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Appendix 1: Public Consultation 2005-2012

The Seafront at Eastern Town, also known as Port Royal, is the supremely intractable problem and exciting challenge and glorious opportunity for Sidmouth. Constantly debated in the press and in public and private meetings, it has been the subject of at least three concerted attempts to consult widely and openly over the past seven years.

.1 VGS consultation 2005-2006

The VISION GROUP FOR SIDMOUTH (VGS), established by Sidmouth Town Council (STC) with the Sid Vale Association (SVA) in 2005, undertook a wide consultation exercise among residents, businesses and visitors in 2005-6 resulting in a document published in 2006. The findings are somewhat dated and have been overtaken by events but are reproduced below for the record:

There is a strong feeling amongst residents, in particular, that the site should be developed as a community facility and not be sold for residential development. Indeed there is a strong feeling that Sidmouth already has an excess of flats.

Both Exmouth and Seaton have approval for the development of visitor centres for the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. A similar centre is felt to be inappropriate competition, though there is strong support for a high profile public building of a similar scale. However, many visitors coming to Sidmouth will expect to find a more substantial introduction to the Jurassic Coast than can currently be provided in the limited space of the museum.

The Local Plan has identified a need for additional community facilities in Sidmouth. In particular, a large performance space has been identified as a need which could be used as a venue for the Folk Festival, and might enable an Arts Festival and other events requiring large indoor spaces to be introduced.

The site could also provide an opportunity to re-site the museum, which is currently chronically short of space and can only display a very small part of its collections. It might also enable co-location of the library, enabling a badly needed extension of the health centre. The Information Centre could also be incorporated, enabling expansion of the swimming pool facilities into its current location. Educational facilities would be an important component, supporting local schools and providing a field study base for visiting groups.

Other ideas for inclusion in the development were:

- art gallery
- aquarium
- wide-screen cinema
- Imax Cinema
- exhibitions on local geology, wildlife/flora, renewable energy, the weather etc
- lecture theatre
- panoramic restaurant
- IT suite
- links to web cameras along the coast
- gift shop
- a winter garden

The design of the new building will be critical. It needs to be a distinctive building of the highest quality, but must fit in with the architectural characteristics of the Esplanade, which have a characteristic ratio of vertical to horizontal scales, both in the overall structure and in the windows. It is different from much modern design, and in particular from long picture windows, which in another setting might be appropriate to capture the views along the coast.

Survey responses

There was general support from residents for a development in East Ham that would provide public amenities and strong opposition to the development of flats in this location. A large majority favoured inclusion of a café or restaurant (more than 2-to-1 in favour). Substantial majorities (but less than 2-to-1) also favoured creation of a cultural venue and art &/or exhibition gallery with a shop, and additional parking. Moving the existing museum and the Information Centre were evenly split, and there was a majority against moving the library.

At the conversation cafés, there was considerable support for redevelopment of the area with a community facility, though with a significant number registering an objection to any move to close the existing Manor Theatre.

70% of commercial respondents to the questionnaire believed a development of the East Ham to provide more amenities, leisure facilities and parking for both residents and visitors would result in a general improvement of the business economy for all.

The visitor responses placed development of cultural facilities near the bottom of improvements they would like to see. They also placed visits to the theatre, museum etc near the bottom of the list of things to do.

