

Minutes of a meeting of Better Mid Sussex Advisory Group held on 17th November 2011 from 10.00 a.m. to 12:28 p.m.

Present: Jack Callaghan (Chairman)
Tim Farmer (Vice-Chairman)

Andrew Barrett-Miles
Katy Bourne
David Dorking*
Margaret Hersey

Catrin Ingham
Anne Jones
Denis Jones

Natalie March
Edward Matthews
Mandy Thomas-Atkin

* Absent

Also Present: Councillor C. Hersey, De Mierre, Marsh, Salisbury

Also in Attendance: Steve Trice, Clerk to Haywards Heath Town Council
Joanne Wilkes, F&C REIT Asset Management
Daniel Lampard, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
Ian Boyd, B3 Architects
Ian Goodridge, F&C REIT Asset Management
Steven Doogan, F&C REIT Asset Management

44. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4

None.

45. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Dorking.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

47. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2011 were agreed as a true record.

48. ORCHARDS SHOPPING CENTRE, HAYWARDS HEATH

Members received a presentation from representatives from F&C REIT Asset Management, the ground leaseholder of the Orchards Shopping Centre about development proposals for the Orchards Shopping Centre. They outlined opportunities and constraints for development including the introduction of an anchor food store, leisure uses for the Shopping Centre and better customer facilities.

In response to a query from a Member concerning the type of anchor food store being considered for the Shopping Centre, Joanne Wilkes from F&C REIT Asset Management explained that they were in conversation with a number of operators however it was too early at this stage to mention specific names.

In response to a query from a Member concerning the impact the introduction larger retailers would have on the existing smaller retailers, Joanne Wilkes explained that

F&C REIT Asset Management were not proposing to remove smaller retail units. She stated that a number of existing national retailers would prefer to move into larger units. She noted that F&C REIT Asset Management would respect the character of the town.

In response to a query from a Member concerning the envisaged size of the anchor food store, Joanne Wilkes explained that it would need to compete with Haywards Heath Sainsburys and would ideally be as large as possible within the constraints of the site. She added in response to a further query regarding promoting linkages to the site that F&C REIT Asset Management felt that it was important to further integrate the Shopping Centre into the Town Centre through better signage.

A Member spoke in support of the consolidation of car parking.

In response to a query from a Member concerning car parking charges, Joanne Wilkes explained that F&C REIT Asset Management would prefer to have control of the Shopping Centre car parks however they did not own these car parks. She noted that the proposed anchor food store would probably have to offer 1 or 2 hour free car parking to compete with Haywards Heath Sainsburys which could impact on the revenue from the car parks. She stated that this would be looked at further as the development progressed.

A Member expressed concern about the indicative design. It was felt that it might not be suitable for poor weather.

In response to a query from a Member concerning how the design would encourage the retention of customers, Ian Boyd from B3 Architects explained that areas of the Shopping Centre would remain partially covered to protect shoppers from poor weather. He added that F&C REIT Asset Management planned to create a more open shopping space. He noted that the terrace depicted in the indicative design would also probably be partially protected against the weather. He added that the proposed design would continue to be considered in the forthcoming months.

It was felt by a Member that Haywards Heath's market town history should be considered as part of the design.

A Member queried whether the proposed anchor food store would be viable given that a large food store was also being proposed as part of the Haywards Heath Station redevelopment. Joanne Wilkes stated that viability assessments had not taken place at this stage. She noted that given the monopoly Haywards Heath Sainsburys currently had, it was likely the town had the capacity for three large food stores.

In response to a query from a Member concerning whether the number of units and car spaces were being increased, Joanne Wilkes explained that there would probably be an overall decrease in the total number of units given the extension of existing units. Ian Boyd added that there would be a total increase in floorspace of in the region of 50,000ft – 70,000ft, including upper levels. He added that F&C REIT Asset Management were also looking to increase car parking.

Joanne Wilkes confirmed, in response to a query from a Member that the development would be phased to reduce the impact on retailers and shoppers.

It was felt by a number of Members that the pedestrianisation of South Road would improve the shopping area. It was noted by a Member that the Haywards Heath relief road was likely to have a positive impact on traffic levels in South Road.

