Adur Planning Committee Monday 16 February 2015

Agenda Item 2

Addendum to report AWDM/1626/14 – Nynex House, Gardner Road, Southwick

The applicants have responded to the consultation responses received during the course of the application:

Marketing

They have reiterated that the site has been marketed for over 2 years and there has been no interest in re-using the site for B1/B2/B8 uses.

They question the Economic Development Officer's assessment of the facilities available and consider that the cost of improving and adapting the building for future business uses would significantly exceed acceptable levels and would impact on the viability of any business relocation to the building.

They also question the ED Officer's assessment that site is being marketed at above market value. They state that the building was initially marketed in June 2012 with no specific value. It was not until November 2013 that the sales particulars quoted a value of £2.75m, which equates to £50 per ft2. This was subsequently reduced to £2.35m, or £47 per ft2. Marketing materials were then amended to remove reference to a price.

It is worth considering that to construct a building of this size would be in region of £160 per ft2, which equates to £8m, plus land cost. Considering price alone, the existing site represents a significant reduction against price of new build.

Serious firms that are interested in sites are rarely deterred by price. What does deter interest is the layout and condition of a building and its ability to accommodate a modern employer. A number of interested parties have been deterred from making offers for this building due to its poor layout, not price.

The site has been marketed by specialist firms who are both active in the commercial property market and who negotiate deals and prices every day. They consider that the prices discussed are easily justifiable in a market context and believe that the property is very much competitively priced. The Economic Development Team's concerns needs to backed up with evidence.

Policy

They consider that emerging policy has very limited weight. Nevertheless, the proposed user would provide much-needed jobs, which should be a preferred objective rather than maintaining a large, empty site.

Objective 3 of the Draft Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan is to stimulate the local economy and provide new jobs. Bringing this redundant site back to use, providing jobs and services to the community and strengthening social capital in order to combat deprivation in the area, is in accordance with that objective.

Community facilities

There have been comments made that there is no need for another community facility. However, there is no policy that requires justification of the provision of additional community facilities.

HSE hazard

The current lawful use of the building also falls within a sensitivity level that would advise against development. It is illogical to object to an inappropriate use on a site which contains an inappropriate use already. Proposed use would see a significant reduction in the number of people on the site compared with the lawful use, therefore reducing the potential consequences of an unlikely major incident.

Highway and Traffic

Site is located close to public transport and a residential area. There is significant parking provision on site and the proposal will remove potential for HGV traffic associated with lawful B8 use of site.

Details of proposed use

All of the building would be available for members of the wider public as well as members of the church. Up to 150 people at one time could use the building. Church services would be held twice a week, while all other activities would be daily.

Further Consultation Response to Applicant's Comments

The **Economic Development Officer** is concerned by the lack of industrial floor space currently available in Adur, to enable business expansion and inward investment opportunities. Nynex House is currently the only large scale industrial site available in Adur.

Whilst actively promoting this site to potential occupiers, businesses fed back that the location and size of this site would meet their needs. However, businesses expressed concern that the current lending market is making it difficult to raise finance on properties requiring considerable investment in addition to the site purchase, unless it can be demonstrated that the asking price adequately reflects the level of additional investment required.

Economic Development has been actively working to encourage inward investment of a large B1/B8 employer whose purchase offer has been rejected, but who are still keen to secure this site to enable the relocation of their 190 employees, as they feel this site has potential to meet their current and future needs.

Planning Officer Response

It remains the view of the Council's Officers that the site has not been marketed at a realistic price for business use and that the high price is deterring potential occupiers due to the level of investment necessary in making building improvements.

It remains the case that an interested business would like to occupy the building but has had its offer rejected. They would not have made an offer if they did not consider that the building was viable for business purposes.

The size of the site makes it currently the only large scale industrial site available in Adur and its retention for business purposes is considered to be essential to support economic growth in the future.