

CABINET – 7 JUNE 2006

MEMBERS' STEERING GROUP – THE FURLONG CAR PARK AREA, RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks authority for a Members' Steering Group to consider the future use of land in the Council's ownership in the area of the Furlong Car Park in Ringwood Town Centre.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning policy for the Furlong Site is provided by Policy RW-2 in the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration. It states:

“Subject to assessment against and compliance with the provisions of Policy BU-1, Section F1 of this Plan, a mixed-use development will be permitted on land at the south-western corner of the Furlong car park providing:

a it includes both retail, leisure and community uses which will enhance the overall vitality and viability of the town centre;

.....”

- 2.2 As part of early work on the Local Development Framework, and in particular, the Core Strategy, the Council has sought advice from consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners. The Consultants' work – which is nearing completion - provides the Council with a strategic assessment and advice on all town/ local centres in New Forest District, together with detailed advice on the District's four main town centres – Ringwood, Totton, Lymington and New Milton.

- 2.3 In relation to Ringwood town Centre the Consultant's have identified a need for additional comparison goods retail floorspace within the town centre. The Report states:

“The quantitative capacity analysis indicates that, based on existing shopping patterns as a baseline scenario, there could be scope for about 2,000 sq m gross of comparison floorspace within the Ringwood/ Fordingbridge area up to 2012, or 4,000 sq m gross up to 2018.”

Further,

“.....it may be possible for Ringwood to improve its market share of comparison expenditure. If market share can be improved then 2,700 sq m gross could be provided by 2012 or 4,400 sq m gross by 2018.”

- 2.4 The Consultant's Report identifies land at the Furlong Car Park as an appropriate location for new retail development (with leisure and community uses on upper floors) to address this future need for additional retail floorspace.
- 2.5 Part of the site is currently occupied by Ringwood Visitor Information Centre and Public Conveniences. In the past there have been aspirations for other community uses – such as a community hall - to be accommodated in this area.

3. BRIEF FOR STEERING GROUP

- 3.1 The Council has dual interest in the land at the Furlong Car Park – as the local planning authority, and as the landowner.
- 3.2 In order for the Council to clarify its aspirations for the future of this site it is suggested that a Members' Steering Group be formed.
- 3.3 The suggested terms of reference of the Steering Group are set out below:

To consider the Council's land holding at the Furlong Car Park (covered by Planning Policy RW-2) and to make recommendations on its future use to the Council's Cabinet. In making these recommendations, the Group will have regard to:

- the economic, environmental, municipal and social needs of Ringwood
- the Council's adopted planning policies
- the views of the local community
- the economic reality of any proposals being implemented in a reasonable timescale
- the wider financial interest of the Council.
- the emerging work on the Ringwood Market Town healthcheck

- 3.4 It is proposed that the Steering Group seek to complete its work and make recommendations to Cabinet by the Autumn 2006.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Financial implications are currently unknown. A further report will be made to a future Cabinet meeting on this matter.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This is a key site in Ringwood town centre. Achieving a successful development could bring environmental as well as economic and social benefits to the town centre.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' COMMENTS

- 7.1 Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder's comments:

The Portfolio Holder supports the recommendation contained in this report.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 That Cabinet authorises a Members' Steering Group, comprising the Members listed below, to consider options for the Council's land holding at the Furlong Car park, Ringwood covered by Local Plan Policy RW-2, and to report back to Cabinet in the Autumn.

Proposed Membership of Steering Group

**CLlr Jeremy Heron
CLlr Peter Greenfield
CLlr Michael Thierry
CLlr Danny Cracknell
CLlr Christine Ford
CLlr Chris Treleaven**

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Background Information:

**Ringwood Town Centre Study Report
(NLP May 2006)**