

OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE REPORT FROM RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE STEERING GROUP

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 7 June 2006 the Cabinet resolved that a Steering Group be set up to consider options for the Council's land holding at the Furlong Car Park, Ringwood covered by Local Plan policy RW-2, and that a report be made back to the Cabinet in the Autumn. Its members are Councillors Cracknell, Ms Ford, Greenfield, Heron, Thierry and Treleven.
- 1.2 The Group had met informally on two occasions and twice more after being formally constituted. At its last meeting on 5 September 2006 it agreed that this report should be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

2. THE WORK OF THE GROUP

- 2.1 At its first (informal) meeting the Group was advised of the emerging findings of the Council's consultants, Nathaniel, Lichfield and Partners, in respect of Ringwood town centre. In essence their conclusion was that Ringwood should be maintained and enhanced as a town centre and should continue to provide for bulk convenience food shopping and a reasonable range and choice of comparison shopping facilities and other services.
- 2.2 The consultants concluded that there was little need for any additional convenience (food) shopping facilities in the Ringwood/Fordingbridge area up to either 2012 or 2018.
- 2.3 In respect of comparison shopping, efforts should be made to retain Ringwood's position and where possible improve the centre's existing market share of expenditure. The consultant's analysis showed scope for about 2,000–2,700 square metres gross of additional comparison floorspace in the Ringwood/Fordingbridge area up to 2012 or 4,000–4,400 square metres gross by 2018.
- 2.4 The consultant's study also looked at commercial leisure development and identified a theoretical capacity for a small cinema, health and fitness, bingo and nightclub facilities in the District. Ringwood/Fordingbridge could provide between 200-300 square metres gross by 2012 or 400-600 square metres gross by 2018.
- 2.5 Two major sites for possible additional retail/leisure development were identified by the consultants. They are the former cinema and Furlong shopping centre servicing area and the Furlong Car Park site (owned by this Council).

2.6 At its second (informal) meeting the Group considered three broad options for the development of the Furlong car park site. These were:

- (a) A purely retail scheme;
- (b) A mixed retail, municipal and social scheme (including a public hall); and
- (c) A municipal and social scheme (including a public hall).

All of these options must include the replacement of the essential services such as the public toilets and the Visitor Information Centre in a sensible central location.

Broad valuation figures for the development of 3,000 sq metres of floorspace (on two floors) indicated that scheme (a) could generate a significant return, scheme (b) a small return and that scheme (c) would have a negative value. In principle, the Group favoured option (a) but only if any revenue raised was used to address any resultant car parking issues and also to provide new community and social facilities.

2.7 At its first formal meeting the Group considered that the broad options should be the subject of a consultation exercise. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Steering Group would visit organisations within Ringwood, starting with the Town Council to set the context for a later formal consultation process by allaying fears that decisions have already been taken.

2.8 In parallel with this consultation process it was clear that technical work was needed to be done to define the appropriate scale, environmental impact and practical constraints on development of the site. Car parking issues, including replacement car parking, would need to be addressed along with access and circulation issues. Finally this work would need to be accompanied by a financial assessment to ensure that any options that came forward could be properly assessed for their viability in terms of generating a positive site value or at least covering all of the development costs.

2.9 It was anticipated that the consultation work and the technical appraisal would take place through the Autumn and Winter 2006 (and early 2007). In Spring 2007 an evaluation of these findings would coincide with the publication of work on the Ringwood Parish Plan and this would further inform subsequent decision making. A report back to the Cabinet would be anticipated in the Summer of 2007.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The technical appraisal work will involve architects, engineers and surveyors working in a multi-disciplinary group. There is not the in-house expertise or the available time programmed to carry out this work. A consultancy with the ability to bring in all of the skills required will need to be appointed. There is no budget for this work.

3.2 An outline brief for what this work needs to cover is attached as Appendix A to this report. A provisional estimate of the cost of this work is £20,000. A supplementary estimate will be needed for this work to be done in the current financial year.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 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.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS

- 6.1 Councillor Heron chairs the Steering Group which produced this report.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Cabinet approves a consultation exercise, as set out in this report, on options for the possible development of part of the Furlong Car Park, Ringwood.
- (b) That the Cabinet approves a supplementary estimate of £20,000 to appoint consultants to carry out the necessary technical and financial appraisal work.
- (c) That the Cabinet receives a further report on the progress of this work when the initial consultation exercise and technical appraisal work has been carried out.

For Further Information Contact:

Chris Elliott
Head of Planning
Tel: (023) 8028 5310
E-mail chris.elliott@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Ringwood Town Centre Study Report
(NLP May 2006)

Consultancy work – on the Development Potential of land in the Furlong Ringwood

DESIGN

Prepare an Urban Design (and Access) Statement for land in the south west sector of the Furlong car park.

Assess the capacity of the site for retail or mixed use development.

Assess the impact on the site of accommodating around 2500 - 3000 sq.m of retail development – on one floor, or two floors.

Define the context and identify constraints.

Define the appropriate Scale - Height – Volume – Massing for development proposals on the site.

Identify significant views to and from the site.

ACCESS

- Car parking – Nos. displaced / re-provided / additional. Identify options for future provision – considering re-designed layout/ management/ decking / Basement or underground parking and servicing.
- Consider servicing arrangements for different types of development.
- Consider arrangements for public transport – bus stops/ taxis
- Identify pedestrian movements and circulation spaces within and around the site. Identify connections to other parts of town centre.

LAND USES

Primary uses : Retail, leisure (entertainment) and community uses

Secondary uses: municipal and commercial offices

Improved provision/ replacement of existing uses:

Public toilets – floorspace requirements? (Existing 102 sq.m)

Visitor Information Centre - floorspace requirements? (Existing 54 sq.m)

Public/ Civic spaces

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Of different land use options:

Single retail user – ground or ground and first floor.

Several retail units on ground floor.

Alternative uses of upper floors – offices/ residential/ community hall/space.

Options considered must generate **a positive site value.**

OUTPUT

The analysis of a range of options in terms of the scale and mix of land uses and their financial appraisal.