
Centros Presentation to Community Partnership. Save Wells Response.

Tuesday, 26 February 2008

Centros presented their latest proposal to the Mendip District Council Community Partnership meeting at Wells Town Hall on Tuesday 26th february. This was an opportunity for Members of the Partnership and the public to provide Centros with verbal feedback on its revised proposals.

Save Wells Chairman Tony Everard drew applause from the well attended meeting when he responded to the presentation.

Tony asked councillors how they could possibly make a judgement affecting the future of the Historic City of Wells from just one plan from one developer? The plan before councillors showed retail development of well over 100.000 sq. ft which is more than double that already within the City centre and far in excess of need, it is known from research elsewhere that the effects on existing traders can be catastrophic. The developer states that shoppers will be attracted to 'big names' on the proposed new shops but most people tell us that they do not want the same shops as can be found in every other town in the country. Wells is unique, and should be treated as such. Save Wells Association is by no means opposed to the regeneration of the area involved, and would welcome some retail inclusion but shops are not the only need in the City, and this is possibly the only opportunity to look at what else could be provided. If the developer has his way nothing else can be provided for a hundred years or more. If this plan goes through the developer will beneficially own the land and almost all the buildings, that will enable them as landlords to control all matters concerning retailing in the City. Alternatives are possible and Save Wells firmly believes that all options should be pursued. If that takes say, two or three years, what is that in the lifetime of the City?

Most of the councillors and members of the public present said that the proposals had not satisfied their concerns about the scope and appearance of the development. Many of those in attendance echoed Tony's Points, including Cllr Rob Read, who said: "Why are we only dealing with Centros Miller?" Councillors said that the plans would affect the city for generations, and it was vitally important to get them right, particularly for a city with a heritage as important as that of Wells. Cllr John Osman said that were he a teacher he would have given the original plans an F grade, and that while the new proposals were an improvement, they did not go far enough. He said: "We are getting there, but we still have a way to go. These are grade C plans for an A-star city." The other councillors agreed, and asked Centros Miller to look again at the plans and come back with revised proposals..