

REPORT TO A MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON 1ST MARCH 2021

CREATIVE QUARTER UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide an update on ideas for the proposed redevelopment of the Court Street car park in the Old Town area of Leamington Spa by Complex Development Projects Ltd (CDP).

2. STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The Stakeholder Forum held a virtual meeting on 8th February 2021 to discuss and consider initial ideas for the regeneration of this part of the Old Town. Warwick District Council (WDC) has given the go ahead to CDP to draw up plans for Court Street car park, including the redundant Stoneleigh Arms building and the Old School building.

The need to provide as much car parking as was previously outlined by WDC has been scrapped and CDP now have a blank canvas for which to prepare a redevelopment scheme. The focus now for this site is sustainability and WDC have indicated that they are willing to waive receipts for the site in order to achieve a greater regeneration impact.

3. IDEAS DISCUSSED

Various uses were raised for the site including:

- Residential apartments, including affordable housing and live/work units
- Artists/creatives spaces – pods or one large area – gallery space
- Mixed use spaces including event space, offices, ethical and independent retail (example - <https://baltictriangle.co.uk/creative-spaces/>)
- Potential use of shipping containers as creative spaces/retail units/coffee shop/workshops - opportunities for short term pop ups, launches, exhibitions etc.
- Public, multi-use outdoor space for classes, break-out areas
- Public Art Trail, high quality Street Art
- Social space in the evenings, a place for creatives to gather and network – a HUB for the creative arts to gather, driving footfall to the area
- Potential for green screen room, sound recording, streaming, You Tubing and Twitch - all growing channels, hireable by day or hour

Ideas mood board can be found here:

<https://padlet.com/joannetruslove1/wtc9ld6kmij8pj51>

4. ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED

Issues to be taken into consideration at this point:

- Affordability of all spaces provided including housing
- Flexible options to rent spaces/membership scheme
- High environmental standards of all design and development to be adopted, aiming at carbon neutral
- Preservation of existing buildings where possible – careful consideration of the Conservation Area and incorporating the more bohemian, creative feel of the Old Town area
- Making everyone feel welcome and ensuring that the area is a useable and welcoming space for all.
- Financial stability and longevity – it was agreed that some mixed revenue income streams from housing/retail/leisure/food and drink offers will be necessary to support viability and affordability of the creatives side of the site.
- Suitable sponsorship and grants opportunities to be explored but not sustainable long term
- If parking is to be reduced or removed from Court Street, then the Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan requires that it be replaced elsewhere or robustly demonstrated that it is no longer required. Court Street is the main car parking provision for this part of Old Town and the area does require some parking for shoppers and visitors to the existing shops and businesses.
- The Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of live/work units on this specific site and supports the provision of attractive and affordable workspaces in the Creative Quarter.

5. CONCLUSION

The Stakeholder Forum was in agreement that the Court Street car park area was a very suitable site to provide relevant, flexible creative studio space but also agreed that to ensure its long term sustainability some cross-financed mixed use activity which may include live/work, retail and leisure units would be imperative to enhance the area and drive footfall.

Further discussions to firm up viable ideas needed – no date set as yet for next Stakeholder Forum.