



PORTFOLIO – ECONOMY AND PLANNING

CABINET – 2 JANUARY 2002

RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE – PROPOSED PUBLIC CONSULTATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider how the Council should progress further its investigations into the development potential of land in its ownership in the Furlong area of Ringwood Town Centre. Agreement is sought at this stage to undertake consultation with the local community on development options that have been identified by the Council's consultant's Chesterton plc.
- 1.2 In November 2000 and December 2000 the Advisory Cabinet and Policy and Resources Committee considered reports relating to the consideration of the development potential of land owned by the Council in the Furlong area of Ringwood Town Centre. This followed submission of a planning application by a private developer for a major retail development in the town centre, a significant proportion of which was on land in this Council's ownership in the Furlong.
- 1.3 In its role as the Local Planning Authority the Council has continued to talk to the developers who submitted the planning application for the site. This application remains undetermined, and remains substantially unchanged from the original submission. Independently of this, in its role as landowner, the Council has wished to explore further how the site could best be used to serve the needs and aspirations of the local community, and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 1.4 A programme of action to progress this matter further was agreed with the Portfolio holder.

2. RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE USERS SURVEY

- 2.1 In March 2001 New Forest District Council undertook a telephone survey of people living within the shopping catchment area of Ringwood. The purpose of the survey was to find out information about how people currently used the town centre and also their views on what would best meet the future needs of local people and help secure the continued prosperity of the town.
- 2.2 The results of the survey showed a mixed reaction to the prospect of development in the south west corner of the Furlong. The overall majority indicated that they would find development here acceptable in principle, providing a commercial development also provided community benefits. Younger people were more likely to favour development than older people. There was more support for a commercial leisure and entertainment development than for a shopping development. Leisure and entertainment facilities seemed to be the main things which people felt the town lacked. There was strong support for a cinema and a theatre/concert hall. People felt that a cinema would provide the most benefit to the town.

3. EXPLORING DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

- 3.1 The next step taken was to seek independent commercial advice to assess the development potential of the land in the Council's ownership, and to assess whether or not the type of scheme likely to be acceptable to local people would be commercially viable. A tender invitation was drawn up in consultation with Ringwood Town Council and seven companies were invited to tender.
- 3.2 In September 2001, Chesterton plc were appointed to advise the Council. In summary, their brief being, to assist the Council in assessing the development potential of land in its ownership in the Furlong area, and to identify at least two commercially viable options for a mixed-use town centre scheme which includes community facilities. It was always intended that these options be the basis for further public consultation.

4. CHESTERTON'S REPORT

- 4.1 Chesterton's interim work identified seven broad approaches to development in the Furlong area. In November a workshop session was held with local District Councillors and Ringwood Town Councillors, together with the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Economy and Planning Review Panel. The purpose of the workshop was to identify which options should be given more detailed consideration by Chestertons in their Report to the Council.
- 4.2 Chesterton's Report was received by the Council in December. A presentation of the Report was made by Chesterton's to the Council prior to its meeting on 17th December 2001. Local Members, the Cabinet, and the Chairman of the Economy and Planning Review Panel have received copies of Chesterton's Report. The two options recommended for further consideration are shown in the annex to this report.

