

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Hythe and Dibden Parish
Council**

**Held at The Grove, 25 St Johns Street, Hythe
on Monday 12 October 2015 at 7.00pm**

p Cllr C Harrison (Chairman)
p Cllr Mrs M McLean (Vice Chairman)

Councillors:

a P Armstrong
p J Binns
a M Bovey
p E Davey
p Mrs J Fowler
p T Johnson

Councillors:

p G Parkes
p D Poole
a M Short
p A Wade
p M Wade

p = present
a = apologies

Also in attendance

K Crisell (NFDC)
42 members of the public

Officers in attendance

Mrs S Bennett (Clerk to the Council)
Mr Sean Spencer (Deputy Clerk to the Council)
Mr Andrew Groom (Estates and Valuations Manager, New Forest District Council)

141/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Chris Harrison declared an interest ref agenda items 4 and 5 and indicated that he would remove himself from the Chair for those items. He remained in the room but took no part in the discussion.

142/15 **MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 21 September 2015.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Council held on 21 September 2015 be signed by the Chairman as correct.

The Chairman then handed the Chair to the Vice Chairman Cllr Maureen McLean.

143/15 **PUBLIC FORUM**

The Vice Chairman proposed, and Cllr Wade seconded, a proposal to suspend Standing Orders to allow more than 15 minutes for the Public Forum session. This was agreed unanimously.

There followed a considerable number of questions and comments from the Public about the sale of St Johns Street car park and the proposed development. These included:

- There is concern that South Street cannot sustain any development. There is already considerable traffic, lorries, surface and foul water drainage issues, and water supply. South Street has historically flooded about once a year and residents now report flooding every time it rains hard.
- What is the reason for the sale of the Car Park? The needs and benefits of the proposed scheme are unclear.
- The proposed development is in a conservation area and aesthetic appearance is a concern.
- There is considerable concern about the impact of Lidl on existing local independent traders. People live here because they like living in a village with those independent traders.
- "Is this a done deal?"
- It is important for people to have a choice. Lidl's will improve people's choice
- Is the market moving to facilitate this development?
- There are currently 7 charity shops and about 7 estate agents in the Village Centre. There are offices in what was previously retail space. This means that potential retailers can't access suitable units for their businesses.
- Why do we need to sell the car park? Where will the current users of the car park park? There is a concern that the other car parks will not take the additional call on capacity and this in turn will increase parking on adjacent streets. There is also a concern that increased use of the other two car parks will increase the vehicle movements in those areas.
- Will there be any change to the access roads feeding St Johns Street Car Park?
- Will there be general public parking available in the car park that is sold once Lidl take over?
- What are the current figures for car park occupancy? There is concern that if NFDC included Sunday in their count this would not reflect the true usage.
- How many jobs will Lidl bring?
- This is a very large site. "Will it be yet more retirement flats?"
- There is concern that if this proposal is turned down "the big guns" will try to get that decision overturned.

- There are considerable calls for wider public communication and a full and accessible consultation in order to find out what the people of Hythe want at this site. It is felt that there should have been far earlier engagement with the community by NFDC.
- Lidl would provide an opportunity for an alternative food provider. It is recognised that Lidl also sells other goods and that this may have an impact on non-food independent retailers in the area.
- Competition will be beneficial; Waitrose is expensive.
- During the discussions about moving the market two years ago the working group of Hythe Business Partnership were informed that PC Builders were not moving.
- We need to protect the footfall into village centre. Visitors to Lidl will stay in Lidl car park and will not venture into the village centre.
- We already have Tesco and we have a good bus service so we already have competition.

