

Minutes of a site meeting held on **Wednesday, 5 October 2015** at **3.30pm.**
at Former Council Offices, Mariners Street, Lowestoft.

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Members Present:

Councillors P Ashdown (Chairman), A Cackett, J Ceresa, J Ford, M Pitchers and C Rivett.

Apologies:

Councillor M Cherry and G Elliott.

Officers Present:

P Perkin (Principal Planning Officer) and S Carter (Democratic Services Officer)

Others in Attendance:

M Fitzsimmons, Valuer, Asset Management Service (on behalf of the applicant)
G Butler, Building Surveyor, Asset Management

The Chairman welcomed Members to the site meeting and reminded those present that the purpose of the meeting was a 'fact finding' exercise only and to provide Members with an opportunity to view the site and its surroundings.

No decision would be made before the application was considered at the next meeting of the Planning Committee on 11 October 2016.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the application was for a change of use from B1 office and ancillary car parking to allow the construction and operation of an A3 restaurant with ancillary A5 drive-thru take-away incorporating retention of part of the Coopers building on Council owned land to the rear of the Town Hall.

The original scheme had been refused at the Committee meeting in August 2016 as Members had felt that the design was not appropriate within the close proximity to the Town Hall and the Coopers building which was a non-designated heritage asset. The new application for consideration aimed to address the reasons for refusal; there would be improved materials used on the proposed restaurant with the brickwork matching the Town Hall and the rendering would match that on the Coopers building. Part retention of the Coopers building walls was also proposed. In addition, the revised layout design included two pre-paid waiting bays in the drive-thru and the roof parapet would be slightly higher. The changes were summarised in the report and advanced visualisations would be displayed at Committee. It should be noted that the materials being proposed were of a considerably higher standard than those used on a 'standard' Burger King restaurant. The changes that had been made meant that the proposal was recommended for approval.

Members viewed the site from Mariners Street, along the A12 to Compass Street and also the signwriting on the Coopers building, fronting both the A12 and Compass Street.

Mr Fitzsimmons explained that the proposal for consideration was for a unique building compared to 600+ Burger King premises. The proposal had been remodelled to make a heritage statement.

Questions

Members raised questions on the following issues:

- How the Coopers façade would be supported.
- Pedestrian access.
- Boundary wall.
- Signage.

- Enhancements to the Coopers building.
- Timescale and lease.

Mr Fitzsimmons confirmed that the wall would be supported by vertical steel, recycled from the site, set in concrete and bolted through the Coopers elevation. Pedestrian access would be through the existing access on Compass Street; the door way would be open and the windows glassless. The existing boundary wall fronting Compass Street would not be retained but be replaced with railings and vegetation; however there would be a new wall on the corner of Mariners Street. The site would be planted with mature cypress trees.

There were two applications relating to signage, one for the Burger King sign and the second for a 'totem' sign which would be placed on the corner of Mariners Street on Council owned land. The purpose of the totem style sign would allow other businesses to advertise.

The proposal was for a 20 year lease with a five year rent review and the tenant would be responsible for maintaining the boundary wall. There would be an obligation on the tenant to keep litter free.

Mr Fitzsimmons explained in detail and pointed out the parts of the Coopers building that would be retained. The original wooden doors facing the A12 would be retained and refurbished. It was intended to install LED light fittings on the exterior to light up the wording which would be painted black on the rendered wall. The stone windowsills were to be retained and the balustrade detail would be carried through in the design. There was also a proposal for archive pictures of the area with narrative to be on display on the inside wall. A Member believed he might have historic pictures that had been taken at the time houses were on the site between the Coopers building and the Town Hall.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that, if the application was approved, specific details relating to the historic element would be subject to discussions with the Council's Conservation Officer and an appropriate condition.

Comment was made that it was a unique opportunity for Burger King in Lowestoft. It was suggested that the parking signs currently affixed to the building in Compass Street be relocated. A further proposal was made to light up, from the inside, the stain glass windows in the Town Hall in order to provide further enhancement to the site. Mr Fitzsimmons advised that lighting could make the windows more vulnerable and some form of protection would then need to be considered.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The site visit concluded at 4.00pm.