

Mendip District Council Responds... Centros Miller's ideas raise significant concern.

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Mendip District Council have issued their first official response to the proposals... The Joint Technical Officer response to the initial concept plan. [Read Full Report Here](#) The report was revealed to councillors at a meeting of Mendip's cabinet committee on November 12th. The Princes Road area, subject to redevelopment investigation, includes Council owned land and capital generating amenities. Should redevelopment proposals progress, the Council will need to consider its financial options and any development agreement concerning this land. The response reflects joint officer opinion in the Council's capacity as a facilitator of economic development and as a landowner. The Council owns the site of the Princes Road car park, the bus and coach station and the land and premises occupied by the Wells Film Centre."

The views are not those of Local Planning Authority because at this concept stage, the Council has not been engaged formally in that role. Nevertheless the Council's development control section has been involved in discussion about the proposal and has contributed to the corporate technical officer response. The response forms part of a process agreed with Centros Miller to inform their production of a draft masterplan for the subsequent consideration of Members of the Cabinet.

Key issues within the report are: Quantum of the Proposed Development

"the concept plan represents a very ambitious increase in retail floorspace for the city. Evaluated against the Council's own information on retail capacity, it is not convinced that the case has been made for the amount of floorspace identified. This concern is compounded by the prospect of a larger Tesco store as part of the scheme, than that already consented, which I believe will be very difficult to justify in capacity terms." Scale, Massing Layout and Design "The concept plan attempts to make best use of site contours to bring together the elements of a new shopping street, together with a relocated Tesco store, which your team has endeavoured to better integrate into the grain of the city centre. The resultant form is nonetheless one that is both inward looking and of considerable bulk and scale, and introduces elements such as a decked/undercroft parking which is alien to the organic form of the city. We believe this approach will need to be fundamentally revisited." Access, Princes Rd and Servicing Arrangements "The partial closure of Princes Road, and the opportunities it could bring to achieve a better configuration of development and servicing arrangements was thought worthy of testing by the Council's 'Guiding Principles' document. However, it is concluded that the evidence presented to support closure is yet to convince either MDC or SCC that the local highway network could cope with the increase in traffic, if the scheme is developed out in the current format. Equally, the attempted improvements to servicing are yet to demonstrate that there would be any appreciable improvement over current arrangements that would justify the closure of this east - west route. These concepts will need review and significant modification" In an accompanying letter to Centros Miller's development manager Malcolm Williams The Director of Community and Regeneration writes: "I am sure that these observations and those set out in more detail below will come as no surprise to your company. Moving from a blank sheet of paper to the first public manifestation of a concept plan was bound to stimulate an active and passionate debate about future retail development in the city, and we have not been disappointed in that. It is equally no surprise that this early concept plan is fundamentally not yet a solution that has found favour, as development of this complexity and sensitivity is essentially an iterative process. The challenge of coming up with a scheme that is worthy of England's smallest city is a major one, and expectations are understandably high. The Council expects that Centros Miller will reflect upon the wealth of comment made on the concept plan, and that in its proposed masterplan will make a quantum step in the direction of a scheme that sits comfortably with the micro scale and chemistry of the city. It must also be of a scale that the city can absorb without detriment to its existing High Street." [Read Full Report Here](#)