

Parking RCMRA Deputation 17/00290/FULL

RCY is supposed to be one of the jewels in Gosport's crown – a Conservation Area destined to be not just a nice place to live but a place for jobs, and tourism - a key plank in the economic regeneration of the Borough.

If it is to achieve that aim, it seems reasonable to require that the car-parking plan should satisfy the obvious questions:

- Where do I park?
- Once parked, how do I get to where I want to be?
- Can I get there safely?

These common-sense questions lie at the heart of LP23. But you are being asked to approve a plan for car parking which fails to deliver key objectives of that policy:

- the lack of coherent and safe pedestrian routes,
- the lack of level and safe access for disabled users,
- extremely poor lighting – well below national standards - creates profoundly unsafe areas, particularly on pavements and at crossing points

It is unwelcoming and confusing for visitors and residents alike

There are also problems with:

- big reductions in Visitor Parking at the north of the site; More visitors needing to park there with the new 55 apartments in the NM7 block
- Lack of visitor cycle parking for customers and tourists
- No site speed limits
- Unsafe internal road junctions

How has this happened?

The site has been developed piecemeal over the past 20 years. Successive development has narrowly focused on the details of each application “in its own merits”. Has there ever been any checking of integration with the original development brief for the site? Doesn't look like it.

That has created problems at the boundaries between phases of development. One of the most recent and egregious examples being the lack of clear, safe pedestrian access between the North Meadow car park to the NM7 block.

So why is so much weight given to the expired previous approvals for Car Parking than to local policies? Particularly the key objectives of LP23 and its predecessors.

Surely it is up to the LPA to take a common-sense view in determining the relative weight which should be given to expired previous permissions.

The 2015 CPMP expired towards the end of 2018. It was flawed, never implemented and is no loss.

Why have time-limits on planning approvals if you are forever going to be hamstrung by previous permissions long after they have expired? How can it be fair or make common sense if the

applicant is allowed to make changes to things which no longer suit them, but the LPA is not allowed to bring a new application in line with local policies?

And yet here we are in 2020 looking at a new parking plan which doesn't satisfy local policy and is still not good enough.

The devil is, as ever, in the detail. With time short, here are just a couple of illustrations:

- Safe disabled access routes. A few more dropped kerbs are offered – but not enough and not in the right places. You might be able to get your wheelchair from your car onto a pavement but will you find a dropped kerb or safe level crossing at the other end? Unlikely.
- Terrible lighting. “Safety” means safe day and night. A minimal improvement to some lighting is proposed but nothing in the worst spots – eg North Meadow car park, on pavements and road crossings. No-one wants the place lit up like a sports stadium but there has to be enough lighting to be safe.

Perhaps some of the bigger lighting issues across the site do have to wait for the 4 Point Action Plan (whenever that may come) but surely it can't make sense to approve a layout plan for the car parks without also ensuring that adequate levels of lighting are provided?

In conclusion:

No-one has any illusions that more parking spaces can be conjured up on this site. However, there are so many ways, with thoughtful and careful design, that this parking plan could address all the other issues and make a much, much better use of the space than the proposal in front of you. And this is probably the last chance to get this right.

“Pragmatic” should not mean an expectation that you will accept a bad design for this important site.

Workable and pragmatic ideas have been suggested – help and advice offered by GAGDF – sadly mostly ignored by the applicant. That's a real missed opportunity.

So:

- Please don't approve a plan which is manifestly flawed and actually unsafe, particularly for disabled users and after dark.
- Since this is big and complex site, we suggest that you defer your decision and come and look at the issues yourselves. If you could come after dark, that would really illustrate the problems.
- And finally, if you are nevertheless minded to approve the application, at the very least, we ask that you consider adding additional conditions to address the most troubling aspects:
 - the lack of coherent, safe pedestrian & disabled access and
 - the shockingly low and unsafe areas of lighting.