

PARTIAL REFURBISHMENT/PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION OF EXISTING SHOPPING MALL TO FORM THREE RETAIL UNITS INCORPORATING CLOSURE OF THROUGH PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AT CROWN WALK, TAUNTON

22650/24380

OUTLINE

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:-

01 The proposal involves the loss of a heavily used pedestrian link to the town centre, resulting in reduced accessibility for pedestrians, in conflict with Policy 42 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and Policy T34 (Criterion A) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit, and in conflict with advice on such matters in PPG13, RPG10 and PPG6.

02 The proposal would be prejudicial to the attractiveness and viability of the proposed Crescent Car Park redevelopment scheme, in that it would deny an important pedestrian link to the High Street and frustrate the comprehensive and co-ordinated development of the wider site, in conflict with Policy T34 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit.

2.0 APPLICANT

Insureprofit Ltd.

3.0 PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks the redevelopment of the Crown Walk Shopping Mall retaining the retail unit at southern end, but redeveloping the central mall area and the northern part of the site to accommodate three retail units in total. The buildings would be serviced from the rear. The proposal involves the loss of pedestrian access from the Crescent car park, although the applicant has indicated that they may be willing to provide a rear pedestrian entrance to one of the retail units.

4.0 THE SITE

The site comprises the Crown Walk Shopping Mall, which also includes retail units on either side.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

6.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (Adopted April 2000)

POLICY STR1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development in Somerset and the Exmoor National Park should:

- be of high quality, good design and reflect local distinctiveness;
- develop a pattern of land use and transport which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel and maximises the potential for the use of public transport, cycling and walking;
- minimise the use of non renewable resources;
- conserve biodiversity and environmental assets, particularly nationally and internationally designated areas;
- ensure access to housing, employment and services;
- give priority to the continued use of previously developed land and buildings;
- enable access for people with disabilities.

POLICY STR2 TOWNS

Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, Chard, Crewkerne, Frome, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Minehead, Shepton Mallet, Street, Taunton, Wellington, Wells, Wincanton and Yeovil are identified as Towns. They will function as locations for employment and shopping, cultural, community and education services and residential use. Taunton and Yeovil will provide a subregional role for certain services including, shopping and financial & administrative services.

POLICY 17 Mixed Use Developments

POLICY 21 Town Centre Uses

POLICY 40 TOWN STRATEGIES

In Towns a range of measures should be implemented to facilitate more sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on the private car in order to improve the living and working environment. Such transport measures should complement development proposals.

POLICY 42

WALKING

Facilities for pedestrians should be improved by maintaining and extending the footpath network, particularly between residential areas, shops, community facilities, workplaces and schools and by ensuring that improvements to the highway provide for safe use.

POLICY 43 Access for People with Disabilities

Taunton Local Plan

POLICY T4 Pedestrian Facilities

POLICY T7 Delivery and Servicing

POLICY T8 Service Bays

Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit (November 2000)

POLICY S1

Proposals for development, taking account of any mitigation measures proposed, will be required to meet the following criteria, in addition to any other Development Plan policies which apply in a particular case:

- (A) additional road traffic arising, taking account of any road improvements involved, would not lead to overloading of access roads, road safety problems or environmental degradation by fumes, noise, vibrations or visual impact;
- (B) the accessibility of the development by public transport, cycling and pedestrian networks would be consistent with its likely trip generation and minimising the need to use the car;
- (C) the proposal will not lead to harm to protected wildlife species or their habitats;
- (D) the appearance and character of any affected landscape, settlement, building or street scene would not be harmed as a result of the development;
- (E) potential air pollution, water pollution, noise, dust, glare, heat, vibration and other forms of pollution or nuisance which could arise as a result of the development will not harm public health or safety, the amenity of individual dwellings or residential areas or other elements of the local or wider environment;
- (F) the health, safety or amenity of any occupants or users of the development will not be harmed by any pollution or nuisance arising from an existing or committed use;
- (G) the safety of any occupants or users will not be at risk from ground instability; and
- (H) the site will be served by utility services necessary for the development proposed.

