

Draft Minutes of Special BCC Meeting on 26th August 2010

Chair: Jon Hardy

Present:

For BCC: Hazel Dakers, Andrew Dakers, Nigel Moore, Chris Dakers, Matthew Rockel, Stephen Browne

For Montague Evans: Tim Miles

For ISIS: David Rudkin (for URBED) Christopher Breslin

For Ferry Quays Residents Association: Nic Doczi, Agata Henderson

**Item 1: Expansion of PC World but installing a mezzanine floor.
Presentation by Tim Miles from Montague Evans on behalf DSGI**

TM explained that the current Curries on Great West Road would swap premises with PC world if their current planning application for a mezzanine of 2000sqm was approved (1400sqm display space the rest storage) TM explained that Curries were following a 'mega store' store model in response to current consumer trends that required the entire stock range to be on display and for customers to receive expert advice from staff; the mezzanine would be used for display of large item white goods- washing machines and fridge freezers etc.

The idea was that customers could also 'try out' items in a positive scenario – he provided some visual renderings of such an environment. Since consumers need / require the staff to have better knowledge than currently large customer service areas would be required for this.

TM said that since DSGI do not develop, they only lease buildings, they wanted a centrally located site with a large surface parking requirement and good road links; this was a national approach. alternatives sequential approach taken As else where they had taken a sequential approach in Brentford to explore alternatives but no sites met the criteria other than the existing site. The High Street had been discounted because DSGI need to move now rather than wait for Ballymore to move.

TM said that impact on Town Centre had been assessed and the conclusion was that since 'like attracts like,' the expanded store would likely diverts trade from other traders of similar type and size (such as Comet) rather than impact on smaller retailers (such as Euronics in Albany Parade. He pointed out that DSGI have stores at Hounslow High Street who specialise in smaller goods and they would be hardly likely to set up competition with themselves that would impact of the trade of these outlets.

He said that the diversion of trade from Brentford High Street was calculated at 1% from Brentford High Street. The rationale was that, since there is generally an increased spending curve/trend this 1% will not damage High Street Brentford since it is swallowed by increased turnover year on year.

It was pointed out that 1% of turnover was actually quite a lot since the burden of this would fall on a small number of traders and could be the determining factor of survival for some businesses especial during the current climate. There was therefore the danger of losing these businesses from the High Street with a concurrent loss of diversity.

HD pointed out that customer service in large stores is usually poor and asked if the range of suppliers to Currys would be diminished. TM responded by saying that the mega-store concept included a commitment to staff-training in customer service. He also confirmed that the expansion actually meant a deepening of the range with the full range of goods being displayed

Asked how much additional footfall Currys anticipated, TM said up to 20% and that travel consultants had been employed and they had concluded transport movements would be additional 6 vehicles arriving at a peak hour: most additional traffic would be at weekends. The company would be entering into a travel plan: they were currently negotiating with LBH over an additional contribution into public transport investment.

It was pointed out that there was an Apple retail site on the West Cross Site and whether or not there had been any consideration as to the impact to business the expanded building would have: TM did not feel that there would be as they were effectively different businesses with different product streams.

AD asked that since there was an acknowledgement of some impact on the Town Centre whether there had been a consideration of compensation to offset this? TM responded that none was being considered: the accrued benefits of the scheme were considered to be employment and better consumer choice.

TM agreed to respond latterly to the question of the height of undercroft of mezzanine: members were concerned that the result would be as claustrophobic as that of Tesco's. his e-mail is attached separately.

2. ISIS presentation – PowerPoint presentation attached

By David Rudkin and Chris Brisling

DR began with a recap of previous presentations and various consultation events that had taken place – looking at where Brentford is and its development through time to the current status (of decline).

Various conclusions had been reached:

- Brentford has a low walk-in radius compared with Ealing which meant the Town Centre had a difficult viability.
- Debate between commercial vs. residential development had resulted in a conclusion that development on Commerce Road should be largely residential

with some commercial and this would help the viability of Brentford as a Town Centre.

- That the form/structure of the existing sheds should be retained to acknowledge the heritage of the site and preserve character particularly the Art deco frontages on Commerce road
- Access through the site was critical. A key element would be a new bridge to the other side of the canal landing in public park – pedestrian only

DR disclosed the news that Brompton Bikes possibly moving into the end shed and having a showroom there.

The current proposals had a housing mix of 35% 3-5 bed units – larger apartments – in a Swedish design similar to Malmo in Sweden, or Hammerby in Stockholm. There are Urbed schemes in Portishead nr Bristol and also in Brighton and the Greenwich Millenium Village.

There were to be some town houses but the majority of units were largely apartments with dual aspect. The height of the scheme is predominantly 5 stories with occasional 6 stories with a 9-11 stories at the back of the site adjacent to the canal and railway. Parking was to be accommodated in a semi-basement.

LBH currently had concerns over privacy distances: the actual distances between buildings are only 14m (street-width) whereas a 20m distance is required. Isis was working on this: they did not wish the development to feel cramped or canyon-like and believed this could be achieved by off-setting building lines.

On Commerce Rd it was proposed to have double height commercial units with flats over: this would diminish the intrusive effect of passing busses from the existing garage.

Other features of the current proposals are:

- An emphasis on the public realm: the architects are attempting trying to create permeability throughout the development.
- Water management focused on recycling and draining into the canal.
- Spatial routes: establishing 'water gates' into the development leading off the tow path which would be widened to encourage walking/cycling.

To further avoid 'canyon of development' they want to establish a Canal Square area at the North end of the development near where the landing of the west arm of the potential footbridge and the question was how best to enclose the space and give it form since it is quite a large space.

