

Heynes PLANNING

groupwest.

**Land at Port Royal, Sidmouth
Scoping Exercise
on behalf of East Devon District Council and Sidmouth Town Council

Executive Summary**

Our Ref: HP0097

Date: December 2017

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Heynes Planning Ltd and Groupwest are instructed by East Devon District Council (EDDC) and Sidmouth Town Council (STC) to complete a Scoping Exercise in accordance with the requirements of a Project Brief issued by EDDC and STC in November 2016. The Scoping Exercise relates to the Port Royal area of Sidmouth which, for the purposes of the Exercise, is known as the Study Area. The findings are contained in a Report dated December 2017.
- 1.2 The overall objective of the Scoping Exercise is to identify opportunities for redevelopment taking into account the fact that much of the land within the Study Area is already developed. Any proposals for redevelopment have the potential to significantly improve the appearance and function of this part of Sidmouth whilst also improving its social and economic well-being. Through the completion of the Scoping Exercise, the landowners and project owners (EDDC and STC) will have a clear idea of the opportunities and constraints within the Study Area and further actions that are required in order to bring proposals forward.
- 1.3 In order to understand the opportunities for undertaking redevelopment within the Port Royal Study Area that is both realistic and financially viable, it is important to examine a number of key matters that will influence how redevelopment may take place. These include understanding the general physical form and character of the existing land uses within the Study Area. Matters relating to planning policy, technical matters and land ownership also need to be understood. A detailed analysis is contained within the Report In Section 3. The analysis refers to supporting Background Papers which need to be read in conjunction with the Report.
- 1.4 With respect to the analysis undertaken in the Report and for ease of reference, the Study Area has been divided into distinct 'Areas of Focus'. These have been based, in the main, upon the different type of land uses within the Study Area and their function but consideration has also been given to other planning, technical and land ownership issues. In summary the Areas of Focus, which are identified in Appendix 4 to the Report, are as follows:
1. The collection of buildings at the southern end of the Study Area;
 2. The Esplanade, turning head, slipways and the beach;
 3. The Ham and adjoining land to the north, including the South West Water Machinating Plant;

4. The Ham Lane car parks (east and west);
5. The area of land covered by the wet fish shop (Bagwells) and adjoining lock up sheds; and,
6. The existing swimming pool complex.

1.5 In Section 4 of the Report a general assessment is made regarding the opportunity for development to be undertaken within each Area of Focus. Importantly, whilst identified as separate parcels of land/buildings, in terms of assessing the opportunities for redevelopment, they have the ability to be combined.

1.6 The outcome of the analysis undertaken as set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the Report confirms that the greatest opportunity for redevelopment is on land within the southern part of the Study Area. The land so identified takes into account some or all of the Areas of Focus and for the purposes of the Report is described as the amalgamated site. It includes land identified for redevelopment as a site allocation in the adopted East Devon District Local Plan (allocated site) and adjoining land. The amalgamated site includes as follows:

- i) the collection of buildings at the southern end of the Study Area (Area of Focus no. 1);
- ii) the Ham Lane Car Park (East) (part of Area of Focus no. 4);
- iii) the Esplanade and turning area (part of Area of Focus no. 2);
- iv) the buildings currently occupied by the 'wet' fish shop (Bagwells) and the adjoining lock up sheds (Area of Focus no. 5), and;
- v) the southern tip of the Ham (part of Area of Focus no. 3).

1.7 In addition to the above, part of Area of Focus no. 4 (the car park to the west of Ham Lane) has some potential for redevelopment but further examination of a technical (flooding) constraint is required before consideration is given to bringing that part of the Study Area forward for redevelopment.

1.8 Community consultation is a requirement of the Project Brief. The output from the consultation would provide EDDC and STC with some insight into the aspirations of the local community with regards to any redevelopment proposed for the Study Area as set out in 1.6 and 1.7 above. The community consultation was undertaken through a dedicated event held in June 2017. It was based around a set of initial concept proposals reflecting the

incorporation of the Areas of Focus as set out in 1.6 above with some reference to the Area of Focus as set out in 1.7.

