

EAST (OUTER) AREA COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 17TH JUNE, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor A McKenna in the Chair

Councillors D Coupar, J Cummins,
M Dobson, P Grahame, P Gruen, J Lewis,
M Lyons, K Mitchell, T Murray and
K Wakefield

1 Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to this Special meeting of East Outer Area Committee which had been arranged to provide an update on the current position of a major proposed development, including road infrastructure, at Thorpe Park LS15

2 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harland

4 Thorpe Park

Further to minute 83 of the East Outer Area Committee meeting held on 15th May 2013, where Members deferred consideration of the presentation on the proposals to enable detailed information to be provided by the Chief Planning Officer, Members considered a further report

The Chief Planning Officer set out the proposals which sought to revitalise the existing office park, provide much needed road infrastructure and deliver a new public park

Members were informed that to achieve this, the developers were seeking to increase the amount of office space on the site and introduce a significant amount of retail use. There was also an urgency to the proposals in view of a negotiated agreement with Network Rail, regarding the provision of a bridge link over the railway lines by March 2015, as part of the Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR)

As there was relatively little interest in out of town office space currently, it was necessary to consider the type of development which could be accommodated on the site

Members were informed that the introduction of retail use on the site raised challenges. This use was not in accordance with planning policy and

could have an impact on neighbouring centres as well as planned investment in the City Centre, i.e. the Victoria Gate development. Members were informed that objections had already been received to the proposals from Crown Point Retail Park; Colton Retail Park; Hammerson's, - the developers of Victoria Gate - and from John Lewis, the main anchor store of that development

The importance of ensuring all these aspects were fully and properly considered was stressed in order to minimise the prospect of a Judicial Review should the City Plans Panel be minded to approve the planning application (which was anticipated to be in late summer 2013)

Members were informed that discussions were ongoing with the developers and that in response to concerns which had been raised by City Plans Panel when it had considered the scheme in March 2013, some amendments had been made

In terms of the size of the food superstore, this had been reduced from 12,000sqm to 9,000sqm. There had also been a slight reduction in the amount of retail in the heart of the development

Having assessed these revisions, the Council's retail consultant was of the view that the impact of the proposed retail use on the site was more reasonable in relation to other retail centres, however, there would still be a significant impact on Colton Retail Park. Members were informed that in respect of Colton Retail Park, this was not protected by planning policy. In relation to planned retail investment in the City Centre, the Council's retail consultant had indicated that there was likely to be an impact

In relation to highways issues, Members were informed that a draft Transport Assessment had recently been received and that further design meetings were planned to look at this in detail

The Principal Highways Engineer for the East Area informed Members that whilst the proposals would have an increased traffic impact beyond that of the extant permission for Thorpe Park, the scheme would likely provide clear benefits through the early delivery of the MLLR such as at Austhorpe Lane and Colton roundabout. However, impacts of the road and increased development mix needed to be better understood in other locations such as through Cross Gates Town Centre and that it would be necessary to ensure that the road infrastructure could be future-proofed in view of other allocated sites in East Leeds which are likely to come forward in the future

Members commented on the following matters:

- the need for assurances to be given that discussions were taking place with Network Rail about the bridge link
- how local people were being kept informed/consulted on the revisions being made to the scheme
- the need for housing to be provided and the latest position on this
- the importance of ensuring jobs and apprenticeships arising out of an approved scheme are aimed at those East Leeds Wards which would be affected by the development
- the latest position on the Land Agreement
- highways issues and that it was essential that the roads were provided before any building took place

- the possible impact of the scheme on retailers at Colton Retail Park
- the level of interest from retailers in taking units on Thorpe Park
- the likely timescales of the proposals

The Chief Planning Officer, together with representatives from Scarborough Developments provided the following responses

- that discussions had taken place with Network Rail but until the formal application had been determined and if planning permission was granted, then detailed design work on the bridge link could commence
- that a newsletter update setting out the revisions would be prepared, to inform all interested parties
- regarding housing on the site, that this had been a suggestion put forward by Council Officers when the scheme was last considered by City Plans Panel. Whilst the inclusion of some housing on the site was of commercial interest to the developers, it was not possible to simply substitute some of the proposed office space with housing and that a masterplan review would be needed to properly consider housing provision. Members were informed that if planning permission for the current scheme was granted, discussions could take place post planning consent to consider submitting a further application which could include family housing on the site
- in respect of jobs, 12,000 would be created and that it was essential to have the infrastructure in place if planning consent was granted and that Scarborough Developments were of the view that the jobs and skills element worked best when it was woven into the fabric of the scheme and had more longevity, once the development was up and running. The scheme would provide an opportunity for the local community to increase their skills and that existing tenants would be brought on board also to help with this. Attendance at job fairs, working with schools and colleges would form part of the work to be undertaken, with the possibility of an education hub being created on the site, where young people could find information about jobs and training initiatives. The Chief Planning Officer stated that it was now the case that Plans Panels, when determining major applications stipulated which wards should be targeted in terms of job opportunities, training and apprenticeships. In view of the proposals for a new public park, there would also be links with the Parks and Countryside Section in terms of apprentice gardeners etc
- that Scarborough Developments were ready to sign the Land Agreement which would then enable Thorpe Park to make provision for the design of the road and bridge
- that in terms of the possible impact of the development on other retail in the City, that whilst Planning Officers had to reserve their position on this, Scarborough Developments were of the view that they could demonstrate that the impact of this would be lower than considered and that there was disagreement with

the Council's retail consultants on the weighting given to the impact on neighbouring centres of the retail proposals at Thorpe Park

- in terms of the impact on Colton Retail Park, if some retailers moved across to Thorpe Park, there would be less pressure on the junction and that in terms of the large retail unit on the site, this might be converted to smaller units, therefore Scarborough Developments did not feel this would become vulnerable, but that it would remain a vibrant retail park, albeit possibly with different retailers. On this point the Chief Planning Officer stressed the importance of this retail park continuing
- that whilst some interest had been expressed from retailers, it was common practice for major retailers to require planning permission to be in place for the site before entering into discussions
- in terms of timescale, if planning permission was granted, building work would commence at the end of 2014

The Chair thanked Officers and representatives of Scarborough Developments for their attendance and the information which had been provided

RESOLVED - To note the report, the presentation and the comments now made

5 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Tuesday 2nd July 2013 at 4.00pm at Vicars Court, Allerton Bywater
Tuesday 10th September 2013 at 4.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds