

ACRA

Alliance of Christchurch Residents Associations
Representing over 10,000 local homes

David McIntosh
Chief Executive
Christchurch Borough Council

By e-mail

3rd October 2012

Dear David

The evolving situation related to the future use of the Old Magistrates Court site and contingent matters continues to puzzle and concern us.

In addressing the Magistrates Court Site, we now understand that planning officers are asserting that (and we paraphrase a direct quotation): *the evidence base that underpins the Core Strategy points to a need for a mixed use scheme, including residential and comparison retail with the potential for convenience floor space provision contributing to the need identified in the 2012 Retail Study.*

Prior to the June "Super Markets" planning committee planning officers had always argued that *any* new convenience stores in the town centre would be harmful. Indeed CBC successfully defended an appeal against the Meteor site on the basis that this extra convenience store would be damaging. The detailed study which was commissioned by the borough also stated that a food store on the magistrate site would harm the town, a point of view that is shared by many residents, their Residents Associations and advisors such as NLP.

Now, just a few weeks later, and after years of consistent opinion on how the magistrate site should be developed, CBC appears to have made a U-turn. *Could you please enlighten us as to which studies and detailed reports have been produced to validate such an apparent volte-face as we can't find them on Dorset for You.*

Our concerns are increased by the news that CBC wishes to downgrade the status of Barrack Road from District Centre to Local Centre. You will recall that The Joint Retail Study 2008 recommended elevating the status of Barrack Road to that of a District Centre.

The people of West Christchurch - residents and employers alike- would be interested to know why CBC have decided that the shopping area of Barrack Road is no longer worthy of becoming a District Centre particularly when the detailed emerging Core Strategy states in Policy KS6 that Barrack Rd should be rated a District Centre.

The NLP 2008 study (8.16) refers to Barrack Rd as already acting as a District Centre. The only changes since then that we are aware of are the positive growth in trade, activity and employment in the Barrack Rd area (which actually strengthens the case for it to have District status) and the recent application to develop the Bailey Bridge site (an application that met with huge support from local residents that was reflected in the decision taken by the CBC Planning Committee).

We feel certain that you will appreciate that the reasons why CBC now want to adopt this course of action need to be substantiated, as this proposal will potentially harm businesses along Barrack Road

and inconvenience residents. *Again we would be grateful if you could point us towards the detailed papers that must have been produced.*

In summary, CBC appears to be adopting in both examples cited above an approach based upon unknown evidence that runs strongly counter to majority public opinion. We need you please to provide us with evidence that this perception is not valid.

A copy of this letter has been sent to Planning Department to form part of our submission to the forthcoming planning meeting.

Yours sincerely

Jim Biggin
Secretary
7 Hurn Road, Christchurch, BH23 2RJ
jebgreycells@zoho.com
01202-473-658

Christchurch Citizens; Friars Cliff; Highcliffe; Stanpit and Mundeford;
West Christchurch