Our Vision

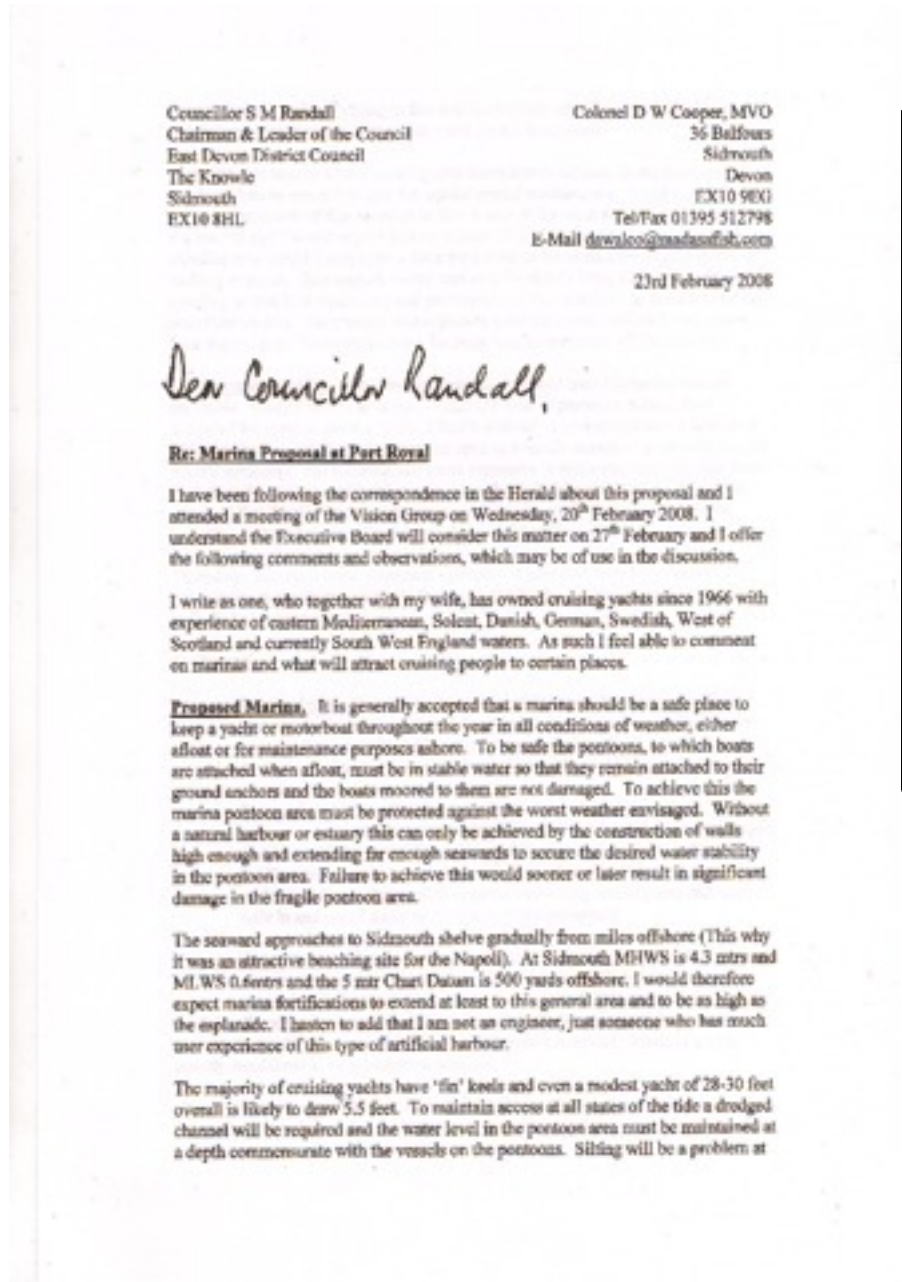
The Vision group concluded that a great majority are in favour of some sort of community development at the Eastern end of Sidmouth in the Port Royal / Ham area. A multi-purpose building or group of linked buildings that can be used for a variety of purposes in all weathers and at all times of the year would be preferred. The space available is about 1800 sq m per floor and with four floors to match the flats opposite, this would give a total floor space of about 7000 sq m. Additional space could be gained by developing below the level of the Esplanade, since the site is a sloping one. However, it may be preferable to reserve this space for parking. Any development must be in keeping with the Regency style of the Sidmouth Esplanade. Some of the potential benefits arise from the use to which buildings in other parts of the town could be put if vacated. It is proposed that the Centre might include:

- Performing Space with seating capacity for up to 500 and facilities suitable for orchestras and large bands. We envisage that an effective floor space of 1000 sq m, some of it two storeys deep. It could be used in a revitalised Sidmouth arts festival, as a venue for the Folk Festival, for the Music Society, and for lectures or conferences.

The seating should be flexible to accommodate different layouts.
- Exhibition Space with an area of 400 sq m. This could be used for both temporary and permanent exhibitions.

An exhibition of historical and current art of East Devon might form a permanent core, perhaps including material from the Museum collection.

