

Buxton Area Forum
Questions and Answers

Thursday 11th October 2007

Pre-Forum questions

Question

Regarding the new kitchens and bathrooms programme. Could you tell me why tenants have to do the preparation work themselves, i.e. removing wallpaper, taking down bathroom cupboards, fixed blinds, taking up carpets, moving furniture and rolling carpets in the bedroom above the kitchen?

Answer from Mike Coppock, High Peak Community Housing

The tenants are asked 21 days, before the work starts at their property, to remove personal possessions and items from cupboards and walls to assist the contractor starting the works as quickly as possible. Large appliances in the kitchen are moved and re-fixed by the contractor. Occasionally, we ask for carpets to be pulled back in bedrooms to access the electrical supply for the kitchen light. If this is not possible, the fitting can be surface mounted. If plastering is required, wallpaper may need removing, this will give a better finish and a sound base for the painted finish to the kitchen. The kitchen refurbishment has a large amount of work carried out and it is not unreasonable to expect tenants to remove these personal items prior to works starting.

Question

If tenants have to do this work themselves, why are they not told this information straight away i.e. if the first batch of letters sent out last year or when going to view the show house last year? Why are they only told when the Liaison Officer visits a tenant to interview them regarding the start of the programme on their house, approximately 3 weeks prior to work starting?

Answer from Mike Coppock, High Peak Community Housing

Information about the amount of work and disruption was explained at survey stage. Letters which were sent out last year informed tenants when work was starting, but wasn't specific to individual properties, as programmes of work were not finalised and could change throughout the contract – 21 days' notice gives a set start date and sufficient time for any items to be removed.

Question

If a tenant is not able to, or willing to do this work themselves due to various reasons, what would happen, if they then did want the work completing?

Answer from Mike Coppock, High Peak Community Housing

If a tenant is disabled or frail or elderly, the contractor has assisted in moving items. It is only reasonable for able-bodied people to move personal possessions; if this was not done prior to the agreed start date, the contractor would be unwilling to commence works at the property.

Question

Is the new Spring Gardens development going to be a carbuncle or something beautiful that the town can be proud of? How is it going to fit in with the town's heritage and Victorian buildings, as it looks like it will stick out from the plans?

Answer

Design is a subjective issue. We are aiming to create something rooted in Buxton and something that fits in with the Council's planning framework.

Question

How many supermarkets does the town need – surely it needs more smaller niche retailers to attract visitors? A small-scale store is fine, but do we need a supermarket on such a large scale?

Answer

The store will be a medium-sized supermarket, aimed at allowing principal shopping to take place. This will give the opportunity to generate shared trips, where people shop in the supermarket and then stay in the town to shop. Threadneedle owns other retail outlets in the town and wouldn't want these to suffer. The town needs a good supermarket offer and Sainsbury's is a different supermarket to Waitrose.

Questions asked at the forum**Spring Gardens development****Question**

Have you checked with the owners of the Wild Carrot and other retailers in the town, to see if they would leave the town?

Answer

Waitrose is aware of the plans. It would be a commercial decision for other retailers to leave the town. The aim is to attract new shoppers and strengthen retailing in the town. Both Waitrose and M&S have been involved and have been supportive, as they have similar aims. These supermarkets are not seen as head-on competition to Sainsbury's and it is felt that all retailers would benefit from an increase in shoppers

Statement from the floor

Don't think that another supermarket is needed. People do travel into the town to do their main shopping, and another supermarket would make the town less attractive. We would have another run-of-the-mill supermarket town, if this development happened.

Statement

There is a lack of aesthetic appeal of the building in the presentation given. The development doesn't fit in with the buildings that the town currently has. The development seems a bit 'brutal'.

Response

The computer model in the presentation was fairly simplistic and designed to show the overall design of the project. Materials are seen as important and this will be taken into account when the plans are finalised. We will try to draw on the town's traditions in the detail of the design, and it should be seen as a work in progress at the moment.

Question

Does the development cater for disabilities in its design?

Answer

The entrance to the development will be a slight ramp rather than steps. There will also be disabled toilets in the development and there will be no access issues. The development will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Question

Have you carried out a detailed impact analysis of the development? Should we be encouraging local shops and independents to come to the town to give a niche offering?

Answer

Initial work has been carried out. Central and local government policy guides the development and it is not in the developer's interest to make the town less desirable for shopping. There is documented background information that suggests a supermarket may be beneficial.

Question

There is a traffic gridlock of delivery wagons in the town trying to access and exit the service area for Spring Gardens. There is no room for taxis as it is. What alternative arrangements are being made to help the situation?

