

The **NUNEATON & BEDWORTH AREA COMMITTEE** met
the **CONFERENCE ROOM, ELIOT PARK INNOVATION
CENTRE, 4 BARLING WAY, NUNEATON** on 10 July 2007

Present:

Councillor	Barry Longden (Chair)
“	John Burton
“	Alan Farnell
“	John Haynes
“	Martin Heatley
“	Pat Henry
“	Frank McCarney
“	John Ross
“	Kam Singh (Vice Chair)
“	June Tandy
“	Sid Tooth

Officers:

Edwina Cordwell, Head of Libraries, Learning and Culture.
Ian Dawson, Senior Estates Surveyor, Resources Directorate
John Deegan, Strategic Director for Environment and
Economy.
Peter Endall, Senior Solicitor, Performance and Development
Directorate
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator,
Performance and Development Directorate
Simon Robson, Head of Local Provider Services
Adrian Litvinoff, Libraries, Learning and Culture.
John Scouller, Head of Skills, Tourism and Economy,
Environment and Economy Directorate
Heather Shearer, Area Manager, Performance and
Development Directorate
Caroline Slane, Communications Officer, Performance and
Development Officer.
Margaret Smith, Senior Transport Planner, Performance and
Development Officer.
Chris Simpson, Regeneration Engineer, Environment and
Economy Directorate.
Mandy Walker, Group Manager, Regeneration Projects,
Environment and Economy Directorate.
Pam Williams, Area Administrative Officer, Performance and
Development Directorate

Also in Attendance: Councillors Jeff Clarke, Tom Wilson, Sonja Wilson and
Gerald Smith, (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) Marion Plant,
Principal of North Warwickshire & Hinckley College (NWHC), Majid Shaikh

(NWHC), Martin Ward, Principal of King Edward VI College (KEC). Christine Kerr, Chief Executive of NBBC, Peter Kingham, Headteacher, Etone Community School and Technology College and 5 members of the public.

Press: Claire Harrison, Heartland Evening News, Steven Evans, Telegraph and Julie-Ann Needham, BBC Coventry and Warwickshire.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Chattaway, Bob Hicks and Mick Jones because of their prejudicial interest in item 2 below as follows –

- (1) Councillor Richard Chattaway as a Governor and Trustee of King Edward VI College.
- (2) Councillor Bob Hicks as a Trustee of King Edward VI College.
- (3) Councillor Mick Jones as a Governor of King Edward VI College.

(2) Declarations of interest

Councillor John Ross declared a personal interest as at member of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

2. Nuneaton and Bedworth Masterplan, Consideration of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (NWHC) and King Edward VI College (KEGs) Relocation to Nuneaton Town Centre.

Marion Plant and Martin Ward, with the aid of a power-point presentation (copies attached), spoke in support of the relocation of the two Colleges to Nuneaton Town Centre. They outlined the advantages of the proposal with regard to improving the educational and vocational opportunities for students in the Nuneaton and surrounding areas and adding to the economic regeneration of Nuneaton Town Centre. This was an aspirational vision for Nuneaton and the two Colleges, which would bring improved benefits and opportunities to students and Nuneaton and create a cultural and learning quarter and which would include a new library. They highlighted –

- (1) The excellent academic achievements of both Colleges, the close working relationship with Coventry, Birmingham and Leicester Universities and local schools.
- (2) That the proposal would make a significant contribution towards addressing the north/south disparity in terms of raising aspirations and educational achievement.

- (3) That the proposal would attract £48m of funding (from the Regional Development Agencies (RDA)(East and West) and Learning Skills Council LSC) and which would contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre. It would bring learning opportunities into the Town Centre and add to the evening economy.
- (4) That the Colleges would be built on a joint campus whilst retaining the two distinct institutions with the benefit of sharing student functions and services, such as, site management, student support and the delivery of learning centres and libraries.
- (5) That sporting facilities would still be provided at the Hinckley Road site and would be available for use by students and the community at large. Additionally part of NWHC was being rebuild within Hinckley Town Centre.
- (6) That the proposal would also aid curriculum synergy between the two Colleges for students whom would benefit from accessing both academic education qualifications provided by Kegs and vocational and sporting qualifications and training from NWHC.

