

Minutes of an Additional Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Tuesday 28 May 2019

PRESENT Councillors Lord Ampthill, David Bookless, Mike Boyd (**Mayor**), Jonathan Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Rebekah Gilbert (**Deputy Mayor**), Chris Hoggart, Pat Hughes, Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, Andi Rivett, Shaun Rogers

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Colonel Anthony Kimber – RNPSG Vice-Chairman; 3 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.31pm.

29 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Andy Stuart and Sam Wood.

30 CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no disclosures of interest nor dispensation requests.

31 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2019 (C1 – Mayor Making).

32 BRIDGE POINT

Members were invited to agree the Council’s response (to the Local Planning Authority) to the application following:

*RR/2019/789/P Bridge Point, Rock Channel, Rye TN31 7HL
Conversion of existing redundant warehouse into a new multi-purpose arts centre, to include workshops, gallery space, mixed use art space and rehearsal space with 3 x live/work artist accommodation units above. Demolition of existing River Café building with new two-storey replacement riverside restaurant and single holiday let accommodation. Construction of 5 new riverside dwellings along with partial demolition of the eastern part of the existing warehouse building and part conversion to form 3 new mews dwellings together with the creation of a new public park and riverside walkway, re-positioning of existing private road and works to include parking, vehicular access improvements and landscaping*

The Mayor invited the RNPSG Vice-Chairman, Colonel Kimber, to assess the application against the RNP:

- The site covers much of Site A (Slade Yard, Bridge Point and former Riverside Café. It excludes Site B (allotments), Site C (Rock Channel East) and Site D (Sea Cadets to Rock Channel East).
- The site in question is allocated for development in the RNP – with the relevant policy being H4 (p28).
- Since 2014, the RNPSG has been in contact with the developer/owner of the site, making comments (but no recommendations on) evolving plans - as well as responding to RDC requests for a RNP perspective.

- The application should be considered in the context of RNP Policy H4 which comprises the criteria following (summarised); design; green space; access to riverside walks; improved A259 access; flood risk assessment; not prejudicing the development of adjacent land; phasing sewerage infrastructure improvements.
- An access issue needs to be addressed in St Margarets Terrace where, over time, residents have taken to parking 'nose to house' outside their properties, overhanging the roadway and reducing the width of the access to the site.
- Having undertaken the necessary site-specific tests, the developer states that the site is 'not subject to flooding historically'. This is incorrect – the site is known to be susceptible to all forms of flooding.
- It is predicted that, to provide the necessary level of future protection from seawater flooding, flood defence barriers generally will need to be increased by 0.7m-1m. It is imperative that there should be nothing to stop such work being carried out unimpeded.
- Sewerage from the area is piped around to the Strand Quay area – and there are regular 'overspills' at the start of Winchelsea Road. Over a number of years, Southern Water has been pressed to rectify the situation but it maintains that other bodies are responsible.
- In normal development terms, the application would appear to be non-viable.
- In lieu of having to provide affordable housing the developer is providing substantial public benefit including an arts centre and low cost accommodation for artists.
- In accordance with the RNP the development is utilising a brownfield site.

Comments from Members included:

- The (philanthropic) developer has been open and transparent with its plans from the outset.
- The development will make a substantial cultural contribution.
- The (expensive) housing will, effectively, help to subsidise the scheme.
- There will be enormous employment benefits.
- Any concerns can be overcome.
- The Jazz Festival is in need of a larger Rye venue for the more well known artists.
- The development will not meet local housing need. It will provide employment – but lower paid jobs in the hospitality sector.
- There is no guarantee that an application would follow at Slade Meadow (which would include affordable housing).
- It is difficult to regularly fill larger auditoriums.
- Most visitors will try and park as close as possible to the venue, clogging up nearby streets and restricting access to front doors and garages (limited on-site parking has been provided – and most of this appears to be associated with the dwellings).
- Many people do not like having to wait for Park and Ride buses to depart.
- The development is outside of the town centre.
- The proposed venue is likely to take revenue away from other venues (such as the Rye Community Centre, Creative Centre, Boys' Club, Methodist Church and Milligan Centre), many of which are supported by volunteers and are struggling.
- The proposed on-site parking spaces are: gallery – 11; studio – 4 and cafe – 48 plus 4 disabled and 11 'unallocated'. The application states that this provision is in accordance with ESCC's non-residential parking guidance.

Visitors will be encouraged to use public car parks – especially Gibbet Marsh, which will be served by a shuttle bus during events.

- Some of the buildings proposed – including the restaurant – lie outside the flood protection zone.
- The sewerage infrastructure fails in a number of areas within the Parish.
- The site has flooded on a number of occasions.
- RDC is likely to be supportive of the development because it would provide Rother with another visitor attraction.
- (Providing they do not end up as ‘standard’ residences) The live/work units are to be welcomed.
- If planning permission is obtained, there is no guarantee that Southern Water will actually deliver the essential sewerage infrastructure improvements.
- RTC should strive to represent the interests of the electorate.
- There are 210 parking spaces at Gibbet Marsh – and it is an 8-minute walk from the site.

In response to questions/comments, Colonel Kimber added that:

- The main auditorium will comprise 200 seats.
- The development would incorporate a SUDS – an attenuation (holding) tank will pump away rainwater collected in a controlled manner.
- All structures proposed would lie within the flood defence wall.
- The cellars of the houses that have already been built are part of the flood defence system (which can present difficulties for the occupants).
- The views/recommendations of a number of statutory bodies have not yet been uploaded to RDC’s planning web site.

Comments from other member of the public present included:

- There are four car parks within a 5-minute walk of the site.
- Similar objections were raised in relation to the Kino planning application; however, many of the concerns expressed were shown to have been unfounded.
- Most of the events held on the site are likely to be held in the evening.
- No existing Rye venue can offer the same level of facilities being offered – as well as disabled access.
- RTC should focus on the positives, rather than the negatives.

Cllr Rogers considered that the Kino does have a negative impact on those living in the High Street – they have difficulty finding parking spaces in the evening. As with the Kino, those visiting the site being considered will try and park as close to it as possible.

Cllr Kirkham advised that Rye College and the Creative Centre are fully accessible.

A proposal objecting to the application was lost by 6 votes to 4.

RESOLVED (6 votes to 4) To support the application subject to the development conforming with Policy H4 of the Final (Referendum) Draft of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan (particularly that the floor risk assessment demonstrates that the development will be safe for its lifetime and that the sewerage infrastructure is upgraded as necessary prior to each phase of occupation) – and that further work is undertaken to identify adequate onsite/nearby parking for visitors in order to reduce

the risk of South Undercliff being rendered impassable outside of its restricted period of parking.

The meeting ended at 7.34pm

Date Chairman