

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

LAND NORTH AND SOUTH OF CHAPEL STREET, HONITON **Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Emerging East** **Devon Local Plan**



STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION

The Land North and South of Chapel Street Development Brief was adopted as interim supplementary planning guidance to the emerging Local Plan by East Devon District Council, following public consultation, on 13 October 2004. As such it supports the policies of the Revised Deposit Version of the East Devon Local Plan 2003 and Adopted Devon Structure Plan, setting out more detailed guidance on the way in which the policies in the plan will be applied.

The Revised Deposit East Devon Local Plan contains Policy LH4, which relates to a redevelopment site to the rear of properties on the southern side of the High Street, Honiton, known as land to the North and South of Chapel Street. The site covers several different land uses and is complicated by a number of separate ownerships. Access is limited and will also form a major constraint.

Given the site constraints and the difficulty associated with delivering a comprehensive development scheme it was considered appropriate that the public and other interested parties were consulted on two alternative possibilities for the western section. One alternative proposed low key uses similar to those already being carried out on and around the site whilst the other proposed a new pedestrianised town square. The remainder of the site should accommodate a mix of housing, Land of Local Amenity Importance and a public garden.

The Draft Development Brief was the subject of a 6-week consultation exercise between 1st April and 14th May 2004, including Honiton Town Council (and all other Parish Councillors in the District), Ward Members (and all other District Councillors), Devon County Council and the Environment Agency. 6 site notices were erected in prominent locations around the area, relevant representors from the Local Plan database were informed by letter, letters were sent to 120 adjoining landowners/residents, copies were sent to many local arboriculturalists and an additional 20 copies were distributed internally to Officers and a press release was issued. 50 copies of the Brief were sent out in response to requests.

Following the consultation exercise, the Council received 6 responses to the Draft Brief all of which were generally supportive of the aims and intentions it contains, although a number of points were raised in terms of the detail. Those appropriate to improve the effectiveness of the document have been incorporated into the adopted Development Brief. Some points of detail have been deleted or amended.

It will be seen from the summary below that opinion regarding the creation of a pedestrianised town square on the western part of the site was generally supported but with no indication as to a preferred redevelopment approach being expressed from developers or surrounding neighbours. Similarly none of the key landowners have responded despite being written to individually. It is made clear in the brief that any redevelopment of this site will be driven by the market and will be funded by the private sector and the District Council is unlikely to become involved in site acquisition. It is therefore considered that either redevelopment option is acceptable and the ultimate development approach is likely to be determined by prevailing market forces. The brief sets the parameters of development on the western part of the site rather than rigidly specifying exactly what should be constructed thereby encouraging innovative design and uses.

2 representations suggested that the vehicular access to Chapel Street should be permanently closed, with all access taking place from Queen Street. This would require the acquisition of land from at least two separate owners and would increase the use of Queen Street, contrary to the advice of the Local Highway Authority. It is also suggested that the demolition of some buildings,

outside but adjacent to the brief area, would improve highway safety. The brief has not been amended to this effect but, if a comprehensive development scheme is submitted in the future, the access arrangements will be reconsidered. The brief in its current form does not preclude this.

The representations can be summarised as follows:-

Summary of Representations in Respect of Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Whimble Parish Council

Land North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

It would be better to locate elderly and disabled people nearer the town centre rather than young people who are, generally, more likely to have transport.

2. Honiton Chamber of Commerce

Trees in New Developments, Re-use of Rural Buildings,
Open Space, Land North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

The Chamber favours the town square option, but the car parking for business users is totally inadequate and this should be addressed before any development. Doubling the market car park could be a planning gain. Tesco's intentions could be relevant. A stall market might be incorporated in the town square.

A quality development of larger retail units would be preferable to possibly unsustainable (in the economic climate) small units, and a top quality restaurant would be desirable. Better access or more access routes to the site are needed; children's play equipment would draw in families to shop.

3. Honiton Town Council

Land North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

The comments are summarised (by the writer) as insufficient land allocated to park and public gardens; a potential missed opportunity to close the substandard Chapel Street/New Street junction due partly to the present description and future proposed use of Area D; and a potential threat to the continuation of the excellent service provided by the Crown Post Office to residents of Honiton and the surrounding area, a facility that has been withdrawn from several East Devon towns. The proposed protection of two burgage plots, stone walls and the Old Coach House is welcomed as is the promotion of pedestrian routes.

There follows detailed comments in respect of appropriate uses. Area D could also provide a better vehicular access to properties in Chapel Street and High Street than the very narrow Chapel Street; the footpath alongside the Old Coach House could be widened. Stone walls and buildings should be retained. Any redevelopment of the St Michael's site would not necessarily include open space. A good deal is made of the importance of the Post Office and sorting office, both to the public and as employers. The Chapel Street traffic problems and pedestrian safety need to be considered more thoroughly; the brief should specify closure of the New Street/Chapel Street junction.

(1) Comments are offered on the two alternative schemes suggested.

- (i) There is a claimed deficit of park and public gardens near the town centre and the Honiton Conservation Area Appraisal has been disregarded in that allotments off Silver Street have been allowed to be residentially developed. Open space should visually link the two private burgage plots (land of amenity importance) with the park, footpath 4 running through a public open space. This would provide a larger area of quality open space.
- (ii) The scheme may compromise the Post Office's future.
- (iii) Private and public pedestrian accesses are not differentiated on the plan.
- (iv) The telephone exchange area should have access to Queen Street, not Chapel Street and New Street.

- (v) The pedestrian route through the Kings Arms is due for review.
 - (vi) The opportunity should be taken to slightly widen the footpath alongside the Old Coach House.
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- (i) as (i) above.
 - (ii) Need for restricted vehicle access to the retained burgage plots not understood.
 - (iii) Pedestrian link via Old School House Court, shown in scheme 1, has been deleted – why?
 - (iv) – (vi) as per (iv)-(vi) above.

4. Ward Member

Land North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

Very much welcomes the issue of the SPG, which will help to clarify the opportunities and constraints on future use of the land.

It is important that the highest quality of development is achieved and the Conservation Area Appraisal is still relevant. The right of way to the High Street should be retained for elderly people in sheltered accommodation in Westcott Way. A public garden is of paramount importance, the undeveloped site providing almost the opportunity of providing a flat, central public garden.

Any development should enhance the area and be no more than two storeys. The site's proximity to Westcott Way would be more suitable for sheltered or special needs housing.

The public garden should be in Area A, as part of a residential development. In support of Land of Local Amenity Importance designation, landscaping of St Michaels and mixed use development around a town square.

Proposals should be of a design and scale in keeping with the area, avoiding major demolition and general vehicular access. The town square should be adopted by EDDC as public open space.

5. Ward Member

North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

Excellent development brief – particularly like the garden areas, which will be of great benefit to residents and any future development scheme.

6. County Environment Director

Land North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton

The difficulties of accessing and servicing the proposed retail and commercial developments are well known and covered in the Brief. An aspect requiring clarification and consideration, along with the difficulty of restricting vehicular access to certain types of activity and sizes of vehicles, is servicing Area A: queries whether the reference to possible access over land owned by the District Council relates to land immediately to the south of the Church.