

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 July 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Flavell (Chair); Councillor Golby (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Aziz, Davies, Hallam, Hibbert, Lane, Lynch, Meredith and
Oldham

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aziz, N. Choudary and Mason.

2. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED: That Messrs Bricher, Barlow and Saunders and Councillors
Hadland and Strachan be granted leave to address the Committee
in respect of item 4A N/2012/0314 and N/2012/0315.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Golby declared a Personal interest in item 4(a) N/2012/0314 and
N/2012/0315 as a County Councillor.

Councillor Hallam declared a Personal interest in item 4(a) N/2012/0314 and
N/2012/0315 as a County Councillor.

Councillor Lynch declared a Personal interest in item 4(a) N/2012/0314 and
N/2012/0315 as a County Councillor.

Councillor Meredith declared a Personal interest in item 4(a) N/2012/0314 and
N/2012/0315 as a County Councillor.

Councillor Oldham declared a Personal interest in item 4(a) N/2012/0314 and
N/2012/0315 as a Co-Chair of the Pensioners Forum.

4. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL APPLICATIONS

**(A) N/2012/0314 AND N/2012/0315- PROVISION OF A NEW 21- STAND BUS
INTERCHANGE (12NO STANDS ON THE FISHMARKET SITE ACCESSED
VIA SILVER STREET, 2NO STANDS ON BRADSHAW STREET AND 7NO
STANDS ON THE DRAPERY) A TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTRE,
PASSENGER FACILITIES (INCLUDING TOILET, WAITING AREA,
SEATING, RETAIL/CAFE KIOSK) AND STAFF FACILITIES. DEMOLITION
OF THE EXISTING FISHMARKET BUILDING, TOILET BLOCK AND
ANCILLARY BUILDINGS AND PART DEMOLITION OF 5 AND 7 SHEEP
STREET (INCLUDING THE RETENTION OF FRONT FACADES, THE
REINSTATEMENT OF ROOFS, THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE GABLE**

END OF 5 SHEEP STREET AND PROVISION OF A SINGLE RETAIL UNIT) AND THE CLOSURE OF THE SUBWAY UNDER GREYFRIARS TO MAYORHOLD CAR PARK; AND CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT FOR DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING FISHMARKET BUILDING, TOILET BLOCK AND ANCILLARY BUILDINGS, THE PART DEMOLITION OF NUMBERS 5&7 SHEEP STREET (INCLUDING THE RETENTION OF FRONT FACADES, THE REINSTATEMENT OF ROOFS, THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE GABLE END OF 5 SHEEP STREET) TO ALLOW FOR THE PROVISION OF A NEW 21-STAND BUS INTERCHANGE WITH RETAILING.

The Head of Planning submitted a report in respect of applications N/2012/0314 and N/2012/0315, elaborated thereon and referred to the Addendum that set out further responses from the Town Centre Manager, The Victorian Society, Northamptonshire Police, the Town Centre Conservation Area Advisory Committee, Natural England, NCC Archaeology, Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, and Stagecoach as well as Officer responses where appropriate, an additional condition in respect of a drainage strategy, an update on the Environmental Impact Assessment and a correction to Condition 2 in respect of N/2012/0314. In the light of the comments of the Environment Agency, the Head of Planning proposed that should the Committee be minded to approve N/2012/0314, that recommendation 1.1 set out in the report be amended by both making approval subject to the removal by the Environment Agency of their objection as set out in the Addendum, and also by giving the Head of Planning delegated authority to impose any appropriate conditions to meet the requirements of the Environment Agency.

Mr Bricher stated that he believed that the proposal did not make best use of the area and that not all of the site was to be used: the scheme may work well most of the time but in a cramped town centre environment it would be vulnerable to traffic congestion. He noted that the bus operators had not anticipated much difference in service levels in the short term but queried what the situation might be in five years. The Town was still growing and the bus operators would want to take advantage of this. Mr Bricher noted the intention to use the Drapery and asked where any new routes would go. He stated that the site was more awkward to use as the Council appeared reluctant to use compulsory purchase powers to acquire the whole site: apparently this was not seen as "value for money". However, he believed that by making this investment the Interchange would be able to cope with virtually all circumstances. The architect would be able to make an even better job of the design. He urged that the current plans be withdrawn and use be made of the other properties: Greyfriars had been a headache for 40 years but he did not want this scheme to become a folly.

