

Consultation on the development of the Goods Yard Site

Response by Bishop's Stortford Town Council

31 January 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Council has been asked to comment on the 2020 Vision group document entitled Goods Yard Development Brief February 2004. The Council understands that the comments will be used by the 2020 vision group to aid the development of a revised brief for this site and that the Council will have an opportunity to comment further on the draft of the new document prior to finalisation. The Council welcomes the pro-active approach taken in assessing options for this site and is keen to engage in shaping the future of this and other significant sites in the Town.

BISHOP'S STORTFORD GOODS YARD SITE

Given the age of the document on which it has been asked to comment, and the significant changes which have occurred since it was drawn up, the Council does not think it appropriate to make detailed observations on the document itself. Instead it has chosen to outline the key elements of a development which it believes would be beneficial and appropriate to the site.

The Council is mindful that this area of the Town has many buildings which are in poor condition or derelict and that a well conceived development on the site is a major opportunity to bring new facilities to the town and re-vitalise the south end which has suffered in recent years. This site is far more suited to a major development than the Causeway site which was the subject of a recent planning application and the Council would prefer to see development concentrated on this site rather than at the Causeway.

The Council is conscious that there is a shortage of quality office accommodation in the town. The survey conducted in 2009 identified lack of local employment as one of the concerns of residents. With its excellent transport connections, highly qualified workforce and proximity to Stansted Airport, Bishop's Stortford potentially represents an ideal location for foreign companies looking for a European or UK hub as well as companies wanting to relocate from London. Without suitable accommodation, however, this potential cannot be realised. With its location immediately adjacent to the railway the site is ideally suited to high quality commercial accommodation and one of a very few sites which are suitable. This is therefore an essential element of any development. A modest sized hotel, suitable for the visitors to this office space as well as other customer groups, should be considered.

Whilst residents have expressed general satisfaction with shopping facilities it is well recognised that the Town lacks a major 'anchor' store and there is little or no suitable property. This site is again well suited to such a development which would provide a 'draw' for shoppers to the south end of the town revitalising the retail business in this area. Together with the large stores (including Waitrose and Pearsons) at the North end of town this would result in a coherent 'bookended' retail circuit which would encourage shoppers to explore the whole of the central retail area. This would also serve the newly built office accommodation and railway users.

Residential accommodation should be high quality comprising principally family homes with good sized rooms and roof gardens. For example such housing could be built on top of the office and retail accommodation to achieve overall a high density. The Council does not oppose development of height in this area so long as historic views (for

example views of St Michael's Church from the London and Hallingbury Roads) are preserved.

Car parking is of course essential. Attractive multi-storey and/or underground facilities would be appropriate.

A redesigned transport interchange, perhaps under cover, would optimise space utilisation and provide enhanced transfer options which may help encourage the use of public transport providing some relief to the ever growing pressure of private cars.

Traffic planning of any link road through the site would need to consider carefully the effect on neighbouring roads.

In summary therefore the Council urges the 2020 vision group to draw up a development brief which encompasses the following elements:

- Quality office accommodation suitable for international and 'city' organisations
- A retail development incorporating a major 'anchor' store
- High quality family accommodation, perhaps built on top of the non-residential space
- A modest size high quality hotel
- Attractive multi story car parking

The Council looks forward to reviewing and commenting upon the draft updated brief.