

## **North Hinksey Annual Parish Meeting – West Way redevelopment plans**

Please note that this report has been produced by the Botley & North Hinksey Community website team from notes taken in the meeting – the official minutes of the meeting will not be available until next year's Annual Parish Meeting.

Julian Seymour (Associate Director, PPS Group) gave a presentation and answered questions in relation to the outcomes of the first round of public consultation. PPS is contracted by Doric to run the consultation process and he explained that he could only answer questions on this and not any possible planning decisions.

Around 1,280 people attended the exhibition days and to date 542 questionnaires had been returned, of which 403 had been analysed to form the basis of his presentation. He reminded the audience that they had until 25th March to return these. Additional copies were available at the meeting and can also be downloaded from the [Doric website](#).

The feedback generally showed a stronger desire for community facilities and units for small retailers and a distinctly lower score for student and residential accommodation. It was pointed out by an audience member that it would have been better if the questionnaire had allowed people to differentiate between the two different types of accommodation to make their views clear on this issue. There was a query about the requirement for the student accommodation, to which Julian said he would email a response to Ag MacKeith.

There was also a feeling that the cinema appeared to be a done-deal, the reply to which was that in order to have more restaurants the cinema was needed. There was concern that without office space, the existing restaurants and cafes struggled, and maybe more are not required.

There were other comments requesting additional sports and health facilities. Concerns about traffic, parking and the future of Elms Parade and Field House were expressed. Mr Seymour informed the audience that free car parking for limited periods of time (as now) was definitely part of the package. A detailed summary of the feedback from the consultation process to date was also handed out at the meeting and will be available on-line when the process is complete.

During the later general question and answer session a related question was asked by the recently formed West Way Community Concern group. Their question was:

### **Question to all Parish Councillors:**

*Following the suggestion in the January 24 Parish Council meeting that a community group could be set up to co-ordinate community views on the West Way redevelopment plans, a group called West Way Community Concern has now been launched aiming to carry out this role. Would the Parish Councillors like to use this opportunity to formally recognise this organisation and state their support for its actions? We should stress that West Way Community Concern exists solely to represent the community's views. It is not a campaigning group and is neutral in its approach to development.*

The Chair (Councillor Andrew Pritchard) welcomed the formation of this community group and the proposal that it should be formally recognised by the Parish Council will be voted on at the next Parish Council Meeting on 27 March as it was not possible for this vote to be carried out at the Annual Parish Meeting. It was pointed out that this will now allow the Parish Council to concentrate on its main role in these development proposals – that of negotiating a suitable replacement for Seacourt Hall. However it was explained that, due to the constraints of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and complications arising from the Planning Application process (Councillors will have to consider this Planning Application in a future Planning Committee meeting) , individual Councillors and the Parish Council as a whole unfortunately could not state in public their active support for any other body involved in this process including West Way Community Concern.

An additional question previously submitted to District Councillor Debby Hallett in writing was answered directly outside of the meeting as Councillor Hallett was unable to attend. At her request we are including the question and answer here as she believes it may be of interest to all members of the community.

**Question submitted by Lorna Berrett:**

In relation to the Westway development plans, please could the Vale District Council confirm the following:

- a. What specific community facilities are Doric legally obliged to provide?
- b. Doric Properties has held a public consultation on the development for the local community. As the developer, Doric's primary objective is to maximise profit from the development. Maximising the profit of the developer may not be consistent with the community's best interests. Please could the Vale Council confirm whether Doric Properties has any legal or contractual obligation whatsoever to take the wishes and concerns of the Botley community into account?

**Response by Councillor Hallett:**

You are right that as developer Doric will want to maximise profit, however, within the various legal agreements there are some requirements to provide the following:

1. Replacement Baptist Church
2. Replacement for Seacourt Hall – this is being negotiated with the Parish council with support from the Vale.
3. Provision of a space for a Library - this is a commercial decision for the county council but they are engaging with this process. This is because the current library is leased and not owned by the county.
4. I think there's also a statement about provision of health/dental practice - but the Vale cannot enforce this as this is down to the NHS. (I can't confirm this, but we can ask Doric.) However, it is our understanding that Doric is positively pursuing this.

I asked about Doric's legal obligation vis-à-vis community consultation. Here's what I was told by Matt Prosser, Strategic Director for the Vale of White Horse.

*In terms of any legal provision for Doric to take on board the needs of the community via consultation, the key here is more about the planning process. So [with] any feedback from the consultation, Doric should show how they are responding to this either via provision if it is a community request for something or mitigation if the community has registered a valid issue of concern i.e. Maybe traffic impact. Clearly this will pick up relevant major issues and not every comment of detail.*

*We did, as part of the legal agreement, require a consultation plan, which Doric were happy to provide and are now delivering via PPS. Although as you say this was part of their business approach anyway.*

When any planning application is registered at the Vale, there is a period of formal public consultation, where the community comments and concerns inform the planning decisions.

The company PPS Group ([www.ppsgroup.co.uk](http://www.ppsgroup.co.uk)) are managing the consulting aspect of this project. You may notice the contact email we've been given is [lindsay.mccallum@ppsgroup.co.uk](mailto:lindsay.mccallum@ppsgroup.co.uk). It's our understanding that it is PPS, rather than Doric, who will be speaking to the parish at the meeting on Thursday the 14th of March.

I hope this answers your questions.