

Cross Party Working Group Lowfield Street – Consultation Sub Group,

MINUTES

Tuesday 20th November, 7pm 2007

Venue: Civic Centre, Dartford in room B12

1. Attendees:

Cllr Jeremy Kite (Leader and Chair of Group)
Cllr Geoff Prout
Cllr John Muckle
Cllr Tony Martin
Cllr Patsy Thurlow
Bob Heasman (Town Centre Partnership)
Graham Harris – Dartford Council
Rob Scott – Dartford Council
Christopher Borkowski (St James's Investments)
Kelly Edwards, Nick Bohane (Green Issues Communications – community consultation)

Apologies: Howard Stoate MP

2. Introduction to the steering group – Cllr Jeremy Kite, Leader of Dartford Council (Chair of Consultation Sub-Group)

As Chair, Cllr Kite opened the meeting. He declared that the aim of the group should be to carry on the work of the Cross Party Working Group (Town Centre Regeneration) into the vital area of community consultation on the proposals for the regeneration of the town centre.

He said that Green Issues Communications – community consultation specialists – had been appointed by the developers St James's Investment and Tesco to run a detailed programme of consultation with Dartford's residents and community groups.

He said that the principal task of the group would be to oversee, monitor and feed back on the programme of activity recommended and implemented by Green Issues. Technical experts should be called into the group meetings on an as required basis.

His opinion was that it would be necessary for the Consultation Sub Group to meet approximately once per month to oversee the consultation programme effectively. This suggestion of a once per month meeting was agreed by attendees.

He felt, and the Group agreed, that both the agenda, minutes and any relevant presentations should be published on the Council's website as part of the commitment to a transparent process.



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3. Standing item: Project Planning Update – Christopher Borkowski, MD St James's Investments)

Mr Borkowski reported that he has appointed a number of well known architects to work on the project and had received initial project ideas. The appointed architects are:

- BDP – Masterplanners on the project
- Page and Park – who are responsible for the North area close to Market Street
- Allies and Morrison - who are responsible for the Central area that will contain the planned Tesco store
- Make - who are responsible for the South area close
- KSS – who are responsible for the new swimming pool complex
- PMT – who are heritage and conservation specialists and would be liaising with English Heritage

Mr Borkowski reported that the architects are working well together and believes it will take around 3 months for worked up proposals to be ready. The architects will working up their initial proposals based on the master plan prepared by BDP which will be considered by the leaders working group in the next three months and will be informed by the public consultation.

Cllr Kite commented that it is critical that the proposals take account of the Council's own park plans and in particular that the proposals for the 'joining points' to the Park and carefully thought through and integrated.

Mr Borkowski further reported that much thought was being given to the sustainability and carbon footprint aspects of the proposals and he hoped to report back on that in due course.

Mr Heasman commented that public realm issues such as traffic/pedestrian management needed to be addressed. Mr Borkowski responded by saying that he would be reporting back on infrastructure issues and that public realm architects would be appointed.

There was a suggestion from the group that 'designing out crime' should be an important part of the project evolution to which Mr Borkowski said that it would be.

4. Presentation on Public Consultation Programme

Green Issues Communications made a PowerPoint presentation on the planned consultation programme. It was agreed that this presentation should be made available on the Council's web site.

The presentation focussed on the period from November 2007 to March 2008 during which time a number of public exhibitions are planned which will give the Dartford community the opportunity to feed back and contribute to the proposals. The Town Centre Regeneration project will also be given a name; this identity process will take place over then next 4 weeks.



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The Group agreed with the broad thrust of the proposed activities and in addition made some specific suggestions about the proposed consultation programme:

- The programme needed to be 100% inclusive in the sense that it should reach out to all 'hard to reach' demographic groups and in a geographical sense, the programme should draw-in those residents living outside of the town centre, eg, along Fast Track hubs.
- The programme should emphasise Town Centre regeneration as a whole as the proposals are 'much more' than about Lowfield St.
- Cllr Muckle voiced the opinion that it would be greatly beneficial to Dartford's residents if the shop area in Lowfield St which is anticipated to be designated as an exhibition drop in space could become a multi-use one-stop shop in the a similar manner to Gravesham's Towncentric. It was also felt that Green Issues should consider other drop in locations in the town centre.
- The consultation should work hard to reach out to all groups within Dartford such the Elderly Forum, Youth Council, disability groups etc.
- The consultation should make maximum use of the communications channels available such as the pedestrian traffic through the train station area, council poster sites, football programmes, town centre schools programmes, etc.
- Any market research should include areas outside of the town centre such as Fast Track transport nodes.
- Cllr Prout emphasised the importance of a second exhibition to feedback to residents how the developer had responded to ideas arising from the initial consultation (eg, from the first exhibition).
- Green Issues said that it would undertake careful consideration of all of the above suggestions and would report back at the next meeting, which suggestions it will be implementing.

5. AOB

As a final point, Mr Heasman asked the developer to confirm whether any properties would be affected by a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Mr Borkowski confirmed there would be some affected properties but he was not in a position to give details at this stage.

After a certain amount of discussion it was agreed that the consultation programme and a project update would be presented to the full Council in the near future. A provisional date of 7pm, 4th December was put forward as the optimum date

Date of next meeting – second week of January to be confirmed.

