

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HAVERHILL AREA WORKING PARTY

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 15 November 2012 at 4.15 pm
in the Conference Room, Samuel Ward Academy, Haverhill**

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Gower, Marks, McManus, Redhead,
Mrs Richardson, Mrs Rushbrook and A Whittaker

BY INVITATION: Will Austin, Clerk to Haverhill Town Council
Luke Barber, Highways Section, Suffolk County
Council
Chris Blake, Financial Surveyor for Bidwells Property
Consultants
Mike Carpenter, Bidwells Property Consultants
Emma Haley, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds
Victoria Jenkins, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds

11. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

12. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ager and Ms Byrne.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Declaration of Interests

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

15. TheatreBus Services in Haverhill

The Working Party received and noted a presentation from Victoria Jenkins and Emma Haley of the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds, regarding TheatreBus services in Haverhill.

Ms Haley advised Members that the Theatre Royal was the last working reGENCY playhouse in the country, producing both its own shows and those from outside the Theatre. The Theatre also had an active creative learning department which carried out outreach work through projects with local businesses, young offenders, outlying villages and housing providers amongst others.

The TheatreBus was an initiative whereby, when the Theatre put on its own shows, it provided a bus to outlying areas to bring people into the town to see a show. For an additional cost of £5 patrons received transportation to and from the Theatre, a programme and a drink. There was also a host on board the bus. The initiative covered all of Suffolk, and parts of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

The service was popular, however the Theatre was always keen to find new ways to publicise it, and was seeking further funding to subsidise it.

In response to questions, Ms Haley advised that the bus company used was flexible and would provide the appropriate size of bus depending on numbers using the service on any one date, and these might be anything from a 33 seater to an individual taxi. The service was usually run during the middle week of a 3-week run of a Theatre production, and the routes were varied each time depending on who had booked the service.

The service was currently run twice per year, but the Theatre would like to provide it more often, if funding could be secured. Members of the Working Party suggested placing leaflets in the Haverhill Arts Centre and Haverhill House. They also suggested using websites such as Facebook to advertise the service to younger people.

In response to further questions Ms Haley advised that the Theatre had 365 seats, and the Theatre knew in advance how many of these were required as part of the TheatreBus service. Disabled access transport could be provided where requested.

Finally, Ms Haley advised that she was trying to set up a meeting with a Haverhill housing provider, to look at a programme specifically for their clients. The Working Party thanked Ms Haley and Ms Jenkins for their attendance.

(Emma Haley and Victoria Jenkins left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

16. Chantry Mill Development Site: Update

The Working Party received and noted an oral update from Mike Carpenter of Bidwells Property Consultants on proposals for the Chantry Mill site.

Ian Poole, St Edmundsbury's Planning Policy and Specialist Services Manager, introduced this item by reminding Members that Chantry Mill had been identified previously as a site with opportunities for future use as its existing owners rationalised their business practices on the site. A site visit had been made by Members a few years ago, and since then a development brief had been prepared and adopted as non-statutory planning guidance, recognising the challenges of the site which included Grade 2 listed buildings, and buildings of significant historic and architectural significance. The development brief had been prepared in consultation with English Heritage, which had the power to call in any applications for determination by the Secretary of State. Bidwells Property Consultants had carried out some preliminary work for potential subsequent submission of formal planning applications, and representatives were here today to talk Members through these preliminary plans in order to give the opportunity to have questions answered at an early stage.

Mike Carpenter advised that Gurteen and Sons had operated the site for some 200 years, and in that time the nature of the accommodation had continually evolved to meet the changing needs of the business. In that period it had become apparent that the existing buildings were not suitable to accommodate modern manufacturing processes, however they had continued to be used for storage and administrative purposes. Much of the

site had, however, been vacant for a number of years, and site access was also a limiting factor on current usage.

Since 2008 Gurteen and Sons had been in discussion with the Council and other statutory consultees and members of the public to identify and implement a strategy for the future use of the site, and this had resulted in the development brief which set out the principles which would apply to the redevelopment of the site. The brief was adopted as non-statutory planning guidance in 2010, and would therefore carry significant weight in the determination of any future proposals. It was acknowledged that the site had an important part to play in the regeneration of Haverhill, and the Town Centre in particular.

