

Mere Town Council

Clerks Report for Town Council meeting 4.7.22

Agenda Item:

5b) Wiltshire Towns Programme

I received the following email from an officer of the Economic Development & Planning Department at Wiltshire Council on 31st May. However, it was flagged to be treated as “Confidential”.

Wiltshire Council has entered into a contract with City Dressing that will allow Town Councils to access a range of interventions to assist with increasing vibrancy and footfall in your town centre. The company will provide a menu of options to improve the high street experience for residents and businesses.

This offer is the first phase in Wiltshire Council's Wiltshire Towns Programme. This programme will be driven by the council's Economy and Regeneration Service. Over the coming months we will be engaging with towns to support them in developing short, medium and long term vision and actions to improve town centre resilience and enhance the local offer.

We will be running a series of workshops over the summer to explain the theory and process we will be encouraging towns to follow. This is certainly not a one size fits all approach and bespoke approaches will be developed as we move along the development pathway.

*As part of the first phase in this Programme, we have appointed the company **Citi Logik** to monitor footfall in our town centres over the course of one year starting from circa May 2022 (together with some historic data for 2019). Once ready, access will be granted to an online Portal from which the footfall data can be visualised and extracted - Citi Logik are currently setting this up.*

*In the meantime, Citi Logik have prepared draft plans showing the potential town centre areas to be monitored. Please take a look and confirm by the 14 June, **if there are any important town centre areas missing and/or areas currently shown which are not relevant to your town** and that you are happy to continue on this basis.*

The study area map for the proposed footfall monitoring boundaries can be viewed through the following link: <http://cl-wiltshiresa.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/>

We are using this email address – wiltshiretownsprogramme@wiltshire.gov.uk. We would appreciate if in the first instance you could reply to this email with a single named point of contact with your response.

*Could we please have all replies by **Tuesday 14 June 2022**. We look forward to hearing back from you.*

My response was:

I was unable to raise this at the last TC meeting because I had sought clarification as to the “Confidential” nature of the subject which was not received in time for the meeting. It turns out that the “Confidential” flag was a mistake & Wiltshire Council wanted our response a.s.a.p. So... having discussed this with the Chairman we wrote back to confirm that we were happy to continue on the basis outlined in the email above.

There has been some publicity about this programme and this link goes to a report that was given to a Wiltshire Council Cabinet meeting held on 21.6.22

This is the latest email that I have received on the subject:

Wiltshire Council have allocated £1M a year to support high streets between 2021-2025. This fund is meant to support high streets to meet the needs of their businesses and communities, delivering transformational change to the county's town centres and diversifying the current High Street offer.

As the first stage of this process, we have been engaging Town and Parish Councils to access a range of interventions to assist with increasing vibrancy and footfall in town centres. We have also been working to set out our plans going forward, and further information is available in our Cabinet paper here: [Update on the Wiltshire Towns Programme](#)

The second stage of our programme will be the development of an Action Plan which will form the blueprint for a range of short, medium and long-term interventions, in particular the Generating Activity Programme. We would like to invite you for an online workshop in July, where we will be providing further background, presenting the action plan template and outlining next steps which will lead to the adoption of the Action Plans hopefully by the Autumn. We will also be taking your questions.

Please could you let us know your availability by selecting one of the dates below? We will follow up with a diary request.

Date 1 - 06 July 2022 14:00-16:00

Date 2 - 14 July 2022 10:00-12:00

7b) Outline application for the redevelopment of Beaumont Business Park, Woodlands Road, Mere - To consider letter from applicants relating to amendments and obligations in relation to the above planning application

Background

Appendix 1 Town Council's consultation response to the Outline Planning Application that was submitted for the Beaumont Business Park in September 2020.

Here is the Planning Register Link: <https://development.wiltshire.gov.uk/pr/s/planning-application/a0i3z000014evXfAAI/2007469out>

Below is contents of an email that has been received from the planning officer:

Cllr Jeans/Mere TC – further to your comments a number of months ago, the application above has been slowly progressing. Both WC Highways and WC Drainage no longer object to the scheme (see website comments), and the applicants have recently agreed to provide the required amount of affordable housing within the scheme (they have dropped their case for viability), so WC Housing no longer object. Notwithstanding, the applicant has now offered to provide funding to improve a footpath adjacent the site which will enhance one of the linkages with the town centre. Please see attached letter from the agent explaining these matters. I would be grateful if the Town Council could consider the proposal again in light of these changes including the provision of affordable housing, and the improvement of the footpath. Grateful of a response with 14 days of this email if possible, but if you need a longer period, please ask.