- 1.9 The initial concept proposal comprises a single proposal that involved the demolition of all existing structures on the amalgamated site and a replacement five storey building. Accommodated within the building there would be the lifeboat station, sailing club (incorporating additional water based clubs), retail and restaurant uses (all at ground floor level) with residential uses above.
- 1.10 For the purposes of the consultation, the initial concept proposals included limited parking provision for the proposed uses. Further, around the allocated site and within the amalgamated site, a series of highways and public realm improvements could be introduced including pedestrianisation of the Esplanade, vehicular/emergency service access to the proposed development from the rear via the Ham Car Park (east); and, public realm improvements to the Ham plus boat storage. The outcome of the community consultation event is set out at the end of Section 5.
- 1.11 The 'Analysis' Section of the Report examines the results of the Scoping Exercise. It confirms that there are opportunities for undertaking redevelopment within the Study Area. These are:
- 1) the redevelopment of the amalgamated site i.e. the Areas of Focus in whole or in part as set out in 1.6 (which formed the basis for the community consultation event); and,
 - 2) the redevelopment of Area of Focus no. 4 subject to further investigation.
- 1.12 With respect to the amalgamated site, part of this area is already identified for redevelopment as a site allocation as explained in Section 3 of the Report and 1.6 above. However, in considering redevelopment proposals for the allocated site, there has been a need to take into account the operational requirements of the lifeboat station and, in particular, the sailing club who will occupy any new building so provided as part of a proposal for redevelopment.
- 1.13 The analysis considers that a single building could be provided incorporating the lifeboat station and sailing club (and ancillary users of that building), commercial development and housing. A residential use is of paramount importance in order that the development creates sufficient financial value and, in particular, that it can fund the delivery of the lifeboat station and sailing club.

- 1.14 If the sailing club is to be incorporated into the new building then additional land is required beyond that which is currently available to it. This additional land is needed for the purposes of storage for boats and other marine related equipment. To achieve this, consideration should be given to firstly, the use of land currently occupied by the wet fish shop plus the lock up sheds and secondly, the southern tip of the Ham.
- 1.15 It is accepted that as part of this arrangement it would mean the removal of the 'wet' fish shop and the former Drill Hall. However, In weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of this arrangement, the sailing club clearly has no other alternative in terms of available premises given that it needs a prominent waterside location plus there are other uses associated with the sailing club i.e. the gig club and the angling club, that also need to be in such a location. The sailing club and the building it occupies clearly provides benefits for a significant proportion of the local community. Against that, consideration needs to be given to the operational requirements of the wet fish shop and users of the lock up sheds. We understand through our discussion with the operators that their fish supply does not come from the beach. Therefore it is not an essential requirement in terms of them needing a shoreline location.
- 1.16 As far as the former Drill Hall is concerned, we are aware that this building is valued by some members of the local community. However this did not come through strongly in the consultation event and further, it has no particular architectural value and is regarded by some as being visually unattractive. If a proposal comes forward that includes the removal of this building then we can see no sound reasons for insisting on its retention.
- 1.17 Further, there is an opportunity to enhance land and buildings immediately adjacent to this allocated site and areas of land identified for boat storage through pedestrianisation of the Esplanade and the inclusion of a new access road leading from the Ham through to the existing public slipway. A new turning head could be provided.
- 1.18 The configuration of development as set out above was reflected in the initial concept proposal which formed the basis for the community consultation exercise. Whilst the lifeboat station, sailing club and residential uses are 'fixed' uses/end users as such, the remaining uses may be subject to further consideration. The concept proposal showed a development that incorporated retail and restaurant uses but they are not fixed as such. Once a final decision is taken to redevelop the site, further market testing should be undertaken to establish exactly which uses will firstly, prove to be most financially viable and secondly, enhance the appearance of the development and the Port Royal area as a whole.
- 1.19 With regards to financial viability, the preliminary analysis undertaken shows that based on

the initial concept proposals, redevelopment of the amalgamated site is financially viable taking into account the high level approach taken. Further detailed analysis in relation to financial viability needs to be undertaken as and when more detailed proposals for the amalgamated site are prepared but that initial analysis should provide sufficient confidence that a scheme can be progressed. There are other matters that need to be addressed prior to detailed proposals being progressed and these are set out in the Recommendations.

