wonder if Watchet needs two such buildings given the number of smaller scale building which can be hired for meetings and functions (Covid permitted).

2.3 The proposed hotel and associated leisure facilities are welcomed.

2.4 Proposals which aim to make this development sustainable are welcomed. To that end, the limited local retail provision is sensible. This development is like a new village grafted onto the western side of Watchet and it is important that residents do not have to leave the site for day to day needs whilst not putting in amenities which threaten the viability of the town centre of the town.

## **3. Transport and access**

3.1 The main access is by proposed mini roundabout on Brendon Road. There are also traffic calming measures proposed for pedestrian exiting from the site to facilitate walking to Knights Templar School. The combination of these measures introduce doubt as to whether they can be successful in their aim given the proximity of the junction giving access into town which is busy and without pedestrian access. The proposals do not address this concern.

3.2 The combination of these measures and geography of town access leave us wondering if traffic light control may be needed in this area to better protect traffic flows and give priority to pedestrians and cyclists.

3.3 The provision of a car park on the site in addition to parking provided related to function is welcomed. The intent behind such provision is not made clear. The car parks in Watchet this summer were operating beyond capacity and this car park would add new capacity and is to be welcomed. This will be a good addition if walking and cycling routes to the town centre are prioritised

and well signed. Consideration could be given to the provision of a targeted park and ride scheme utilising electric vehicles to deliver people from the site to the town and return.

#### 4. Conclusions

4.1 Concerns remain as to ability of Watchet to absorb such a number of new homes on this site together with the numbers proposed in other developments without substantial infrastructure change some of which are addressed in these proposals.

4.2 The Council would agree with the conclusions of the SWT's Economic Development Specialist as follows: "Whilst investment in the site is welcomed, safeguarding a larger proportion of the site for employment need would seem advisable as an opportunity for the development to create employment for the town of Watchet and wider economic area."

4.3 The Council would support the remarks of the Place Making Specialist when she urges the layout and treatments at the Reserved Matters stage to be "townscape led not highways led."

4.4 The Council welcome a mixed-use development on this site which recognises the value of the site historically as an employment site whilst providing new forms of employment and living.

- 3/37/20/014 Land adjacent to 1A St Decumans Road, Watchet, TA23 0AT**  
Variation of condition no's 02 (approved plans) and 03 (disposal of surface water drainage) of application 3/37/19/014  
**Committee recommends approval**
- 3/37/20/016 West Somerset Hotel, 17 Swain Street, Watchet, TA23 0AB**  
Replacement and repair of a fire damaged roof of outbuildings  
**Committee recommends approval**
- 3/37/20/016 West Somerset Hotel, 17 Swain Street, Watchet, TA23 0AB**  
Listed Building Consent - Replacement and repair of a fire damaged roof of outbuildings  
**Committee recommends approval but would like it noted that they support the Consultee comments made by the Conservation Officer in the report dated 22 October 2020.**

Meeting closed at 6.52pm

Signed:.....

Date:.....