Members were reminded of the main existing historically important buildings on the site, and their location, with the use of diagrams and aerial photographs. The strategic objectives of the brief were to:

- (a) secure viable and sustainable future uses for the site;
- (b) introduce uses which would contribute to the regeneration of Haverhill Town Centre;
- (c) protect and enhance the most valuable buildings; and
- (d) retain the character and provenance of the site.

Constraints for re-use included the structural characteristics of the buildings, arrangement of internal spaces and vehicular accesses, the cost of refurbishment of the existing factory buildings to bring them in line with modern standards, and the potential erosion of any heritage value through refurbishment.

There were also opportunities for re-use, in particular the fact that some of the older buildings did lend themselves to conversion for office uses. Much of the entrance complex had already been converted and let, whilst some was still used by Gurteen and Sons. There was therefore an opportunity to refurbish the French Gothic building in its entirety, providing a new office hub in the heart of Haverhill.

Gurteen and Sons would like to apply for permission to demolish the sewing factory to the rear, along with other buildings of low or no importance, to create an open space giving light to the back of the building, and at the same time start to convert and refurbish the French Gothic building and put this to the market as office space. Rather than say at this stage what these buildings would be replaced with, and prejudice any future ability to market the high value Northlight Buildings, at this stage the space would be used for car parking and landscaping until such time as the market dictated the future use of the remaining buildings. In the meantime the Northlight Buildings would continue to be used for warehousing.

In response to a question regarding the current pressures on car parking and access for existing tenants, Mr Carpenter advised that when more office space was provided then the car parking would need to be extended. However, longer term, there were public car parks nearby so it would not be necessary to provide parking on site for every visitor. The two current principal access points would need to be retained, and as they were not adequate for large heavy goods vehicles, then that may dictate the acceptable future uses of the site.

In response to questions regarding other potential access points, Mr Carpenter advised that the Cleales Yard site was not in the ownership of

Gurteen and Sons and so was not immediately available to provide access, and there may be potential to create a new access on the southern side of the site, subject to the issue of the significant change in level of the site being resolved.

When asked whether residential use of any of the site was a possibility, Mr Carpenter advised that the whole project would be a staged process, Stage 1 being demolition of the less important buildings in order to bring back into use the French Gothic building, before it would be possible to think about the rest of the site.

Ian Poole advised that what Members had just received was an early preliminary presentation, but that there was a long way to go. At planning application stage there would be a need for full supporting material for the consideration of the Development Control Committee, and the relevant impact assessments.

When asked about timescales, Mr Carpenter advised that he had instructions to work with St Edmundsbury and English Heritage in preparing some of the documentation required before submission of a formal planning application, and so timescales would depend on how quickly the formal processes involving other parties progressed. A rough guess might be the production of a planning application by Spring 2013.

Members thanked Mike Carpenter and Chris Blake for their attendance.

(With the agreement of the Chairman, the following items were considered in a different order to that shown on the agenda).

17. Review of Article 4 Directions in Haverhill

The Working Party considered Report D185 (previously circulated) which recommended that consultation be undertaken on the removal of the Article 4 Direction in the two Haverhill Conservation Areas.

An Article 4 Direction had been made in the Queen Street and Hamlet Road Conservation Areas on 3 June 2003. The Direction typically applied to the Victorian and Edwardian buildings which made up a large proportion of the Conservation Areas, and affected approximately 300 properties. Article 4 Directions were used to take away householders' permitted development rights to make changes to the appearance of their properties, meaning that planning permission was required to carry out alterations such as replacing windows or altering fences.

When the Article 4 Direction was made, some of the streets had very few surviving original features, and the aim was that the Direction would encourage owners to reinstate original features, thereby enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas. However, in the nine years since the Direction was put in place, due to a combination of factors, there had been barely any restoration work seen.

Christine Leveson, Borough Council Conservation Officer, advised that in these particular Conservation Areas, much of the character came from the building lines, chimneys and decorative brickwork rather than from windows and doors which were not the most noticeable features in these often narrow streets. This sort of detail was not so much under threat, as it was part of the structure of the buildings.

