



**LAMPETER TOWN COUNCIL
CYNGOR TREF LLANBEDR PONT STEFFAN**

**MINUTES OF A PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY
14 SEPTEMBER 2006 AT 7.30PM AT THE VICTORIA HALL, LAMPETER**

PRESENT:

Cllr. Mayor Dorothy Williams (**Chairperson**)
Cllrs: E.J.K.Evans (Leader of Ceredigion County Council),
R.P.Quant (Deputy-Leader)
R.G.Harris, J.I.Williams (Local members)

Messrs: P.Ellis, E.Evans, A.Lewis, J.Jones, R.Marks
(representatives of the Ceredigion County Council)

Members of the Town Council
Elin Jones AM
Ceredigion MP Mr Mark Williams

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

The following declared an interest in the proceedings. They included Cllrs. John Davies, Hag Harris, Selwyn Walters and Ifor Williams

Difficulties in hearing were noted. A microphone would have helped.
Apologies were given for the lack of translating facilities.

The Mayor, Dorothy Williams welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the members and officers representing Ceredigion County Council (CCC). Cllr. Williams indicated that this meeting had been arranged for members of the public, to convey the information received by the Town Council at the meeting of the 20th July, by CCC. This discussion had revolved around **the proposal for relocating the rugby and football clubs from the existing grounds and for developing the site for retail purposes**. The views of the public were needed at tonight's meeting, in order to help the Town Council in further discussions with CCC. The chairperson outlined the order of events and suggested that initially, the audience should listen to members of the CCC's cabinet and others, as they delivered the background to this issue. This would be followed by a question and answer session and finally, two straw polls (to sample popular opinion regarding this proposal), would be held, one to make soundings about the opinions of Lampeter voters and another to show the opinion of the present audience.

Mr P. Ellis, Development Manager with the County Council explained that approaches had been made from retail operators in the context of the development of the former mart site at Station Road and, whilst it had not been considered desirable to develop that area of land for retail purposes, several retail operators had confirmed their interest in a suitable site such as the playing fields on North Road. He stated that the County Council, as landlord of the land in question, had followed up these expressions of interest and had held initial discussions with representatives of both the football and rugby clubs, the current lessees of the land. He explained that the interest shown provided an opportunity for the County Council to control any possible development of the site and utilise an element of any capital received, for the development and improvement of the clubs' facilities and general sporting and recreational activities for the town. Mr Ellis claimed that CCC had been encouraged by the sports' clubs to take this development to the next stage and should the town be supportive, an opportunity now presented itself for the county council to undertake its own retail impact assessments e.g. the retail needs for food, clothes and a range of other items. Their consultants would carry out an assessment of the effect of competition with nearby towns e.g.

Carmarthen, Aberystwyth, Cardigan and vice versa. He concluded by stating that the right way to approach this expression of interest would be to support a retail assessment. If the assessment showed a potential benefit to the town, then it would bring forward the process quite considerably.

Mr Ellis suggested that a chance existed for the local people of Lampeter to be part of the planning process from the possible sale of land to the possible acquisition of sporting facilities.

Mr Alan Lewis CCC continued the address by stating that the county council is acting in its role as a landowner of the present playing fields and as a possible sponsor of any development. Part of the process is to test the opinion of the local people and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a development. He conveyed that it is the duty of the county council to make informed choices and much work would need to be done to analyse the pros and cons. He mentioned that change, for any town, is inevitable and hopefully, the public's input at the beginning of the process would be very helpful.

Cllr. H.Harris mentioned previous planning applications, in 1981 in the College Grounds, more recently at Cwmann and also the development of the former mart site at Station Road, by retail developers was mentioned again. He stressed the importance of informing the public on such matters and for their views to be heard.

The local elected member explained the reasons why he had to declare an interest in the proceedings, but gave an opinion on two issues of interest.

1. In terms of land-use, these playing fields were not adopted under the proposed Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The Memorial Field was considered a CER (to do with the community, education and recreation of the people). This would put the development of a supermarket outside the present guidelines. The county councillor was of the opinion that the field should be kept as an amenity area, despite the advantages for the economy of the area.
2. He asked the question "Would another supermarket be beneficial or not?" A report would have to be carried out to this end. His personal opinion is that Lampeter does not need another supermarket.

Before the commencement of the question and answer session Mr Noel Davies, a former Mayor of Lampeter, presented the county council with a petition of 2,530 signatures, opposing the proposed development.

