

DORSET COUNCIL - EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chairman), Shane Bartlett (Vice-Chairman), Alex Brenton, Cherry Brooks, Robin Cook, Mike Dyer, Beryl Ezzard, Barry Goringe, David Morgan, David Tooke, Bill Trite and John Worth

Officers present:

Andrew Bradley (Project Engineer), Phil Crowther (Legal Business Partner – Regulatory) and David Northover (Democratic Services Officer).

Speaker

Councillor Bill Trite – Swanage Town Councillor and local resident, minute 70.

66. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received at the meeting.

67. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

Councillor Bill Trite having considered that, by virtue of his involvement as an elected member in the process for the development of the scheme, could be seen to have predetermined what was being proposed. On that basis he had decided not to play any part in the Committee debate or vote on the item, but to speak only as a local Member and as a local Swanage resident.

68. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 were confirmed and signed subject to an amendment - for clarification purposes - being:-

- That reference be made in the penultimate paragraph of the body of the minute 61 text to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provisions at Paragraph 12 stating “*Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted*”.

69. Public Participation

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

70. Footway improvements - Institute Road, Swanage

The Committee were being asked to consider proposed changes to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) governing the use and positioning of loading bays on Institute Road, Swanage to complement and ensure that a footway improvement scheme could be readily accommodated. Institute Road was a one-way road bisecting the south eastern part of the town and formed part of its main retail and commercial centre, being the only vehicular access to the southern half of the town, serving the harbour, quay and Durlston Country Park, as well as residential areas. The proposals for the changes to be made to the TROs had received the full support of the Swanage Town Council and both Dorset Council ward Councillors. The principle of the footway improvement scheme had been agreed and approved by both Dorset Council and Swanage Town Council, with funding being readily available, with contributions being allocated to this between the two councils and from the Local Transport Plan and from local development.

With the aid of a visual presentation, officers explained the reasoning behind the need for the TRO modifications to be made and the basis of the objections received. Photographs and plans were shown to the Committee by way of illustration. This showed what the changes would be; how they would affect the traffic management of the road; what alternative arrangements were being proposed; and how the general situation currently looked. The characteristics, configuration and topography of the road and its setting within the townscape were drawn to the attention of the Committee, giving an idea of the relationship between the traffic using the road, pedestrians using the footways and the proximity of the commercial and retail properties.

As the road was relatively narrow - at 5m wide – this being further exacerbated by a loading bay running its entire eastern length, access along the road was only some 2.5m in width, which was evidently too narrow for larger vehicles trying to pass vehicles parked in the loading bay, as had proven to be the case on numerous occasions. This had habitually resulted in vehicles having to mount the footway to pass - made easier to do given their height was little more than the road surface - which invariably conflicted with pedestrian movements. There had been evidence of incidents occurring which significantly compromised road safety. Moreover, parts of the available footways were privately owned by shops and used by them for displaying merchandise, further limiting the available space for pedestrians.

So as to improve the safety of pedestrians, it was now being proposed to widen the footways on both sides of the road, allowing satisfactory access for them. In order to facilitate and complement this however, it was necessary for the loading bay traversing the length of the road to be removed and repositioned, requiring changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) governing its use. What other traffic management measures were to be

implemented to complement the scheme was described by officers, including the upgrading of a puffin crossing.

Following the advertisement of the proposals, objections had been received on the basis that the loss of the extent of the loading bay would adversely affect the ability for retailers to readily load and unload goods efficiently and conveniently and would affect their trade and the viability of their businesses. However, officers considered that adequate, reasonable and proportionate alternative arrangements had been made for there to still be adequate and satisfactory provision for this activity in the near vicinity.

Consequently, the Committee was now being asked to consider the objections received and whether the proposal should be recommended for endorsement by the Portfolio Holder for implementation, as advertised.

The Committee heard from one of the two local ward Members, Councillor Bill Trite, speaking on behalf of both of them - as well as Councillor Avril Harris of the Town Council - who considered that given the necessity for the implementation of the footway improvements and given that the changes to the TRO's was a necessary consequence of this, the proposals should be supported, as they stood. The Town Council would be making a significant contribution to the works' costs, showing the importance of the scheme to the town. Much consultation on this had taken place in the recent past with the scheme design addressing the majority of concerns raised and, whilst he understood the reasons for those concerns, this length of road remained one of the busiest in Swanage, especially during the summer months, and the widening of the footways would give pedestrians much safer access to shops and along the road, whilst still providing for the necessary access by vehicles along its length. He considered the proposals to be integral to the benefits to be gained from the improvement scheme and would improve the retail experience.

So as to inform their decision making, the Committee took the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what the proposals entailed, how concerns had been addressed and what alternative arrangements for loading had been made. Officers confirmed that the new scheme would ensure the kerbs were raised so there was a clear distinction between the footways and the road. They also confirmed that the repositioned loading bays would still prove sufficient opportunity for this activity to take place and were being located as close as practicable to those commercial businesses for their convenience.

Whilst there would undoubtedly need to be some degree of negotiations between shopkeepers and their suppliers over when deliveries would take place and how this would be done, the Committee considered that what was being proposed was, in the circumstances, reasonable and a suitable alternative in meeting retailer's needs. The need to ensure improved pedestrian access on road safety grounds on Institute Road, on balance, outweighed any inconvenience which might be expected by businesses and could well encourage an increase in trade by having this enhanced environment. Members emphasised though that there would be a need for

stringent enforcement of the TROs for them to be as effective and successful as they could be.

Having considered the objections received, and understood what was being proposed and the reasoning for this and having heard from officers at the meeting and what they had read in the report, the Committee considered that the proposed changes to the TROs governing the location of the loading bays were necessary both on safety grounds and on practicability and to complement and accommodate the benefits to pedestrian safety the footway widening scheme would bring, being both reasonable and proportionate in achieving this. Given this, and taking into account the support of the local Ward Councillors, Swanage Town Council and other primary consultees, on being put to the vote, the Committee considered that the proposals should be implemented as advertised.

Recommended

That having considered the representations received, in response to public advertisement, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment be asked to support the proposed changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders, as advertised.

Reason for Recommendation

To enable and complement the footway widening improvement scheme in Institute Road in providing a safer environment for pedestrian, in considering that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the potential impacts on local businesses, from reduced loading provision and on-street parking.

71. Urgent items

There were no urgent items for consideration at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 10.45 am - 12.20 pm

Chairman

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