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Economic Development Board

27 January 2021

A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD WAS HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2021

Councillors Ms Ballard, Bateman, Beavis, Casey, Mrs Cully, Mrs Furlong, Hutchison, Jessop, Johnston, Mrs Jones, Miss Kelly, Mitchell, Philpott, Mrs Prickett and Scard

31. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

There were none.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD HELD 18 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 be signed as a true and correct record.

34. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

There were none.

35. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ITEM 3.5

There were none.

36. SUPPORTING HOUSING DELIVERY AND PUBLIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE: GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE SCOPE OF PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Manager of Planning Policy briefing Members regarding the content of the Government's '*Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Delivery*' online consultation (December 2020) and set out key matters to form the basis of a formal online response.

The Board was advised that the report was a government consultation to rescind a significant amount of existing need for planning permission for different types of development and expand the scope of permitted development.

The consultation was live and the deadline was 28th January 2021. The Board were advised that officers were minded that if the proposals were implemented, it would have a significant detrimental impact on the Borough in terms of the loss of primarily retail units and other town centre functions and on employment land, specifically offices and light industrial units. The Officer advised the Board that it was felt that the combination of these two factors at a time when the planning policy team were working on a first draft of a replacement local plan meant that team felt it was worthwhile producing the draft response being considered. It

was clarified that there was a formal consultation form and that it had been decided to use that form provided, rather than a letter.

In addition, the Board was advised that the consultation was part of a suite of a broad range of proposed changes from the Government, and thus should be seen as part of a larger package rather than stand alone. As yet, it remained to be seen in what form the final changes would take and it was hoped the Local Authorities' response would be considered.

As a result the changes may not be to the level detailed in the consultation, but conversely, they could implement radical changes for local authorities, affecting the ability to plan sustainably for local authorities hence the proposed strongly worded response.

Members welcomed the report and the proposals and felt that there had been an increase in development around the town, and that the services provided were essential ones, medical, financial and retail on their doorsteps. It was important that the frontage of retail and services remained prominent and accessible. It was felt that emphasis needed to be placed on parking, so any development to the rear of shops needed to acknowledge this, as did the parking strategy.

It was felt that applicants and residents needed to continue to be able address and clarify planning proposals and that this should not be taken away as a result of increased permitted development and Members also welcomed the need for affordable rented homes and employment.

Members felt that the granting of permitted development to any size of buildings was concerning and would create densely congested areas.

Concern was expressed that dead frontages would increase and as a result this would threaten the viability of the high street.

In answer to a Members question, the Board was advised that with regard to frontages, it was self evident that they did not readily lend themselves to residential units, including frontages opening on to the high street. The rear of shop units were not always straightforward and often presented complex planning issues, such as light and amenity for future occupiers.

There was some blurring of what was a planning officer consideration and that the consultation suggested that things such as fire safety would potentially be a planning officer consideration. This was not something they currently considered, as a result it was felt the thinking behind the change to the material considerations had not been sufficiently explained.

In relation to parking, the authority had addressed issues through adopted documents. In areas such as Town Centres, local strategies would be dismissed making it difficult to control parking within town centres and for the Board to make local judgments based on policies and common sense.

Members expressed concern about the long term future of High Streets, particularly with big name stores being lost recently. It was felt that the consultation to extend the permitted development to allow High Street shops to change to residential was not the answer.

The proposal took away local control of development of shopping areas and the rights of local people to influence the conversion of shops to home and that the report clearly set out the concerns in the proposed response to the consultation.

Members felt that the response should express severe concern at the nature of the white paper and reiterated their disappointment with the proposals included in it. The white paper would cut through the local shopping areas, and Members also expressed concern that the value of these centres would be lost. It was felt the planning system should be plan led, with economic and social priorities and provide a platform for residents to express their feelings about proposals. These were not decisions to be made centrally, and interfered with local democracy.

Members reiterated that change should be led by local people and determined locally and that local representatives be accountable for such process.

Concern was expressed that unregulated development in Towns, High Streets and Neighbourhood shopping areas was not acceptable and should not be tolerated. It was felt that this was a cross party matter and that the devolution of power should be a priority. With struggling High Street businesses it was anticipated that the owners of units would find re-letting challenging and the implementation of the white paper would allow them, without recourse of the local authorities, to convert them to residential properties.

Members congratulated the Officers on the report and fully endorse the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That this Council makes the following representations to the Government: (as expanded upon within sections 2-4 of this Report):-

- A. The Council considers that the proposed changes to Permitted Development Rights is an existential threat to Local Plan-led planning and sustainable development in Gosport and hence strongly objects for the following reasons set out in the Report:
 - i. Rebuilding Town Centres and facilitating mixed-use sites requires genuine Local Plan-led planning in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) Paragraph 15. The proposed crude Permitted Development Rights clearly do not constitute an appropriate substitute for Local Plan-led planning. The proposals are unclear as to how they address NPPF Paragraph 150 with regard to the relationship between new development and addressing climate change. There is also an inherent tension between effective community engagement and the use of the Prior Approval process for major development proposals.
 - ii. The potential loss of designated Employment Land which benefits from former Class B1 uses (now in Class E) which includes Offices, Research and Development facilities and Light Industry, to residential use, which will directly undermine the Borough Council's long standing strategy of retaining and enhancing its employment offer and increasing its job density.
 - iii. The proposed Permitted Development is likely to accelerate the loss of retail and quasi-retail units where greater value can be extracted by residential conversion, and potentially driving investment away from residential development proposals which still

require planning permission.

- iv. Reduced level of protection for Conservation Areas with proposals being determined through the Prior Approval process rather than Planning Applications.
 - v. The extent to which the use of the proposed Permitted Development Rights may be stymied by conditions on existing permissions is not acknowledged in the consultation.
 - vi. Permitted Development residential conversions would bring in no Affordable Housing or planning obligation contributions
 - vii. That 'fire safety' is set out as a material planning consideration in the Prior Approval process for the first time with no reasoning as to why set out in the consultation. Traditionally, fire safety has been a Building Control issue.
- B. That the Council supports the following measures sets out for reasons set out in the report (together with any specific reservations):
- i. increased Permitted Development Rights for hospitals, schools, further education colleges and prisons subject to the continued provision of a suitable level of vehicular parking

That the Manager of Planning Policy, in consultation with the Economic Development Board Chairman, has delegated authority to submit a response to the Government based on the principles of the above recommendations and comments set out in this Report.

37. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

38. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting as details of the financial affairs of a third party if the information was made public could have an adverse impact on the contract.

39. NEW LETTING OF THE CAFE AT THE ALVER VALLEY COUNTRY PARK

Consideration was given to a confidential report of the Head of Housing inform the Board of the outcome of the marketing of the café part of the Alver Valley Western Gateway Building and to recommend the preferred tenant.

RESOLVED: That the Board gives its approval to Coffee Cup becoming the tenant of the café and authorises the Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Head of Housing to enter into such paperwork as necessary to effect the decision

Economic Development Board
27 January 2021

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 6.54 pm

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