

What they said about the plans

Some thoughts...

■ "It's a significant development by any standards." – **Gareth Thomas, principal planning officer**

■ "We have to get this right now. It's going to bring new life to Welshpool." – **Cllr Ann Holloway**

■ "What is going to happen to the Tourist Information Centre?" – **Cllr Wynne Jones**
 "Who decided on the restrictions on the goods (to be sold)? We have three carpet stores already, but you have allowed them on the development?" – **Cllr Francesca Jump**

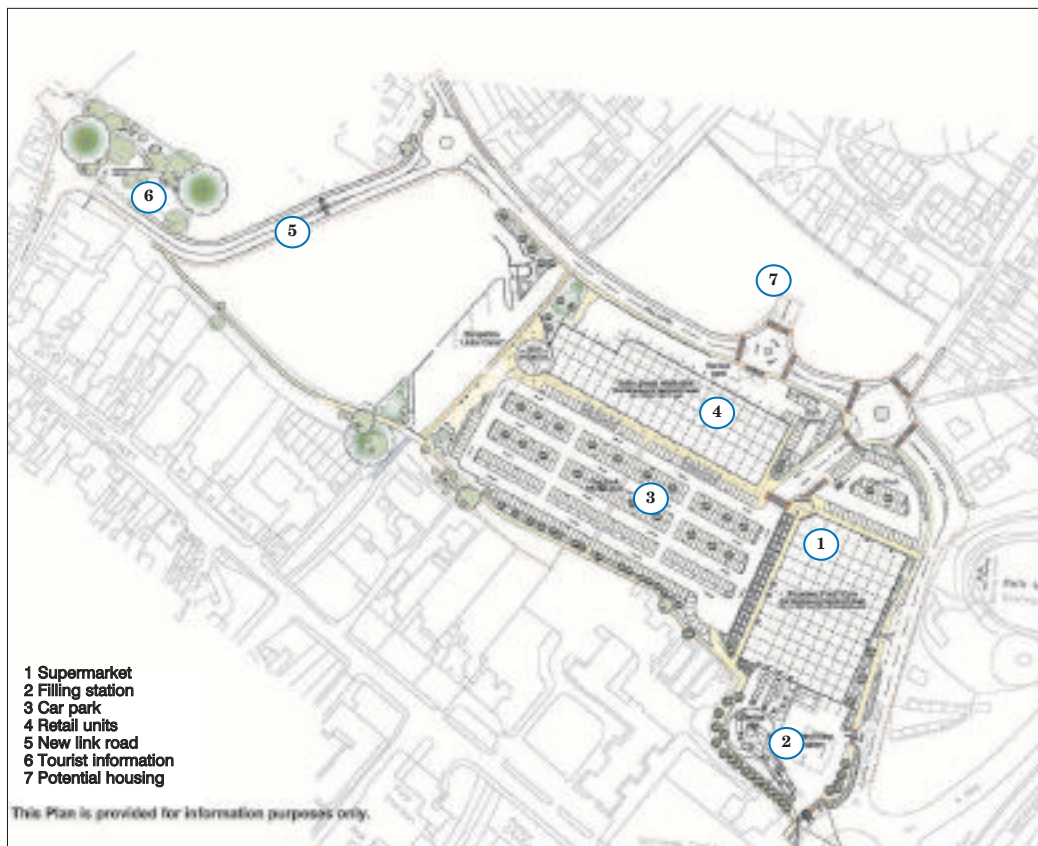
■ "What's proposed is a one-way gyratory system around the town centre." – **Gareth Thomas**

■ "We have only really talked about parking provision for visitors. We have not talked at all about the people who work in the town. How many permit holders have we got in the town, because it will probably affect them." – **Cllr Kath Roberts-Jones**

■ "We're not here to protect other businesses, but do need to ensure that the town centre and sites in the town centre are not affected to the extent that there are closures." – **Gareth Thomas**

