

Meeting on  
18 December 2006

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- The purpose of the meeting was to record the views of some Residents towards the future of the area, which need to be taken into account in the production of the Depot Road and Upper High Street (DR/UHS) site appraisal study by the planning office;
- Public input was needed now at the start of the site appraisal project, which is to end in 3/07;
- Notes of meetings would be made public, and there were to be public meetings on 19<sup>th</sup> January;
- A site map showing the principal ownerships was noted; as was a list of the other organisations that had already been invited to give their views to the planning office; there were significant underground services and legal constraints across the area;
- The residents stressed that they were not part of a formal (eg RAG) group, but were local, and had talked to many other residents about the future of the project;
- BJ tabled, & had previously circulated, a concept layout for the Council & Helical Bar sites, which, whilst not a formal design, aimed to illustrate the kind of development that could find support;
- The essential points were that there was no support for a large 8000sqm retail unit, which was seen as a “category killer” that would generate very large volumes of traffic and tend to suck trade from a range of other retailers without bringing in new trade to the town; the Upper High Street (UHS) site was seen as outside the retail “drag”, and the UHS shopping was in a tertiary zone and had low pedestrian flows; the Depot Road site was backland and similarly not appropriate for retail; the only possible retail use was considered to be destination retailing (ie an outlet that became a destination irrespective of its location); the potential therefore on the UHS site would probably be limited to a discount food supermarket; it was felt that there might be support for such a cheaper food store to complement M+S and Waitrose;
- Because of the closeness to the town centre, other suitable uses would be residential or possibly office; street scene, parking, environmental character and relationship to adjoining residential properties were the main issues;
- The height and scale of the development needed to relate well to the nearby buildings, and the principal design objectives should be; building heights limited to three storeys, with two storeys beside the conservation area; to have sloping roofs, with gaps along the UHS frontage and irregular building lines; housing being placed beside adjoining housing; and new buildings set back to respect the amenities of the existing residential; the possibility of eliminating the existing vehicle access on Upper High Street should be considered;
- The Helical Bar site could/should be developed on its own, and could contain a small (say 1500sqm) supermarket, with flats above, basement parking for flats, and with housing on the rest of the site; the Council’s UHS site could be developed for housing, with the displaced car parking accommodated into a new multi storey car park on the Depot Road land, to provide the same total number (c400) of public parking spaces as now; this public car parking would be closer to the town centre than the present UHS site, and therefore more convenient;
- The end result could be the creation of a new pedestrian-friendly residential quarter or urban village; the new residents could bring new business to the Upper High Street shops as they walked to and from the town centre; some live/work units could also add interest; environmental issues, energy generation, innovative design are all needed; a “lanes of Brighton Character”?
- Housing to be designed for future flexibility and adaptation, with an appropriate level and mix of affordable housing;
- Community facilities for young not practicable unless long term funding from Council guaranteed;
- Pedestrian routes are currently well used through the site and need to be incorporated/improved;
- The sale of the Council’s present UHS car park land for housing (the values being high locally) should be sufficient to finance the construction of the multi storey car park on the Depot Road end of the site. Underground car parking could be considered but might not be viable because the cost of construction is very high (around £30k per car underground, £10k per car in multi storey);
- A key point was the retention of the existing number of public car parking spaces combined with a form of development which did not generate too much additional traffic, since increased traffic congestion and vehicle movement was a major concern of residents.
- The detail of the sketch layout was only illustrative, and the general approach and design concept was the important part; but this was the suggested approach.