Exhibitions might include local government plans, touring museum exhibits, local events, art shows etc..
- Restaurant & Bar with an area of 400 sq m., positioned so as to benefit from the view of the sea and cliffs to the East. The bar would support the performing space for pre and post event meals and interval drinks and snacks, so should be easily accessible from that part of the building.
- Library with an area of 400 sq m, slightly larger than the current space. The current library in Blackmore gardens is an excellent facility, though it suffers from lack of parking. However, the adjacent Health Centre needs extra space into which to expand, which could be made available by relocating the library.
- Museum with an area of 400 sq m, slightly larger than the current space, but easier to make good use of. The museum is currently very attractively displayed in Hope Cottage. However, only a very small fraction of its collection is accessible due to space constraints, and Hope Cottage is expensive to maintain. It is proposed that a new museum space be provided in the Port Royal Centre, that the museum's substantial book and pamphlet collection be made available through co-location with the library reading room, that the museum's unique etchings collection be



displayed as part of the core collection in the exhibition area, and that other collections be used for temporary displays in the exhibition area.

- Classroom and laboratory with an area of 100 sq m, providing educational facilities for local schools and visiting school groups to the World Heritage Coast.
- Sailing and Sea Angling Club with a floor area of 400 sq m, equivalent to the current space. As well as accommodating club facilities, consideration might also be given to extending the meeting facilities to further support youth activities.

.2 Proposal for a Marina 2006-2008

The VGS document was put on one side while senior officers and councillors of the EDDC were negotiating to consolidate the Eastern Esplanade in EDDC hands. The Drill Hall had been donated in 1894 for use by the young people of the town according to a lost covenant; it had been used as a Drill Hall by the East Devon Regiment Cadet Force, before falling into disuse and disrepair in 2004.

Meanwhile EDDC negotiations with a private property developer culminated in a proposal to sell the site for development as a marina.

When made public, the proposal for a marina provoked widespread debate with many arguments for and against as well as mounting public concern that the proposal might be a distraction from the strategic issues facing the town as exemplified in paragraph 1.5 of the PRSG document.

The marina proposal was fully debated at the EDDC Executive meeting in February 2008 where it was overwhelmingly rejected after considering a range of submissions including the letter from Colonel David Cooper reproduced herewith:

Colonel Cooper's informed opinion was that a slipway with a seawall or mole to allow embarkation and disembarkation of shallow draught vehicles in all tidal conditions is feasible and desirable on Sidmouth seafront.

He warned that a full marina would require the following:

- A fortification wall as high as the esplanade, extending 500 metres off shore.
- Regular dredging, requiring planning permission every time it is required.
- Hard standing for a dock, hoist, and diesel refuelling pontoon, car parking and access for large boat transportation.
- To be commercially viable it would require 450 berths, providing employment for up to 15 staff, including part timers.

Although the marina proposal had been rejected, the Leader of the Council revealed that the EDDC priority continued to be finding a buyer to develop the site. No such buyer was forthcoming.

Meanwhile the strategic issues confronting the town remained - and Sidmouth's Eastern town continued to be ignored by EDDC.

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A marina will require a hard standing area immediately adjacent to the pontoons so that boats can be brought ashore for regular annual maintenance. In my experience adequate provision of this essential facility is one of the most important features of a marina. In size I would expect it to be at least 25% of the pontoon area. The hard standing area would incorporate a dock for a boat to lift boats ashore and a diesel refuelling pontoon. Boat owners would expect to be able to bring their cars to the hard standing so that boat equipment and provisions can be transferred to handcarried to load onto their vessels. They would also expect to leave their cars here until they return from their cruise. Temporary access for large boat transporters will be necessary.

Commercial viability. There are few marinas with less than 450 berths that are profitable. Many this size or larger, even those built in protected waters, have struggled for years to show a profit. I find it difficult to understand how a marina of 180 or so berths, constructed on such an open and hostile stretch of coast, without any natural advantage, and consequently more expensive to build and maintain than those in sheltered locations, can be given any more than a brief consideration. I can only conclude that the developer proposing a marina lacks competence in this area of expertise or there is some other agenda that is driving the company.

There have also been some optimistic estimates of jobs that would be created. A better guide is the Plymouth Yacht Haven of 450 berths, which employs 15 people including some part time.

Customers

- **Passing Trade.** Cruising yachtsmen consider Lyme Bay a stretch of water best crossed in good weather and without delay. A yacht on a direct course between Portland Bill and Start Point passes Sidmouth 15 miles offshore. I doubt that a day or two in a marina at Sidmouth would be seen as attractive diversion.
- **Sidmouth as a Base.** Cruising people want to be based in, and able easily to visit, picturesque holiday areas with safe comfortable berths and anchorages; Chichester Harbour, the Solent, Poole Bay, Weymouth, Torbay, Salcombe, the Dart and ports West are good examples. Based in Sidmouth the yachtsman faces a long sail to reach an interesting cruising area and short sails in and out of a marina have a very limited appeal.

