

THE SHERBORNE AND DISTRICT SOCIETY

James Lytton-Trevers, Case Officer
Dorset Council,
South Walks House,
South Walks Road,
Dorchester,
DORSET DT1 1UZ

16 June 2019

Dear Mr Lytton-Trevers,

LAND SOUTH OF PADDOCK GARDENS / THE PADDOCK PROJECT **Application No. WD/D/18/002619- Committee Hearing on 18 June**

As Chairman of The CPRE Sherborne and District Society, we have written objection letters on this matter on the 12 December 2018 and the 21 January 2019. These letters showed serious concerns about the above Application concerning the Paddock project – “the Project”. Following various amendments to the Project uploaded to the Dorset Council –“DC”, web-site between the 20 May and 6 June and liaison with Heritage England, we write to update you and the Planning Committee on our current views. In summary we have had constructive discussions with the applicants and now withdraw our objection.

But we insist that severe conditions are placed on any permission that might be granted. Further that any agreements reached by DC for the use of the Old Market Car Park takes account of the parking position explained below and in earlier letters both during and after the construction phase. Lastly the lease by Sherborne Town Council –“STC”, for the use of Paddock Gardens contains tough provisions for rejuvenation and reinstatement of that Garden with an adequate and committed budget.

Paddock Gardens

We are pleased with the revised treatment of the Southern wall and the repositioning of the main building south by one metre. We are disappointed that no attempt has been made to alter the entrance for large objects. Given the heights of the Galleries we feel it would be possible to have an entrance from the Old Market Car Parks. However we are prepared to accept the part destruction of the West Wall as long as the end result remains, if proper works are carried out, a basically walled and in part quiet garden, as originally designed but now rejuvenated and replanted.

The garden is owned Sherborne Town Council –STC- who have with solicitors, produced a proposal to lease part of these Gardens and include provisions for reinstatement and maintenance of the Garden. It is our view that if planning permission is granted DC should insert a condition that the Applicants make a suitable payment to STC to start the replanting and updating process going with a suitable designer. We will assist in

Dorset CPRE | Charity no: 211974
PO Box 9018 | Dorchester | Dorset | DT1 9GY
www.dorset-cpre.org.uk Tel: 0333 577 0360

suggestions of choice of designer in liaison with SAT – the Applicant. In addition the condition should deal with future maintenance and access to the Garden.

There is still no indication of the time it will take to develop the site and then reinstate the lower lawn and flower beds by the south and west walls. Further there is no plan filed for the site during the building phase. Again a condition of the approval should include a development plan. This should deal with such questions as whether any part of the Garden will be a store for materials or the site for, say, a crane (modern building methods particularly when they concern a hall or gallery with a large span seem to imply a crane should be used). If the whole garden is so used, it deprives Sherborne of the one quiet open space for an indefinite period. Perhaps consideration should be given for the upper part of the garden to be fenced off for the duration of works and the lower half used as the constructors' site deem appropriate but with guarantees given on reinstatement with a budget to a rejuvenated low maintenance plan. It is imperative that a condition is placed for this in the development plan.

Parking and loss of parking spaces for a major tourist attraction

The Local Development Plan adopted in October 2015 with Policy ECON 5 iii) is still in force. This Policy and the requirement in the NPPF for provision of a gallery are not mentioned by Ove Arup. Instead the Ove Arup report after amendments (we believe prompted by one of our Committee members), concludes that there is a need for, say, 55 extra parking spaces. Their view is that this can be met by the other parking spaces in Sherborne. This viewpoint is nonsense as Ove Arup ignore the behavioural characteristics of the high proportion of elderly population visiting Cheap Street, the Post Office, Banks and Waitrose. If the car parks of Waitrose and Old Market are full they might go elsewhere, but we doubt it as many cannot walk the distances involved from Culverhayes (uphill) and Acreman Street. Visitors to the Gallery and the Town will not be accommodated and will drive around the narrow streets of Sherborne with mounting frustration and frustration. Cheap Street will lose trade rather than gain it.

Then there is the potential horror of the construction phase. There is no plan as to where the vehicles for the construction workers will park. For the nursing home on the South side of Bradford Road of similar size to the Gallery, 35 cars, vans and vehicles were counted on a weekday: the same number rolls in every day of every week in this phase of the building process.. We expect the same number of vehicles plus delivery lorries which will interfere with local traffic. Maybe a crane will be needed to service the Project during the building phase. The town needs to know where this all will be located. DC as owner of the Old Market Car park (and of course the 15 parking spaces lost to the project for access), has a duty to set forth its position as to whether they will for consideration consent to the Car park being taken over in whole or in part during the construction phase. So far they have not done so. It may be that in meetings with the Applicants they have given some sort of comfort. It is our view a dereliction of DC's duty to Sherborne not to comment in this connection in order for proper, sensible parking conditions to be formulated in a transparent manner.

