

APPROVED

DPC meeting 8/13

8/7/13

THE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of the 8th Meeting of 2013 of the Development and Planning Commission held at the Charles Hunt Room, John Mackintosh Hall, on 8th July 2013 at 11.00 am.

Present:

Mr P Origo (Chairman)
(*Town Planner*)

The Hon Dr J Garcia (DCM)
(*Deputy Chief Minister*)

The Hon Dr J Cortes (MEH)
(*Minister for Environment & Health*)

Mr M Gil (MG)
(*Chief Technical Officer*)

Mr G Matto (GM)
(*Senior Architect*)

Mr C Viagas (CV)
(*Heritage & Cultural Agency*)

Mrs J Howitt (JH)
(*Environmental Safety Group*)

Mrs C Montado (CAM)
(*Gibraltar Heritage Trust*)

Dr K Bensusan (KB)
(*Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society*)

Mr C Russo (CR)
(*Land Property Services Ltd*)

In Attendance:

Mr P Naughton-Rumbo (DTP)
(*Deputy Town Planner*)

Miss K Lima
(*Minute Secretary*)

Apologies:

Mr J Collado (JC)
(*Land Property Services Ltd*)

Mr J Mason (JM)
(*Rep Commander British Forces, Gibraltar*)

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328/13 – BA12306 – Coaling Island – Proposed marina – GOG Project

DTP told the Commission that this application has been subject to the legal requirements and presented to the relevant consultees. Four representations have been received.

The Commission welcomed Mr Chris Riddell on behalf of HMGOG.

Mr Riddell told the Commission that this project is a Government manifesto commitment to create 700 new berths for local boat owners. The berths will accommodate 6 to 8 metre long boats.

Mr Riddell said that feedback from authorities and the general public has been taken into account. He said that most concerns were regarding water quality and health and safety issues for vessels accessing the marina. He said that issues arising from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) have also been taken into account and changes made to the plans as a result.

Mr Riddell also told the Commission that the revetment has been made smaller and the wharf area enlarged. He also said that there will be an underwater bridge at the south exit from Coaling Island and that minor smaller outlets will be included to allow a flow through every 37 metres.

Mr Riddell explained that he had met with the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club (RGYC), Mediterranean Rowing Club and the Calpe Rowing Club who raised the issue of traffic congestion due to an increase in boats entering and leaving the area. To alleviate traffic congestion, access has been split and small boats have been placed behind the revetment.

Mr Riddell told the Commission that another major concern raised was safety and that an exclusion zone has been marked, through which only the rowing or sailing fraternity can navigate. This area will be protected by law so as to ensure safe access. He said that the different clubs should coordinate with each other and manage this amongst themselves. There will also be another demarcated channel for motor boats. Mr Riddell assured the Commission that he has met with all of the clubs and that they are now confident that these changes address their concerns. He also said that the Captain of the Port has issued a statement saying that he is satisfied that safety has been met.

With regards to the movement of water, Mr Riddell said that culverts will provide enough clean-up. He also said that Technical Services Department (TSD) has confirmed that problems with high tide and sewage should not reoccur as the sewage system is being improved. Nevertheless, Mr Riddell said that various systems to avoid problems with sewage will be placed if necessary.

Mr Riddell said that three artifacts of heritage importance have been found on-site but that the Ministry for Heritage has confirmed that these can be removed. He said that they also recommended monitoring during works and a dive survey. He confirmed that this will be done.

In terms of the ecology of the area, Mr Riddell said that two species have been found in the area and that these will be relocated to ensure that they are not destroyed as silt is lifted.

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Mr Riddell also said that an EIA and screening suggests that no issues exist that should impede the process. He said that the EIA summary of potential impacts is based on a narrow throat but that the design has been changed to an ultra-throat, to minimize the amount of debris coming in.

JH said that the ESG had met with Mr Riddell and that they were heartened to hear that the fuel service has been removed from the design. She said that this reduces the ESG's level of worry. However, JH said that they still consider that increasing the number of boats in the area to over 1000, can contribute to a reduction in air quality. JH requested that Government places a fourth air quality monitoring station in the area. With regards to water quality, JH said that samples taken show dire levels. She said that she would welcome the implementation of guidelines on discharge from boats and requested confirmation that rigorous monitoring will continue, especially if the area is to become a bathing zone. JH also said that the sewage system works on pumps and that if there were to be an electric fault, this could affect the system. She added that there should be stricter controls of the boating community.

