

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning & Townscape Committee
held at the Town Hall, Rye on Monday 18 January 2010**

PRESENT Councillors John Breeds (Deputy Mayor), Jo Kirkham, Paul Osborne, Frank Palmer (**Committee Chairman**), Shaun Rogers, Sam Souster (Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall – Town Clerk; Cllrs Granville Bantick, Sonia Holmes, David Russell and Mary Smith; County Councillor Keith Glazier; Andy Hemsley – *Rye Observer*; 13 members of the public.

The meeting commenced at 6.31pm.

116 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons logged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Bernardine Fiddimore and David Wright (Committee Vice Chairman).

117 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr Bantick	<i>personal</i>	RR/2875/CC	Friends of Rye Library Secretary
Cllr John Breeds	<i>personal</i>	RR/2875/CC	May have pre-determined his position
Cllr Holmes	<i>personal</i>	item 121	Member of the LPA
Cllr Osborne	<i>personal</i>	item 121	Member of the LPA
Cllr Russell	<i>personal</i>	item 121	Member of the LPA
		Item 122	Rye Partnership Director
Cllr Smith	<i>personal</i>	RR/2875/CC	Friends of Rye Library Committee Member
Cllr Souster	<i>personal</i>	item 122	Involved in the early stages of the Central Garage site proposed redevelopment

118 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Planning and Townscape meeting of 4 January 2010 (PT18) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119 MATTERS ARISING

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72 'Camber Castle Car Park' (endeavouring to get the Environment Agency or English Heritage to accept responsibility) Approach to English Heritage outstanding.

Gibbet Marsh rail crossing (broken defective gates) Network Rail to send an inspector.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for questions/comment from members of the public (See **Appendix**).

The meeting reconvened.

RESOLVED To bring forward item 121.

121 PROPOSED CHANGES TO PLANNING PROCEDURES

Cllr Rogers invited the Committee to recommend that the full Council resolves the following:

That this Council regards the existing mechanisms for planning in Rye as seriously inadequate and not appropriate for a town of Rye's importance as a major historic, architectural and tourist centre.

It seeks an early meeting with representatives of the District Council to investigate the possibility of changing the planning procedures for Rye.

He asked Members to put to one side any prejudices they might have in relation to the CDR and to consider the proposal objectively – with a view to working towards entering into discussions with RDC and ESCC.

The Recommendation was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Souster (to ensure it was debated).

The Committee Chairman's comments included the following:

He had previously asked Dr Taylor if he considered the planning system had been better pre 1974 – and he thought this had probably been the case. Dr Taylor – together with Christopher Strangeways – had had a meeting on the subject with RDC's Head of Planning, Tim Hickling.

Speaking from the Gallery, Mr Strangeways advised that Mr Hickling had been attentive but the CDR had not received a reply to its subsequent letter to him.

Cllr Osborne observed that the CDR had bypassed RTC and appeared to have come to it only after failing to get a positive response from RDC.

Cllr Palmer observed that Rye's (undesirable) ribbon development had taken place pre-1974. Neither Rye nor RDC had any control over the outcome of the application to develop land north of Udimore Road because this was determined by the Planning Inspectorate.

Prior to 1974 – for reasons unknown – Bank House (now occupied by the former Woolworth store) was demolished.

RTC P&T Committee meetings are fairly flexible in terms of public involvement and he considered that any suggestion that debate is stifled was unfounded.

Cllr Osborne stated that he would not oppose modifying the current planning system if it was possible and appropriate. He had tried to alert Udimore Road residents to the danger of new development in 2001-02 but had received a lukewarm response and there had been little interest in the Rother Local Plan Exhibition at Rye Town Hall. Because of downward pressure, even if RTC had been the LPA the outcome would have been the same.

Once a month a RDC planning officer visits Rye to provide informal advice and Richard Wilson (Team Leader – East) is familiar with Rye. It would be difficult for some Rye Town Councillors to attend day-time meetings. He questioned what would be gained by having a planning officer present at P&T meetings.

Cllr Souster observed that the Chairman of P&T did not appear to have a problem contacting the Planning Team Leader and any individual/group was able to attend P&T meetings. It was not unusual for Rother Officers to be required to be responsible for a number of parishes/areas – for example, one compliance officer covers the whole of eastern Rother. He suggested that there were costs associated with the proposal and that in the current economic climate it would have been helpful if the CDR had identified these.

Cllr Souster could not support the reference within the proposal to planning in Rye being 'seriously inadequate'. Cllr Kirkham agreed and suggested considering this matter at full Council (when more Members would be present) and inviting the Head of Planning.

Speaking from the Gallery, Cllr Russell observed that, after 4 years, the CDR appeared to retain a font of goodwill but suggested that it needed to be more specific. He acknowledged that some district/borough councils allow public participation during Planning meetings and others (like RDC) do not. The majority of planning applications in Rye are fairly routine; major applications – such as a school or large residential development – are rare.

Citing Safeguard 2 of RTC's Terms of Reference for Council and Committees, Cllrs Bantick and Rogers asked that the agenda item be referred to full Council.
Clerk

The Clerk would invite RDC's Head of Planning – or a deputy – to attend the next Council meeting.