Andrew Groom replied to the questions and comments with the following information:

- This is not a "done deal". NFDC cabinet will consider the proposals at their November 2015 meeting.
- The resulting car park will be for a free stay of 90 minutes with no requirement to shop at the Lidl store in order to use the car park.
- Overall NFDC believes that the Village is adequately serviced for car parking. There are 511 spaces existing and the proposal would reduce that to 450 however we have an opportunity to provide a further 40 spaces within New Street Car Park if required.
- PC Builders report that they currently experience about 10 HGV visits per day. Lidl has indicated that it will service this store with smaller vehicles and anticipate 2 visits per day. This gives a net reduction in HGV traffic.
- Pre-application discussions have commenced between planning officers and Lidl. It is recognised that the site is in a Conservation Area and any building will require careful design.
- NFDC appointed a retail consultant who analysed current trading and identified that the existing supermarkets are currently over-trading and are sustainable with a reduced footfall. The consultant also identified that there would be an impact on other retailers but that this could be offset as Lidl would attract additional shoppers to the Village. In summary the consultant identified that the provision of a further supermarket such as Lidl would have a positive impact on the Village.
- The market will move to the High Street and this has been a piece of work that commenced a long time before the conversations about St John's Street. The market will move whether or not this development goes ahead.
- An NFDC survey undertaken in 2006/2007 demonstrated that throughout the New Forest 40-60% of food shopping trips extended to other purchase areas.

- NFDC is working in partnership with PC Builders. Part of the proposed Lidl store will be on the land owned by PC Builders. PC Builders wish to stay local and in order to complete a move they require a capital receipt. This they can achieve by selling the remainder of their land to a high density housing provider; this is retirement flats and the site is likely to allow the provision of 36 units.
- NFDC is taking a capital receipt from the sale of the car park.
- National and local planning policy restricts the provision of out of town shopping stores. The preference in planning policy is for stores to be located in the centre of towns and villages in order to preserve their footfall.
- If Lidl cannot secure a site within the Village they will likely seek a store out of the Village. This will likely reduce footfall and will not encourage extra visitors to the Village centre.

Additional comments and questions:

- Occupants of houses at lower end of South Street will have nowhere to park their vehicles.
- NFDC has been in discussion with Lidl since the Summer of 2014.
- In 2007 HCC revised its policy of providing a link road through the car park. This enabled the subsequent landscaping and refurbishment.
- NFDC took on the market in 2003 as it was in decline and it has subsequently not recovered and further declined.
- Surface water should not be an issue as this will be part of the planning consideration.
- Identified foul water issue will be raised with other parties.
- If NFDC commissioned the consultant how can this be considered independent?
- Negotiations have been secure however information can now be shared thus the request from NFDC for a Parish Council comment.

Deborah Summers commented that the minutes approved by Council did not fully reflect the question she asked at the last meeting.

Standing Orders resumed

144/15 **SALE OF ST JOHNS STREET CAR PARK**

The Vice Chairman invited comments from each of the Members present. Members concurred with the comments and queries of the community and also expressed concern for the existing local independent retailers.

Members felt that with many of the community not accessing social media they would not have had a chance to gain information on what is proposed.

Malcolm Wade suggested a written consultation questionnaire to every household in the Parish and a public meeting in the Parish Hall. It was proposed by Malcolm Wade and seconded by James Binns that this Council goes to consultation to find out what the community wants for this site followed by a public meeting.

Alex Wade felt that there are already too many retirement properties and the Parish needs affordable housing for young families.

James Binns presented a Survey Monkey snapshot survey he had undertaken over the weekend and gave the results as adjusted for margins of error as 54.22% for the proposal and 45.78 against. 429 people left comments that covered the topics raised during the public forum section of this meeting.

Trevor Johnson thanked James for the survey work and reported that the people he had spoken to were concerned about visitors to Lidl not subsequently visiting the businesses in the village. There is particular concern for the Greengrocer and Bakers.

Graham Parkes stated, if this proposal goes ahead all agreements on infrastructure and design need to be a condition of sale.

RESOLVED, that the following response be sent to NFDC.

“We believe that no decision should be taken by NFDC cabinet at this time. We propose that a fully accessible consultation is undertaken with the community to seek their views on what is their preference for this site”.

Proposed by Maureen McLean and seconded by Malcolm Wade.

The Vice Chairman thanked the community, Andy Groom and Members for their attendance and contribution at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Chairman

Date

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