



An artist's impression of how a new leisure centre, which could be built on The Green, might look

Town council backs leisure cent

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Hythe councillors have agreed in principle to let Shepway District Council build a new leisure centre on The Green.

Transferring the land to the district council has not been formally agreed as councillors only backed proposals which still have to be agreed by the district council.

But town councillors voted to support making a deal with SDC, subject to a number of conditions agreed at a meeting on Monday.

The majority of the packed public gallery in the town hall seemed opposed to development on The Green and there were loud rounds of applause during and after speeches which opposed Shepway's proposal for Hythe Town Council to transfer ownership to SDC.

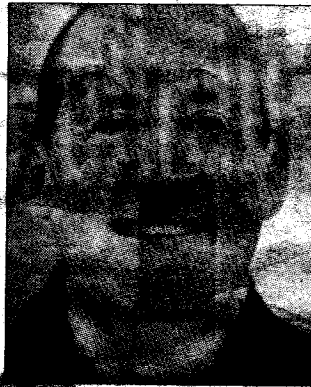
But there was not a total lack of support for building on The Green as applause and calls of "well said" could be heard after arguments were made saying The Green provided a better option for the new multi-million pound facility, which could be available in 2017/18, according to SDC.

Cllr Malcolm Dearden proposed an amended proposal with six conditions stressing the transfer of The Green to SDC would only go ahead "subject to agreement" of all of the conditions.

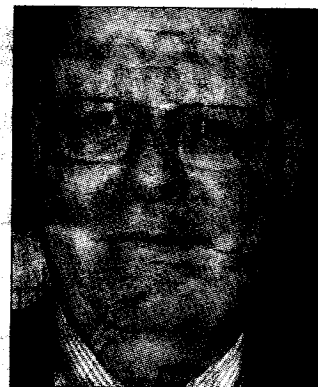
These included the lease reducing to 70 years on a peppercorn rent and it returning to Hythe Town Council's control after that; SDC reimburses HTC for legal costs of the lease; free park-

HOW THEY VOTED

For:
Cllr Malcolm Dearden
Cllr Alan Eastwood
Cllr Paul Peacock
Cllr David O'Connell
Cllr David O'Connell
Cllr Denise Maskell
Cllr John O'Connell
Cllr Paul O'Connor
Cllr Keith...
Cllr Doreen...
Cllr Anne...
Cllr Wendy Peacock
Cllr Paul Peacock



"WRONG" Cllr Paul Peacock



AMENDED PROPOSAL: Cllr Malcolm Dearden



"STAGGERING": Cllr Denise Maskell

ing for centre users and no further development being permitted protecting it as an open space.

It also proposed deferring discussion of the outline planning application submitted by SDC until more detailed work is carried out.

Councillors backed the proposal by 11 votes to four, in a recorded vote at the meeting.

The decision spells the end for the debate of building the new swimming pool and leisure centre on the equally controversial former landfill site at Princes Parade on Hythe seafront.

Concerns were raised about the outline plans SDC has submitted, particularly regarding road access and traffic assessments.

Cllr Paul O'Connor said: "We need time to consider all of this. This is a change in plan for Hythe and we need more time. I think it's fantastic we're considering a sport centre for Hythe but we

...into it."

Cllr Paul Peacock said: "It's supposed to be for the future and it's for Shepway. It should be built in the right place and this is not the right place."

Cllr Denise Maskell added: "Isn't it about time we got on with it? We should do all we can to protect our open spaces but unfortunately Shepway has made it clear we've two options that threaten our green space."

Cllr Wendy Peacock said: "I find it staggering that anyone considered covering up this gem. I've had people sobbing and that's how people feel about it in Hythe."

Hythe Green Preservation Society spokesman David Plumstead said they would keep fighting.

He said: "We will be meeting within the next few days to work out a strategy for what we do next and will be in touch with members. As Morcambe and Wise used to say it's not over until the fat lady sings."

Speakers bring up pros and cons

A total of 12 public speakers made presentations at the meeting.

There was a balance of support and opposition for The Green as a favoured option.

Supporters said they feared the development would move back to Princes Parade if The Green was turned down after SDC announced last year that Princes Parade was its second choice.

Opponent Geoff German argued the decision had "a moral dimension" and that the land "must remain in Hythe Town

free for all". He added by agreeing to give the land to Shepway it was "committing The Green to a dangerous future".

Arguing in favour of The Green, Gillian Bond said: "Can we all not find a way to share The Green?"

"I think one definition of democracy is to find a way that provides the greatest good for the majority, and I feel sure that siting the facility in the centre of Hythe and right next door to the school fits that.

will not take it away, it will just extend its use to a wider group of residents."

David Horton, whose ancestor Joseph Horton formed the covenant in 1862 which campaigners have been fighting to protect as it states it prevents development on The Green, received a rousing reception when he suggested the land be handed into the care of a newly-formed charitable trust.

What do you think? Write to Folkestone & Hythe Express, 34-36 North Street, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9JF or email folkstone@...