POLICY EC7 Accessibility of New Development

POLICY EC8

Retail proposals will be required to meet the following criteria:

Major proposals for retail development and other key town centre uses will be permitted within the settlement limits of Taunton and Wellington, provided that

- ~~(A)~~ the development of sites allocated for retail purposes would not be prejudiced the proposal, where located beyond a town centre location, would not prejudice the development plan strategy;
- (B) where proposed beyond a town centre location, there is a demonstrable need for the development;
- ~~(B)~~(C) where proposed beyond a town centre location, the development, in conjunction with other proposed facilities, would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of Taunton and Wellington town centres or of any existing or proposed local centre. Similarly, the proposal must not adversely affect the viability of essential shopping availability of local service facilities within the associated settlements, rural centres and villages;
- ~~(C)~~(D) the site will be served by existing or proposed public transport routes with services of a frequency that will permit easy access throughout shopping hours the proposal is in a location which can deliver safe and convenient access for the majority of the likely catchment population by public transport, walking or cycling, and will not result in an over reliance on private vehicular travel; and
- ~~(D)~~(E) adequate servicing arrangements are provided, usually at the rear of the proposed development, so as to minimise environmental impact and pedestrian conflict.

The local centres referred to in Criterion B are as follows:

- 1 ——— Comeytrove centre
- 2 ——— Galmington Road
- 3 ——— Lisieux Way
- 4 ——— Livingstone Way
- 5 ——— Mountfields Road
- 6 ——— Priorswood Place
- 7 ——— Roman Road
- 8 ——— Rowbarton

POLICY EC9A

Proposals to create more modern retail floorspace by the amalgamation of existing units, refurbishment or redevelopment will be supported.

POLICY T34

A site of 4.4 1.7 hectares at The Crescent as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for a major retail development scheme, to include food and drink, leisure and entertainment facilities. Development will be permitted provided that;

- (A) existing footpath linkages to High Street and Bath Place are retained and enhanced, or replacement linkages of equivalent convenience are provided;
- (B) the proposal facilitates the continued rear servicing of properties on High Street, Bath Place, The Crescent and Upper High Street;
- (C) the proposal ensures the replacement of all current short stay shoppers car parking spaces within the redevelopment site;
- (D) an archaeological survey is undertaken, together with (if required) excavation and / or evaluation of deposits identified; and
- (E) the proposal preserves or enhances the character of the conservation areas and settings of adjoining listed buildings.

In association with the development, the following will be sought:

- ~~(EF)~~ contributions towards both necessary and related off site transport measures, and works required to improve highway safety within the vicinity of the site, as well as contributions towards related elements of the Transport Strategy, the implementation of which will improve the overall accessibility of the site. This will include measures to: improve cycle accessibility within the town centre, and assist with the delivery of bus priority measures including park and ride facilities;
- ~~(FG)~~ contributions towards environmental enhancement works on the section of High Street which adjoins the site.

8.209 Under used land at The Crescent provides an ideal opportunity to identify a town centre site suitable for redevelopment ~~for shopping purposes to provide a major retail and leisure scheme.~~ The site currently comprises mainly short stay shoppers car parking, most of which is within TDBC ownership. The site is located to the west of High Street (Primary Shopping Area) and includes several properties here for redevelopment/refurbishment. The site is bounded to the north by retail premises on Bath Place (Primary Shopping Area), to the west by commercial premises at The Crescent, and to the south by Guildford Place. As well as some retail premises on High Street, the site also includes the Crown Walk shopping arcade for refurbishment/redevelopment. The recently approved Taunton Deane Retail Capacity Study (1999) highlights that, having taken account of outstanding commitments, there is an available capacity by 2006 to provide 13,500 sq m of town centre durable goods floorspace. The Borough Council envisages that the majority of this floorspace requirement will be accommodated at The Crescent. However, due to a lack of available capacity and concerns over trip generation, the site is considered unsuitable for large scale food retail development, although small food units could be incorporated as part of any redevelopment proposals. In addition, the site provides a major opportunity to enhance leisure and entertainment provision within the town centre. For example, the Borough Council is aware of demand for additional cinema screens in the town. The Crescent site provides an ideal

opportunity to accommodate a new multiplex cinema. Other typical town centre uses will also be acceptable within any final scheme, including restaurants and residential accommodation. The building known as Telephone House at the rear of the site would be suitable for residential conversion. Any residential development within the site should contribute to affordable housing need, as set out in the housing chapter. However, it is recognised that there may be significant on site costs, given the brownfield nature of the development. Accordingly, a target of only 30% affordable housing is proposed for the site. The Local Plan housing policies set out the priority attached to the incorporation of social housing as part of this provision, to meet the assessed housing needs of the area. Negotiations on the precise details of the provision will reflect this priority. The Borough Council has recently undertaken a marketing exercise for this proposal, and by the end of 2000 will appoint a development partner to assist with the delivery of the scheme. A "Developers' Brief" is available for this site, which provides further detail as to site constraints, legal issues and the envisaged form of the final scheme. Given its' constraints, The Borough Council consider that a scheme is unlikely to be delivered before 2003. If necessary, the Borough Council will utilise its Compulsory Purchase powers to ensure the delivery of this proposal.