A Water space Strategy was referred to which includes Freight 'node' south of the High St: however this is speculative as it would occur on land not in ISIS control. A question was asked about where new moorings could be established but this was not really answered.

Regarding Transport, ISIS representatives stressed that there would be a variety of measures to discourage car use:

- A car club
- Cycle parking in line w TfL standards
- Only 0.6 to 0.7 parking spaces/unit

However, since the PTAL is only 2/3 and the canal restricts the connectivity it was acknowledged that the car will still play a significant role though traffic generation will be only 50% of the previous scheme. There would be improvements to London Road Junction with Commerce Road.

The developers said that the scheme would be Policy compliant: there would be an 'attempt to meet if not exceed all standards.'

As regards Sustainability: 30% of roof space would be green roofs; the use of photovoltaic cells and CHP and/or district heating is being considered widely. It was likely that such a district heating/CHP plant would be housed in the first two storeys of the 13 storey block on the north end of the site.

In terms of pressure on local facilities the BAAP allowed for an increase in population and the scheme would not exceed the headroom this gave. Later on there was a community concern that this notwithstanding the reality of the matter is that the new facilities required for education and health were not forthcoming and unlikely to be so given the financial climate.

HD questioned if the reason behind the 13 storey block was that ISIS had paid too much for the land: she felt tall blocks were an anathema to the area. This was not directly answered though the ISIS representatives said *they* had not been driven by inflated land values in designing the buildings though they appreciated the height was a point for debate. LBH had appointed an independent consultant to address this issue.

AH asked about the idea of young families in flats and what facilities for children would be provided and how nearby would these be? She spoke of the experience of living in Ferry Quays where children hung around because there was a deficit of facilities for teens.

ISIS reps replied that all family sized units would have gardens and terraces: there would be access to open space of 75m/household. In addition the proposed footbridge to Robin Grove Park would give access to that facility. There would also be the squares and courtyards within the developments as well as the Canoe Centre and Brentford Community Sports Centre being nearby. ISIS understood the deficit of facilities in Brentford and the need to contribute to the community.

There was concern about the concept of a play-street that still had access of cars: ISIS said that the concept of a 'home-zone' was well-practised and it would be such that vehicles would be aware they were manoeuvring in a play street SB stated that

any eventual planning permission would need to have stipulations that the area is kid-friendly to ensure that play is built into the concept.

JH asked about Affordable Housing and whether it would be mixed in with other units to create social cohesion – ISIS were not in a position to state what provision there would be regarding this as they were still in negotiations with the planning department.

Other questions were asked about on-site GP provision but JH interjected that any health contributions were likely to be used by the PCT in extending the use of the Brentford Health Centre rather than funding a surgery on site: that had been the conclusion of the GWQ scenario.

A question was asked about the 14m wide streets: would this dictate a lower roofline to ensure that the sky was not above a 45degree elevation: CB replied that the roofline would be varied so that this was not so.

In answer to a query as to whether the need for flood defences would mean that the open spaces in the development would be uphill from the towpath ISIS explained the land adjacent to the canal will be varied by 'water gates' which will be adjacent.

HD also asked about the bridge link to Robin Grove Park raising the question of a wider access route to the Station. CD said he was delighted about the proposed bridge but pointed out the proposed route to the railway station would still be a long way around the West end of the platforms could be directly accessed be accessed. ISIS said that that Network Rail might try and make them fund this improvement - – TfL might help with this perhaps but ISIS did not intend to be held to held to ransom on this account.

In response to a query as to whether there would be shops in the north end commercial part of the development (in competition with the High Street) ISIS said that the intention would be to have a café to encourage GSK workers down the tow-path in order to bring them closer to the High Street and support it in this manner.

A further question about the Commerce Road units, as to whether they would be retail elicited the response that ISIS see this area as a growing chain for SMEs – GWQ doesn't have the critical mass but hopefully this will link in the future. Asked if there had been any consultation on Water space Strategy for the area ISIS replied not as yet as they were still 'struggling to speak to LBH'.

Asked as to what role freight would play in the proposed development ISIS said that BW see this zone as a leisure hub – though they believed freight may pass through: this was in contradiction to what BW's freight tsar said at one of the consultation meetings. ISIS responded to a question relating to the use of waterside to support the various manufacturing operations that they would provide access from the water so that such companies could be stocked from water transport.

3. Lots Ait: a discussion with Ferry Quays representatives on the proposed footbridge

ND gave a brief viewpoint on the matter: Hither Green the developers of Ferry Quays had retained various elements of the Ferry Quays site including Lots Ait. The residents of Ferry Quays were glad to see the recent the development of Soaphouse Creek: now they wished Hither Green to complete their obligations to refurbish Lots Ait as a working boatyard; the residents wanted to see better access along the Thames towpath to Waterman's Park. Hither Green has yoked a bridge to Lots Ait into this development of the Thames Park.

Lots Ait is a boatyard – no other planning permission on the site. There was a great need for a boat yard in the area and this would, with a little development be able to be brought back into proper use and meet a growing demand.

MR pointed out that the boat yard does not need a footbridge to operate so why the desire for it? JH felt that Hither Green were being disingenuous and reminded ND of their misleading statements at the River Brent moorings Inquiry regard the lock gate to Soaphouse Creek. Certainly HG's statements regarding Lot's Ait were not re-assuring. It was noted that initial Ferry Quays development plans show only one dry dock retained rest a harbour for leisure boats. It was suggested that the installation of the bridge could be there to enable filling it up for houseboats.