

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING, PROPERTY & RETAIL  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20  
SEPTEMBER 2023 AT CURCHOD & CO, MORRIS HOUSE,  
34 COMMERCIAL WAY, WOKING GU21 6EN**

**PRESENT:** Steve Hall                      Boris Rusen                      Richard Newsam                      Franco Orlando  
Tom Simpson                      Will Park                      John-Paul Jackson                      Nigel Dickason

**APOLOGIES:** Dave Peet                      Clare Charrett                      Richard Taylor  
Chris Lacey                      Mark Abbott

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES:</b></p> <p>The meeting was opened, and apologies noted.</p>	
2.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:</b></p> <p>Minutes of the Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (Rev. A) approved as an accurate record.</p>	
3.	<p><b>INTRODUCTIONS</b></p> <p>Tom Simpson introduced himself to Franco Orlando as Planning Policy Officer at Woking Borough Council replacing Gillian Bernadt on the Committee.</p>	
4.	<p><b>CHAMBER EXECUTIVE UPDATE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last Chamber Exec Meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023.</li> <li>The next WCC Monthly Networking Event will be at The Lightbox from 12:00-14:00hrs on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023.</li> <li>Woking Means Business Exhibition is being held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at Woking Leisure Centre. This kicks off at 8:15am with Breakfast and a Presentation by Woking Borough Council.</li> </ul>	
5.	<p><b>PLANNING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woking BC are due to complete an internal review of the planning policies within their Core Strategy. This will then be published and presented at the Council's Executive Meeting in October 2023 for approval.</li> <li>Government Consultation on proposals to make local plans, including mineral and waste plans, simpler, faster to prepare and more accessible is underway and closes on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning Application Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 Storey Office Scheme (Class E) at Cleary Court, Chobham Road. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is currently underway with the Planning Application to follow.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Planning Application Update (Cont'd)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application received for a 17 storey co-living development in the High Street (Lighthouse Site). The scheme is for retail at Ground Floor with 329 studios above. This is a complicated application as it falls within the Town's Conservation Area.</li> <li>• Application received for 2-storey vertical extension at Hollywood House, Church Street East to provide 20 flats. This is in addition to a recent consent for the conversion of the building from office to residential to provide 49 residential units.</li> <li>• Approval given for the redevelopment of Church Gate House with the commercial space retained and addition of 2 floors of residential space.</li> <li>• Change of use applications for ground floor retail to residential continue to be received, however these are generally resisted by the Council in order to maintain active frontages within the Town Centre.</li> <li>• Redevelopment of the Goldsworth Road Industrial Estate has been refused.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>COMMERCIAL &amp; RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY</b></p> <p><b>Curchod &amp; Co</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN reported that things seemed quieter, however a number of businesses are relocating their offices to Woking.</li> <li>• Quality of office space and the Town Centre facilities are key drivers for these relocations.</li> <li>• 1 nr. industrial unit left to let at Woking Business Park with a target rent of £19.50/ft².</li> <li>• Still a lack of supply of industrial space.</li> <li>• RN feels that despite the current state of Woking BC's finances, the Council need a strategy that focuses on and promotes the positives of Woking. This should include how far the Town Centre has been improved in the past 10-15 years.</li> </ul> <p><b>DB Real Estate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ND reiterated RN's comments above and advised that there has been an uptick in commercial enquiries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Madlins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Association and School work continue to be busy.</li> <li>• Commercial work continues to lag.</li> <li>• Fee bidding for new work is busy.</li> </ul> <p><b>BBF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential enquiries are down and people are being cautious driven by the higher mortgage rates.</li> <li>• Similar situation on the commercial front.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>COMMERCIAL &amp; RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY (CONT'D)</b></p> <p><b>Seymours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House prices have dropped by around 10% in the past 6 months and another interest rate increase may see a further softening of prices.</li> <li>• Completions are down around 20% on last year and it has become a real grind with mortgages taking longer to get approved which means that transactions take longer to complete; sometimes up to 6 months.</li> <li>• The market needs more instructions at sensible prices and then the buyers will follow.</li> <li>• Residential rental market is busy with rents up by 10%+ and 70-80 completions per month.</li> </ul> <p><b>William Lacey Group (E-mail update provided by Chris Lacey)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales are very tricky for new homes. The market seems to have stagnated during September which is when we would normally expect a seasonal boost.</li> <li>• Land sales are however progressing and we are actually in the process of purchasing a large site ourselves.</li> <li>• Anticipation is that interest rates may have peaked, or are close to doing so, and today's inflation numbers (and in particular the underlying core rate) would appear to support this view.</li> <li>• Based on distant past memories of very high interest rates, we think that base rates may fall faster than the commentators are suggesting, and that has previously proved to be a good time to invest in residential property.</li> <li>• Little feedback on planning other than even more frustration around nutrient neutrality and the mixed messages regarding planning reforms.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>PARKING &amp; NEIGHBOURHOOD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richard Taylor, Parking Services Manager at Woking BC, sent his apologies and provided an update on parking numbers in the attached e-mail dated 20.09.23.</li> </ul>	
8.	<p><b>RETAIL</b></p> <p><b>Shopping Centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August's weekly footfall was at 160k an increase of 10% year on year.</li> <li>• Footfall for August was just over 600k.</li> <li>• The trend on car parking numbers in the shopping car parks is upwards with just under 100k for August.</li> <li>• Year on year trade growth is double digit with a numbers of retailers continuing to trade well (e.g. Sainsbury's, WH Smiths, Boots, etc).</li> <li>• There are a number of enquiries and lettings, but deals are taking longer to conclude.</li> <li>• Debenhams – ongoing discussions with potential occupiers.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Shopping Centres (Cont'd)</b></p> <p>Letting Details as under:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile Gift letting in The Peacocks.</li> <li>• Black Sheep are commencing their unit fit out in Henry Plaza w/c 25.09.23</li> <li>• The old SpecSavers unit is under offer to a Pharmacy.</li> <li>• New restaurant in Jubillee Square is opening shortly.</li> <li>• Wilko have gone into Administration, but there is already interest from other parties in the unit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Chertsey Road</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Hairdresser and Dessert Shop have opened.</li> <li>• The Barbers in Chertsey Road is opening another premises in Commercial Way.</li> <li>• More office workers returning to Dukes Court has resulted in more visitors to Chertsey Road.</li> <li>• Management of on street parking continues to be more efficient.</li> </ul>	
9.	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing raised.</li> </ul>	
10.	<p><b>NEXT MEETING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next meeting will be 12:30-13:30hrs on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at Madlins LLP, Nova Scotia House, 70 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6LQ</li> </ul>	