He drew attention to the minutes from the Borough Council Meeting in the 1950s, which state that the fields "should for all time be used as a playing field for the area". Ian Sheldon, Cilcennin also suggested that a Covenant exists which prevents the sale of the Memorial Fields.

Mr Richard Marks, the council's legal representative, pointed out that there is now no legal impediment to the sale of the land.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

These questions and answers are not in their entirety, but rather a broad sample.

1. Kate Field, Penuwch asked if the county council had a regeneration programme for the county and in particular, one for Lampeter. According to CCC, this could be investigated.
2. Julian Smith, Prengwyn enquired on the proceeds of the sale and how they would be apportioned. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Keith Evans stated that a part of the proceeds would be ploughed back to Lampeter in the form of sporting facilities. The other portion would be used to help other areas of Ceredigion. In the past, the realisation of assets outside Lampeter, has been used to improve the quality of life of Lampeter.
3. Stella Smith, Mydroilyn asked if another site could be developed, as opposed to the Memorial Field. CCC answered by stating that retail developers favour a site in close proximity to the town centre.
4. Gwyn, (a resident of Lampeter) and a member of the Chamber of Trade was of the opinion that local trade would be decimated, should this development come into fruition.
5. Mrs Page, Troedrhiw Cottage, Lampeter was concerned about the traffic changes that could ensue from this development. She asked if a traffic assessment could be done, to find the possible impact on the dangerous bend in the road, at Troedrhiw on the Aberaeron Road. CCC replied by stating that a range of feasibility studies would be undertaken e.g. environmental impact, traffic impact, accident records. These would be financed by the profit on the sale. CCC has competent engineers who consider these factors.
6. B. Goodfellow asked which supermarket is now under discussion. The CCC stated that many retailers were interested in the development.
7. Elin Jones AM stated that this proposed development is in direct contradiction to the county council's own UDP, which designates the Memorial Fields for community and recreational purposes. Authorising consultants to assess the proposal is totally inappropriate.
8. Martin Macapine, Cilcennin was concerned about the impact of narrow roads in the area as a result of the development. Also the personal customer care of many traders in the town would be missed. Again, it was pointed out that business would be decimated.
9. Hazel Lloyd, CAVO, Lampeter viewed the development as degeneration, rather than regeneration. She rued the impact on existing trading.
10. Gwilym Price compared the Memorial Field to a graveyard and said that developing the field commercially would be akin to interfering with the graves of people who had made sacrifices in the Second World War, including even their lives. He is not convinced that the Memorial Field can be sold legally by the present landlord.

11. Rosemary, a resident of Lampeter asked if a study of the impact on the quality of life of the people of Lampeter would be made. CCC stated that this would form part of the planning process.
12. Dave Smith, Chamber of Trade expressed concern regarding the building of a superstore some distance from the centre of the town. In his opinion this would have an adverse effect on the middle of the town and on tourism.
13. John Crowther was concerned about the environmental impact of such a development. The present green spaces should be kept as such e.g. Bryn Field. In answer, these would follow planning guidelines.
14. Kate Stewart asked for a "Slow City" status for Lampeter e.g. Llandeilo, where the quality of life is sustained.
15. Rose North enquired whether this kind of development had been successfully resisted elsewhere. A place in Suffolk was mentioned. There is hope for Lampeter yet.
16. Len Taylor, Forest Rd, Lampeter considered this a terrible development for Lampeter. He could not understand how the county council, could even begin to consider the proposal? Cllr Keith Evans replied by stating that the county council had a duty to consider all applications, retail or otherwise.
17. Mr Burgess, Chamber of Trade reported that surveys have shown that many aspects of towns, where a superstore has been built, has resulted in the killing off of activities such as the small shopkeeper.
18. Viv Moss who lives adjacent to the proposed development pointed out that enough problems already existed in Mill Street and North Road to do with traffic calming and yellow lines.
19. Rob Phillips said, "All other towns that have had these supermarkets built, have also gone through retail assessments and they have all come back approving a supermarket. These towns have become ghost towns, so what is to say that this proposed retail assessment won't do the same?"

STRAW POLL/S RESULTS:

Nearly every one of the 300 attending the meeting voted against the proposals in both straw polls. Karl Taylor asked about the significance of the opinion of this discussion in the future. It was conveyed that the views of this meeting will now be considered in the next meeting of the Town Council, scheduled for the 28th September and transmitted to the county council for further dialogue.

A message of thanks and appreciation was extended to members of the Ceredigion County Council for giving of their time, expertise and transparency in attending this meeting at Lampeter.