5. THE WAY AHEAD

- 5.1 In considering options for the Council's land in the Furlong, the views of the local community have been considered important. It would now be appropriate to progress to the next stage of public consultation and give people in Ringwood the opportunity to comment on the options identified in the Chesterton's Report. The purpose of the consultation would be to canvas peoples views on the options for development of the site and to provide additional information about the type of retail and leisure uses they would like to see.
- 5.2 It is suggested that the most appropriate form of public consultation at this stage in the process would be the circulation of an information leaflet/questionnaire to households in and around Ringwood. This would outline the two options being looked at, summarising their advantages and disadvantages, and inviting them to give their views. An exhibition would also be displayed in Ringwood. Detailed arrangements for the public consultation will be worked up in detail with the Portfolio holder, and should take place as soon as practical in the new year. It is estimated that the cost of this consultation would be in the region of £1,500.
- 5.3 The response to the options will be used to inform the Council decision as to which of the options it wishes to consider in further detail.
- 5.4 When a preferred option has been identified a detailed Development Brief for the Site will need to be drawn up. At this stage the Council may need to seek further advice from Consultants.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All work to date on this project has been within existing budgets. Further public consultation on the possible development options identified in the Chesterton's Report can be funded within existing budgets.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The development of this site may have a significant visual impact on Ringwood town centre, particularly when viewed from northern approaches. An important objective of this project is to ensure that any future development in the Furlong Area is of an appropriate design, character and scale, fitting to the site's location on the edge of Ringwood Conservation Area, in close proximity to the Meeting House (a listed building), and at an important point of entry into the town centre.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None arising from this report. However, any proposed development will need to be designed in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Design for Community Safety'.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Copies of this report to Cabinet and Chesterton's report have been given to all local Members, and to Cllr. Wyeth, Chairman of the Economy and Planning Review Panel. Any comments received will be reported at the Cabinet meeting.

10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 10.1 Cllr. Droogleever supports the recommendations in this report.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Based on the Report prepared on behalf of the Council by Chesterton plc public consultations should be held in Ringwood in the new year on development options for land in the Furlong area.

12. RECOMMENDATION:

- 12.1. That public consultations take place in Ringwood on the two development options identified in Chesterton's report;
- 12.2 That detailed arrangements for the public consultation be agreed with the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder;
- 12.3 That the results of the consultation be reported back to Cabinet, with recommendations on the way forward.

Further Information:

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Background Papers:

Ringwood Town Centre Users Survey NFDG May 2001
Ringwood Study Chesterton plc Nov. 2001

