

## **Maltings and Central Car Park Development - Personal Statement**

Wiltshire Council, hence this Cabinet, claims that there has been public consultation on the Maltings and Central Car Park development.

“One thousand people visited and approximately 300 completed a feedback form”.

That is a direct quote from Stanhope’s letter sent to me, personally, at Salisbury Vision’s request. One of *this* Cabinet’s members is quoted in the local press as saying “This would be a significant move forward in the regeneration of this site.”

Out of Salisbury’s 2011 census population of nearly 460,000, one thousand attendees is a tiny proportion. There is no evidence whatsoever that any of those attendees thought the proposals worthwhile or appropriate for Salisbury, now or in the future.

That a Cabinet member has already applauded such misrepresentation, in the public media, clearly indicates an established bias in direct favour of agreeing to this development whatever the public view may be.

The only part of the Stanhope exhibition that was of any consequence consisted of two slim panels. One carried a list of aspirational bullet points, The other, two rather vague plan drawings. There was no technical detail and no documentation to take away for consideration. Salisbury Vision and Wiltshire Council were not represented.

This clearly questions the council’s obligation to fulfill the protocols for full and proper public consultation for this very substantial development using publicly owned land. It also brings into question the commercial intent of those who have engaged in the process. Particularly as a number of those involved have well established commercial interest in Salisbury and have been invited to sit on the unelected advisory body, Salisbury Vision.

The vast majority of the arrangements made by Wiltshire Council with the advice of Salisbury Vision, in respect of this development, have been made behind closed doors. This would seem to indicate a predetermined intention to sign up to Stanhope being the approved developer and for that company’s proposal to be accepted. There is clear evidence that previous interest has been shown in the commercial development of this site by at least one member of the Salisbury Vision board.

However, there is no evidence at all that Salisbury’s taxpayers agree with any part of this proposal and this clearly suggests that Wiltshire Council and Salisbury Vision are intent upon foisting this development upon Salisbury no matter what. This can only be interpreted as the public bodies involved being openly dismissive of the public consultation process. This view is supported by clear documentary evidence of such dismissiveness in relation to other important projects currently in hand in the Salisbury environment.

There is no indication whatsoever that any other proposal for this site has been given due consideration and no suggestions for ideas or possible expectations have been sought from anyone. As far as can be determined local appointed representatives for

Salisbury, who have been engaged in the whole arrangement process, have done so as amateurs. That, in itself, is inadequate.

It is vitally important that Salisbury taxpayers are given every opportunity to engage with and decide upon what they would wish their city to become, now and in the future. 'Your Wiltshire Magazine', published by Wiltshire Council claims that it wants exactly that. Wiltshire Council should stand by its word and that can only happen if there is complete transparency in the process with full technical and visual detail being properly presented in the public domain. To date that is not the case.

It is extremely difficult to see how a proposal such as this can be further promulgated at this time without compromising the integrity of Wiltshire Council and this Cabinet.

Eric G Hart