Mr Riddell confirmed that the fuel service area has been removed from the plans. He also said that the environmental report states that there are no concerns on air quality and that the Captain of the Port is in favour of issuing guidelines for boats. In terms of monitoring water quality, Mr Riddell said that this area will not become a bathing area but that the Ministry of Environment will be monitoring this.

MEH concurred with JH. He said that an extra monitoring station is something that should be considered by Government and that he would be speaking to officials on this. He also said that the sewers were in a bad state but that TSD is working on this and that the two main sewage outlets should not pose a problem.

KB said that JH had raised most of the points which he would have wanted to raise. He also expressed concern that should this become a swimming area, water standards will not be met.

MEH said that water sampling will have to continue on a regular basis; at least as regularly as in the beaches.

CR said that there is also the issue of sculls capsizing and that therefore, the water quality should be monitored whether this becomes a bathing area or not.

KB told Mr Riddell that a licence is necessary to relocate the two species found in the area and that information on where they will be relocated to should be provided. Mr Riddell said that instructions on this have already been sought. MEH told Mr Riddell that he should copy KB into all correspondence on this matter.

DCM said that this project is part of the Government manifesto and that although he has not been directly involved in the project, the plans show considerable improvements. He said that JH and KB's comments should be taken onboard.

CR asked why the opening is on the southern end. Mr Riddell said that this is to provide a safety route and to ensure water quality at the RGYC.

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The Chairman asked whether the RGYC motor boats will have to navigate through the southern end. Mr Riddell said that the clubs have agreed to liaise amongst themselves and come to an agreement on the preferred manner of entering and exiting the area. The Chairman said that perhaps it would be better if this were managed by the Port Authority. Mr Riddell said that everything will be subject to the Captain of the Port agreeing.

The Chairman asked whether it will be possible to alight on to the island that is being created and how will this be controlled. Mr Riddell said that this is something that still needs to be considered.

The Chairman also asked whether the Captain of the Port will control navigation outside the protected area. Mr Riddell said that new regulations will be required to ensure safe passage of vessels. He said that this will be considered during the operational phase of the project.

The Chairman also asked whether, if Government designates the area as an official swimming zone, lifeguards will be employed. Mr Riddell said that this was outside his remit as project manager and that this is a matter for Government policy.

CR said that Government needs to consider that they will be introducing a further 700 boats to an area which already has heavy boat traffic. MEH said that he thought that it was best to have this activity within the harbour area where this type of activity already exists rather than anywhere else. The Chairman said that none of the representations have stated that the berths should not be constructed at this location. Mr Riddell added that many sites were considered but that within port waters was the best, most economical and safest option. Mr Riddell also said that CCTV will be installed to ensure that users do not violate regulations.

DTP asked Mr Riddell whether he was satisfied that 30 cars and 30 motorcycle spaces will be sufficient. He also asked for clarification on whether super yacht facilities form part of the project.

Mr Riddell said that designs have been revised to include up to 50 car parking spaces. He said that at present Coaling Island marina, for example, does not have parking facilities and that he therefore, did not feel it necessary to include further parking. He said that there is a nearby public car park and that people should be encouraged to use public transport. Regarding the super yacht facilities, Mr Riddell said that there will be facilities on the outer part of the wharf. He said that this area has been designed like a promenade, adding leisure amenities to the area. He added that this will allow access to the coastline which at present is not possible.

CR said that the manifesto commitment was for 700 berths and asked whether the super yacht facilities have been added instead of having a revetment. Mr Riddell said that by having the super yachts at this location navigational risk will be lower. He also said that visiting yachts will provide for new growth.

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Mr Riddell added that wave attenuation measures have also been incorporated into the designs. He said that these will be added to the exterior of the wharf, so will not be detrimental to the inner side.