The case for a Marina. People making the case for a marina claim that it would visually enhance the coastline with a picturesque harbour and bring trade into the town. A moment spent imagining the works necessary to build a marina will dismiss the 'visually enhancing' case immediately, and a realistic assessment of the net increase in employment would hardly justify the costs involved. Marinas are not usually considered to be job creation schemes.

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Clearly Sidmouth would benefit from more visitors. The seaside location is very important and perhaps a better way to increase visitor numbers is to make it possible

for more people to use and enjoy it. In other words improve access to the sea and sea related activities but without ruining the coastline. For example:

- A slipway to allow the launching of trailer Day Boats. Such a facility at Lyme Regis is popular and always busy in the summer. This would also benefit the Lifeboat, the sailing club and the small local fishing fleet.
- A sea wall or mole could be built to protect the slip and allow it to be used in light sea conditions.
- The slipway and mole could be shaped to accommodate the type of shallow draught vessels used by the Stuart Line to allow the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers in all tidal conditions. This need only be a fair weather facility as these trips are very much a settled weather activity. Currently, on the relatively few occasions when the tidal conditions allow the Stuart Line to operate from the open beach at Sidmouth there is no shortage of customers. If they could offer regular cruises from Sidmouth in settled weather (which is most of the summer), from a place unaffected by tidal heights, they would certainly draw customers and thereby visitors to Sidmouth.
- Any facility designed to increase visitor numbers will require increased car parking, and the failure to provide adequate parking will inevitably limit its potential.

I hope you will find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely,

David Cooper

David Cooper.

Copies by email to: Executive Board Members
Chief Executive
Corporate Director, Environment

1.3 2009-2010 EDDC Port Royal Steering Group

Mounting public pressure about the neglect of the Eastern Town and the absence of a strategic plan for the town finally caused the District Council to acknowledge that there were no resources earmarked for planning developments in Sidmouth and no professional staff on the payroll who could undertake such a task.

In autumn 2009 the EDDC Executive accepted an offer by the then Chair of the Chamber of Commerce to bring together *pro bono* expert advice from within the town. EDDC Executive established the Port Royal Steering Group (PRSG), comprising representatives of the EDDC, the Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hospitality Association, the VGS and the SVA with a remit to report back to the EDDC Planning Department and to the local EDDC councillors, who would then decide whether to use the resulting document to engage the community and seek potential developers and funding sources.

The PRSG met monthly from December 2009 to July 2010 collating factual information about the site with technical support from the Senior Planning Officer, and Planning Surveyor, and advice from the EDDC Design Portfolio holder. Sidmouth members of the Steering Group in alphabetical order: Robert Crick, Chair of the VGS; Richard Eley, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce and past chair of the VGS Seafront Group; Councillor Simon Pollentine of Sidmouth Town Council; Brian Hall, Chair of the SVA Planning and Development Committee; Mark Seward, Chair of Sidmouth Hospitality Association; and Edward Willis-Fleming, Director of Sidmouth Design Company.

The PRSG consulted a wide range of stakeholders using a range of methods, including the public consultation process undertaken by the VGS in June 2010:

2010 PORT ROYAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Ideas that have been carefully developed over years have been debated and refined in 2010 at a series of meetings with the Environment Agency funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and organised by Seafront Action Group of the Vision Group for Sidmouth. These were distilled in a display at the library, together with a lively site visit and a thoughtful public meeting in All Saints Hall in June 2010, eliciting written responses from 60 members of the public, which are summarised below. NB This is not a statistically random sample but a self-selecting group of respondents.

PERCEIVED ASSETS in order of preference from 60 responses

the sea – 30
 green area – 23 (*Ham Green as a Village Green*)
 fish shop – 15
access to town centre – although cut off from other parts of town
considerable size of site
quaint, peaceful, unspoilt: characteristic of Sidmouth

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS including perceptions articulated by individual respondents, which are not necessarily endorsed by officers of the Vision Group nor by members of the EDDC Steering Committee

flood risk – 30 (*might preclude planning permission for use of site for residential development*)
not good economic climate for development investment
no clear leader or ownership for providing flood protection
no definitive Sidmouth Town Plan: no town policy on the Environment, on Transport, on Areas of Conservation, on Planning, on Road Improvements, on New Development sites, on Flood Prevention. There are no proposals for Sidmouth on maintaining commercial

prosperity, on the shopping environment, on traffic speeds, on widening footways, on ease of movement of pedestrians, on increasing the standard of cleanliness, on street lighting, on drainage

