

## **Press Release from the Lymington Society**

**Date 15.0.05**

### **Public Hearing at Planning Appeal best way forward for the Webb's Chicken Factory site at Bridge Road Lymington Following the Deferment by NFDC Development Control Committee**

Following the recent deferment for a month of a decision on the second Planning Application by Paxton Holdings the Lymington Society issued the following statement:

The planning position in relation to the Webb's Site as has now reached such a critical stage. On 9th February, our Councillors deferred a decision in respect of the second planning application, which means that in a month's time we face the unhappy prospect of an unsatisfactory compromise or a costly appeal.

If they had been able to make an unfettered decision our Councillors would probably have voted to refuse the current application. They were concerned about the unimaginative use of a unique riverside site for a high density development of small units, which would become an isolated dormitory rather than a living part of our Town. We already have the example of the Barrett Homes development at Hillcroft where many of the units are sold but unoccupied.

But the Council Officers advised that the Councillors should not refuse the second application because the Developer had now complied with the detailed issues upon which the first application was refused.

The problem is that the Officers' advice ensured that the refusal of the first application was not made on grounds of principle and density - the main objection of local people, the Lymington Society and the Town.

The Officers encouraged the current development, with the condition of the payment of a substantial sum to compensate for the fact that the development was to be almost wholly high-density residential. This is a departure from the mixed use anticipated by the Lymington Society and other local bodies. It is a radical departure from the significant amount of industrial use specified in the Supplemental Planning Guidance for the development.

Earlier soundings of local views in relation to this high-profile development would have avoided the current debacle. The Developer indicated its willingness to take account of local views before the first application but the Council discouraged the tripartite meetings the Lymington Society proposed between ourselves, the developer, and the Planners. Local input into the proposals through the Supplemental Planning Guidance has been effectively torn up and thrown away by the Council in its response to the first planning application.

Speaking on Monday Mr Clive Sutton Society Chairman said:

"Input by parties wishing to speak to the Councillors at Planning and Development Control Committee meetings has been limited to presentations of one or two minutes, which has prevented our Lymington Councillor, among others, from expressing views and suggestions. I appreciate that there must be a guillotine but it must be proportionate to the importance of the application and the same guillotine cannot apply to a 300 unit prime site development as it does to an extension to an existing house.

We are where we are, and, as stated by Lymington Society Committee Member Donald Mackenzie at the planning meeting last week, it will be wholly wrong if the potential of this site is not properly realised, in order to get the Council out of a problem of its own making.

What is so far missing from these deliberations is fully argued input from local people who have to look at the development and live with it. We understand the Developer intends to precede with its Planning Appeal where an inspector gives wide latitude to third parties to present their case and where the public can see the basis upon which the decision has been made. If this results in an expenditure to the Council, and consequently unfortunately to the Council Tax payers, then that is a consequence which the Council will have to accept and account for.

The Councillors must not accept the second planning application, which does nothing to address the fundamental objections of local people, but allow it to go forward to a Public Appeal Hearing with the first application”

#### Notes for Editors:

The Lymington Society is an amenity society with over 400 members and keeps a “watching brief” on developments likely to affect the environment of Lymington. Its aims are stated as:

- Wishing to protect the character of our historic town
- To ensure new development is in keeping
- To encourage the maintenance and improvement of civic amenities
- To provide a forum where residents can express views on such subjects publicly

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