8.210 The site is bounded on three sides by listed buildings, ~~Furthermore, with the western and northern boundaries to the site adjoin the defining~~ The Crescent and Bath Place conservation areas. In addition, the eastern part of the site adjoins a proposed Conservation Area for the High Street. Consequently, a redevelopment scheme of appropriate scale, massing, and design quality will be expected quality materials and design, which preserves or enhances the settings of listed buildings and existing and proposed conservation areas, will be required (criterion E). The site occupies former burgage plots to adjoining properties and any design should reflect this historical association throughout the development. The Borough Council envisages predominantly three, domestic scale, storeys above ground level, with reduced scale in the vicinity of Bath Place - a speciality shopping and residential street of low, two storey domestic scale. The success of any scheme will be dependant on its ability to satisfactorily demonstrate (throughout) that it is a worthy contribution to the townscape of this particular area of Taunton, preserves or enhances the setting of listed buildings and existing and proposed conservation areas and is an integral, rather than isolated, development in all respects. A Design Statement, which addresses these issues, will be required to accompany any submitted planning application. A quality, modern - interpretation of historic forms and detailing, which satisfactorily addresses the above issues, is encouraged.

8.211 Being located adjacent to the Primary Shopping Area, the site provides an ideal opportunity to establish a quality town centre shopping development. However, in order to ensure the integration of the site with existing facilities, it is essential to ensure that good pedestrian

linkages are maintained with the rest of the town centre. Consequently, convenient footpath access will be required leading to both Bath Place and High Street.

- 8.212 In order to avoid pedestrian and vehicular conflict, it will be a requirement of the scheme to facilitate the continued rear servicing of properties on High Street, Bath Place, The Crescent and Upper High Street. Criterion (d) (E) of policy EC8 also applies.
- 8.213 Maintaining a good supply of convenient and accessible short stay shopper/visitor car parking facilities is a key element which contributes towards sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres. The Crescent car park is one of the most popular shopper's car park in Taunton. It is essential to ensure that such facilities will be replaced in full, and that new provision is equally accessible and convenient to the town centre. Consequently, the proposal must either provide a multi deck car park as an integrated part of the scheme, or contribute towards alternative provision in an equally accessible and convenient location.
- 8.214 The site is within a designated Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP). In fact, the site is crossed by the Medieval Town Ditch, and is likely to be of considerable archaeological interest. Research and excavation of the site will be required before ~~any development takes place~~ planning permission is granted. Applicants are advised to seek the advice of the County Archaeologist.
- 8.215 The proposal will generate increased visitor numbers to this part of the town centre. For reasons of highway safety, it will be essential to ensure that surrounding road junctions are safe for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. A transport impact study will be required to assess this issue in more detail. However, contributions will be sought toward those junctions which require improvements as a result of the development.
- 8.216 In addition to facilitating shopper's car parking (Criterion C), promoting and ensuring accessibility for modes of travel other than the car is also equally important to town centre vitality and viability. The Transport Strategy seeks to realise such an objective, and is complemented by recent TPP / Local Transport Plan submissions which are heavily weighted towards both high measures of vehicular restraint and the promotion of alternative modes of travel. The Borough Council acknowledges that the site, being within the town centre, is in a highly accessible location. However, access to the site (and the town centre generally) is in need of improvement. Policies T38 to T45 seek to ensure that direct access to the town centre is made as convenient as possible for pedestrians, cyclists and those reliant upon public transport, through the implementation of bus priority schemes and convenient cycle routes. Without such measures, car trips within the vicinity of proposed town centre development sites could increase

unacceptably. Accordingly, Criterion F will require any scheme to contribute towards proposals for greater cycle accessibility within the town centre, and the provision of an east / west bus priority route through the town (including park and ride facilities). Details of these proposals can be found at Policies T39, T40 and T41, and are identified on the Proposals Map. Ultimately, the scale of contribution will be dependant upon the impact of the scheme in terms of trip generation, over and above that generated by the existing use of the site. The development will be required to provide secure cycle parking facilities within the site. The Borough Council will only permit a level of staff car parking which is in line with the requirements of Policies M1 - M3. Consequently, given that the scheme will generate increased numbers of shoppers and visitors, it will be a requirement that any proposal must contribute towards appropriate elements of the Transport Strategy, such as bus lanes, park and ride facilities and cycle lanes, in order to facilitate accessibility for all. The transport impact study will form the basis for an assessment of the level of contributions to be sought from the scheme.

