

MOTION ON OLD RIVER LANE BISHOP'S STORTFORD

This council notes:

Widespread concern amongst Bishop's Stortford residents regarding the previous administration's plans for the development of the Old River Lane site in Bishop's Stortford;

Uncertainty and lack of transparency regarding the nature of the Council's (ORL Delivery Board) relationship with their preferred developer Cityheart, and the amount of money spent so far.

Uncertainty about the detail of these plans, their commercial viability, their public benefit, and the timescales for the project;

The damaging nature of prolonged uncertainty about the future of this site, the buildings on it, and their occupants and users;

The decision of the Old River Lane Delivery Board announced on the council's website on 3rd July 2023 that the council will continue the residential and commercial aspects of the redevelopment through its appointed developer, Cityheart, and pause the arts centre element of the plans for an unspecified time.

This council believes:

That rapid progress is expected of us as a newly elected council to continue with the direction of this project established by the last administration;

That members have not had sufficient opportunity to constructively challenge the financial and legal implications of the partnership with Cityheart;

That it is imperative that the residents of Bishop's Stortford and East Herts are listened to through a genuine meaningful public consultation process about the nature of the whole scheme;

That transparency in decision-making is critical to gaining public support for any development of this site, and that fundamental

decisions about this project should be made by Full Council in a public meeting, not behind closed doors.

This council therefore resolves to:

1. Conduct further due diligence with respect to the proposed development agreement with Cityheart and the affordability of the project in its current form
2. Instruct officers to not sign any development agreement with Cityheart pending this review
3. Publish a detailed breakdown of the capital and revenue costs spent on this project to date
4. Cease any work in relation to Charringtons House or the Water Lane hall that could be perceived as preparing the sites for demolition in advance of and potentially prejudging any decisions on the existing planning applications for these sites.

Proposed by Councillor David Jacobs

Seconded by Councillor Yvonne Estop