

SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Notes of the meeting of the Port Royal Scoping Study Reference Group held at Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Woolcombe Lane, Sidmouth, on Thursday 20 October 2016

Present: Cllr. Jeff Turner (Chairman)
Cllr. David Barratt, EDDC
Dave Bramley, Sidmouth Vision Group
Alan Darrant, Sid Vale Association
Cllr. John Dyson, EDDC
Mel Gater, Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce
Deidre Hounsom, Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan
Cllr. Stuart Hughes, DCC Highways
Cllr. Paul Wright, STC

Also Present: Christopher Holland, Town Clerk, STC
Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive, EDDC
Alison Hayward, Regeneration & Economic Development, EDDC
Karen Jenkins, Organisational Development and Transformation, EDDC
Alison Stoneham, Communications & Public Affairs, EDDC

Apologies: Cllr. Ian Barlow, STC

The meeting started at 6.00 am and finished at 7.30 pm.

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman of the Group, Councillor Jeff Turner welcomed everyone to the first meeting and commented that the Sidmouth was the best coastal town in England and, now that the Port Royal land was in public ownership, it was a golden opportunity to look at ways of renewing the eastern gateway to the town, ensuring that it is both enhanced and protected.

Group Members present expressed their desire to help facilitate the study and to encourage community involvement and engagement.

2 **Scoping Study project overview**

The Chairman explained that how Sidmouth Town and East Devon District Councils, were both significant landowners in the area and how the Councils had agreed that in order to progress and facilitate the renewal of Port Royal, a scoping exercise would be undertaken to understand the opportunities and constraints presented by this area of the town.

The exercise would carry out initial assessments of the site and make practical recommendations to the two Councils regarding what will need to be more significant work to bring about investment and redevelopment for the Port Royal area. Appointed consultants would provide expert opinion on what kind of redevelopment would be potentially viable for Port Royal and would be asked specifically about how they will consult the community during this first stage of the process. They would also identify the boundaries and ownership of the area and the needs of existing occupants.

Group Members commented that the study should take into account previous studies and research and also help promote tourism, heritage and maintain the high quality of development in the Sid Valley and particularly the esplanade. It was anticipated that the work on the study proper, would begin in the New Year.

3 **Role of the Reference Group**

The group discussed how they themselves fitted into the Scoping Study and how their input would help guide the process. The Chairman commented that the group would act as a bridge between the expert consultants, the stakeholders and the wider public. The Reference Group was a good representation of the Chairs of the major bodies from the town who had shown leadership and a keen interest in the future of Port Royal whilst keeping the size of the group manageable for working meetings. With the help of professional expert consultants, the study would provide information relating to the constraints and opportunities for the area with a list of options and how viable they were. Both Councils, as landowners would be need to ultimately decide on the recommendations made at the end of the study.

4 **Communications and public Interest**

The group discussed the need for transparency and openness as far as practicable during the study process. The Reference Group agreed that whilst their meetings should be held as working and creative meetings, (due to the handling of potentially sensitive information, regarding land value, tenancy agreements and potential suggested uses) meeting notes should be made public after each meeting. The group stressed that open communication was vital to the success of the study.

It was agreed that each organisation could feed back the action points from each meeting to the community which would be agreed by the group along with a press release to help inform the public. It was suggested that the Clerk write to major tenants with this information from each meeting. The group members agreed that they had a responsibility to keep people informed to avoid rumours and inaccurate information from circulating regarding the study.

- ACTION:**
- 1) Agreed that Reference Group meeting notes including action points, be made public on the Council websites. The notes of each subsequent meeting would be working notes and contain the actions and main points agreed by the group.
 - 2) Agreed that at the end of each meeting of the group, a press release and communication be agreed detailing the progress made during the meeting.
 - 2) Reference Group Members should feedback to their respective organisations on the outcomes of each meeting.
 - 3) The Clerk to write to tenants with a copy of the notes of each meeting and the press release as agreed by the group.

4 **Commencing the Scoping Study and next steps**

The group noted that the invitations to tender would be sent out to consultants in the next few weeks and that a consultant would be appointed by the Councils soon after. It was anticipated that a meeting of the Reference Group in January would be able to have the appointed consultants present.

4 **Public Consultation**

It was agreed that significant consultation to hear the views from the public and users would be a core part of the study and be held on three to four separate occasions. The different views of the public would be sought at these consultation events which would include a separate event solely for tenants and users as key stakeholders. The Neighbourhood Plan consultation which was being carried out would be utilised if possible within the timescales, to include general questions on Port Royal to be agreed by the Reference group, the results of which could be considered during the study period.

5 **Next meeting of the Reference Group**

ACTION: Agreed that the next meeting would be held in early January to be confirmed by the Town Clerk.