8.217 It will be important to integrate the scheme with the rest of the town centre through the creation of attractive footpath linkages. This, in part, will be achieved through the implementation of Criterion A. However, it is also essential to ensure that the immediate environment of High Street is pleasant and inviting as a pedestrian thoroughfare. Consequently, the Borough Council must ensure that any development helps to enhance this part of the town centre. This may necessitate certain off site enhancement works along the part of High Street which adjoins the development (Criterion G). Such provision will help to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre. In order for the proposal to be a success, it is essential that an attractive environment is created between the site and the existing shopping centre. In this respect, High Street will function as a key link. However, High Street is now showing signs of its age, and the Borough Council is committed to enhancing its environment (policy T44). The proposal will be expected to contribute towards its redesign and improvement.

8.217a The Borough Council will be mindful of the impact of any development on the amenities of adjoining and nearby residential properties. Accordingly, the provisions of Policy S1 apply.

POLICY T43

Within the Restricted Access Cordon, traffic management and traffic calming measures are proposed with the aim of removing unnecessary traffic and improving the pedestrian and cyclists' comfort and safety, while maintaining access to the shoppers' car parks.

7.0 RELEVANT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

PPG1 General Polices and Principles

Paragraphs. 4 - 6 Sustainable Development
Paragraph 26 The Importance of Town Centres

PPG6 Town Centres and Retail Developments

Paragraphs 2.2 The vitality and viability of town and district centres depend on:-

- retaining and developing a wide range of attractions and amenities;
- creating and maintaining an attractive environment;
- ensuring good accessibility to and within the centre; and
- attracting continuing investment in development or refurbishment of existing buildings.

Paragraph 2.3 The planning system should provide a positive framework to encourage appropriate investment in town centres. The Government, therefore, wishes to:-

- encourage the development of town centre strategies;
- enable town centre development through development plans and by facilitating site assembly;
- attract investment into upgrading existing buildings and high-quality new development;
- encourage investment in retail, employment, leisure and other key town centre uses;
- encourage mixed-use development in town centres;
- encourage an increase in housing in town centres;
- promote town centre management, including maintenance of public areas;
- improve access and traffic management;

- make more effective use of town centre car parking; and
- encourage high-quality design of both urban spaces and buildings.

Paragraph 2.13 Local planning authorities should use their development plans to set out policies for mixed-use development in town centres by identifying suitable areas and sites, and issuing planning briefs. A mixture of small businesses, houses or offices in or near town centres and the occupation of flats above shops, can increase activity and therefore personal safety, while ensuring that buildings are kept in good repair. Residents and workers stimulate shopping, restaurants and cafes, and other businesses to serve them, and so in turn add to vitality. Local authorities should particularly focus on the opportunities for urban design strategies for large sites in or on the edge of town centres, as well as on opportunities for small sites and in individual buildings.

Paragraphs 2.26 - 2.28

Annex E Traffic Management Strategies for Town Centres

Paragraphs 1, 2 3 and 5.

Going to Town - Improving Town Centre Access

A companion guide to PPG6.

PPG13 Transport

Paragraphs 35 - 36

Paragraph 75

Paragraph 76 In preparing their development plans and in determining planning applications, local authorities should:

- in conjunction with work on preparing the local walking strategy, review existing provision for pedestrians, in order to identify the network of routes and locations (including the links between key uses such as schools, town centres and transport interchanges) where the needs and safety of pedestrians will be given priority, and the measures that will be taken to support this objective;

- pay particular attention to the design, location and access arrangements of new development to help promote walking as a prime means of access;
- promote high density, mixed use development in and around town centres and near to major transport interchanges;
- promote and protect local day to day shops and services which are within easy walking distance of housing;
- create more direct, safe and secure walking routes, particularly in and around town centres and local neighbourhoods, and to schools and stations, to reduce the actual walking distance between land uses, and to public transport; and
- ensure that the personal security concerns of pedestrians are addressed .

