

Lee Manor Society summary of the revised St Modwen proposals for Leegate in May /June 2018

Introduction. The revised proposals contained in planning application DC/18/107468 appear to be the same as those put to us in consultation meetings last autumn. There is a much smaller food store and a decent public square offering respite from busy, traffic-congested local streets. There are pedestrian routes linking the square with Carsten Close to the south and Eltham Road to the north-east. The revised plans represent a considerable change from the original scheme approved by the council in May 2016. That scheme involved a large Asda food supermarket and minimal public space. The scheme remains tall and bulky despite the architects' efforts to break up the frontages and it will dominate the south-east corner of the Lee Green crossroads. But overall, the new proposals include elements that the Lee Manor Society has been calling for for the past ten years: decent public space and good pedestrian connections across the shopping centre.

Space allocation. This is a large application and many documents are involved. The data in St Modwen's Design and Access Statement shows the scale of the change from the company's original scheme:

Original scheme (square metres)	Now	
Size of food store	8,731	1,281
Foodstore parking	8,840	1,223
Foodstore services	1,021	-
Residential	31,667	48,408
Public realm	2,216	4,046 including public square of 1,958*

Public space currently at Leegate is 3,307 including a public square of 2,073 so we are still losing some public space.

Parking. The revised scheme will offer 131 underground parking spaces for residents and 40 ground level parking spaces for shoppers. The previous scheme included 320 parking spaces on the supermarket roof.

Public square. The public square will have seating, connections for market stalls and 24 yellow honey locust (*gleditsia triacanthos* sunburst), a variety which is resistant to pollution and provides a dappled shade.

Crossroads corner. The "signature tree" to be planted on the cross-roads corner of the site will be a Monterey pine (*pinus radiata*), an evergreen which grows to a height of up to 30 metres. Paving around the tree will have plaque insets possibly incorporating directions (to local sites?) and a seat. The Society's existing enameled historical panel will be relocated, St Modwen says, though the panel does not appear on the plan of the crossroads included in the documents. The Society must ensure a suitable site is found for the panel which was financed from Society and Assembly funds.

Walkway. The connecting pedestrian street between Carsten Close and the square will be 10 metres wide but will reduce to 3.7 metres width of walkable space because of "defensive planting zones" in front of the two- and three-storey houses that look onto the walkway. The houses are intended to provide overlooking of the walkway so it does not feel a narrow threatening space.

Housing. The redevelopment will provide 393 homes, all flats with the exception of 14 four-bedroom houses and 17 maisonettes. St Modwen assumes that half of the homes for sale will be sold "off-plan" – before they

have been finished. It expects limited interest from overseas and domestic buy-to-let investors due to Leegate's "secondary location", itself the result of poorer transport links than other nearby housing developments, and the less attractive surroundings.

Traffic. The plans envisage no further modeling of the crossroads junction and will generate less traffic on Burnt Ash Road than the original scheme with a large superstore. Traffic on Burnt Ash Road between Taunton Road and the crossroads in the weekday morning peak will be 8 per cent lower than envisaged in the earlier scheme and in the evening peak 18 per cent lower. Traffic volumes at peak times on Saturdays will be more than 21 per cent lower. There will however be small increases in traffic on Leyland Road. This looks to be residents entering and leaving the two underground car parking spaces

Community Centre. The space allocated at a peppercorn rent for the community centre is smaller than at present. Overall there is a larger area for community use but this is likely to be at a commercial rent. The space should at least match that available on the two floors of current shop, ideally at ground level to improve disabled access.

Finances. St Modwen's financial calculations in its Financial Viability Report are difficult to fathom and will need further probing. At one level the numbers are immaterial to us because St Modwen appears committed to the redevelopment. But they have clearly affected its negotiations with the council over the amount of affordable housing and its contribution to community benefits. Total costs are estimated at around 191 million pounds against a gross development value of 177m pounds, producing a developer's profit (or 'residual land value') of minus 14m pounds. The residual value 'is below what would be considered an acceptable return so 21 per cent affordable housing is the maximum' that can be provided,' St Modwen states. 'Any requirement for further planning benefits may make the scheme undeliverable,' it adds. Separately St Modwen notes that if the residual value is lower or not sufficiently higher than the benchmark land value the scheme 'is not technically viable.' It is unlikely that St Modwen is proposing a loss-making project though it clearly wants to avoid the council pushing for a bigger contribution to any 'planning gain' or for more affordable housing. Its calculations assume it will make a community infrastructure levy (CIL) of 4.1m pounds and provide a community centre of 3,122 sq ft. The CIL levy is intended to spent on local infrastructure improvements to support a development. Separately GL Hearn, St Modwen's property consultants, suggests the project will make a total profit of 18.1 per cent of gross development value comprising a minimum return of 20 per cent on the private housing, 15 per cent on the commercial element (shops) and 6 per cent on the affordable housing.

Timetable. The timetable envisages completing the planning process by February 2019, carrying out demolition from October 2020 to April 2021, remediation work (cleaning the underlying soil of pollutants such as petrol) by September 2021. Construction phase one, the crossroads corner, runs from July 2021 to July 2023; phase two (south of the square) from June 2022 to May 2024; and phase three, the south east corner, from February 2023 to October 2024.

Lee Manor Society

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