

REPORT TO A MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON 10th JANUARY 2022

CREATIVE QUARTER UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide an update on the current and planned activities of Complex Development Projects (CDP) with regard to Leamington Creative Quarter

2. PROGRESS ON SPENCER YARD AREA

A planning application was submitted by CDP for “extensions, alterations and change of use to office space (Use Class E)” to the United Reform Church, No. 5 Spencer St and The Old Dole Office, Spencer Yard on 22nd December 2020. The Town Council’s Planning Committee response was that it had “no objection to this application, subject to no objections from Conservation, WCC Highways and Environmental Health”. No objections were received from Conservation and WCC Highways to the application and Environmental Health added conditions should permission be granted. Permission was granted by Warwick District Council (WDC) on 24th June 2021.

The accompanying Listed Building Consent application for the United Reform Church was submitted to WDC on 29th October 2021. The Town Council’s Planning Committee response was that it “supports this redevelopment and reuse of this landmark building in the Creative Quarter. However, it is disappointing to learn that the proposed cafe included on the ground floor is not for public use (thereby allowing access to the building for Leamington Spa residents not involved in the creative industries) but just for those working in the building.” No decision has been given by WDC as yet on this application.

Repairs to the roof of the United Reform Church have now begun and CDP is appointing a main contractor for the rest of the works there in January 2022.

There is an ongoing ambition to create a pedestrian bridge from the Pump Rooms side of the river to Spencer Yard. Funding for designs for this to be sought from WDC. There is no pedestrian access available as yet to Spencer Yard from The Colonnade/Loft Theatre.

3. COURT ST CAR PARK AREA

Potential plans for this area (mixed use scheme featuring residential, work space (including smaller studio spaces), event space and potentially a small amount of parking) have been paused for a while as WDC have chosen to pursue redevelopment of the Town Hall as an easier and quicker option to bring to fruition with funding from the government’s Future High St Fund which has been received.

The Stoneleigh Arms, however, will have its frontage dressed to improve its appearance on Bath St. This possibly to be a wrap with positive messaging about the Creative Quarter.

4. TOWN HALL

More detailed designs for a revamp of the Town Hall into a creative hub are currently being created and will be made available to the Town Council for consideration when complete. Aims to open out the foyer area to make it more welcoming and interesting. Better facilities for meeting rooms, improved toilet facilities, an external lift to the rear, cycle parking, 5G wifi and decorative improvements are to be included.

Redevelopment of the Town Hall will come under the auspices of the new Transformational Framework Board; the first meeting of which is due on 5th January 2022. There will be an independent chair of this Board and the Town Council will be invited to participate. Currently, Cllr Rasmussen represents the Town Council on the Creative Quarter Partnership Board.

5. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the update on progress with the Creative Quarter during 2021.