Paragraph 77

Local authorities, as part of their local walking strategy, should also promote walking through measures such as:

- provision of wider pavements, including the reallocation of road space to pedestrians, and environmental improvements, including improved lighting;
- pedestrian-friendly road crossings which give pedestrians greater priority at traffic signals and avoid long detours and waiting times, indirect footbridges or underpasses;
- traffic calming measures to reduce speeds, particularly near to schools, in urban residential areas (perhaps as part of a home zone) and in villages;
- encouraging health and education providers and employers to promote walking to and from schools and places of work, ideally in the context of site-specific travel plans;
- pedestrianisation schemes where vehicle access is restricted or prohibited to boost the attractiveness of town and local centres for shopping, employment and leisure uses. Schemes may include clear zones, where access is

restricted to walking, cycling and low or non-polluting vehicles;

- encouraging more use of public rights of way for local journeys and help promote missing links in rights of way networks;
- partnerships with local health authorities and input to Local Health Improvement Plans; and
- encouraging pedestrian routes, for instance, along river banks, canal towpaths or disused railways to be highly visible and integrated with other activities, in order to maximise pedestrian safety and security.

RPG10 Regional Planning Guidance for the South West

Paragraph 1.31 Transport

Policy SS 5: Principal Urban Areas

Structure planning authorities should plan for the long term growth of the PUAs, on a basis to be agreed with the RPB. This will be necessary in order that the regional monitoring, both for this RPG and the Annual Monitoring Statement required by PPG3, to ensure a consistent and comparable basis; and as the best way to inform the required work for urban housing capacity exercises. Planning should involve all the districts for the area of each PUA, with early outputs for a new round of co-ordinated structure plans following publication of this RPG, using:

- urban housing capacity studies for the whole PDA, using existing and additional research;
- constraints mapping for PUA extensions, using existing and additional research;

and for the Bristol, Bournemouth/Poole, Exeter, Plymouth, Swindon, Cheltenham and Gloucester and Taunton PUAs:

- urban extension studies which, where relevant, will need to take account of and be taken into account in reviews of any Green Belt, including transportation and infrastructure needs (including costs) studies.

Structure plans should define the general geographic extent of each PUA, in the same way that the general extent of Green Belt is set out. They should support forward planning and investment in infrastructure and a more sustainable distribution of development by:

- providing for a balance of housing and employment in towns with good facilities and services, thus reducing the need to travel to the PUAs;
- providing an indicative target in structure plans for the number of dwellings and the amount of other developments to be located at each PUA;
- producing compact urban developments likely to be well served by public transport;
- identifying major transport proposals for inclusion in LTPs and where appropriate in the Regional Transport Strategy.

Paragraphs 3.42 – 3.44

Policy SS14: Taunton

Local authorities, developers, infrastructure and transport providers and other agencies should work together to achieve the following for Taunton:

- an enhanced role as a focal point for increasingly diversified economic activity and as a commercial, cultural and service centre for the central part of the region;
- balanced housing and economic development, facilities and services consistent with the town's enhanced role;
- investment in transport and other infrastructure and facilities to support this strategy, including measures to address capacity problems at M5 junction 25.

Policy EC6

Policy EC 6: Town Centres and Retailing

Local authorities in their development plans and other agencies in their plans, policies and programmes should:

- seek to locate developments which attract large numbers of people, including retailing, leisure, commercial activity and public facilities, in the centres of the PUAs and in the other designated centres for growth specified in the spatial strategy;

- encourage town centre developments of an appropriate scale in the market towns and larger settlements elsewhere in the region in keeping with their size and function; ensure that such development is located where it will contribute to the regeneration and environmental improvement of town centres, can help to reduce the need to travel and encourage journeys by modes other than the private car;
- ensure that the vitality and viability of existing centres, including suburban centres, is protected and enhanced, notably by assessing the need for new development and by applying the sequential approach in PPG6 (Town Centres and Retail Development) to site selection for new retail and leisure developments (for convenience shopping, a distribution of provision should be maintained that minimises the lengths and frequency of trips, so that any settlement of reasonable size has access to all normal day-to-day necessities. Such provision should be in keeping with the scale of the centre and the catchment that it conveniently serves so as not to encourage longer trips or to undermine the viability of other nearby centres); and
- make no further provision for proposals to build or extend major regional or sub-regional out-of-town shopping centres. Any proposal to extend or redevelop the existing regional shopping centre at Cribbs Causeway should be brought forward and fully justified in a future review of Regional Planning Guidance;
- ensure that such development is located where it can help to reduce the need to travel, encourage journeys by modes other than the private car and contribute to the regeneration and environmental improvement of town centres;
- ensure that the vitality and viability of existing centres, including suburban centres, is protected and enhanced, notably by assessing the need for new development and by applying the sequential approach in PPG6 (Town Centres and Retail Development) to site selection for new retail and leisure development.

