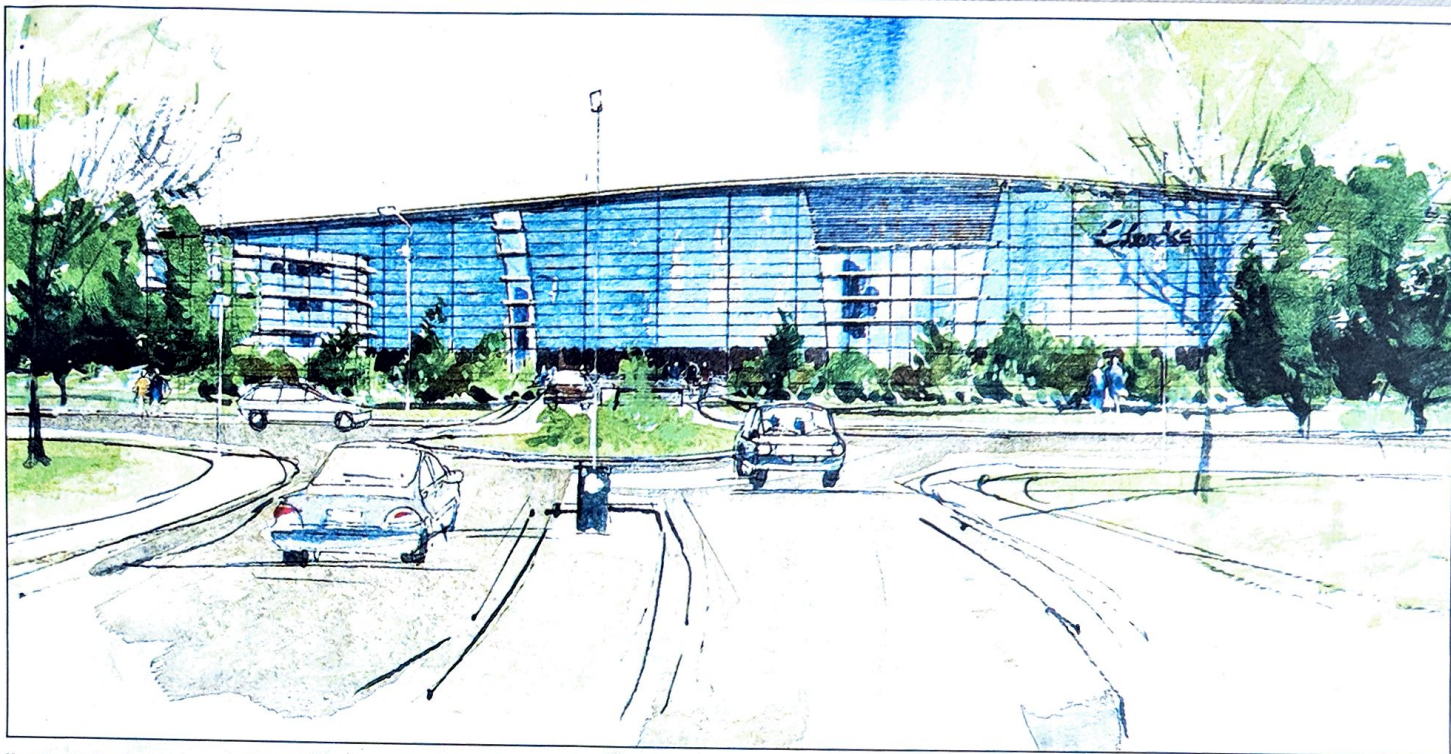


News



How the Clarks warehouse and houses development will look from the McDonald's/Sainsbury roundabout on the Street bypass

£30m plan meets opposition

A multi-million pound plan by Street-based shoe giants Clarks to build a housing development and international distribution centre in its home village has come up against stiff opposition.

At a public meeting last week, representatives for Clarks International confirmed that unless it was allowed to build a £30 million storage unit on its Houndwood site near Sainsbury it would have to move a large part of its business out of the district.