Mr Barlow, on behalf of Northampton Bus Users Group, stated that they welcomed the concept but had some concerns. Since 1976 all bus services had left from a single point of departure, Greyfriars. Now buses would depart from three different locations. He queried where the bus lay-over facilities would be as bus drivers currently had their mandatory 45 minute break in Northampton. Mr Barlow commented that an estimated 125 buses per hour would be passing through the pelican crossings and stated that the phasing of the lights would be critical to avoid congestion. Connected to this were public safety concerns, in particular for school children crossing Silver Street. He observed that the proposed roundabout at the King Street, Silver Street, Bradshaw Street, College Street junction could cause

stacking of buses within the Interchange. Mr Barlow commented that the development of the Enterprise Zone might lead to new bus routes being created and queried if these could be accommodated within the scheme. He believed that the scheme would be more viable if it used the whole of the site. In answer to a question, Mr Barlow stated that he believed that Warrington had had a similar situation to Northampton and had built their bus interchange in conjunction with a shopping centre and had been able to have all services departing from the one location and the approaches to it were adequate for passengers from any direction.

Mr Saunders, the Architect, stated that the new Interchange had been designed with reference to the CAAP and the proposal had been located on this site following an exhaustive site selection process. He believed that the scheme would provide a modern, welcoming and safe facility promoting the use of public transport. He noted that the stands in the Drapery would be linked to the same real time information technology as would be available in the Interchange itself. He commented that toilets and full baby changing and disabled facilities were provided. Mr Saunders stated that five existing buildings would be demolished and that 3 and 5 Sheep Street would be renovated and brought back into use within the scheme. He believed that the scheme would provide an improved pedestrian environment with the cantilever roof design providing protection from the weather: there were other improvements to the public realm. In answer to questions Mr Saunders stated that in respect of the elderly and the disabled the Interchange would be on one level and fully accessible to all stands; that discussions were continuing as to improvements in the Drapery such as new bus stops and the provision of real time information; that the bus companies had been consulted and he understood that lay-off and drivers rest facilities were to be provided elsewhere and did not form part of the proposal; and that the existing Borough Crest and other original features were to be worked into the scheme.

Councillor Hadland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, stated that site selection and deliverability of the proposal were important considerations. The proposal would move the centre of gravity of the Town Centre to give better access to the Market Square, The Drapery and Gold Street: it would also unlock the Grosvenor site for redevelopment. He believed that the proposal would provide modern, well designed facilities that would ultimately make savings for the taxpayer. Councillor Hadland noted that the railway station was to be redesigned and this scheme would complement that one as well.

Councillor Strachan stated that ideally he would have preferred more public consultation but the Town needed to be competitive with its neighbours; sometimes there was a need to rebrand and relaunch and to be able to do this it was necessary to offer improved facilities. In order for the Town Centre to improve its market share commercially, an investment had to be made in its facilities. He believed that the proposal was a good news story that would provide a new modern facility. It may also allow a link to the new railway station which was another good design. Together they would help to bring the Town on a par with its neighbours.

The Head of Planning commented that the capacity and highways aspects of the Bus Interchange had been exhaustively modelled and reminded the Committee that it needed to make a judgement on the application on the basis of what had been submitted. He confirmed Mr Saunders comments concerning the toilets and changing facilities. In answer to questions the Head of Planning commented that:

- There would be two, possibly three drop-off spaces in Sheep Street along with two disabled spaces and two taxi spaces;
- At present national coach services would be provided elsewhere but the proposed Interchange may be capable of handling them;
- The capacity of the scheme conformed to the projections up to 2026 included in the Bus Development Plan and had been tested against all the relevant development plans for that timespan;
- The scheme could be further developed if other land became available in the future;
- In terms of the surface finishes in the Drapery and elsewhere samples of materials would have to be approved;
- It may be feasible that short stay parking could be provided where the disused bicycle racks were located but that this area was not within the site boundary;
- The bus operators had raised no objections to the proposal and Stagecoach in particular has engaged in the development process as evidenced by its submissions in the Addendum;
- The technical issue with the Environment Agency was for the applicant to resolve;
- If the Committee were to refuse the application the emerging CAAP would still have weight in the context of any resulting appeal; and
- The bus stops in the Drapery would have the same real time information as that provided in the Bus Interchange.

The Committee discussed the applications.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Planning Application be approved subject to the removal of the Environment Agency objection and delegation to the Head of Planning to impose any necessary conditions as a result of this; the application of the conditions set out in the report and in the Addendum as the proposals would deliver sustainable development and substantial public benefit in compliance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Submission Central Area Action Plan (2012).
 2. That the Conservation Area Application be approved subject to referral to the Secretary of State and the conditions as set out in the report and amended in the Addendum as the demolition works would release the site for redevelopment facilitating the delivery of sustainable development and substantial public benefit in compliance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the emerging Central Area Action Plan (2012).

The meeting concluded at 19.52 hours.