- 1.20 With respect to the remaining parts of the Study Area, the opportunities for redevelopment are not so immediate given planning, technical and land ownership considerations. However there may be an opportunity for redevelopment of the car park on the western side of Ham Lane (part of Area of Focus No. 4) subject to an examination of matters relating to flood risk.
- 1.21 The Report concludes that the Scoping Exercise has identified a series of opportunities for redevelopment within Port Royal. The Report sets out which parts of the Study Area have the potential to be redeveloped and the type of development that could take place.
- 1.22 In order that the project for the redevelopment of Port Royal can be progressed further, a number of recommendations are identified. They either confirm what actions are required to progress opportunities already identified where there is every opportunity for delivery i.e. the amalgamated site, while other recommendations set out what actions are required to allow for identified constraints to be overcome which are preventing further consideration of opportunities on other parts of the Study Area e.g. the Ham Lane car park (west). The recommendations are set out below:
- 1.23 **Recommendation 1** – As set out elsewhere in this Report, land situated within the southern part of the Study Area is covered by a Policy in the adopted Local Plan which allows for it to be redeveloped. We have suggested that this land be combined with adjoining land to create an amalgamated site upon which redevelopment could take place. It is recommended that this opportunity is explored further by:
- i) discussing further, with the lifeboat station regarding their exact operational requirements;
 - ii) discussing further, with the sailing club and other water based clubs, their exact needs regarding additional boat storage as this will, in turn, impact upon the extent of the amalgamated site and the development that could take place within it;
 - iii) investigating, in greater detail, the nature of the lease and restrictive covenant covering the amalgamated site;

- iv) discussing with the planning department of the District Council the key planning and technical issues surrounding the redevelopment of that part of the Study Area that is situated within the amalgamated site;
 - v) discussing further with the County Council the ability to use the Esplanade and turning head for redevelopment and including it within the amalgamated site; and
 - vi) undertaking certain technical survey work to de-risk unknown issues associated with abnormal costs.
- 1.24 **Recommendation 2** – If the Councils are satisfied that a scheme can be delivered within the amalgamated site without significant planning and technical constraint then some further limited market testing should be undertaken to establish if there is likely to be interest in the site from a developer/operator point of view;
- 1.25 **Recommendation 3** – If, following action undertaken in relation to Recommendations 1 and 2 above there is going to be a potential positive outcome, then the Councils should take steps to positively promote development on the site themselves or with a development partner.
- 1.26 In terms of those parts of the Study Area that sit outside the amalgamated site we have identified potential opportunities for redevelopment on the Ham Lane car park (west). As already set out, this part of the Study Area could prove attractive to developers interested in a residential use or some form of retirement home/hotel. However there is a need to retain existing levels of car parking. A more fundamental constraint however is that this part of the Study Area is covered by a floodzone designation. The nature of the designation is such that development is not automatically precluded. However, some investigation is required to understand how this part of the Study Area may come forward in light of Government and local planning policy in relation to development upon such designations.
- 1.27 **Recommendation 4** - In light of the commentary in paragraph 7.6, we recommend that if the Councils wish to undertake development on this part of the Study Area then discussions should take place with the Planning Department of the Council, Devon County Council (as local lead flood authority) and the Environment Agency to establish with greater certainty the potential for redevelopment to take place.
- 1.28 **Recommendation 5** - In our view, the investigations covered by Recommendation 4 could be undertaken relatively quickly. If those investigations result in a positive outcome in that the flooding designation would not prevent redevelopment from taking place, then a further recommendation is that some limited market testing should be undertaken to establish if there is likely to be interest in the site from a developer/operator point of view.

- 1.29 **Recommendation 6** - A further recommendation is that if the amalgamated site and Ham Lane car park (west) both come forward then discussion should take place with the District Council planning department to establish whether the creation of a masterplan for the Port Royal Study Area should be undertaken. The status of the masterplan could be formal or informal. Given the close relationship of various parcels of land (Areas of Focus) to each other and with there being, potentially, more than one parcel of land that could be redeveloped then in the interests of securing an attractive comprehensive development and to avoid conflict between schemes in close proximity to each other such an approach could prove to be beneficial to ensuring the delivery of high quality redevelopment across the Study Area.
- 1.30 **Recommendation 7** – Clarity needs to be provided from South West Water as to their intentions regarding the future use of the machining plant.