Article 4 Directions needed to be monitored at least every three years to identify unauthorised works, and this required sufficient staff resources. With a reduction in conservation resources being imminent, and the acknowledgement that the use of the Article 4 Direction in Haverhill had not been effective, it was recommended that consultation be undertaken on the removal of the Article 4 Direction, although the Conservation Areas would be retained. The results of the consultation would be brought back to the Working Party for consideration, and the consultation would include drop-in information sessions.

In response to a question regarding what works would still be restricted following removal of the Direction, Ms Leveson advised that dormers would be restricted, as well as changes to rendering and cladding. Members were aware that grants were available for insulating properties from Environmental Health, and these had been offered via Community Spirit Magazine, but officers were asked to put a pack of information together for residents.

When asked whether Article 4 Directions were monitored elsewhere in the Borough, Ms Leveson advised that a working group was looking at how to improve the management of these in Bury St Edmunds. There were currently approximately 1400 properties across the Borough covered by Article 4 Directions, of which 300 were in the two Haverhill Conservation Areas.



RECOMMENDED:

That occupants of affected properties be consulted on the removal of the Article 4 Direction in the two Haverhill Conservation Areas (Queen Street and Hamlet Road), as illustrated in Appendices 1 and 2 to Report D185.

18. Haverhill High Street Improvement Scheme: Progress Update

(Councillors Mrs Gower and Marks declared local non-pecuniary interests as Members of Suffolk County Council and remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party received and noted an oral update from Luke Barber, Suffolk County Council's Project Manager for the Haverhill High Street Improvement Scheme.

The Working Party had on 27 April 2011 been given delegated authority for managing the total £750,000 budget for the Scheme and approving the final project design. Suffolk County Council's Highways Section had been commissioned by the Borough Council to design the Improvement Scheme.

Luke Barber recapped the activities of the last Working Party meeting, where the recommendations had been worked through in detail, and where it had been acknowledged that physical improvements were predicated upon getting Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) correct, as changes to roads, for example street furniture or parking bays, were needed in order to manage the illegal parking which was occurring in the High Street. Whilst the Working Party had not closed the door on pedestrianisation of the High Street, access restrictions and a tightened TRO would make it easier to enforce the current conditions, and limit the legitimate use of the road to blue badge holders, loading, and access to off-carriageway sites.

At the last Working Party meeting and subsequently it had become apparent that there was significant feeling in the town that this was not the scheme that the town wanted. It was decided that Suzanne Buck, Suffolk County Council Commissioning Manager for Improvements, would facilitate a meeting at the Arts Centre on 12 October 2012, at which Luke Barber, Will Austin, Pat Hanlon, Borough Councillor Terry Clements and Suffolk County Council Portfolio Holder Guy McGregor would be in attendance. Councillor McGregor was responsible for signing off TROs, and if a TRO received objections, he was responsible for putting it through the Rights of Way Committee and then signing off the Committee's recommendations.

At the October meeting the Town Council had stated its case of issues with regard to the difficulty of enforcement, the extent of access restrictions being flaunted, and traffic domination of the High Street, detrimental to the amenity of the High Street, as well as concerns over public safety (although those were not borne out by collision data). Councillor McGregor had looked at deliverability, and visited the site, and several issues had been flagged up, including the fact that signing to the car parks was poor, and the general appearance of the links between the High Street and the car parks meant that people who could use the car parks probably did not; others were probably simply unfamiliar with the town.

The October meeting had discussed what could be done to cut off vehicles from the High Street, for example making Camps Road one way from the High Street to the Mill Road junction, so that traffic could only turn left into the High Street. Councillor McGregor had taken on board the Town Council's position, as well as discussions with Gurteens, and after consideration of all relevant issues Councillor McGregor believed that the TRO should go ahead, introducing features as part of an improvement scheme to improve the situation on the High Street, but that pedestrianisation of the High Street not be considered further at this time. If, during the consultation on the TRO, other opinions came into play, then they would be taken on board, but on the basis of the evidence seen to date, his view was to push ahead on enhancing the existing TROs and provide environmental enhancements to make Haverhill High Street a more pleasant place.