We do not accept the “no comment” of DC's Highways Department. More importantly there should be made available a report outlining the potential revenue lost if the Applicants use the car park and what charges will be made if they take over the 15 spaces and propose to use the car park in part. It is vital given the fragility of the retail climate and shops in Cheap Street that DC protects the trade in Cheap Street. A condition as to parking and usage of the Old Market Car Park has to be made. We suggest this should be to ban all tradesman / workers vans from the Old Market Car Park and, say, provide space for them elsewhere

Dorset CPRE | Charity no: 211974
PO Box 9018 | Dorchester | Dorset | DT1 9GY
www.dorset-cpre.org.uk Tel: 0333 577 0360

e.g. land at the back of Sherborne House. Of course there should be a proper development plan too as mentioned above. .

No business plan – major tourist attraction

A further letter has been filed by the Applicant in an attempt to meet the requirement of Paragraph 4.5.8 of the Local Development Plan. This letter is once again a cherry-picked extract from the secret and unpublished AEA Consulting Feasibility Study. The key requirement in the LDP is to give a plan for:

“The longer term viability of the enterprise, levels of spend and the amount of money expected to be drawn into the local economy, and likely impact on the vitality and viability of nearby town or local centres”.

To date nothing has been produced except a statement that the benefactor will support the Project for four years and thereafter the Project should be self-funding. A simple projection of expected income analysed by source and most importantly analysed expense categories for 7 years could allay fears of an empty buff elephant at the end of Paddock Garden. However, STC and DC will have to lease respectively part of Paddock Gardens and parts of the Old Market Car Park to SAT – the legal owners of the Project. We believe that the two lessors have a public duty to make sure that SAT is financially viable for the period of the lease. We expect them now to do their due diligence and their public duty which would imply they should see a proper business plan and explore the position of longer term viability.

The absence of a business plan with the impact assessment on the local economy of Cheap Street means shops and restaurants in Sherborne and most importantly Cheap Street do not know whether the Project will enhance or damage their trading prospects. Certainly the loss of parking space and the utilisation by visitors and staff of parking space in the locality will reduce footfall in Cheap Street severely and hence damage the local economy and employment.

Visual aspect & Impact on Sherborne House

We are pleased that meetings with Historic England have resulted in revisions to the plan and elevations of the Gallery. This is important since the Gallery will be on axis with Grade I Sherborne House. We consider that the revisions have produced tangible improvements, in that the elevation to the Paddock Garden no longer impinges on the garden itself, and the timber colonnade has been replaced by a frontage of regularly spaced stone piers that are also picked up on the south and west elevations. This results overall in a more integrated and coherent design. In the judgement of the CPRE Sherborne & District Society the scheme, though still not of outstanding architectural quality, is now sufficiently improved in design terms that we can accept its presence in the heart of one of this country's most attractive small historic towns. This is so despite the fact that we do not feel the new building will actively enhance the setting or make a positive contribution to the conservation of Sherborne House.

Sherborne Town Council

Dorset CPRE | Charity no: 211974
PO Box 9018 | Dorchester | Dorset | DT1 9GY
www.dorset-cpre.org.uk Tel: 0333 577 0360

The Campaign to protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

Sherborne Town Council in a note of 12 June supports this application, but raises the following concerns: -

- The loss of 15 parking spaces in the Old Market Car Park.
- The lack of disabled parking bays in the Old Market Car Park.
- The uncertainty regarding overflow and Coach parking arrangements.
- Requests that Dorset Council mitigates the loss of car parking spaces.
- The lack of information relating to the Carbon Footprint of the proposed building.
- Requests the inclusion of comprehensive planning conditions associated with construction process to avoid disruption within the Town.

We wholeheartedly endorse this list of concerns and would add to this our concern over the terms of the lease of the Garden by STC and whether funding of the rejuvenation and future maintenance of Paddock Gardens is guaranteed.

Conclusion

Taking all the above comments under the various headings into account we do not now object to permission being given to the Application and it should not be refused. However there should be a schedule of conditions to deal with the specific concerns raised in this and previous letters. Since there is no draft schedule of conditions and due to the short time for consultation on this Application for the deferred Meeting of the Committee, we insist that this document – the schedule of conditions should go through a proper public scrutiny process and come before a future meeting of the Planning Committee.

Disclaimer

Whilst we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration, as we are not a decision maker or statutory consultee, we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching your decision.

Yours sincerely

John A Newman