

# The Regulation Committee

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the Regulation Committee held under the Coronavirus Regulations, 2020 on Thursday 4 February 2021 at 10.00am.

## **Present:**

Cllr J Parham (Chair)  
Cllr S Coles  
Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper  
Cllr M Rigby  
Cllr N Taylor  
Cllr M Pullin (Substitute member on behalf of Cllr M Caswell)

## **Other Members Present:**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the meeting procedures, referred to the agenda and papers and highlighted the rules relating to public question time.

### **1 Apologies for Absence** - agenda item 1

Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Keating.

### **2 Declarations of Interest** - agenda item 2

Reference was made to the following personal interests of the members of the Regulation Committee published in the register of members' interests which was available for public inspection via the Committee Administrator:

Cllr J Clarke	Member of Mendip District Council
Cllr S Coles	Member of Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper	Member of Mendip District Council
Cllr M Rigby	Member of Somerset West and Taunton Council
	Member of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council

3 **Minutes of the Regulation Committee meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 -**  
Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were signed as a correct record.

4 **Public Question Time -** Agenda Item 4

(1) There were no public questions on matters falling within the remit of the Committee that were not on the agenda.

(2) All other questions or statements received about matters on the agenda were taken at the time the relevant item was considered during the meeting.

5 **Application No SCC/3775/2020 Land adjacent to Trenchard Way, Taunton –**  
Agenda Item 5

(1) The Committee considered a report by the Service Manager - Planning Control, Enforcement & Compliance on this application. The applicant sought permission for the erection of a three storey building of 2,613 sqm floor space (Use Class E) including office, reception, meeting rooms and flexible collaboration workspaces with 159 sqm ancillary cafe use and external car parking area on land adjacent to Trenchard Way, Taunton.

(2) The Case Officer outlined the application by reference to the report, supporting papers and the use of maps, plans and photographs.

(3) The main issues for consideration were: the principle of development, highways and transport, design, mass and bulk, landscaping, ecology and public art.

(4) The Case Officer's presentation covered: a description of the location site and surrounding area; details and history of the proposals and plans; consultation responses from external and internal consultees and the public; the Case Officer's comments on planning policy considerations and the key issues set out in (3) above and matters raised in objections; and the Case Officer's conclusions.

(5) The Case Officer explained that:

- The Principle of Development complies with the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- The area has a high-density mixture of residential, industrial and commercial development and is within the Firepool regeneration area.
- Car parking has been reduced to 25 spaces to comply with policy.
- The site is a highly sustainable site with easy access to the railway station, buses, cycling and walking.
- No objections had been received from the County Highway Authority.
- That the build has been reduced in scale to 3.5 storeys to reduce impact – materials changed to red brick and cladding in line with SW&T Design Review Panels comments.
- Replacement trees to be planted to compensate for the felled trees.
- The site has low ecological interest.

(6) The Case Officer reported that one objection had been received from a local resident raising issues regarding the pedestrian access to local bus stops. Referring to the objection, the Case Officer reported that routes to bus stops are not commodious, which is not necessarily disputed, however it would be beyond the scope of this application to address such matters (i.e. to widen pavements outside of the boundary and ownership of the site). It was further report that bus stops can be safely accessed by foot on pavements, without having to step into the road.

(7) In his conclusion the Case Officer commented that: there have been no objections from statutory consultees and that issues which were raised, and matters which remain outstanding can be adequately addressed via appropriate planning conditions to be agreed between the local planning authority and the applicants (as well as the relevant statutory consultees).

(8) The Case Officer commented on the recommendations proposed, highlighting: the Innovation Centre would offer an opportunity to boost the economy though job creation and learning opportunities for visitors; the use is compatible with the nearby residential properties; both massing and overshadowing studies show that there will not be an unacceptable impact on neighboring properties, and that as usch the design is considered acceptable.

(9) The Committee heard from the following, with their comments/views summarised as shown:

(i) Samantha Seddon, speaking on behalf of Somerset County Council: who raised a number of points including: the positive collaborative work of Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council; the time-limited opportunity for Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council to secure circa £7 million of EU and Government funding to enable delivery of the Digital Innovation Centre; and that the Innovation Centre would provide a flexible, high quality space. Samantha Seddon further stated that: the Firepool location had been identified as the most appropriate site for the scheme, links to the Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan, the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy and Somerset West and Taunton Council's priority to unlock development on Firepool as a strategic site for Taunton: the scheme is forecast to create 40 jobs in the local digital economy in the period to the end of March 2026; and that the UK Hydrographic Office has confirmed that it envisages engaging with the Centre.

(10) The Committee also heard from Cllr S Coles, County Councillor for the Taunton East electoral division, who emphasised the importance of the project for Taunton.

(11) The Committee proceeded to debate, during which members raising matters including: the importance of the proposal, being essential for the future of Taunton; the positive negotiations regarding the building design; and that the application served as an exemplar for positive Local Authority collaboration.