■ "It's accepted that while there's a quantitative need (for this development), the extent is open to debate. But I will make the point that there's considerable leakage of spending out of Welshpool at the moment." – **Gareth Thomas**

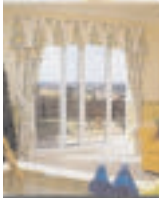
■ "People coming up to me need a thriving town centre. It's not a thriving town centre at the moment... I do hope the motte and bailey will be safeguarded." – **Cllr Ann Holloway**



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"THIS development will affect Welshpool for a long, long time, and will do more to shape Welshpool over the next 25 years than anything" – these were the words of Gareth Thomas as councillors from Montgomeryshire met to discuss the proposed development of the Smithfield Market site.

Members raised a number of issues with the plans, which will go before the full county planning committee for outline planning permission on January 22.

Mr Thomas, principal planning officer, told members of the Montgomeryshire committee: "It's a significant development by any standards. It follows the granting of permission for a new livestock market."

"The livestock market (which will be relocated to Buttington Cross) is an economically significant development for the town and the region."

The site in question would see a 4,300 sq metre supermarket built, and planners intend to restrict the floor space to 1,419 sq metres.

It would also incorporate 4,000 square metres of any retail space – designated for "bulky good" – and a canal side cafe/restaurant, along with 479 car parking spaces.

There would also be a new petrol station off the A483 roundabout.

Cllr Ann Holloway, who represents Welshpool Llanerchydol, told members: "We have to get this right now. It's going to bring new life to Welshpool."

She said at the moment it's "just charity shops and estate agents on the high street", adding: "I just hope there's no derogatory impact on the high street."

Cllr Wynne Jones, Dolforwyn, asked: "What is going to happen to the Tourist Information Centre?" He said the new road would cut it off from potential users."

Mr Thomas replied: "The TIC remains where it is."

And Cllr David Jones, Guilsfield, said:

By MARK LINGARD
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"When a major supermarket development was built in Brecon, £3m was spent (by PCC) on highways."

"In Llandrindod we were forbidden to say how much we're spending."

"But the county council's not spending a ha penny."

He also questioned whether through traffic would use the new road, saying: "Traffic's going to have to go through half a dozen roundabouts."

"On Severn Street and Broad Street they can go straight through."

Mr Thomas told him traffic signs would be altered – subject to Welsh Assembly approval – so that visitors who did not know the roads would be directed a new way through town, adding nothing could be done about people who know the roads.

Councillors were then talked through four main issues of the development: retail impact, highways, flood risk and planning obligations.

Mr Thomas said studies of the town and its economy showed a need for the new development, which should boost existing businesses.

However, he added: "Morrison's will be the hardest hit."

But figures in the planners' report claim even in a worst case scenario, in which Morrison's lost £2.1 million in trade, it would still not have to close.

He suggested 75 per cent of the floor-space of the additional retail space be restricted to the following goods: DIY, carpets and floor coverings, tiles, furniture and soft furnishings, sports, leisure goods and outdoor wear, motor vehicle accessories, pet supplies, garden products and electrical appliances.

Cllr Beryl Vaughan, Banwy, asked: "Can we dictate everything?" to which Mr Thomas replied: "We did concede on sports goods and footwear and met them halfway."

Cllr Holloway told fellow members: "We must get what is best for the town."

"My worry is we do not want shops being lost, things must not be duplicated too much."

Some councillors questioned whether carpets should be removed from the list, pointing out that there are already three stores in the town.

Members were also warned that there is a concern over whether there is the real capacity for a store of that size.

Mr Thomas told councillors that figures revealed 82% of the capacity could be met through increased spending, increased market share, and capturing additional shoppers from elsewhere.

But he warned that still left another 18 per cent to make up.

Councillors were then shown the proposed new link road, and the one-way system which would be introduced to help traffic flow in the town.

Mr Thomas warned without changes: "We would not be able to accommodate the expected traffic, we would have reached capacity."