Answer

This is a serious consideration for the developer and the taxi rank may be relocated to New Wye Street. Deliveries will be regulated to control times and nature of deliveries and to avoid congestion. A lot of other shopping centres around the country experience similar problems.

Question

A new supermarket will affect the takings of small retailers in the town. The Council supports these retailers through the Shop Local initiative. Are the developers interested in their own shops and not niche shops?

Answer

The reasons for having a new supermarket were explained in the presentation (note: Presentation highlighted the need to attract shoppers to the town, who are currently going elsewhere to do their main food shop, as these people would then do other shopping in the town and increase the overall footfall). A Sainsbury's has just opened in Matlock, which is a medium sized store. Research on this project has indicated that working with local retailers was a benefit to retailers generally in the town.

Also, a store has been opened in Dronfield, and this didn't have an impact on local shops. Sainsbury's has experience of this type of development in other towns, and it has helped those areas. Research also indicates that Sainsbury's shoppers would use other local shops as well.

Question

How many of the car parking spaces will Sainsbury's shoppers use and what about the hotel?

Answer

There will be 200 additional spaces to those available now. The hotel will generally use the spaces in the evening and Sainsbury's in the day. Also, all staff employed by Sainsbury's won't be at work at the same time.

Question

Buxton is a unique town, and we need to be aware of this when looking at architectural issues. The plans look identical to developments in other British towns and cities – they take no account of the architectural nature of the town. The area in question does need development, but shouldn't we have great architecture there, rather than a development that you would find in any other town?

Answer

The points made earlier are relevant here, eg, we would hope that the development would reflect the town's local characteristics.

Question

Parking is a concern locally – is 200 extra spaces enough? What about all the extra employees? The development will create more pressure on parking generally.

Answer

Research has shown that most Sainsbury's employees live within 2 miles of the store and walk to work. There will also be travel plan for employees. Also, not all 200 employees would be there at the same time and most employees do work locally.

Pavilion Gardens and Leisure facilities

Question

Why can't High Peak Borough Council do the same as Threadneedle and get developers to fund the leisure centre?

Answer

The whole point of bringing the University in was to lever extra funding that wouldn't have been available otherwise. A Partnership deal between the 2 parties, to build the best facility possible, would be the best option for the leisure centre. We (the council) have got to look at working with partners.

Question

You should be listening to what the people want. I would like the facility in this park (Pavilion Gardens). Will these developments create problems with traffic?

Answer 1

There is a timescale for the leisure project. The whole idea is to listen to what people say, which is why consultation is taking place. Members are accountable to those that elected them.

Answer 2

The Council can't dictate what Threadneedle does. We recognise that the food hall proposal wasn't popular. Additional funding for some of the Pavilion Gardens development would be obtained from University of Derby. The community wants the facility retained, as a community asset, and wouldn't want to lose control, which is what may happen if a developer partner was brought in. The community also needs to use the facility and help make it successful.

Question

Would regular evening use of the building help the building survive? It is hard at the moment to find out information on how to book and make regular use of the facilities.

Answer

We do need to make use of the building in the evening, but it is hard to find a way of running the facility at that time. A heavy emphasis will be placed on this issue in the short-term plans. There is work to be done over the next few months on this.

Statement from the floor

I have been disappointed with the general response to developments in Buxton. The current leisure facility situation is getting drastic. Village green applications hold up developments for the town. Good facilities would encourage people to visit and live in the town. Local people need to work with the local council to make these developments work.

Response

Government legislation does hold up developments for local people through town and village green applications, and they take time to resolve.

Question

A leisure facility wouldn't work in the Pavilion Gardens. Will the café still be there in the proposed Pavilion Gardens idea? Arts, crafts and gift shops don't make the money needed to keep the facility going and putting prices up to make profit doesn't work!

Answer

Arts, crafts and gift shops are not the primary source of income for the facility. The sale of art in the pump room does generate income. The café will be staying and the arts café should be open more.

Local people should also use the facilities more. The overall size of the catering offer would be reduced and the offer would be changed slightly. The café side is highly important. The ice cream parlour will be upgraded and include a seating area.

Question

This is a good proposal for the gardens, but there are reservations. Will the daily tourist come to the facility and use it? Will the 2 ideas work together – of a tourist visiting area and a café for local people to use 7 days a week? How will passing trade work with the central foyer area or hall being cut off? Has a feasibility study been carried out?

Answer

Wedding functions will still be able to take place. The arts café would stay as it is and seating would be increased in the current café area on the ground floor. The aim is to provide good food at good prices. We will try to address all of the concerns raised through this consultation. A study has taken place and a business plan produced.