

Arcadia - Community Assessment

Description of facilities

Diagram of the site



The proposal contains very little in terms of what would normally be regarded as community facilities. Certainly no GP or NHS clinic, police station, school or nursery, park, swimming pool, open air sports facilities, information and advice centre, community facilities for the very young or old, or halls for hire.

Stretching it a bit, there are:-

- Public open spaces
- A Health & Fitness club
- Cafes and restaurants

Public open space

There is public open space within the development. In reality most of this is just walkways between the buildings. There are also changes of level within the site. These are dealt with by slopes and steps, which rather break up the space and make it less usable. There is a wider space in the centre of the development. This is mainly flat. The high buildings mean that most of the

open space will be in the shade most of the time. The open space is indeed open – it is not glazed over nor are there canopies above any of the walkways. Parts will also be a bit windy.

Health & Fitness club

This is referred to as a leisure centre in some of the plans. The main part of it is the entire first floor of Block E (the centre one on the northern side of the development). There are a couple of smaller bits of it on the upper and lower ground floor levels. These appear to be a foyer and a small lounge area. The exact nature of the facility isn't clear, although a commercial gym is the most likely possibility.

Cafes and restaurants

There are 5 of these. Three of them are at ground floor level facing the space between Blocks D and E, on the north of the site. There is a small café at ground floor level at the base of Block F (the tall one) and a much bigger restaurant there as well. This restaurant also serves a big terrace on the first floor.

Issues

There are a number of these:-

- There are no real community facilities at all to serve a residential population of over 900 people, plus the many others who would expect to find such facilities around this town centre site.
- Extra community facilities can't really be provided using Section 106 money, as there are simply no nearby sites on which to build such facilities. There is already Section 106 money from Dickens Yard looking for a local place in which it can be spent.
- The Health and Fitness club looks either unnecessary or oversized, given the availability of others in the town centre.
- The amount of extra retail also looks excessive, given the empty units in the town centre and a national trend of decline of traditional local retail.
- The site and design provides ample scope to be used to provide community facilities. Both the Health and Fitness club and some of the retail units are of a suitable design to be used for such things as a nursery, GP surgery, NHS walk-in clinic, police station front office, information centre and community meeting rooms. A condition requiring such use would be far more appropriate than Section 106 money.
- There is an opportunity to glaze over all, or at least a part, of the open space and walkways to produce a more pleasant environment between the shops etc. A covered area outside the cafes and restaurants would increase the attractiveness and vitality of the area.