A new link road would connect Church Street and Mill Lane, cutting through the existing public car park, reducing the amount of spaces from around 350 to between 100 and 150.

A one-way system would operate along Broad Street as far as the junction with Jehu Road, down Jehu Road, right down Brook Street and Union Street, allowing people to turn left only down Church Bank towards Salop Road.

Anyone entering Welshpool from Salop Road would have to turn left down Mill Lane and follow the new link road into the town centre.

Motorists coming down Red Bank, which some councillors suggested is currently used as a rat-run, would have to turn left towards Salop Road.

Cllr Holloway said: "We held a public meeting and people do want this."

Cllr Francesca Jump, councillor for



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THE NEW ONE-WAY SYSTEM: 1. Traffic will only be allowed to travel one way down Church Street. 2. Traffic will only be allowed to travel one way up Broad Street. 3. Traffic will only be allowed to travel one way down Jehu Road. 4. Traffic at the end of Jehu Road could turn left up Brook Street, or turn right down the one-way system. 5. Traffic coming down Brook Street will have to turn left down Church Bank. 6. The stretch of road between Red Bank and Mill Lane will become one way, with traffic coming down Red Bank forced to turn left. 7. Mill Lane will have traffic in both directions. 8. The new road, which will allow traffic in both directions. 9. Salop Road, east of the junction with Mill Lane, will allow traffic in both directions.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW: An aerial view of the Smithfield Market site.

effect the years

Welshpool Gungrog, said: "I have concerns about traffic on Salop Road, especially during the summer. Is this not going to cause a back-up?"

Richard Hobbs, from the highways department, told councillors: "You can only influence visiting traffic, those who know the layout the roads will use the way that they consider appropriate for them."

Mr Thomas told councillors that the flood risk to the site in question came not from the River Severn but from the Lledan Brook.

"In times of flood water spills over into the canal," he said, "and spills onto part of the site, the sheep pens."

He said the developer had agreed to contribute towards a flood alleviation scheme. The scheme would allow housing to be built on the sheep pen site.

The flood alleviation plan involves raising the canal tow-path on the southern side, between the town centre canal wharf and the Gungrog sluice.

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Thomas told the *County Times*: "It had to be taken out of the UDP, but because we've

overcome the flood issue we can move to start developing the site in principle."

Mr Thomas added: "It could accommodate 40 to 50 homes, and I expect an application will be submitted in due course."

Councillors raised a number of questions about the plans, all of which should be considered before the next meeting. These included whether there would be a direct link to Severn Street and the lack of a direct link between the new site and the railway station (except over a dangerous road crossing).

They were also told improvements would be made to the Somerfield car park.

Mr Thomas told members that the developers would have to make a number of commitments, under a section 106 agreement, including £200,000 for the built heritage fund, £25,000 for public art, and a new HGV parking site at Buttington.

However, he told councillors that the developer is contesting the scale of contributions under the agreement, including the amount for the built heritage fund.

HOW IT MIGHT LOOK: An early artist's impression of the retail development



What Powys County Council wants from the developers

Offered by the developer

- £150,000 for town centre. Motte & Bailey, light railway terminus improvements
- Refurbishment of Lledan Aqueduct bridge
- Touch screen displays, linking the town centre to the development
- Traffic improvements
- Flood improvement scheme
- Build livestock market

Additional requirements

- another £50,000 for built heritage
- £25,000 for public art
- Effective link over the canal
- Management of car park
- Restrictions on what goods can be sold in the non-food retail warehouses
- Provision of customer services floor-space for use by Powys County Council
- Adherence to development brief and use of materials that complement the town centre
- Provision of HGV parking at the new livestock market at Buttington
- Bus stop/dropping off points at both the supermarket and Church Street car park
- Improvements to Somerfield car park, including re-modelling of entrance works.

Get in touch



What do you think?

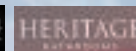
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