

Alternative Scheme 1- COMMERCIAL, RETAIL AND RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT FOCUSING AROUND A TOWN SQUARE

- 6.16 *The first approach would enable a comprehensive development scheme to be undertaken. It is envisaged that this could provide an exciting opportunity to develop a pedestrianised Town Square surrounded by vibrant retail, cafe and commercial development. Residential and commercial development at first floor level and above could increase the viability of the scheme and increase the likelihood of attracting a developer.*
- 6.17 *The success of this scheme would depend upon a number of factors. Several other developments in the town benefit from better access to the High Street and New Street than this proposal and yet suffer high vacancy rates. This, combined with access difficulties and lack of parking, might deter prestigious development which would be most suitable for the site.*
- 6.18 *The land is within a number of separate ownerships, not all of which have been revealed to the District Council in a Land Registry search. It is known that the site covers several commercial enterprises which are unlikely to come forward at the same time, and alternative sites would have to be found for the tenants at similar rents to those currently paid. The scheme is intended to be private-sector led and could only be implemented if it is commercially viable but the District Council may become involved to help assemble the land and possibly acquire land for the Town Square/ Public Open Space.*
- 6.19 *It should be noted that no approaches have been made to landowners to test their reaction to the scheme although all residents and businesses around the brief area were made aware of the proposals and invited to comment.*

The development of a Town Square would be expected to comply with the following brief:

6.20 Areas C and E

- I) Honiton has long wished for a town square or piazza to act as a focus for pedestrian activity. The redevelopment of this site could present an opportunity to create such a focus. It is envisaged that a number of small retail units and cafes could front onto the square which could also accommodate market stalls and outdoor family entertainment.
- II) The Post Office is one of the few unlisted buildings in this part of the High Street. In order to access the land behind the High Street this building could be partially demolished so that a wide ground floor walkway could be provided with commercial premises or residential accommodation above. In order to achieve this the Post Office could be accommodated within an alternative premises, perhaps an existing stationers, newsagent or in purpose built premises within the new development, whilst the sorting office could relocate to an employment site elsewhere in the town.
- III) There is a medium term requirement for the retention of the Telephone Exchange to the west of the brief area. As network requirements change this building will become redundant and its redevelopment could facilitate the development of the site for retail, residential and commercial purposes. In order to ensure that future development is in accordance with the aims of the brief the Special Policy Area could be extended to incorporate the Telephone Exchange site which measures approximately 0.27 hectares.

Acceptable Uses on the land to the rear of the Post Office

- IV) Honiton already has a number of small businesses operating from the narrow lanes leading off the High Street elsewhere in the Town Centre. These exist in close proximity to residential development with few amenity problems. In the event that the Post Office buildings are removed, uses which fall into class A1 (Retail) and class A3 (Food and Drink) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 could be accommodated, probably fronting onto a pedestrianised Town Square. The use of the upper floors of these buildings for residential purposes would be encouraged in order to create a vibrant, lively environment and increase the commercial viability of the scheme.
- V) New units would have to be of a design and scale that respects the local linear form and intimate character of the area, in accordance with Local Plan Policies EN16, EN17, LH1, D1 and D4. If this section of the site were redeveloped as described, the provision of a further footpath link between the north of the site and the proposed Public Square would be explored. Due to the sensitive location of the site high quality surface materials would be used throughout and public art would be encouraged to contribute to its sense of identity.

- VI) It is envisaged that the development of the town square and associated retail, commercial and residential development, would be financed privately by a developer or consortium. The District Council would adopt and maintain the town square as formal public open space.

The Old Coach House

- VII) The Old Coach House is an attractive two storey building previously used as a small model engineering workshop. This building should be retained and the District Council would support the continuation of this use or, if this was not viable due to the buildings domestic scale and form, conversion to provide a workshop unit at ground floor level with residential accommodation above.

Access and Car Parking

- VIII) The local Highway Authority, in considering detailed planning proposals, may require vehicular access to the site to be limited to disabled customers only, with smaller delivery vehicles allowed to service commercial premises during restricted times, due to the width of the junction and its restricted visibility. It would not be possible to serve new development off Chapel Street, since larger vehicles only gain access to the existing premises by accessing through Area D of the Brief Area from Queen Street. Chapel Street and its junction with New Street are not capable of taking large service and delivery vehicles. Planning conditions would be imposed on the planning permission to ensure that highway safety is maintained.

6.21 Area D Car Parking

- I) This section of the site benefits from access points to the north and south. It is proposed that the small area of wasteland adjacent to the Old Coach House should be cleared and the whole area be surfaced with a permeable material to provide car parking reserved for disabled visitors and in association with the redevelopment of the Brief area. A landscaping scheme should be implemented to ensure that the car parking is not unduly dominant.
- II) This area will provide an important access to the employment land referred to above and any scheme must retain an adequate access.