VISION – including aspirations from various respondents that reveal contradictory visions

- relocate/restrict car parks – 27
- jetty/pier/harbour/marina – 26 (*protect Alma Bridge/ cliffs/town from flooding*)
- pedestrianise – 14
- trees – 12
- hopper/shuttle bus – 12
- park and ride – 9
- against expensive flats/apartments – 8
- boardwalk along river towards Byes – 7
- increase car parks - 7
- seating – 6
- wave boom – 5 (*generate electricity; provide protection*)
- support for expensive flats/apartments – 4

SPECIFIC CONCEPTS, SUGGESTIONS and IDEAS:

Exhibition/performance area with café/bar/shops (Maltings at Snape)

Carparking at ground level, with development at 1st/2nd floor levels

Extend shopping facilities eastwards from High Street

Solar electricity generation from any roof area

Solar thermal on swimming pool; cover part of carpark with PV panels

Small hydro-electric plant on river

Ensure that the children's recreation area is visible from seafront: not hidden

Improved Hopper Bus: frequent service/ every 10-15 mins; basic charge; calling at important town amenities

Opportunity for architecture students

Local businesses willing to participate in creation, management and perhaps running of any new facilities

New client base: future stayover visitors are likely to package their own tours and will require something different to a silver-service table d'hôte dinner at their hotel

Sidmouth needs high quality indoor activities: aquarium, health spa, sports/fitness centre, children's play area

No proposals for Sidmouth on maintaining commercial prosperity, on good shopping environment, on traffic speeds, on widening footways, on ease of movement of pedestrians, on increasing the standard of cleanliness, on street lighting, on drainage

Relocate pumping station at top end: turn whole locality into green area

Replace old 'macerating station' beyond Ham playground with garden for blind/partially-sighted

Entrepreneurial retail/production units

Small business area on car park: Arches at water-front in Exeter: commerce and visitors

Lightweight tent as meeting/performance space

In August 2010 the draft brief was submitted for consideration by EDDC Executive but the submission received no written acknowledgement and was not referred for consideration to the EDDC Executive or to Sidmouth's elected representatives on the EDDC or STC.

Members of the PRSG were taken aback to find that they had "misinterpreted" the initial remit. They had attempted to provide the first step on a long and arduous process of public engagement to elicit creative inspiration, and informed evaluation of a range of options. They were however informally advised that what EDDC now required was:

- A "realistic" plan solely for the property that was owned by or about to be acquired by EDDC, removing any proposals relating to the wider context, including development of the surrounding publicly owned land, and removing consideration of the economic, cultural and social strategies needed for Sidmouth's future development

- A “specific” architectural design showing the scale of proposed seafront development: height, footprint, length, depth.
- Precise details on how a layout change might increase parking numbers.

The PRSG received no further formal or informal acknowledgement from EDDC despite several tentative overtures during the following 12 months. However, in October 2011 the EDDC Survey on Car-parking stated:

Ham West Car Park

The car park is the main central visitors’ and shoppers’ car park offering 192 spaces within a site area of 1.085 acres.

The car park is held by way of freehold title but is encumbered by high voltage electricity cables which would require reposition in the event of any development of the site. This car park has recently been subject to a development opportunities study undertaken by community representatives.

Consideration will shortly be given as to how this work is progressed to the next stage.

1.4 An independent PRSG report (2012)

Late in 2011, the Drill Hall was finally acquired by EDDC and the decision was made to demolish it. Ironically, while the rest of the nation reclaims public space to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee with parks, fountains and sculptures and while the World Heritage Coast celebrates the Olympic Year with a festival of science and art, there was a serious suggestion that Sidmouth should acquire, “temporarily”, an additional car park on this prime location on the south coast.

In February 2012, having received no further communication from EDDC, but taking heart from the new “localism” agenda of the Westminster Government, the remaining members of the PRSG agreed to edit our findings and present them independently to assist in public engagement for the production of a neighbourhood plan within the context of the controversial EDDC LDP for 2026.

Appendix 2: Site Photographs



Lifeboat Station, Port Royal Club, Drill Hall



Esplanade Turning Circle and SWW on Ham