The attached letter can be found here:

9a) Proposals for new Mere Town Football Club men's team and amalgamation with Mere Town Youth Football Club – I have received the following proposal report for the Town Council to consider: For the season of 22/23 Mere Town Football Club would like to start a men's team. The youth club have agreed that we would become one club and have the men and youth under one roof, a first in a very long time. The idea of starting a men's team has generated from players who played either all or the majority of their youth football with Mere Town Youth FC. The proposed managers of the men's team are Sean Harkin and myself Karen Harkin. Having devoted years to running teams in the youth sector we will be starting a fresh with a men's team. We currently have over 18 players interested and they have already started to train by hiring the 4G in Wincanton once a week showing how keen they are. The boys are aged 16 upwards. 9 of the current 18 wishing to play live in Mere, Zeals & Bourton. These include families such as the Harkins, Batesons, Hodges and Harveys. Many of the other players played for Mere Town Youth Football Club when they were younger along with the some of them having played in the Mere Men's team in their later years. Mere Town Youth Football Club agreed to merge as they have realised that without a men's team there is nowhere for the youth to progress to as they get older. This is also an age group that is really important to keep active and continue to provide the sports that many participated in during their younger years. We believe now, especially post covid, that this opportunity will have a positive impact on the mental health of our players. Insurance and affiliation would be completed under one club – Mere Town Football Club. We would be requiring the use of the changing rooms but would only offer cold showers as we realise that heating the boiler is too much of an expense. We would always clean the changing rooms after use. Just to let you know that the changing rooms have a lot mud in them which is not from Mere Town Youth FC as they do not use the changing rooms other than the odd visit to the toilets, but from when they were hired out and have not been cleaned since. This would bring new people into Mere helping with businesses such as the Co-op, Mere Social Club, the Sprout and Flower and the other local pubs. By joining with the youth, we would just be requiring the additional use of the men's pitch on a regular basis alongside the existing facilities that the youth already use. We hope that you can see your way to approving the men's team as part of Mere Town Football Club. Initially we would like to join the Sunday Blackmore Vale League. Enrolment needs to be by the end of July so we would really appreciate a quick turn-around. We apologise for not being able to give more notice but the boys have only just put this idea to both myself and Sean.

Regards Karen & Sean Harkin (Treasurer and Vice Chairman – Mere Town Football Club)

APPLICATION NUMBER: 20/07469/OUT

Proposal: Outline Planning – Demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of up to 70 dwellings.	Address: Beaumont Business Park, Woodlands Road, Mere. BA12 6BT
Case Officer: Steven Sims	

At a meeting held on Monday, 12th October 2020, the Town Council considered the above application and has the following response to make:

No comment	
Support	
Support subject to conditions/concerns	
Object	Yes
No Objections	

The Commercial Viability Report within the application states that *“the site has a negative land value for any commercial development.”*. However, in the Economic Viability Assessment for development it states that *“policy compliant development of the site is unviable. It says that the reason for the overall viability issues are that the site has significant Existing Use Value and that the CIL and s.106 contributions are not sustainable. Therefore, it is not economically viable to provide 30% affordable housing within the development.”* These would appear to be somewhat conflicting statements when considering “use” and “development” as contributing factors to the viability of the site.

The Economic Viability Assessment also lists 7 units within the site, all of which are in use and providing a rental income. Whilst this may not be a high employment site in terms of numbers, this evidence may suggest that the site is still commercially viable albeit run-down by a lack of investment. This evidence would confirm the Town Council’s view that development of the site for residential purposes only would result in the loss of an existing employment site.

Whilst the Town Council may prefer to see a brownfield site being utilised for development over a new greenfield site, given that the applicant’s Economic Viability Assessment (EVA) suggests that the site has such a high Existing Use Value and that, as it states, the site is yielding a rental income, members felt that as Mere has achieved its housing allocations identified within the current Wiltshire Core Strategy and there would be no community benefits or infrastructure benefits in

relation to the proposed development, that the application should be refused. Mere deserves better.