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Annex

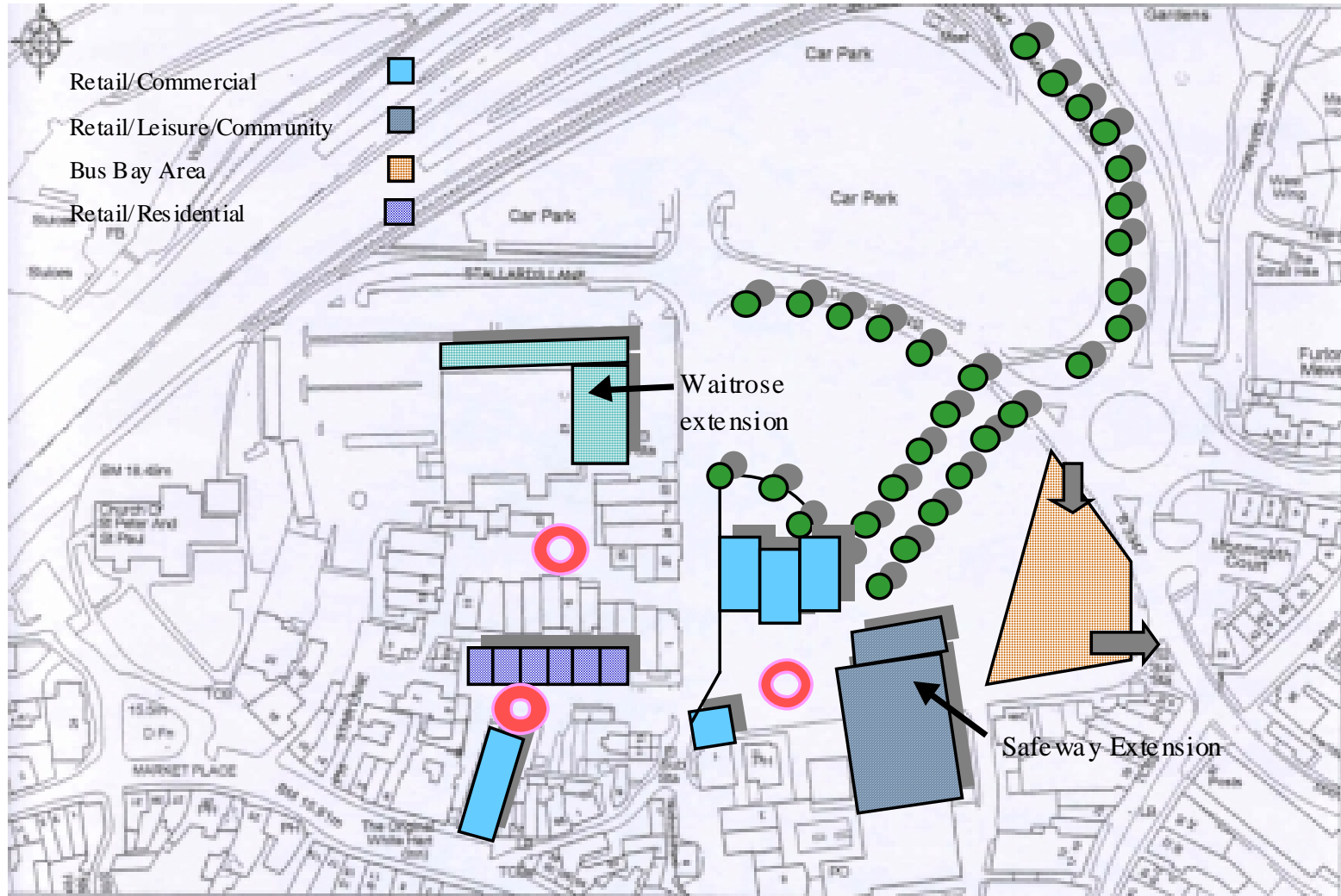
Preferred Development Options

The two diagrams shown in this annex illustrate the two preferred options identified in Chesterton's Report which should be given further consideration.

Chesterton's Report outlines the opportunities presented by these two development options.

Revised Option 2 – Supermarket Based Extension

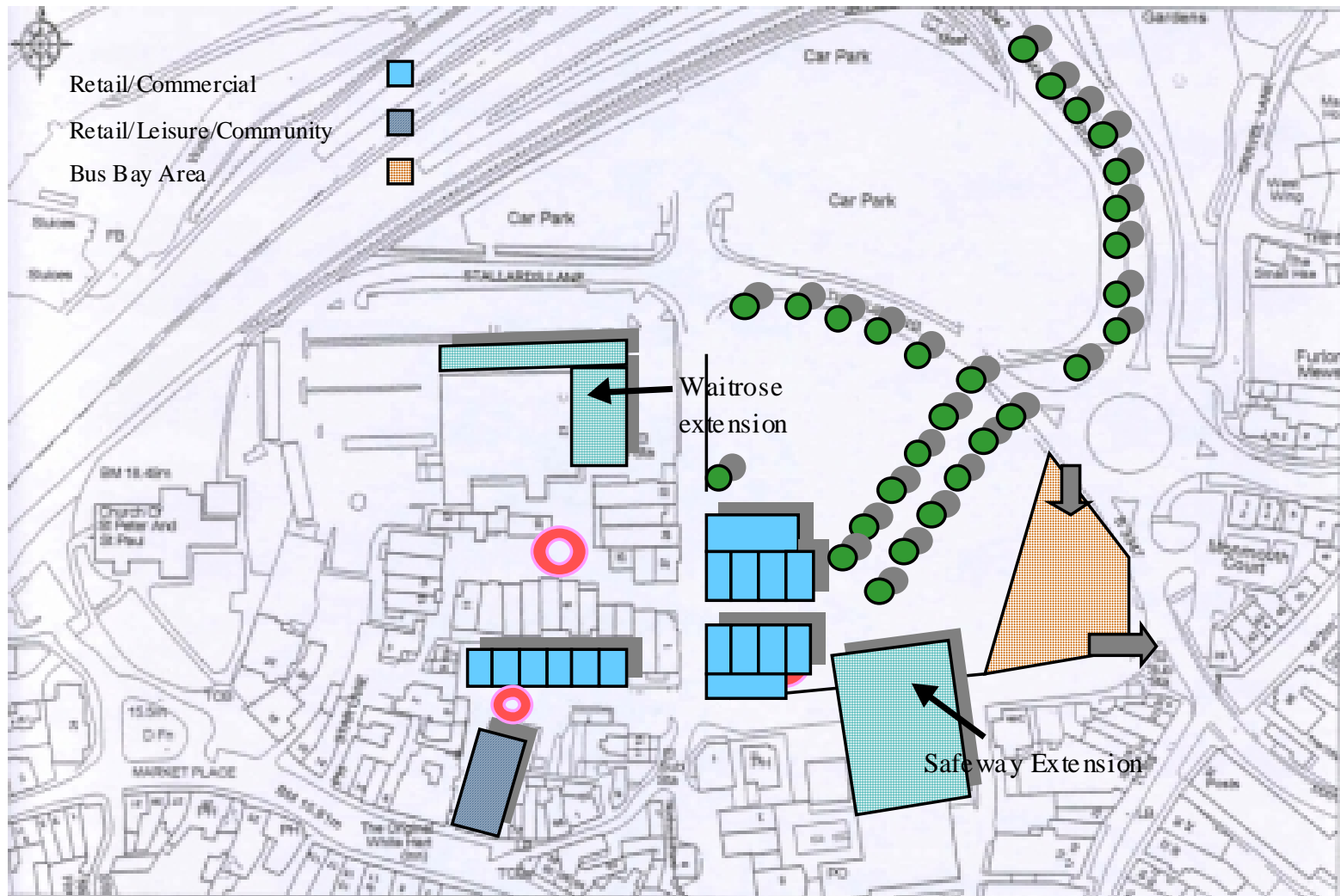
Indicative plans only – to be basis for consultation and further investigation



