LYTCHETT MATRAVERS PARISH COUNCIL

TESCO FRONTAGE UPDATE 11.9.24

Background

LMPC have been in long term discussions with both Dorset Highways and Tesco regarding what is considered to be an unsightly and potentially dangerous forecourt. This encompasses the whole of the area between the Purbeck Parade row of shops and the High Street – pavements, roadway and planted island.

Plans supplied by Dorset Highways in 2019 showed the whole area to be part of the adopted highway. A plan of improvements was drawn up by LMPC in close liaison with Dorset Highways and agreed as a solution.

Tesco Negotiations

However Highways considered it a low priority so funding was going to be unlikely, at least in the short term. Approaches to Tesco were initially fruitless. Then in early summer this year a line of dialogue was opened with Tesco, largely on the back of their store refit which took place in July/August. A number of on-line meetings took place. It was apparent that Tesco might be willing to share costs with LMPC. We had some rough estimates from a local contractor and DC. Then Tesco instructed one of their regular external works contractors to prepare an estimate. We prepared a detailed drawing and met the contractor's representative on site. We have been chasing that estimate for a few weeks now.

Ownership Uncertainty

Simultaneously, we tried to establish the mechanism by which LMPC and Tesco would be able to carry works out either on DC's behalf, or at least with their agreement. The normal section 178 process stalled because DC insisted on a Planning Application (which would not be necessary if DC did the works direct!). That application is virtually ready but, for the sake of caution, given that the Land Registry plan shows the frontage as part of the same ownership, we wish to serve Notice on Tesco's freeholder. We found that the previous freeholder wound up the business a year or so ago. Land Registry documents showed that first, the freehold had been sold to others and we have been chasing Tesco to establish the new owner.

Finally this afternoon Tesco replied, firstly holding back on a cost estimate because of likely delays in the planning process, but secondly confirming the new freeholder as The Whitelock Group. Tesco further confirmed that it was essential to involve Whitelocks which confirmed a nagging doubt about the status of the forecourt.

Also, the planning application for the adjoining premises, 8 High Street, whilst for the back area, shows their part of the frontage as being owned by Norton Developments (Southern) Ltd.

Accordingly I have today spoken with Whitelock's property manager. He needs to check, but is almost certain that they do own the frontage and that it is not adopted by DC. He requested a formal approach by LMPC so he can get instructions from his directors before engaging with LMPC.

Where now?

We need absolute proof of adoption from Dorset Highways, but it does seem highly likely that we have been dealing with the wrong people for the past 5 years! Worse, rather than a single landowner, we must now deal with 2x parties, each with their own best benefits to consider.

Ken Morgan 11.9.24