

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21st October, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

In the Council Chamber at the Council House Walsall

Present

Councillor Bird (Chairman)
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor Arif (arrived at 5.45)
Councillor Ault
Councillor Beeley
Councillor P. Bott
Councillor Douglas-Maul
Councillor P. Hughes
Councillor Madeley
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Munir
Councillor Robertson
Councillor Sarohi

1891/08 Apologies

Apologies for non attendance were received on behalf of Councillors Ali, Flower, MG Pitt and Underhill.

1892/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1893/08 Deputations and Petitions

There were no deputations received or petitions submitted.

1894/08 Application number 08/0951/OL - Walsall Gigaport – Outline Application (Access only considered). Erection of 127,000 sqm of B1 (A) offices, a 4,206 sqm data centre, 4,300 sqm hotel with conference facilities, 23,195 sqm of live/work space, a 5,890 sqm health and sports facility and 621 sqm of A1/A3 (retail/non-retail) floorspace together with associated highways works, public transport facilities, new public square, landscaping and car parking. (Revision of planning application

application reference 07/2659/OL/W7) at Land North of Walsall Town Centre, Bounded by Littleton Street West, Hatherton Street, Hatherton Road, Wisemore Roundabout, Green Lane, Blue Lane East, Portland Street, North Street, Teddesley Street, Arboretum Gyratory, Walhouse Road and Lichfield Street, Walsall

Prior to consideration of this item the Chair sought Committee's agreement to to afford each speaker with 10 minutes in which to address committee. Members of the Committee considered the suggestion and it was **resolved:-**

That speakers be afforded 10 minutes in which to address the Committee.

The planning officer gave a detailed presentation on the application and highlighted key aspects including the proposed data centre and the creation of a business incubation centre. Indicative scales were presented to Committee though it was stated these were not to be agreed as part of the outline application. During his submission, the officer drew members attention to the supplementary paper circulated at the meeting. This detailed a further public participation response, an additional consultation response from Leisure, Culture and Lifelong learning and revised conditions.

The Committee then welcomed the first speaker, Mr Caddick who spoke against the application. Mr Caddick objected as, in his view, the application was too ambitious and unachievable. He made reference to neighbouring authorities that had approved such schemes and noted that many aspects had not been undertaken. In addition, he raised concern that the road infrastructure would be unable to cope with the additional traffic, generated by the proposal. The application would also impact upon long established businesses in Walsall due to the proposed metro route.

The Committee then welcomed Mr Cromer who wished to speak in support of the application. Mr Cromer stated that the application would transform the economy. The proposal showed a commitment to Walsall and would provide certainty and assist in aligning resources to achieve delivery. Whilst the application was outline only it was the applicant's full intention to provide high quality design, a new public square and high quality business space. The proposal would provide around 3,000 jobs over time and ensure Walsall was a vibrant town. Improved public transport links, aligning education to the new business sector and providing the United Kingdom's first new fibre optic centre were key reasons to approve the scheme.

There then followed a period of questioning by members.

It was asked whether there would be adequate facilities within the new public square for the provision of public toilets. In response, Mr Cromer stated that this would be included within the design brief.

The Chair asked whether any firm interest had been received in respect of the proposal, given that the economy was in decline. In response, Mr Cromer

stated that the application was in outline and should approval be granted they would be approaching a number of developers to discuss taking the application forward from outline, to a full application.

There then followed a number of questions relating to the creation of jobs, whether it was possible to build the data centre as a stand alone development and the provision of car parking.

There then followed a period of questioning to Officers. To ensure members were fully aware of the proposal the 'fly through' was shown once again and the planning officer talked Committee through the application.

Officers were asked whether the proposed level of car parking would be sufficient. In response, it was stated that an increased emphasis would be placed on public transport and use of 'park and ride' schemes. Cycle lanes would also be provided. In this vein it was asked whether the road network would suffer as a result of the application. The Officer advised that should the application not go ahead the network would deteriorate.. Approving the application could achieve improvements to the predicted situation. This was due to the fact that the application, if approved would provide funding to address traffic issues.

The Committee then continued to discuss the application in detail and identified the need for a cohesive approach to the provision of public transport.

Members considered the application and Councillor Bird **moved** and it was duly **seconded** by Councillor Micklewright:-

That planning application 08/0951/OL be approved subject to the conditions as contained in the report and supplementary paper now submitted and Referral to Government Office.

The motion having been put to the vote was declared carried with members voting unanimously in favour of the application.

Resolved

That planning application 08/0951/OL be approved subject to the conditions as contained in the report and supplementary paper now submitted and Referral to Government Office.

Councillor Arif, having arrived during deliberation of the application did not take part or vote on the application.

Termination of meeting

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6.45 p.m.

Signed:

Date: