



Dorchester Civic Society

An Independent Voice

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Dorchester Prison: A unique opportunity for the town

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In September 2014, Dorchester Civic Society and Dorchester Town Council adopted a joint position statement on the future development and use of Dorchester Prison following its closure in December 2013. The September 2014 statement continues to provide the basis for the Society's stance on City & Country's, the site's new owners, evolving development proposals for the Prison site. The Society is taking a positive and proactive approach to engaging with City & Country.

Comparison of the September 2014 Position Statement and City & Country October 2015 Scheme Proposals

I/D	Key requirements of the September 2014 Statement	Response
1	The site should be considered and planned in a comprehensive manner.	The scheme proposals confirm this to be the case
2	A masterplan should be prepared as a basis for consultation, community engagement and the submission of a planning application	The Society welcomes City & Country's approach to consultation and community engagement. We have benefitted from meeting representatives of City & Country on 6 October when their latest proposals were presented to, and discussed with, the Society's Committee.
3	The site is within Dorchester's historic core and should be planned in the context of the town's heritage quarter; there should be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings and other feature of historic and/or visual interest.	The balance between the retention of historic buildings and other buildings is appropriate but we question the merits of retaining so much of the prison walls that may inhibit permeability – see 6 below. We reserve further judgment pending release of a detailed archaeological and other specialist site appraisals.
4	A residential-led mixed-use development is favoured and affordable housing must be part of the mix	We support the proposal for a residential-led mixed-use development but affordable housing is an essential ingredient of an acceptable mix; unless an element of such housing is included we are likely to object to the development when the planning application is submitted.
5	The development should comprise a mix of uses that increases footfall through the site and promotes vitality: suitable non-residential uses include heritage interpretation, café/restaurant, small office/workshops and small retail outlets, public open space and enhanced landscaping	The inclusion of only two non-residential elements (the 'museum interpretation space' and a commercial frontage to North Square) is less than envisaged. The limited mix of uses makes it all the more important that through pedestrian movement between North Square and Glyde Path Road is realised and that the public have access to the gardens overlooking the Frome. An affordable housing element would promote social diversity.
6	There is an opportunity to open up the site from which the public have been excluded by providing landscaped public open areas as well as pedestrian links through the site to the north and west, and enhanced landscaping	The extent to which the public will have access to and through the site is unclear at present: this is one of our key requirements – see 5 above. To increase visual permeability, the opportunity to create views into and out of the site, to and from the Frome and water meadows should be explored.

Dorchester Civic Society exists to stimulate people's interest in the town and its setting; promote high standards of architecture, urban design and planning; safeguard buildings and areas of historic interest; and promote civic pride.



7	<p>Given the site's context, good quality design is a top priority; there is an urban design opportunity to improve the form and character of North Square</p>	<p>The Society appreciates greater acknowledgement of, and deference to, buildings being retained on site and those in adjoining streets. We welcome moves to reduce the visual mass and scale of the 'mansion blocks' The design treatment of the proposed building on the car park site overlooking Friary Hill and facing North Square and the prison wall will need exceptional thought and care: this site is both a gateway to the scheme and potential local landmark</p>
8	<p>Access to the site is constrained via narrow streets and a full transport assessment is required to accompany the masterplan and planning application</p>	<p>The scheme should not be viewed in isolation from pedestrian and traffic movements and issues in the historic core of Dorchester. DTEP's objectives and proposals should be reflected in the scheme proposals. However vehicular access to the site is arranged traffic signage should be minimized; the scope for shared space should be maximized; streets should be designed for a sense of place and designed as a whole not as a series of individual and uncoordinated elements for the benefit of all users – pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities as well as drivers.</p>