CAM asked whether the redistribution of wave energy will affect the area. Mr Riddell said that TSD have produced a wave study commissioned on a 200 year return, in which 16 crucial points within the harbour were considered. He said that results were not detrimental and that he was confident in a 95% reduction.

The Chairman said that TSD recommends monitoring of the waves to continue after the project is completed and recommended that this is done.

MEH highlighted that an important part of this project is providing public access to the sea front.

JH asked Mr Riddell whether there will be services for the repair of boats. Mr Riddell said that at present there is no provision for this as the yard which was included in the original plans was removed to allow for a more pleasant environment and not an industrial area. However, he confirmed that this is being looked into.

The Commission did not have any further questions and thanked Mr Riddell.

The Commission welcomed Mr Paul Borda who had submitted representations to this application.

Mr Borda told the Commission that his main concern is safety. He said that sailing is not an exact sport and that winds and gusty conditions can affect control of the vessel. He said that the neck is too narrow for proper sailing and that depending on the wind conditions it might not be possible to sail on some days, as there is a danger of sailing into the rocks. He requested that the width of the narrow channel is increased. Mr Borda also highlighted that the Mediterranean and Calpe Rowing clubs currently have a large bathing area in front of their clubhouses and that this area encroaches into the demarcated channel.

Mr Borda also raised the issue of a yard for the repair of boats. He said that this needs to be considered as boat owners will need an area in which they can use power tools, varnish and paint their vessels.

Mr Borda was also concerned with cruise liners which currently reverse into this area as they leave the berth at North Mole. He said that he feared that if there ever were to be an engine failure on one of these cruise liners, it might end up crashing against the marina. Mr Borda also told the Commission that at present commercial vessels do not respect recreational vessels and that strict rules should be implemented.

With regards to parking, Mr Borda said that these berths will generate movement in and out of the area and that if parking is not provided people will begin to park illegally.

The Commission did not have any questions for Mr Borda.

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Mr Riddell was given the opportunity to respond to Mr Borda's concerns. He said that the entry channel has already been increased from a 30 metre width to approximately 50 to 60 metres width. He said that at present there are already issues with wind and sailing in the area, and that an option would be to tow the vessel if it is not possible to sail out. Bathing he said is currently restricted to 20 metres from the shore intertidal zone. He said that this will have to be measured and a rope placed to demarcate the area. With regards to there being no plans for a hard standing at the moment, Mr Riddell said that this had been removed following consultation with the RGYC. He said that the original position in front of the RGYC continues to be the reserved position, however, to avoid dust pollution, high walls would have to be placed around it. Mr Riddell also assured Mr Borda that measures will have to be taken to ensure safe navigation. Regarding cruise ships, Mr Riddell said that he had raised this issue with the Captain of the Port who confirmed that the recommendation is that there should be a 350 metre minimum clearance. Mr Riddell said that a 425 metre clearance has been allowed in the new design and that the Captain of the Port was satisfied that this area was safe for the rotation of cruise liners. Finally, Mr Riddell said that the width of the wharf has been increased to 15 metres and up to 50 parking spaces included along the western side. He said that Government must balance parking and recreational use by also including trees and benches along the wharf.

CV said that access and the provision of a drop-off area is an issue that must be considered, especially for emergency vehicles.

The Chairman asked whether this will be a public road and recommended that vehicle access only be permitted to boat owners. Mr Riddell said that this was beyond his remit as project manager.

The Chairman summarised the points raised in his report on the EIA, which was circulated to members prior to the meeting. He confirmed that all relevant bodies have been consulted and that this project forms part of the Development Plan 2009 and Town Planning Act Scheme. He said that there will not be any transboundary effects as a result of this project, so neighbouring countries have not been consulted.

In his assessment the Chairman raises various issues relating to transport, air and water quality, construction phase, noise and vibration, landscape and visual, navigation, cultural heritage and flood risk. In his report the Chairman also recommends 9 conditions for the planning permit if approved. He also recommended that there should be proper management of use of the hard standing and will ask Government to present solutions to the Commission.

The Commission ratified the report of the Chairman and accepted his and the recommendations of the consultees contained within.

Any other business

329/13 – Next Meeting

The Commission agreed to next meet on Tuesday 9th July at 09:30am.