

THE SID VALE ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSE TO THE PORT ROYAL SCOPING STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

General comments

The Sid Vale Association, (SVA) applauds both East Devon District Council; (EDDC) and Sidmouth Town Council, (STC), for initiating the study which we hope will in time lead to the regeneration of this dilapidated area. We support studies and action which will make the area attractive for residents and tourists.

However we feel that the study as presented in the Display Boards, is flawed, in that it:

- Portrays a "Concept Proposal" which is not called for in the Terms of Reference, (TOR), and asks the public to comment on the Concept, without any supporting evidence or data that might underpin it. The Questionnaire further reinforces the impression by asking public comment on a sketch on one of the boards at the Exhibition. EDDC and STC have said that the sketch is only a "concept" at this stage, but we believe that producing it has been a significant error, and is misleading the public at this early stage. The "Concept Proposal" presented only gives the public an opportunity to comment on a "large, poorly massed" building.
- The "Concept Proposal", or area that has been considered as available for development has apparently been confined to Area E03, (shown on the Local Plan for Sidmouth), thus omitting the opportunity to consider and evaluate other areas, such as the car park and the boat park that might give rise to more appropriate development opportunities.
- Fails to mention any use of the boat park to the north of the Ham.
- Fails to explore the use of the existing car park, "Area D" as a development area.
- Apparently fails to take into account the fact that Areas A and B are in a Conservation area.
- Apparently fails to take into account that there is severe contamination in the area.
- Uses area of the Ham which are legally and properly part of the inheritance of the town. There is no evidence so far that this intrusion has been quantified and assessed.

Next Steps

The TOR say that the Final Report will be prepared following the public consultation and that the Reference Group will review it before it is subsequently sent to EDDC and STC councils for comments. We trust that this procedure is held to.

We note that the Report, when finally presented, will indicate the next steps. We believe that the next stage must NOT include the Building on Area "A"; and the consultants must be able to start from a "proposal free base", and should include what might be achieved in the area should funding not be available for the construction of new facilities and housing. We believe that both councils need to be flexible in their approach to what is possible on the site. Any development of the Port Royal area should consider the retention and enhancement of existing buildings as the basis of a Sea Sports facility and Lifeboat House as an alternative to complete ground up redevelopment. The Drill Hall is an old building and may warrant further investigation.

The Questionnaire in detail

1. The closure of Esplanade to traffic from the Lifeboat station eastwards, with primarily pedestrian usage, is an interesting proposal, which would enhance the sea front. But further investigations must take place to assess the best way of maintaining the ability of passenger coaches to be able to turn round at this end of the Esplanade (eg an allocated area at the existing lifeboat station from where they could reverse safely into Ham Lane. Further investigations should also consider achieving this through the use of "shared space" with pedestrians.
2. A suggestion for any building along the sea front in the position shown as within "A" is not supported. neither is the adoption of area "A" as a general area of Building development. This area should not be built on, the existing open views from the Ham to the sea should continue. Any sea frontage development should occur only on the existing Lifeboat station/ Sailing Club/ Drill hall site, not further eastwards.
3. Area "C" (the traffic access to Area "A"), would not be required if Area "A" were not developed.
4. We are very disappointed that the Study does not investigate the possibility of undercroft car parking on Area "D" with building above. This could cater for any new residential and perhaps Restaurant proposals.
5. There should be no reduction in car parking areas and if new housing is proposed parking should be increased to meet the proposed demand.
6. A centre for sea/water based activities, (a water sports centre), (not just the sailing club alone, should be developed. Area "E", (lifeboat station, sailing club), must have direct access to the beach. The existing facilities, (Lifeboat/Sailing club) must maintain direct access to the sea. We supported the creation of a "Multi-Activity centre" (Community facility).
7. We noted that the 30 dwellings on the Local Plan were derived arbitrarily and that a modest increase might be acceptable, if sensitively planned and designed, if their provision gave rise to greater funding possibilities.