

From: SIMON BELLORD [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 August 2017 19:08
To: Planning Policy Internet
Cc: Councillor Philpott, Stephen
Subject: Response to Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre SPD

Dear Deputy Head of Planning Services,

Here is my response to the SPD:

Simon Bellord, Ex Councillor in Woking Borough involved in planning including attending planning summer school at Swansea University and local now resident at [REDACTED] Gosport.

Response to the draft of the Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

This document addresses the development opportunities for Gosport Waterfront.

It is an excellent document promising and exciting in its entirety and must be of interest to developers awash with money as there are so many who will however expect a return.

This document is significant for its 3400 residents of which I am one.

The report highlights the potential to open up and develop an area that is already steeped in history and one which is currently in use to a large sailing community and related industry and service sector.

It is only a short water crossing to Portsmouth and is already joined to Portsmouth in the preservation of matters of historical interest such as museums, buildings and landmarks.

It is a chance for the planning authority to really contribute to the further enhancement of an already special, dynamic and popular place for visitors.

The project should be quite an easy one; the sailing fraternity have already created their special place. This brings hundred of visitors into the area all year round and with it industry and jobs.

The report outlines the opportunities to enhance and make accessible all the valuable historical aspects of the area which is very good.

Much work has already been done to develop the area for an important mix of housing although it is clear that the area is very heavily developed for social housing and historically high density offerings so further development must concentrate on other housing need. There is a great opportunity for example to generate accommodation aimed at a younger working population, perhaps those working in Portsmouth and beyond who look to use the ferry crossings and also retirees especially ones who enjoy sailing for example, the later group is already evidently in progress more I feel.

2.5 of the Document states that it is the "starting point for further actions to be taken by the Council, Developers and other partners" So we should look forward to a wide contribution facilitated by the Council and carefully lead by members who should seek the interests of all parties who wish to see the area develop well.

The questions for local interest are; is the vision reasonable? Does the plan do justice to the points listed in 3.1?

I feel the Council needs to be brave in how it proceeds.

My Comments to the Report:

Section 3.8 tabulates the guiding principles. These are all good.

Although a small point I feel the inclusion 'Creating a healthier town' quite a boring, unnecessary and meaningless contribution to the report.

Gosport Waterfront

I feel opening up the waterfront with easier access to the shopping area and for leisurely walking access is an essential part of this plan. Much of the success of future development depends on really enhancing the offering of the whole area. Examples of how this can be done can be seen in waterside developments across the UK, including London Docklands, Liverpool, Bristol etc. People love to be in those cities because they are big famous important cities; Gosport can create its own case I am sure. The country has many Marinas of which Gosport's combined Marinas are very large, but only in Gosport is there such an opportunity to develop a whole area to benefit from such activity. This is a fairly unique chance. Presently there seems to be a great separation between the town and the sailing groupings, this can be changed I am sure. Port Solent seems to have attracted some entertainment offerings for example yet has nothing like the potential. I am sure leisure complexes such as a cinema like Harbour Lights in Southampton could be popular.

In the Summary to the report, it states in paragraph 5 who the Council would like comments from and does not specifically mention the sailing industry and members of the marinas as a group. I take it these are somehow included under perhaps Local residents or businesses or community organisations, I wonder what they themselves feel?

In the development strategy on page 33 I feel it is time to sideline the idea of social housing and concentrate more on development that is accessible to younger working people. I believe social housing in general is very unfair as it can never meet demand and increases the cost of housing in general. I also believe it has encouraged people to make lifestyle choices to enhance their opportunities to be housed. The Council should urgently look at all alternatives and innovative ways to provide housing, including Community Land Trusts, where the land is held in trust and the properties are built for rental only for local working people on short hold tenancies also the provision of high density pre-fabricated or factory built dwellings. Gosport could well choose to lead in this respect making an interesting mix of the old and the new styles that has traditionally been an easy and interesting fit in waterside areas. Rope Keys is a sort of poor example however it falls a bit short in some respects and gated developments always create an unfriendly feel especially in busy areas.

On page 50, I can't accept that a report like this sees water fountains as healthy in these days of pushy health and safety. has this been thought through?

Hopefully the remains of the old railway station on page 61 could be encouraged to be an excellent venture for a restaurant perhaps with an old railway dining car and of interest to the hundreds of railway enthusiasts and accessible to passers by.

Page 62, don't forget the buildings are beautiful, historic and of interest on their own. You should not need to stop other development because of the fact.

Page 88, there must surely be heritage money for the improvements to the historical aspects without having to fleece the developers adding further hidden taxes to the costs of new houses and businesses. The development should all be light on planning bounty if you want innovation see pages from 89.

There is always talk of working through the Solent LEP, effort must be made to guard against this distracting from this being a very local project. Also the council must make these organisations and their involvement transparent to local people in a democracy.

The coastal communities fund will also come with interference; councillors must beware of politically motivated funding.

Assisted area status is good

There is also a Coastal Communities Team, this sounds a great idea but looking at the minutes and social media it does not seem to do much to me although I appreciate it has a reason to exist.

I do not feel the report does justice to just how dynamic and important Gosport is to those involved in sailing (of which I am not one) there is a lot of local social media enthusing about this area. It is essential that somehow this is more included as these planning considerations progress. The council can use the opportunity of redeveloping the transport hub to get a more joined up involvement. The local activity around the Marinas may well not have a coordinated voice, which is a good thing in these over politicised days so hopefully what they would like to see in Gosport can be found and included as we move forward.

Efforts may be needed to raise the quality of the offering in the High St which often seems to be a vast meeting area for people with nothing better to do and does not have a particularly interesting retail offering, I am sure businesses will come given the right opportunity, just look at the town centre development in Woking where I was a councillor.

So a tiny conclusion is that the vision needs to come from a wider interest group, everyone should get on with it. Make it a place for strivers and hard working people who love life.

These are the areas Councillors will be judged on.

Simon