

## SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

### Notes of the meeting of the Port Royal Scoping Study Reference Group held at Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Woolcombe Lane, Sidmouth, on Thursday 5 October 2017

Present: Cllr. Jeff Turner (Chairman)  
Cllr. Ian Barlow, STC  
Cllr. David Barratt, EDDC  
Graham Cooper, Sidmouth Vision Group  
Deidre Hounsom, Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan  
Richard Thurlow, Sid Vale Association  
Mel Gater, Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce  
Cllr. Paul Wright, STC

Also Present: Christopher Holland, Town Clerk, STC  
Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive, EDDC  
Alison Hayward, Regeneration & Economic Development, EDDC  
Ed Heynes, Heynes Planning Ltd.  
Jonathan Andrew, Groupwest Ltd.  
Alison Stoneman, Communications Officer EDDC  
Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead - Organisational Development and  
Transformation EDDC

Apologies: Dave Bramley, Alan Darrant, Cllr. Stuart Hughes,

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.35pm

#### 1 **Welcome**

Councillor Jeff Turner welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Councillor David Barratt for standing in as Chairman in his absence at the last meeting.

#### 2 **Notes of the last meeting**

The notes of the meeting of the Reference Group held on 21 September 2017 were acknowledged. Cllr Paul Wright asked that his remark that Councillors should have been involved in the drafting of the questionnaire for the Scoping Study consultation carried out by the Councils and his request that if legally possible, the raw data of the results be published, is recorded.

#### 3 **Draft Scoping Study document**

The Chairman thanked Ed Heynes and Jonathan Andrew, consultants for attending the meeting and supplying the first draft of their Scoping Study. He reminded the Reference Group that their organisations had been given a chance to comment on the early draft of the report and asked for each representative give their comments which the consultations would take away before they produced their final report.

Points and observations regarding the report are summarised below:

- It is acknowledged that the report does not recommend any one scheme or design for development and this was welcomed. It could still stress even more that there is still a 'blank canvass' and that as yet, no design work has been decided on or undertaken.

- It is not clear if underground car parking has been considered or included in the research done for the report – it was explained that this would potentially come at a later design stage.
- There is no mention of the potential size of residential units - it was explained that this would potentially come at a later design stage.
- Developing on flood zone areas is mentioned as something that would require further investigation (sequential testing). Why does this not apply to the allocated Local Plan site? – it was explained that National Planning Policy does not require a site already allocated in the Local Plan to be subjected to sequential testing.
- The report outlines ‘significant opportunities for development’
- Report briefly covers including building over the car parks (whilst retaining parking underneath) which would help to keep the overall heights low. However, this would be subject to sequential testing. This could be emphasised more to make it clearer to the reader.
- The Chamber of Commerce and businesses would be strongly against the idea of losing carparking but acknowledges that buildings with parking underneath may be possible.
- Restricting the overall height of any development and the potential inclusion of affordable housing has been a theme of responses to the Neighbourhood Plan and other consultations. It was acknowledged that achieving this on the site available would be difficult and unlikely to be financially viable. This could be more clearly acknowledged in the report.
- The idea of a ‘destination’ development to contribute to tourism could be emphasised more.
- Though there is mention of the Ham as being protected by a covenant, the report does not explore this further – It was explained that this would be subject to a further piece of work if desired by the Councils but could be mentioned more in the report with clearer advice on what could be done next
- It was noted that the purchase of the Drill Hall by East Devon District Council was subject to overage and that this had been taken into account when examining feasibility and viability.
- The mention of the purchase of the Drill Hall by East Devon District Council and their right to redevelop if they wished, should be made clearer to the reader
- It would have been useful to include other differing examples/options of more ambitious viable development if possible.
- Some of the Group were disappointed that the report didn’t consider the possibility of using the other car parks for development to help subsidise having just commercial/community uses on EDO3 site
- The overall structure and tone of the report and appendices could be clearer for the reader. Recommendations are not easily referenced. An Executive Summary should be considered.
- Viability has been calculated using the land value, the desirability of the location and interest of potential developers, potential commercial returns and the expectation of a

high-quality build and necessary public facilities (Lifeboat house, sailing club and multi use community building including toilets).

- Inclusion of 'public toilets' in the multi use community building could be clearer and emphasised more.

The Chairman thanked the various representatives for their comments and suggestions. They discussed the next stages of the project. They acknowledged that the function of the Reference Group to help advise and support the Councils in producing a draft report was complete and that the Consultants should take back the comments to consider before publishing their final report. It was agreed that when the report was finalised and submitted to the Councils that it would be sent to the Reference Group organisations as well as being published online.

#### 4 **Communications Update**

Reference Group Members agreed that a press release following the meeting would be circulated to the group prior to publishing.