The way forward was that the draft TRO had been worked through, and the next stage was formal consultation where all parties would have the opportunity to make representations. The TRO would then be put before the Rights of Way Committee in March 2013.

At this point in the meeting Will Austin read out some points from a statement by Councillor Ms Byrne which had been submitted for the Working Party's information, which covered issues including public support for pedestrianisation, enforcement problems, and the use of the High Street as a cut-through. Members felt that some elements of her statement were not clear, and asked for it to be brought back to the next meeting, where Councillor Ms Byrne could provide clarification.

The Chairman reminded Members that there was a set procedure for placing information before the Working Party. If Members were not going to be able to attend, they should put their information through another Member of the Working Party and ask them to present it, not through other invitees or the Committee Officer.

A detailed and wide ranging discussion was then held by the Working Party, during which the following views were expressed: Members were

extremely frustrated with the issue, and wanted a decision once and for all; who would enforce the TRO; what was the point of consultation when Councillor McGregor would not be further considering pedestrianisation at this point; pedestrianisation worked in other towns why not here; the electronic consultation carried out did not accurately reflect public opinion and direct canvassing suggested that 70% of the public wanted pedestrianisation; shared space did not work and was dangerous; what about the 10,000 increase in population of the next 20 years; and the fact that there was no police representation at the October meeting.

Members asked whether Councillor McGregor had put his decision in writing, together with his reasons, and if so requested a copy of this paper, and Luke Barber advised that Will Austin had already requested this, and when received it would be circulated to the Working Party. Members also requested sight of the minutes of the October meeting.

In response to questions, Luke Barber advised that the new TRO would be the first step to achieving a workable solution to the issues of concern and provide a good baseline, including clearly marked bays and one-way traffic in Camps Road, and would be experimental so could be changed if unsuccessful; it could be seen as a building block on the way to other improvements.

Members noted the present position on the issue, and asked for the matter to be included on the next agenda.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the decision of Councillor McGregor not to give further consideration to pedestrianisation of Haverhill High Street at this time, made following the meeting facilitated by Suzanne Buck on 12 October 2012, together with his reasons for that decision and the minutes of the meeting, be circulated to Members of the Working Party; and
- (2) a further progress update on the Haverhill High Street Improvement Scheme be included on the next Working Party agenda.

19. Public Art in the Town Centre of Haverhill (PATCH): Update

The Working Party received and noted an oral update from Councillor Mrs Rushbrook on the work of the PATCH Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Mrs Rushbrook advised that the Group had had several meetings, working with Roy from Metcraft, and the metal donated to the project would shortly be arriving, and pupils were working on putting a template together. The last meeting had discussed ideas for positioning the artwork, and after acknowledging that placing it in the High Street would not work, the Group was now recommending positioning in the Market Square, on the raised area at the far end. Inspector Ferry was happy that this would enhance the area and encourage young people to use the Market Square, and Cameron Findlay, Borough Council Parking Services Manager, had advised that this would not impede the operation of the market.

Will Austin felt that the area to the rear of the Market Square was not well used by the public and the sculpture would not receive the recognition it deserved. It could also interfere with the use of the space as a performance

area. He advised of an emerging project in the churchyard which included a proposal for artwork in the Windsor recess. Mr Austin felt that this area was a more prime location, would see a higher footfall, and would lead on to more art in the newly refurbished churchyard. He asked whether this could be looked at as an option.

Councillor Mrs Rushbrook felt that due to its size, the sculpture would get the necessary recognition and footfall in the Market Square, however, Mr Austin was welcome to put his alternative suggestion to the next PATCH meeting. Additionally, Members were asked to look at these two potential sites over the next few days, and email any thoughts or preferences to Councillor Mrs Rushbrook by 23 November 2012.

20. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party confirmed that its preferred frequency for future meetings would be quarterly, but that urgent meetings could be called if necessary. Due to the timing of the Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Committee, the next meeting of the Working Party should be set for early February 2013.

At the conclusion of the meeting Members expressed their thanks to Ivan Sams, who had been the lead officer for the Working Party for several years, for the excellent work he had done for the Working Party.

The meeting concluded at 7.13 pm

**MRS K D RICHARDSON
CHAIRMAN**