Section 3.2.2 of the Transport Statement produced by Hydrock says: *“Clement’s Lane, which connects to the village centre, some 300m from the site, benefits from footways on at least one side of the carriageway for much of the route through the village. Where footways are not present, there are grass verges which can offer space for pedestrians to step off the carriageway.” This is not true. There is no footpath whatsoever around the dangerous bend and over the bridge nor is there any grass verge – in other words there is no footpath from the end of Clements Lane to the beginning of Pettridge Lane. This is the most dangerous part of the highway into Mere and is a blind bend. To encourage pedestrians and/or young mothers with children and pushchairs to use this route is unacceptable.*

Section 3.2.3 of the Transport Statement produced by Hydrock says: *“There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in close proximity to the site, providing alternative leisure (indirect) routes linking to the village centre of Mere. The PRoWs within the vicinity of the site are shown in Figure 3-1.”* Whilst this statement is true, it is also necessary for someone to come out and try and walk these footpaths to see that they are not wide enough nor practical for anyone other than the most able-bodied to use. Rights of Way MERE66/10 leading onto MERE50/10 would provide the most direct route for pedestrians to get from Clements Lane to the centre of Mere. This route would avoid the dangerous bend (without footpath) at Edgebridge. However, the Right of Way is narrow (too narrow for a wheelchair) and the tarmac surface is so uneven that it presents a safety hazard for any users. Furthermore, the Right of Way is too dark to negotiate after dusk. It would be possible, however, to bring this Right of Way up to a standard that was more user-friendly by widening it, resurfacing it and providing some low-level solar lighting bollards. The Town Council feels that this should be included within the planning application as it would fulfil a need for the proposed development.

Overall, members felt that the demands and impact that such a large development would have on Mere, given that it would be adjacent to an area that has recently and is still currently undergoing development (134 houses), needs some professional assessment to see if the demands on access, highways, drainage, amenities, utilities and services can cope.

RESOLVED that the Town Council recommends refusal of this application because members would expect a level of affordable housing and infrastructure improvements to be offered as a result of a development of this size. This application is not proposing any community benefits that would make this proposed development acceptable in planning terms. As an example, listed below are the community benefits that the Town Council would expect and would feel appropriate in relation to the actual needs of the proposed development:

- 30% affordable housing
- Live/Work units or a planned mix of residential and light commercial use.
- The provision of a footway for pedestrians to access the site along Woodlands Road and also provision to provide or fund a safe pedestrian route from the site to the centre of Mere by way of accessibility improvements to RoW 66/10 and 50/10 (there is no safe accessible pedestrian route to the centre of Mere from Woodlands Road at the present time as there is no footway around Edgebridge corner).
- Proposals to address major concerns about increased vehicles and vehicle safety along Pettridge Lane and on the junction of Woodlands Road with Edgebridge and highway improvements that are required as a consequence of development.

- Vehicles should be discouraged from turning left out of the development and causing obstructions and congestion along the narrow rural lanes around Huntingford and Swainsford (Please note that when determining the planning application for the adjacent development, an informative was agreed at Committee to address the same issue but this was missed off the final permission document by the planning authority. Fortunately, it was implemented by the developer as a good will gesture).
- As conditioned on the adjacent development as well as the development at Walnut Road, arterial roads within the development should be 5.5m minimum to allow for on-street parking for visitors & deliveries.
- Green space and recreational facilities for children should be provided within the development. The Walnut Road Play Area is quite often full to capacity. Also, the original intent of on-site children's recreation facilities was to provide peace of mind for parents that children are safe and within the site.
- Sufficient off-street parking to allow for 2 cars per house. Residents like their vehicles to be parked within site of their houses. Garages provided are often used for other purposes.
- Contribution towards educational facilities. This, along with any other S.106 contributions should be clearly allocated and identified for the sake of clarity.
- Consideration should be given to broadband fibre to premises and individual electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- A traffic management plan, similar to that produced by C. G. Fry & Son for the adjacent development, would be expected with a direct communication line to report breaches.

Town Clerk,
Lindsey Wood

Date: 16th October 2020

he Town Council considered the following planning application