In conclusion, they said that they had worked closely over the last two years with the RDA, LSC and the Borough and County Council to bring about this exciting and visionary project which they considered would change the lives of the people of Nuneaton.

In reply to questions Marion Plant said that –

- There was no Member of the LSC present at the meeting
- She was aware that 3 secondary schools had applied to have their own 6th form and this was an issue of concern that would need to be resolved before the commencement of the project. The College worked closely with 35 schools and had a good College/school relationship, which she considered would not change.
- The total number of students that would be enrolled in the new Nuneaton premises would be of the order of 4,000 (with another 900-1000 at the Hinckley Road premises). Not all the students would be present at one time however.
- With regard to suggestions that the two Colleges should join together, this was a decision for the two College governing bodies. The Colleges were determined to implement co-location in any event. They would prefer this to take place in Nuneaton Town Centre as anticipated by the current report since they considered this would have significant advantages both for Nuneaton and the Colleges. However, if that was not to be the Colleges would reluctantly look elsewhere (e.g. to the NWHC's Hinckley Road site).

In reply to questions Martin Ward said that –

- He was aware that Etone School had applied for 6th form status but considered that this would complement the current proposal for the two Colleges.
- Research had shown that the particular way a 6th form college operated was distinct and, although the two Colleges would be located on the same site, they wished to retain the ethos of both schools, whilst benefiting from the economies of sharing services and enabling further opportunities in terms of vocational provision.

Chris Simpson then presented the report of the Strategic Directors for Environment and Economy and Adult, Health and Community Services and highlighted the key issues relating to the impact of the possible relocation of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and King Edward VI College to Nuneaton Town Centre.

The report described the potential impacts of the relocation and compared them to the original masterplan proposals and also considered the impact on the existing library and the options for relocating the library. Members' views were requested on the preferred option for the library.

In reply to Members' questions –

- (1) Chris Simpson and Mandy Walker said that there would be an increase in traffic movements if the Colleges were in the Town Centre. Although it was predicted there would be a maximum of 1800 students at the site during the busiest periods, their movements would be staggered throughout the day. The total number of peak hour movements generated would be less than those anticipated from the original Town Centre Masterplan and modelling had shown that there would be less impact on traffic flows overall. A full Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) would be required when the planning application was considered.
- (2) John Deegan explained that the level of rents for business premises was a measure of success of an area and, whilst accepting that some business might move out of the Town Centre, would be accepted and an indicative performance measure of success. He also noted that there was a traffic appraisal embodied in the report. Any development would inevitably increase traffic. The main issue was how this could be best managed.

Discussion followed during which the following comments were noted –

Of concern/Opposition

- Public consultation - That a public consultation exercise should have been carried out on this proposal similar to that carried out for the Town Centre Masterplan. For the consultation to be carried out when the planning application was submitted was considered to be too late.

- Traffic - That the traffic through Nuneaton at peak times was currently congested and the proposal would bring even more traffic into the centre. The proposals for a Park and Ride site would not resolve this problem and would increase the on-street parking problem. There was no mention of how the traffic movements of the 50/60 buses serving the Hinckley Road site would be accommodated.
- Concern was expressed that the Strategic Directors' report was strongly biased in favour of the Colleges' proposal.
- Concern was expressed that the Area Committee was being asked to make a decision about the Library when the Library Service was currently undertaking a value for money exercise.
- That the proposal did not constitute a variation to the Masterplan but was a complete change because the Masterplan was solely about issues such as housing and retail and there was no mention of educational provision.
- That recommendation 3 of the report effectively amounted to an unequivocal commitment to sell the Library site, and was not an, in principle, decision. The promise of future consultation was therefore illusory.