This could put hundreds of jobs under threat in central Somerset as the company might have to move the development to a town such as Bridgwater or further afield.

But if the plan stays in Street it could create 150 new jobs for local people.

A full application for the centre and an outline application for more than 350 houses has been submitted to Mendip District Council.

Clarks spokesman Dean Collier said: "Houndwood is our core of dis-

tribution in the UK with more than 90 per cent of the company's shoes being distributed to this country and internationally from this site.

"The problems we have with our current warehouse buildings is that they will not allow the company to grow.

"We also don't have flexibility to change the way we operate in our current buildings, which is also inefficient.

"Clarks is doing well as a business and its UK and international business is very healthy. We need flexibility in the way we operate to respond to changes in the business.

"We have 500,000 pairs of shoes leaving that site each week and what we really want is a simple integrated distribution centre.

"We want to bring all the country's operations to the site but can't currently do it because we don't have room."

Traffic calculations carried out by a company on behalf of Clarks

showed there would be minimal impact with only four extra lorry movements on and off the site each day and overall a 10 per cent increase in traffic on the A39, when the warehouse and housing development was taken into account.

The land on which the warehouse is planned to be built is already earmarked for housing in Mendip District Council's Local Plan. Clarks are seeking permission for a land swap, so that after the new distribution centre is built, the old buildings will be demolished and replaced with more than 350 homes.

Clarks also hopes to reinforce the boundary of the site by providing 10- to 15-metre high planting to shield the new building, which will be made from light blue metal panels with an aluminium roof.

Some residents said the structure would be an ugly intrusion on central Somerset's landscape.

Cranhill Road resident Philippa Nicholls described the planned warehouse as "similar to the monstrosity building that is Nutricia on

the entrance to Wells".

And Portland Estate resident Eddie Daulton said the warehouse would be an unwelcome greeting to visitors to Street. He said after a number of years the building would be left to run down and would turn into an "aluminium nightmare".

However other residents expressed positive comments about the plan, saying the whole idea was important for the area.

Walton resident Barrie Lovelace said: "We should try to work with Clarks to get industry here.

"We do not want to lose any opportunities for our next generations," and Street parish councillor Richard Dold said: "I am pleased that Clarks sees its future in Street, which is a grand thing."

Other residents felt there had been insufficient investigation into traffic implications and the impact of such a large building. There were also concerns that the housing plan would have an impact on health and education facilities in Street.

But Clarks representatives said

discussion were on-going with various authorities concerning these issues.

Clarks says it has looked into the derelict Morlands site between Street and Glastonbury as a possible location for its new warehouse. However, the company feels there would not be enough room available on the site to construct the new building.

Following a two-hour meeting, Street Parish Council voted three to two to object to the plan.

The council agreed that: "We encourage the applicants to go away and do some more detailed work with the community and organisations. Some of the key issues need to be looked into.

"We are also concerned that the two applications, one for the warehouse and one for the housing, have too many issues up in the air."

The meeting's chairman Dawn Della-Valle said: "We don't want to lose the jobs this plan might make, but really we want the best of both worlds."

Daffodils display signs of spring

Spring was in the air in Henton Village Hall on Sunday when the Wessex Daffodil Society held a show. Clouds of golden daffodils filled the hall as the exhibitors compared blooms.



Pictured right: Mr Alan Purnell from Somerton, with part of his display
headal 1604

Second charge added in Land Rover case

When Nathan Mark Wilmott of Goss Drive, Street, reappeared before Wells magistrates this week on a charge of dishonestly receiving a Land Rover Discovery, worth around £18,000, he denied the charge, and a further charge was put.

This alleges that, with the intention of perverting the course of justice, he telephoned another person with the request that a false statement should be made to the police concerning the Land Rover.

The magistrates were

advised that this would have to be referred to the crown court without delay and that the handling offence would also be dealt with at the same time.

There was to be a pleas and directions hearing at Bristol Crown Court the following Tuesday (April 22).

Bail was extended to the 24-year-old man who is alleged to have received the vehicle, belonging to a Mr Young, of Coxley, near Wells, who was seen driving the vehicle with false number plates.