8.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

County Highway Authority

“The proposed development site currently provides a well used pedestrian link between offices on The Crescent, The Crescent Car Park and the retail units within the Town Centre, with pedestrian movements through Crown Walk in the high hundred trips per day. The recently published companion guide to PPG6 "Going to Town - Improving Town Centre Access" emphasises the need to improve the accessibility of town centres through quality pedestrian routes in both public and private ownership. One of the key objectives of PPG13 is to promote accessibility to jobs shopping and leisure facilities by walking, by giving priority to people over ease of traffic movement and providing more road space for pedestrians.

The proposed development will close off this pedestrian route, significantly reducing the permeability of the western side of the town centre. In addition, Policy T34 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit allocates the area of land to the west of the proposed development site for major retail development, subject to retention of pedestrian linkages to the high street. It is likely that, through removal of the Crown Walk pedestrian link, this proposal will prejudice the major retail development allocated in the Local Plan and I would therefore recommend refusal of this application on transportation grounds for the following reasons:-

1. The proposed development is contrary to the advice contained in PPG13, RPG10 and Policy 42 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, since it will remove a heavily used pedestrian link, frustrating pedestrian access to the Town Centre.
2. The proposed development will prejudice Policy T34 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit, since closure of Crown Walk limits the scope for major redevelopment of the Crescent to maintain or enhance existing pedestrian links.”

County Archaeologist

“The site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential as defined by the Local Plan (Policy EN24). It is a plot which extends from the original medieval high street back towards the town ditch (i.e. the medieval town defenses). An excavation which took place across the road (now High Street) revealed Iron Age/Roman settlement as well as medieval occupation associated with the market. It is likely therefore that important remains exist on the proposal site. However, some of these remains will have been impacted by the present buildings. From the information present it is impossible to come to a reasoned decision concerning this applications affect on any remains.

For this reason I recommend that the applicant be asked to provide further information on any archaeological remains on the site. This is likely to require a field evaluation.

I am happy to provide a specification for this work and a list of suitable archaeologists to undertake it.”

Wessex Water

“The development is located within a sewered area, with both foul and surface water sewers available.

The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water to an 'existing system'. As there are no existing separate surface water sewers in the vicinity of the site, it is advised that the developer investigates alternative methods for the satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site (e.g. soakaways). Surface water should not be discharged to the foul sewer. Your Council should be satisfied with any arrangement for the disposal of surface water.

It will be necessary for the developer to agree points of connection onto our systems, for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows and surface water flows generated by the proposal. The connection point can be agreed at the detailed design stage.

According to our records, there is a public water main crossing the site. Please find enclosed a copy of our supply records indicating the approximate position of the apparatus. Wessex Water normally requires a minimum three metre easement width on either side of its apparatus, for the purpose of maintenance and repair. Diversion or protection works may need to be agreed.

It is further recommended that a condition or informative is placed on any consent to require the developer to protect the integrity of Wessex systems and agree prior to the commencement of works on site, any arrangements for the protection of infrastructure crossing the site. We advise that this should be agreed as early as possible and certainly before the developer submits to your Council any Building Regulations application. Again, connection points can be agreed at the design stage to accommodate an arrangement for the satisfactory supply of water.

It is recommended that the developer should agree with Wessex Water, prior to the commencement of any works on site, a point of connection onto Wessex systems.”

Avon & Somerset Constabulary

“I would raise the following concern regarding public safety issues.

If the Crown Walk is to be closed as a pedestrian thoroughfare, the resulting access points to and from the car park to the High Street would be via the alleyway to Bath Place and the small alleyway that exits next to 'Snackers'.

These access points are not so acceptable with regard to personal safety issues. This is particularly relevant to the small alleyways in late afternoon periods during the winter months. The alleyway exiting next to Snackers is very narrow, poorly illuminated and although it is possible to see along its entire length, it raises serious concerns if it was to become a major access point.”