Alternative Scheme 2- COMMERCIAL, RETAIL AND RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

6.22 *This approach would enable a development scheme to be undertaken without the need for agreement from all landowners and would enable existing uses to continue on parts of the site. As in the first scheme, retail, cafe and commercial development would be encouraged and could be implemented independently of each other and would not be reliant on all three pieces of land becoming available at the same time.*

6.23 *As explained above, the land is within a number of separate ownerships, not all of which have been revealed to the District Council in a Land Registry search. It is known that the site covers several commercial enterprises which are unlikely to come forward at the same time, and alternative sites would have to be found for the tenants at similar rents to those currently paid. Again, the scheme is intended to be private-sector led and could only be implemented if it is commercially viable. The District Council will expect each component of the Brief Area to be developed in a way that enables a comprehensive development scheme to be achieved and does not compromise the development of any other part of the Brief Area.*

6.24 *Again it should be noted that no approaches have been made to landowners to test reaction to the scheme although all residents and businesses around the site were informed of the proposals and invited to comment.*

6.25 Area C Employment Land

- I) The Local Plan specifically allocates a number of employment sites in Honiton, but also recognises that it is important to encourage additional employment within the built-up area whilst safeguarding the existing character and amenities of that area. It is proposed that section C of the site continues to be used for employment purposes. The large building on this part of the site was used by the Post Office until recently for vehicle repairs and a similar use, in accordance with Policy E3- Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises is considered acceptable.

Acceptable Uses

- II) Honiton already has a number of small businesses operating from the narrow lanes leading off the High Street elsewhere in the Town Centre. These exist in close proximity to residential development with few amenity problems. In the event that the large Post Office outbuilding is removed, the District Council will encourage uses on this site which fall into class B1 (business uses) of the Town and Country Planning (Use

Classes) Order 1987. Class B1 includes office uses (other than those which fall under class A2 (financial and professional services) and light industrial uses which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of the area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, soot, ash, dust or grit. Any proposals for new development must comply with Policy E2 'Employment Generating Development in Built-up Areas'. New units must be of a design and scale that respects the local linear form and character of the area. When this section of the site is redeveloped, the possible provision of a further footpath link between the north of the site and the proposed Public Open Space will be explored.

III) As the adjoining gardens are designated Land of Local Amenity Importance, any new commercial buildings should be positioned so as to minimise their impact on that area.

The Old Coach House

IV) The Old Coach House is an attractive two storey building previously used as a small model engineering workshop. This building should be retained and the District Council would support the continuation of this use or, if this was not viable due to the buildings domestic scale and form, conversion to provide a workshop unit at ground floor level with residential accommodation above.

Access and Car Parking

V) The local Highway Authority, in considering detailed planning proposals, may require vehicular access to the site to be limited to customers, disabled employees and smaller delivery vehicles only, due to the width of the junction, its restricted visibility and narrow width. It would not be possible to serve light industrial development off Chapel Street, since larger vehicles only gain access to the existing premises by accessing through Area D of the Brief Area from Queen Street. Chapel Street and its junction with New Street are not capable of taking large service and delivery vehicles. Planning conditions will be imposed on the planning permission to ensure that highway safety is maintained.

6.26 Area D Car Parking

I) This section of the site benefits from access points to the north and south. It is proposed that the small area of wasteland adjacent to the Old Coach House should be cleared and the whole area be surfaced with a permeable material to provide car parking reserved for disabled visitors and in association with the redevelopment of the Brief area. A landscaping scheme should be implemented to ensure that the car parking is not unduly dominant.

II) This area will provide an important access to the employment land referred to above and any scheme must retain an adequate access.

6.27 Area E Mixed Use Redevelopment

I) There is a medium term requirement for the retention of the Telephone Exchange to the west of the brief area. As network requirements change this building may become redundant, in which case it could be redeveloped for either employment or housing. In order to ensure that future development is in accordance with the aims of this brief the Special Policy Area will be extended to incorporate the Telephone Exchange site which measures approximately 0.27 hectares.

II) This area experiences similar access problems to the rest of Area C and these will restrict the types of development for which it is suitable. It is considered that either employment uses similar to those on the adjacent Post Office land or residential development of the type proposed under Area A or a mixture of these uses would be acceptable. The guidance set out above in respect of employment or residential proposals will also apply to this section of the site.

6.28 It is not considered that, given the sensitive location within the Conservation Area of much of the Brief area, proximity to residential housing (much of which is listed due to its historic merit or is occupied by elderly or special needs residents) and the access restrictions, that any other alternative uses and/ or other forms of new development would be appropriate.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Any queries relating to this Development Brief should be addressed to

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