Revised Option 2 - Supermarket Based Extension

Revised Option 4 – Finer Grain

Indicative plans only – to be basis for consultation and further investigation



Revised Option 4 -Finer Grain

Revised Options

Both option 2 and 4 assumes the scheme will be anchored by the expansion of both the Safeway and Waitrose stores, which will help provide some of the critical mass required by a new development.

The larger retail units will help contribute to the retail offer in the area and a balance to the smaller units along Centre Place and Pedlars Walk.

Option 2 is based on the Furlong remaining open in order to promote movement through the site and to help minimise disruption within the centre. Option 4 is a variation on this scheme, based on the original option, which includes provision for smaller units. This will help complement the retail offer within the Furlong centre and improve the linkage between the Furlong Centre and any new retail offer.

The land use schedule outlined below is based on Option 2. Option 4 will provide the same amount of supermarket and leisure space but with approximately 5,000-m sq. more comparison and office floorspace.

Option 2 and 4 provide the opportunity to improve the linkages to the town centre along Centre Place and Pedlars Walk, which will be linked by the new public square.

The gateway to the town will be enhanced by the creation of a new entrance point between the extended Safeway and retail block. This frontage will have appropriate architectural treatment to highlight the gateway feature.

The landscape framework within the car park would be reconfigured to draw shoppers into the new gateway.

Anchored by an extension of a quality foodstore(s), the chances of attracting national multiples are heightened and with it the opportunity for returns to help enable associated leisure and community benefits on the upper floors of the expanded retail units or the former Cinema in Market Place as indicated.

It may be possible to include some residential units above the retail frontage of Centre Place. This will help create a securer environment in this area and add to the viability of the option.

Revised Option 2 – Land Use Schedule Estimates

Use	Ground Floor M sq.	Upper Floors M sq.	Car Parking Impact* (Estimated)
			70-80 loss
Supermarket	2000		
Comparison Retail	1908		
Leisure/ Community	480	980	
Office		1908	
Residential		1500	

*Note: There are currently around 810 car parking spaces in the Furlong area, and 21 lorry bays.