

New Development Brief

Thursday, 18 February 2010

Alternative Wells Plans Close To Completion(Published by 'The Wells Journal', October 8th 2009)Frantic activity is taking place behind the scenes as rival plans for the development of the neglected south-western part of Wells approach completion.Mendip District Council are moving fast to prepare a new development brief for Princes Road and Priory Road.The moves come in anticipation of an appeal by Sainsbury's against refusal of permission for a new supermarket.The store chain wants to build on land currently occupied by Tincknells off Strawberry Way.Mendip council officer Malcolm Williams told a meeting of the council's cabinet that the new development brief was needed urgently. He said: "We have a very short window of opportunity before Sainsbury's goes to a planning enquiry."Mr Williams said that the development of the land off Priory Road and Princes Road was a viable alternative to the Sainsbury's plans.Discussion of the report was delayed by council leader Harvey Siggs who moved part of the agenda,stating that it would take a long time before the Princes Road/Priory Road Development Brief could be heard by the cabinet that evening as they had other issues to discuss.In fact the moving of the items delayed discussion for just 15 minutes.The meeting also heard from city landowner Richard Collins, who asked why the council's latest draft for the area included two properties in Market Street. The land which is occupied by a car sales lot and a pound shop had been added to the developmentarea for the first time.A spokesman forMendip said after the meeting that the area had been included because of its location as a linkage through to the city centre, and because it was felt the area could do with some enhancement.Mr Collins revealed that the plans had been sent out on Friday, and that councillors had not seen them.He said "There is no reason why this land has been included now."Mr Collins has his own vision for the area involving its conversion into a "Tourism Gateway" for Wells including a car park, coach and bus station and boutique hotel.Mr Collins'suggestions would make the area the main tourism entry point for Wells.He said: "All these things need to be centrally located, the city would be destroyed with modern box retail development. It would be a disaster."Sainsbury's are expected to either appeal against the refusal or to present a fresh application for a supermarket.Agents working forSainsbury's are believed to be putting the final touches to a replacement plan for a store on the Tincknells site on Strawberry Way.Sources close tothe project say that they believe they can satisfy grounds used by MendipDistrict Council to reject the application in September.Meanwhile it isunderstood that members of the team involved in trying to bring Waitrose to the city have visited the Emporium site on Priory Road.It is believed that they are checking its viability as an alternative to original preferred location for Waitrose of the EMI club inChamberlain Street.