
WEBSTERS WAY CAR PARK PROPOSALS – ADDITIONAL CONSULTATIONS (Min 149/00)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report outlines the details of additional consultations carried out to ascertain the interest in a redevelopment scheme for Websters Way Car Park and summarises the deliberations of the Town Centre Working Group.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** The issue of a redevelopment scheme for the Websters Way Car Park was discussed at Extraordinary Council on 26 April 2000, when it was concluded that further consultations be undertaken before a final decision was made on the appointment of consultants.
- 2.2** The additional consultations were completed and the outcome reported to the Town Centre Working Group on 8th November 2000.
- 2.3** In addition to the list requested by Members, consultation letters were also sent to: Tesco, Somerfield, Iceland, Halifax, Woolwich, Nat West, HSBC, Lloyds TSB, Abbey National, Nationwide, Vernon Collard, McKays, Peacocks, Boots, BAC and Blockbusters. The Rayleigh Chamber undertook some additional consultations with their Members.³

3. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

- 3.1** The returns received to the consultation exercise were disappointing. Aside from the Police, who commented on the impact of any redevelopment scheme, comments were received from Rayleigh Town Council and the Chamber of Trade, plus two additional responses from companies contacted by the Chamber.
- 3.2** The Town Council indicated support in general for a redevelopment scheme, although had some concerns about the scale and impact of the buildings and that car-parking levels would need to be maintained during redevelopment.
- 3.3** The Chamber was not particularly supportive of new retail foodstore provision within the town, given the impact this would have on current levels of congestion. However, the Chamber did see some merit in the provision of new leisure facilities.
- 3.4** Of the two additional responses forwarded by the Chamber, one indicated support for a redevelopment scheme, although suggested

that a multi-storey car park should take precedence, and the other was opposed.

- 3.5 No written response was received from the County Highways Department. However, an Officer from Highways attended the meeting of the Working Group on 8th November 2000 to explain the County's position on any redevelopment scheme. In reality, County Highways indicated that it would be difficult for them to comment without a specific scheme being available for consideration. In any event, a prospective developer would be expected to fund a traffic impact assessment.
- 3.6 For Members' information, a copy of the notes from the Working Group on 8th November is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.7 There is no doubt that a scheme for redevelopment of the Websters Way Car Park is a possibility. However, the exact nature of such a scheme would need to be carefully considered and the appointment of an external consultant would enable the Council to obtain advice on options.
- 3.8 Since the deliberations of the Working Group in November, the Council has been informed in writing that Tesco is pulling out of Rayleigh High Street on 5th May 2001. Their unit in the High Street is to be occupied by a clothes store.
- 3.9 Tesco have discussed the possibility of a development scheme on the Websters Way Car Park with Officers of the Council, and it has been confirmed that the site is of insufficient area to accommodate a store of the size they would require to remain in the Town Centre.
- 3.10 The fact that the Car Park is not large enough for Tesco's requirements does not rule out other foodstore operators being interested in the site.
- 3.11 Following a detailed discussion of the consultation responses, the Working Group concluded that, subject to the necessary finance being available, an external consultant be appointed to undertake a feasibility study in respect of development of the Websters Way Car Park and that the Recommendation be reported back to full Council.
- 3.12 It is considered that there remains sufficient justification for Members to consider appointing an external consultant to examine and report on options for the site.

4. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some concern has been expressed about the impact a major scheme might have on crime in the town centre.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any redevelopment scheme would need to be sensitively designed to reflect the historic nature of the town. There is concern about the impact a scheme would have on traffic congestion.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 If Members are minded to consider examining the potential of a scheme in more detail, there would be a need to appoint a consultant. It is suggested that a sum of £10,000 be identified for this purpose.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that an external consultant be appointed to advise the Council on the development options for the Websters Way Car Park.

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