In support

- That the decision required was only an in principle decision and was an exciting proposal that should not be dismissed without at least giving it further consideration. The opportunity to aid regeneration of the Town Centre and help narrow the educational gap between Nuneaton and other parts of the county should be taken and explored.
- Whilst accepting there would be car parking problems on a few days during the year and the capacity of the ring road system to cope with additional traffic due to development these were major issues for the planning authority to overcome.
- Concern about bus movements was valid but the current bus station was in the centre of the Town Centre and under used site. There was "room2 for the College development.
- That the value for money exercise on the Library Service would be available later on in the year in time to effectively inform Cabinet's final decision on the Colleges option.

John Deegan, in response, said he acknowledged that this was a complex proposal and there were significant risks and uncertainty and that was why it had been brought to Members for their views. Nevertheless, the County Council, the Borough Council and College officers believed that this was a once in a generation opportunity to do something for the people of Nuneaton and to narrow the gap in performance indicators between the North and the South of the

county. This was an opportunity to promote educational attainment and Town Centre vibrancy and, at the same time, to bring about much needed improvements to Library provision. The conditions set out in paragraph 3 of the report imposed effective safeguards on the manner in which the Colleges option was developed.

If the Colleges did not get the Area Committee's in principle approval now then the time/funding constraints to which they were subject would force them to abandon the Town Centre option and build on NWHC's Hinckley Road site. Full public consultation would follow in due course in any case as part of the planning process. To delay any in principle decision now for consultation would unnecessarily jeopardise the Colleges option.

Members then expressed further views about the Colleges proposal including –

For

- (1) that this was an exciting proposal that should not be dismissed without further consideration.
- (2) That the proposal was visionary and should be explored despite major issues to be overcome in terms of traffic management and impact on the Town Centre.
- (3) If the Colleges were built on the Hinckley Road site instead of the Town centre this would cause considerable difficulties for local residents given the possibly greater inability of the local road network to cope with a development of that scale. Even with its current level of use nearby residents were plagued by the number of bus movements in and out of the site.

Against

- (1) That the proposal would abandon the Masterplan's vision to create an open plaza for the public in that area and the proposed Colleges buildings would be an over intensive and overbearing development on that part of Nuneaton.
- (2) That Members had not previously been made aware of the proposal to relocate the library to the Church Street site and would need to be consulted/take soundings amongst their constituents before coming to an informed view.
- (3) The co-location would not help the Colleges, as they would still be operating from split sites.
- (4) Concern was also expressed that an issue of this magnitude could and should have been brought to the Committee much earlier to allow Members a proper chance to consult with their electorate.

Christine Kerr said that the Masterplan had been considered by the Borough Council's Cabinet and whilst not all Members supported was endorsed and

adopted. She accepted that some Members might not have been aware of the proposal to relocate the library on a new site. The Cabinet did, however, support the Colleges' proposal, in principle, and was of the view that the Masterplan could be changed. The Borough Council's Cabinet considered the proposal some 12 months ago and gave consent to officers to discuss a range of issues relating to the proposals and how they would impact on the Town Centre. The Borough Council would wish to see the Colleges option explored further and would not favour it being rejected at this stage.

Mandy Walker by way of conclusion re-emphasised that the underlying goal of the proposals was to improve the educational and cultural facilities of Nuneaton and to address the county's north/south divide.

Following which -

The Chair, seconded by Councillor Frank McCarney, moved and it was Resolved (6 Members voting in favour and 5 Members voting against): -

That this Area Committee does not wish to pursue the option of co-locating North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and King Edward VI College into the Town Centre and wishes to retain the original Masterplan together with a new library on the existing site and recommends this proposal to Cabinet.

3. Any Other Business

There were no items of urgent business.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 7:50 p.m.