

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (SOUTH SUNDERLAND) SUB-COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY 4th OCTOBER, 2016 at 3.45 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Porthouse in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bell, M. Dixon, English, I. Galbraith, Hunt, Hodson, Jackson, Kay, Mordey, Scaplehorn and S. Watson

Declarations of Interest

16/00892/FU4 – Site of former Crowtree Leisure Centre, Crowtree Road, Sunderland, SR1 3EL

Councillor M. Dixon declared that he had previously met with the Civic Society but he had not expressed any opinion on the merits of the application and would be considering the matter today with an open mind based on the information to be presented to the committee meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D. Dixon, Smith and P. Watson

Applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder

The Executive Director of Commercial Development submitted a report (copy circulated) relating to the South Sunderland area, copies of which had been forwarded to each Member of the Council, upon applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations made thereunder.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

**16/00892/FU4 – Erection of a retail unit and associated car parking, access, public open space, service yard and stopping up of a public highway.
Site of former Crowtree Leisure Centre, Crowtree Road, Sunderland, SR1 3EL**

The representative of the Executive Director of Commercial Development outlined the development proposal to Members of the Committee and the relevant material planning considerations against which the application had been assessed.

Councillor M. Dixon queried the statement in the report made by an objector that the scheme in its present form would make it difficult to develop the remainder of the site. He was advised that there had been extensive discussions between the applicant and the LPA during the process and the servicing requirements had been an important factor; the proposed service yard would be accessed via the Bridges' existing service yard rather than introducing HGVs to High Street West. The proposed access for servicing would be via the same route as for the Debenhams store which was considered to be the most appropriate option and it had been demonstrated that this access was suitable for articulated trucks.

Councillor Hodson queried why, when it was normally considered to be inappropriate for city centre stores to have their own car parking, was an exception being made for this store. He also questioned the statement that the site was close to public transport links when he was of the view that previous reports had described public transport in this area as being inadequate. He also expressed concern felt that the inclusion of car parking as part of the scheme would undermine one of the objectives of the draft area Masterplan to improve pedestrian flows in this area. He also commented that smaller retail units would help to encourage pedestrians into the area where this single large store would not.

In response, officers advised that the applicant had proposed the parking provision as they felt that it was necessary to support the needs of the store given the types of goods that would be sold. Officers advised that it was not possible to refuse the planning application on the basis of its parking provision. It was proposed that the new car park would be operated as part of the Bridges car parking. There had been discussions with bus operators to get buses routed along St Mary's Boulevard although this was beyond the scope of this planning application.

Councillor Jackson commented that customers may prefer to be able to park on site due to the fact that the intention was to sell homewares and garden items which could be bulky or heavy.

Dan Hattle, Planning Implementation Manager, advised that the Masterplan was in draft only and had not yet been out for public consultation and as such limited weight could be placed onto the Masterplan when determining this planning application. There had been discussions with the Highways department and it was not felt that the parking would cause any issues for pedestrian safety.

Councillor Hodson commented that he did not see why the applicant could not make use of the existing city centre car parking and that this was potentially a missed opportunity to improve pedestrian access in the area.

Officers advised that the application needed to be considered on its own merits and as submitted by the applicant. The parking was considered to be acceptable and there were no grounds to justify asking the applicant to remove the parking element from the proposal.

Councillor S. Watson commented that there was a need to redevelop this important town centre retail site and that people would go to those shops with parking nearby if they were buying large and bulky items.

The Chairman then introduced Mr Will Charlton, the agent for the applicant who was in attendance to speak in support of the application. Mr Charlton advised that there had been extensive discussions with the planning and highways departments to ensure that the proposal was suitable in terms of its design and highways arrangements. He also confirmed that the parking would be operated as part of the Bridges car parking.

The Chairman then moved the officer's recommendation as set out in the report.

1. RESOLVED that the application be approved for the reasons set out in the report, subject to the 27 conditions set out therein.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) S. PORTHOUSE,
Chairman.