7.25 Cllr John Breeds left the meeting.

120 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED That the comments following be submitted to the Planning Authority:

RR/2875/CC 29-30 High Street, Rye
(ESCC ref) Alterations and extensions to the existing building to provide a library and associated offices and storage.
Applicant: ESCC, CEO Department, County Hall, St Annes Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

Speaking from the Gallery – and after re-stating his personal interest - Cllr Bantick made the comments following on behalf of the Friends of Rye Library:

The Friends had been surprised that the planning application had been submitted prior to the completion of the public consultation events. There had been no mention previously of the CHP relocating with the Library. The Friends considered that the true catchment area for Rye was c15,000. Mindful that Uckfield Library is 500sq metres and Peacehaven is 1500sq metres, the 320sq metres proposed for Rye is clearly inadequate – particularly if the CHP will be encroaching on the space. Why is it necessary to have two interview rooms? Why are the baby changing facilities not at the rear? Does the computer suite require so much space? How will vehicles access the site? The (largely unchanged) frontage is not appropriate for the Citadel. Why is the Library not to be on two floors? The planning application deadline should be extended to permit further consultation. The Old Monastery site would have been a more desirable location for a new library.

Speaking from the Galley, Cllr Glazier stated that he had highlighted the loss of retail space last year. He had been advised that the Friends of Rye Library supported the relocation. In 2008-09 Rye Library had 42,000 visits and 61,000 items had been lent.

Also speaking from the Gallery, Cllr Smith suggested it was not clear what was actually going to be provided within the former Woolworth building; the CHP will take up a significant amount of library space and disrupt library activities; there will be little space for books; and there is no parking provision.

Cllr Kirkham observed that those seeking the assistance of the CHP may be distressed and suggested that it was preferable for the CHP and Library functions to be separated.

Cllr Rogers stated that it was unclear where the CHP functions would be physically located.

RESOLVED SUPPORT REFUSAL Insufficient information about the areas that would be used for the Community Help Point and any other non-library services to be provided on site.

RR/2009/3029/P 27 Mill Road, Rye
(Del) Pair of semi detached dwellings in garden of 27 Mill Road.
Applicant: Mr M L Tree, The Trees, 27 Mill Road
SUPPORT APPROVAL

RR/2009/3041/P
(Del)

Deadman's Lane – land north of, Rye
Formation of new vehicular and pedestrian access and
the erection of 4 dwellings.
*Applicant: Mrs HJ & Mr RJ Symonds, Castanha, Stubb
Lane, Brede*
SUPPORT REFUSAL Unsafe vehicular/pedestrian
access to and from Deadmans Lane; overdevelopment.

122 FORMER CENTRAL GARAGE SITE

Cllr Souster advised that he had been in correspondence with former
Winchelsea resident, David Bourne concerning the appearance of the former
Central Garage site.

His first letter to Mr Bourne contained an error: it was the Partnership
Executive which took the decision to pass the proposed project to Sea Space
in 2004, not Partnership Directors (the Partnership was unincorporated at the
time).

A further letter from Mr Bourne drew attention to Conservation Area Consent
RR/2003/544/H which states that if within 6 months of demolition of any
building on the site work has not commenced on any approved
redevelopment scheme the site shall be cleared and laid out as an informal
open space. However, it appears no enforcement action has been taken.

Responding to a question from Cllr Rogers asking if the public money
(c£120,000) expended clearing the site could be recouped, Cllr Glazier (Rye
Partnership Chairman) advised that the matter had been drawn to the
attention of the National Audit Office and this had resulted in RDC (as the
accountable body at the time) having to write to SEEDA.

**RESOLVED To ask the Planning Authority to act to secure
improvements to the appearance of the site. Clerk**

The meeting ended at 7.57pm.

Date.....

Chairman.....

Rye Town Council PT19 18 January 2010

Adjournment – RR/2875/CC

Cllr Glazier respond to Sonia Relf's questions as follows:

Q *Would the library relocation be temporary?*

A The lease is 25 years with an option to extend.

Q *Would the first floor computer suite be for public use?*

A Unknown.

Q *How does the proposed space for books compare with current provision?*

A There would be more shelving for books than is shown on the plans. Library Services has advised that there will be sufficient space provided for library services to meet anticipated demand.

Q *Why is there a shower cubicle in the basement?*

A Probably because ESCC encourages staff to cycle to work.

Q *If the site is to accommodate the CHP as well, could this be on a floor other than the ground floor?*

A The CHP needs to be accessible.

Mike Eve *Could the CHP have a separate entrance/exit to avoid disturbing library users?*

Cllr Glazier This would be put to Library Services.

Cllr John Breeds stated that many people were concerned that Rye would be losing a prime High Street retail site. The length of the proposed lease had not been known generally when the change of use application was considered last August. A number of people thought the library relocation would be a temporary measure.

Cllr Souster considered that the majority of people would prefer the site to remain retail but ESCC could not afford to wait any longer for the Central Garage development. It was unlikely that ESCC would invest substantially in the former Woolworth site to facilitate the provision of library services for a relatively short period of time.

Cllr Osborne observed that, in August, only he and Cllr Rogers had opposed the change of use and that the Chamber had not made its concerns known to RTC at that stage.

Adjournment – item 121: proposed changes to planning procedures

Keith Taylor summarised the paper distributed previously to support the agenda item:

People feel remote from the planning system. There is a sense of cynicism and powerlessness – and this is understandable. Changes to the system can be made locally without the need for an Act of Parliament and which would be to Rye's advantage.

The CDR had asked him and Christopher Strangeways to examine the current system. They had concluded that there is a persistent undervaluation of Rye as a major international visitor destination. He suggested that Rye deserved special treatment.

Rother is divided into two planning sectors (East and West) – each with its own team and Team Leader; however, no single officer is tasked with addressing Rye's planning problems/issues. There should be a single expert – a Rye Planning Liaison Officer.

Additionally, when RTC considers a major application a single meeting should be arranged inviting all interested parties – including the applicant.