

REP-788 Seafront Traders Association

Matter 1.1

The document does not comply with the council's Statement of Community Involvement.

The invitations sent out to businesses in Southend to visit the consultation public workshops contained incorrect dates for the meetings. As a result many business owners missed the 2 sessions that were for businesses and were not able to have their say.

‘‘Have your say on future development of Southend’s town centre and central seafront ‘‘

Please see appendix 1&2 showing invitations to the workshops on 21st Jan 10am to 1230pm, and 6 pm to 830 pm.

The actual workshops for businesses were on 20th Jan 3pm to 4pm and 21st Jan 8am to 9am.

The invitations to residents only arrived on the day the workshops were taking place and thus many residents could not attend at short notice.

The submission form downloadable from the council's website is in a pdf format which can't be edited. Thus many businesses / residents have not been able to email their representations to the council.

The online submission process was very difficult to navigate. It is time consuming and not at all user friendly, and does not allow for attachments to be submitted. Due to this many businesses / residents wanting to submit an online representation would simply give up.

SBC's planning department has made it difficult for businesses and residents to have their say on the SCAAP proposals. Where businesses and residents have made representations, the direction and policies SBC are pushing under the SCAAP haven't really changed at all. In my opinion SBC has gone through the motions of 'consultations' as a box ticking exercise, so that they can argue the SCAAP process has been legally compliant. They didn't want anybody else playing with their train set.

This poses the question as to what qualifies as legally compliant in terms of consultations? Was the process legally compliant as SBC held consultations and ticked a box? Or does it have to fully engage in the spirit of consultation and take on board the views of businesses and residents, working in conjunction with the central area's key stakeholders to formulate the SCAAP policies, to fulfil the criteria of being legally compliant?

The determination of SBC to follow its own path, regardless of input from businesses or residents, is highlighted by several email responses and a letter written in to the local press from the Leader of the Council at the time, Cllr Ron Woodley.

As chair of the seafront traders association I raised the issue with SBC that the business community felt there was a lack of parking spaces in their proposed redevelopment of the Seaway car park into a multi screen cinema, restaurant and hotel complex. Our concern was that this car park is the main seafront car park, and it is vital to the viability of the seafront. SBC's plans for the complex involve

adding all the uses mentioned above, but keeping the number of parking spaces on the car park the same. This would create a massive shortage of spaces as tourists compete for the same spaces as the leisure development visitors.

Appendix 3 is an email from the leader of the council (at the time), on an email to an officer which he was copied into. A year later he then wrote in to the press stating the council's disappointment at traders for voicing their opinions of concerns over their livelihoods (Appendix4). Seafront businesses were also branded as 'moaners' for having an opinion different to that of SBC.

Appendix 5 is another email from the leader of the council. The seafront traders made representations, that we felt doing traffic surveys in March, in the rain, was a waste of tax payers' funds. Surveys should be done on hot, sunny days, perhaps in July/August, to gain parking data for 'peak periods of demand'.

These emails and press clippings demonstrate the attitude taken by SBC at the time the SCAAP was being prepared, to representations and consultations made to them. The seaway car park, is a key opportunity site in the SCAAP, and parking capacity is one of the key topics of concern in the central area. The parking studies form much of the council's evidence base that they use to justify the Car Parking Study and the transport section of the SCAAP.

The email from Dawn Jeakings (appendix 6) and the press clip (appendix 7) refer to the Better Queensway proposal document that went before full council on 20thApril17.

Better Queensway Project – SBC officers asked councillors to vote to approve their Queensway development proposal. The preferred road layout plan under this proposal involved narrowing the Queensway underpass and dual carriageway to a single lane (appendix 8). No consultation had been carried out with residents, councillors or businesses over the narrowing of this route.

This again demonstrates that planners at SBC do not engage or consult with businesses, residents and councillors over key issues in the SCAAP area, the road layout being one of the major routes within the Central Area, to the Seafront and southern end of the High St.

Quite a few business men (including 2 ex-leaders of SBC, Tollhurst Fisher email) wrote in to the Chief Executive and Southend councillors expressing their concerns over the SCAAP, in particular to the Transport and Parking policies. These do not appear to have been included by SBC as SCAAP representations so I have referenced them in this document, please see appendix 9.

1.3

Great emphasis has been placed in the NPPF on the 'golden thread' of sustainable development. The scaap should deliver a strategy that leads to the growth of a strong economy within the area, and the economic role is one of the key principles of sustainable development.

"an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure"

A major concern held by the businesses is that policy DS5 will make access to the central area by car difficult and frustrating, driving its customer base elsewhere. This will have a severe negative impact on economic growth and will threaten the viability of retail and tourism within the central area. This policy thus is inconsistent with the NPPF.