Joanne Wilkes noted that whilst F&C REIT Asset Management were not proposing to pedestrianise South Road, they did support traffic calming and landscaping to improve the road visually and reduce speed.

A Member spoke in support of a shared space between pedestrians and traffic on South Road.

In response to a query from a Member concerning where the anchor food store parking would be located, Joanne Wilkes explained that it was planned to make use of the slope of the site and locate the car parking below the food store.

In response to a query from a Member concerning whether other forms of public transport, such as mini-buses accessing the Shopping Centre had been considered, Ian Boyd explained that various modes had been anticipated and would be considered further as part of the transport study. He noted that electric car parking points and secure bike storage would also be considered.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the proposed timescales, Daniel Lampard from Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners explained that following the consultation period, it was hoped that the planning process would be a straightforward 12 month process. Joanne Wilkes added that this was likely to be a medium phased development.

Steve Trice, Clerk to Haywards Heath Town Council welcomed the coming proposals and the opportunity to be involved in discussions with F&C REIT Asset Management.

The Chairman moved as per the recommendations in the report.

These were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That:-

- (1) F&C REIT Asset Management be requested to develop their thinking for improvements at the Orchards Shopping Centre by working with the Haywards Heath Town Council and Mid Sussex District Council; and
- (2) the Cabinet Portfolio Holder be advised that the Haywards Heath Town Centre Landowner Brief approved in 2008 should now be withdrawn.

49. PROMOTING HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN CENTRE

Joanna Steadman, the Senior Property Officer introduced the report and updated Members on the amended promotional pack to be used to encourage new retailers into the Town Centre.

Members suggested a number of amendments including; clarification of the rankings in the text, adjustment of the some of the formatting, clarification of who the document was being aimed at, clarification of car owner and visitor figures and less emphasis on the tourism information.

It was felt by a number of Members that the document needed to be more focussed toward retailers and there needed to be clarification of its purpose. It was felt by a Member that the promotional pack should also be provided in a hardcopy to retailers.

It was also felt by a number of Members that a budget needed to be allocated for the production of the promotional pack to ensure it had a high impact on retailers.

It was felt by a Member that Haywards Heath Town Council should take on the responsibility and cost for promotional materials for the town, as happened in other towns in the District.

The Senior Property Officer noted that the promotional pack was part of a larger piece of work being done with Haywards Heath Town Council to promote the town centre to retailers. She explained that the Town Council would be consulted with to determine which retailers residents wanted and those retailers would be directly targeted.

It was felt by a number of Members that the promotional pack was not yet ready to be sent to retailers.

The Chairman moved that the promotional pack be referred to Haywards Heath Town Council for comment then referred back to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for final sign off.

This was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the promotional pack be referred to Haywards Heath Town Council for comment then referred back to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for final sign off.

50. SADLERS YARD, WEST STREET, EAST GRINSTEAD

David Waite, the Property Manager introduced the report and updated Members on progress at the site, since they had considered it at the 3rd March 2011 Better Mid Sussex Advisory Group meeting. He noted that a new lease until 2012 had been entered into and agreed. He stated that the East Grinstead & District Access Group was likely to be relocated to East Grinstead Town Council at East Court. He explained that the small property company also subletting the property had expressed interest in purchasing the site.

Tom Clark, the Solicitor to the Council asked Members to consider the 8th March 2012 for the update report due to the non-availability of the Council Chamber on the proposed date.

It was felt by a number of Members that the site was in a good location, particularly for a residential development and shouldn't be sold until the property market improved.

The Chairman moved as per the recommendations in the report subject to the amendment of the update report being presented to the Advisory Group on 8th March 2012.

RESOLVED

That:-

- (1) the current position regarding the potential relocation of the East Grinstead & District Access Group be noted;
- (2) the interest and subsequent offer from the sub tenant to acquire the site be noted;
- (3) notwithstanding the offer made above, support be given to the preparation of a planning application for residential development of the site to enable the offer in question to be 'tested' in the open market; and
- (4) an update report concerning the site be presented to the meeting of this Group on 8th March 2012.

51. WORK PROGRAMME

Tim Barkley, the Better Mid Sussex Planning Leader noted that the Work Programme would be amended to take into account the revised date for Sadlers Yard, West Street, East Grinstead update report.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

Chairman.