The Chair also highlighted; that while he concurred that the Innovation Centre is a necessary project, he did have concerns regarding the reduction of car parking spaces, and that while policy compliance, he questioned what controls had been put in place to prevent the travelling visitors to the site by car, with the potential of spilling out to neighbouring streets.

(12) In response to the Chairman's question, the Case Officer reported that an associated travel plan will be in place and that the nearby car park has availability to easily accommodate over spill as required.

(13) Cllr S Coles, seconded by Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, moved and the Committee **RESOLVED** that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the imposition of the conditions listed in section 9 of the relevant report (except for conditions 9.8 and 9.11 which are to be altered to compliance conditions), and that authority to undertake any minor non-material editing which may be necessary to the wording of those conditions be delegated to the Strategic Commissioning Manager – Economy & Planning

6. **Application No SCC/3745/2020 Saltlands Depot, Saltlands, Western Way, Bridgwater, TA6 3JG – Item 6**

(1) The Committee considered a report by the Service Manager – Planning, Control Enforcement and Compliance on this application for redevelopment of site to provide a school transport depot. The report highlighted that works would include; surfacing, drainage, lighting, fencing, the installation of an office building and associated works.

(2) The Case Officer outlined the application, with reference to the report, supporting papers and the use of maps, plans and photographs.

(3) The main issues for consideration were: planning policy considerations and the principle of development; visual impact; impact on surrounding residents; contamination; highway safety and associated impacts and flood risk.

(4) The Case Officer's presentation covered: a description of the site; the background and planning history; details of the proposal and plan; consultation responses from external and internal consultees and the public; the Case Officer's comments on planning policy considerations and the key issues set out in (3) above and matters raised in objections; and the Case Officer's conclusions.

(5) The Case Officer explained that:

- The site is well screened with dense hedgerow and tree boundaries.
- The parking is sustainable, highly accessible by foot, cycling and by public transport.
- The site is largely level in nature, with a slight drop to deal with run off effectively.
- The impact on surrounding residents/uses is minimal given its semi-industrial location and good road network.
- There had been no objections from the County Highways Department subject to the imposition of suitable conditions.
- The site is previously developed land, in a stable location, which would provide economic benefit in terms of employment.

(6) The Case Officer reported that no neighbour objections had been received, and that the two local County Councillors had been consulted, Cllr A Bown, County Councillor for Bridgwater West electoral division and Cllr M Caswell, County Councillor for Cannington electoral division. Cllr Bown had expressed concerns

regarding extra traffic affecting a Hinckley Point route. Cllr Caswell supported the application, commending the safe and sustainable transport for school children. It was further highlighted that one objection had been received from Chiltern Trinity Parish Council regarding traffic and that this was addressed in 7.1.2 of the report.

(7) In his conclusion the Case Officer commented that: the site is sustainable, available, and will allow for growth of the depot itself in accordance with local and national policy.

(8) The Committee heard from the following, with their comments/views summarised as shown, to which the Case Officer responded:

*(i) Chris Winn - Somerset County Council, Planning Agent and Principal Design Officer for the project: who raised a number of points including: the inception of the plan and support of the pre-planning application, with various identified issues able to be resolved with further detailed information and mitigation, as required, in accordance with the policies of the Sedgemoor District Local Plan. The information prepared for the application had been increased to match with the pre-planning advice. That following the submission of the planning application there were a few concerns from consultees and an objection from Chilton Trinity Parish council, the Parish council concerns relating to the traffic generation and vehicle movements have been addressed in the transport statement. The professional opinion is that there are no risks with the transporting somerset vehicle movements along the road past the waste transfer station.*

*(ii) Oliver Woodhams, Head of Corporate Property, who raised a number of points including: Somerset County Council operates a fleet of passenger carrying vehicles within the Council's Transporting Somerset team, primarily for use to provide a home to school transport function and is currently based at its Bridgwater transport depot, located in central Bridgwater. The existing depot site does not have the capacity for the new size, higher environmental standard vehicles and is not fit for purpose; therefore, the Transporting Somerset business must relocate. The new vehicles are to provide school transport, thereby contributing to the Council's commitments on climate change; the vehicles also enable the Council to intervene in the local coach operator market which has had a beneficial impact on pricing. The proposed site is adjacent to a potential solar farm project, which (in the future) could provide electricity to charge the vehicles in the Transporting Somerset fleet therefore contributing to reducing the councils' carbon footprint. The Mount street site has a buyer the sale would*

reduce the SCC estates liabilities and generate capital funds which for property re-investment to deliver the council's wider objectives.

(9) The Committee proceeded to discuss the proposal during which members expressed their support for the application.

(10) The Committee Chair provided a summary of the points raised, noting a well worked application, with the outcome of the debate indicating that the traffic movements were not a concern in the area.

(11) Cllr S Coles, seconded by Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, moved the recommendation and the Committee **RESOLVED** that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the imposition of the conditions set out in section 9 of the relevant report, and that authority to undertake any minor non-material editing which may be necessary to the wording of those conditions be delegated to the Service Manager – Planning & Development.

(The meeting ended at 11.50)

CHAIR