Town Centre Partnership

“The members of the Partnership discussed this application at a recent meeting and expressed particular concern at the closure of the pedestrian access from the Crescent car park to the High Street.

It was generally agreed that refurbishment of this shopping mall is long overdue in this key trading area of the town, but that this should not be done at the expense of public access to one of the principal town centre car parks. It was felt that closure of this access will severely inhibit retail activity in the High Street and the Old Market Centre.

The application is also prejudicial to the plans for development of the Crescent mixed use retail scheme currently under discussion. This development has been in the Taunton plan for many years. With the current developments at both Exeter and Broadmead it is essential that this scheme for Taunton should go ahead in order to retain our market share in the South West. Without this key access point from the new development to the High Street the viability of the development on the Crescent car park is questionable.

Taunton's role as Principal Urban Area indicates that the town is destined to grow; an increased population will be looking for greater choice and opportunities for leisure and retail, any inhibition of the development of a key site such as the Crescent scheme can not therefore be supported.”

Rights of Way Officer

“There is no definitive right of way involved.

The pedestrian access appears to be private as it is fitted with barriers. However, I am not aware, and this needs to be checked, of any defined public access as part of the original planning permission for Crown Walk. In other parts of Taunton defined public access and definitive rights of way have subsequently been locked off - illegally.

If the passage was originally meant for public access to the High Street for the car park, then it should remain as such.”

Conservation Officer

“Objection to principle - would compromise viability of Crescent Car Park redevelopment.”

9.0 **REPRESENTATIONS**

Letter received objecting on behalf of Heritage Property Holdings Ltd:-

“ The principal concern is that, if implemented, the pedestrian route through Crown Walk from the High Street site towards the Crescent Car Park site would be blocked, precluding linkage between the proposed development site and the town centre.

Such permeability was an integral part of the Development Brief for the Crescent Car Park site which was published by the Borough Council. Loss of the link would be seriously detrimental to the scheme in terms of layout and linkage and hence of concern to potential retailers, thence impacting on viability.

We have not had the opportunity to view the plans, but understand the application to be in outline and hence trust that any details of plan or elevation would be illustrative only.

It is the principle of infilling the pedestrian route with built form which is of concern - something which we understand is also of concern to officers. The proposal would prejudice the implementation of comprehensive development of the Crescent Car Park site, contrary to the policies of the Development Plan and guidance of the published development brief.

10.0 **PRINCIPLE ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

1. How does the proposal relate to retail policies for Taunton Town Centre?
POLICY
2. Impact of this proposal on the proposal to redevelop the Crescent Car Park?
CRESCENT SCHEME
3. Sustainability? SUSTAINABILITY

POLICY

Whilst in normal circumstances investment in retail development in the town centre would be welcomed in accordance with Policy EC9A of the Taunton Deane Local Plan in this case the proposal by virtue of closing off the pedestrian walkway linking High Street and the Crescent Car Park will impact significantly upon the attractiveness of the High Street and the Old Market Centre for retail purposes. This conflicts with guidance in PPG 6, PPG 13 and RPG10. An offer from the applicant to provide a rear pedestrian access to the

new retail unit, (similar to the situation at Boots), will have little impact on mitigating these strong concerns.

CRESCENT SCHEME

Proposal T34 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit identifies the Crescent car park site as suitable for a mixed use redevelopment. The attractiveness of such a scheme is dependent upon achieving good pedestrian links with the town centre, and in particular from the High Street. To allow this proposal would prejudice the provision of suitable access and comprise the attractiveness and viability of the scheme as a whole. It is therefore most important in terms of this Council's strategy for the town centre that this proposal is resisted.

SUSTAINABILITY

Permeability and the ability to access town centre facilities on foot is an important requirement of sustainable development. As stated above, this proposal conflicts with this aim.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Objections to this proposal relate to the loss of a heavily used pedestrian link to the town centre, which will reduce permeability and levels of pedestrian movement in the town centre thus reducing it's attractiveness as a shopping environment. Moreover, the loss of a direct access from the High Street to the Crescent car park will cause demonstrable harm to the attractiveness and viability of the Crescent Redevelopment Scheme, which is a key proposal in the emerging Local Plan and important to the function of Taunton as a Principle Urban Area, (as defined in RPG10).

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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