

Chris Elliott
Chief Executive
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
CV32 5HZ

9th November 2017

Re: Covent Garden Car Park Development Proposal (Ref: W17/1700)

Dear Mr Elliott,

I am writing on behalf of the BID Leamington Board of Directors to explain our position on the Covent Garden Car Park development proposal at this time. Out of professional courtesy we wanted to confirm that we support the Councils efforts to develop the site, but must object to the planning application on the grounds that due diligence has not been done to protect the vulnerable town centre during the build. We also feel that the opportunity to future-proof existing parking issues in the town centre has been overlooked.

Over the last eight months we have invested extensive time supporting efforts to understand the impact and plan for the delivery of this site. This includes attending a meeting with the development partner (PSP Warwick LLP) and inviting Bill Hunt to present to our Board.¹ We have consistently expressed support for the principle of developing the site and set out our key concerns, including the need for a detailed and costed 'displacement plan' which we understood would be put to Members, in advance of planning.

A detailed planning application has now been submitted, so accordingly we have consulted our members and the Board of Directors met to consider a position. It was unanimously agreed that the proposal is failing in a number of significant areas and will have a detrimental impact on the economic viability of the town centre and its businesses. For this reason, it will be our intention to oppose the planning application (Ref: W17/1700). Notwithstanding this, we wish to confirm our desire to continue to have an open dialogue and work with WDC to find the best possible solution.

Specific areas of concern are:

- a) The demand for parking spaces in the town centre is already at capacity during peak times. The application will result in the loss of **468 car parking spaces (31% of town centre spaces)** for two years, bringing the total town centre supply in this time to just **1055 spaces**. In closing this carpark, an average of **25,000 users per month (800 per day)** will be displaced. In peak months, like November, this figure is closer to 29,000 (900 per day). This will have a detrimental impact on the local economy if sufficient additional spaces are not provided within 400m of the town centre in advance of and for the duration of the closure.²

¹ **2017 Meetings:** Numerous meetings with Bill Hunt, Rob Hoof and Paul Garrison; Duncan Elliot - 13th April 2017 at the Chamber of Trade Executive; Bill Hunt - 25th April 2017 at the BID Leamington Board; PSP Warwick LLP - 12th May 2017.

² **In-Town Parking: What Works? Innovative Practices in Parking Provision**, July 2014; **Re-think Parking on the High Street**, 2013, commissioned by the British Parking Association; **WDC Draft Parking Strategy 2018-2028** (Pg 27): 'Location' is the overriding concern for customers looking to access a destination from a vehicle and it is generally accepted nationally and by WDC definition, that this figure is within 400m.

- b) With 1523 off-street car park spaces, Leamington Town Centre has a significant shortage for a town of its size and caliber³ and demand is expected to increase by 17% in coming years.⁴ Based on this application, upon completion the total number of spaces in the town centre⁵ will be **1513 on weekdays** and **1570 on weekends**, whilst at the same time bringing around 250-300 extra WDC staff / users who will no longer have allocated spaces. With 44 dwellings and office space for 365 staff proposed, sufficient parking is not being put back to avoid displacing existing workers and shoppers, or to plan for the future.
- c) We feel that retail and local business considerations are not being given sufficient weight over office and housing concerns. The application overlooks opportunities to ensure the development supports and complements the retail functions of the town centre. In doing so it risks missing opportunities to address existing issues and ensure the future retail proposition is fit for the future.

This has brought us to the conclusion that more work needs to be put into preparing this planning application as well as the associated displacement plan.

Based on our research and experience we have suggested a number of options including exploring the phased development of the Covent Garden site, or putting additional capacity into Chandos Street in advance. We are also sure there are other options to explore and wish to reinforce our continued commitment to working with WDC to support our shared ambition of supporting a thriving town centre.

We look forward to receiving your thoughts and would be available to meet at your convenience to discuss this further.

Yours Sincerely,



Stephanie Kerr
Executive Director
on behalf of the BID Leamington Board of Directors



Sarah Horne
Chair – BID Leamington Board of Directors

cc: Councillor Andrew Mobbs, Executive: Leader & Strategic Leadership Portfolio

³ **Royal Leamington Spa Town Centre** current supply = **1523 off street spaces** (top 2 levels of Covent Garden not in use); **Royal Tunbridge Wells**, a town of similar size and caliber = **4137 off street spaces**; **Wellingborough**, a town similar size but lesser economic caliber = **3018 off street spaces**.

⁴ **Warwick District Council Draft Parking Strategy 2018-2028** (Pg 14 & 15): "With demand for parking forecast to increase by around 17% by 2027 there are some longer-term concerns about Leamington's ability to manage demand given its existing parking stock and parking management arrangements".

⁵ **Town Centre Spaces**: Bedford Street Surface (49); Chandos Street Surface (146); Covent Garden Multi Storey & Surface (468) – and 592 incl the top two levels; Rosefield Street Surface (45) Royal Priors Multi Storey (430), St. Peter's Multi Storey (385) = **1523**. Less Covent Garden = **1055**. Old Town spaces (192) are 800m – 1km away, small, fragmented and have very little spare capacity. W17/1700 proposes the following public spaces: 458 in weekdays and 515 in weekends.