

## **AGENDA ITEM 7c - LAND SOUTH OF THE HIGH STREET**

### **REPORT ON INDICATIVE MASTER PLAN PROPOSAL**

#### **HISTORY**

The current iteration of the South Side Working Party seeks to progress with the development of the currently derelict land south of the existing High Street. Given the many years of procrastination by the Planning Authority and leading landowner, Central Bedfordshire Council, the working party has been set up to provide a lead for future development by Leighton-Linslade Town Council.

To that end, discussions have already taken place with two of the other landowners and it was clearly evident to members that they were very frustrated after 30 years or more of inactivity but were buoyed by the positive vibes emanating from the working party members. The working party has yet to speak to other similar stakeholders but it is felt their views will be much the same.

The Town Council has expressed a keen interest in the provision of a Civic Centre to provide better accommodation for their administrative activities, more practical space for council meetings and expanded facilities for the public interface. The design of the building could also facilitate outreach offices for Central Bedfordshire Council and other community organisations together with a museum and arts centre already mooted by the Peppercorn Trust.

There is no doubt that there will be many calls on the use of the site and these will inevitably include an allocation of housing and an increase in the retail offer to provide commercial viability. However, Policy & Finance Committee approved a recommendation from the South Side Working Party to investigate commissioning a social infrastructure needs analysis for the town to gain an insight of what other uses/facilities might else be required within the future development and to explore whether S106 funds could be released to fund this important analysis.

Whilst the Local Plan dictates that the only major town centre development activities would be concentrated on Dunstable and the recently completed £7 million re-vamp is evidence of that policy, this Council has continued to press Central Bedfordshire Council officers and portfolio holders to provide us with an insight of what strategic objectives they had for the South Side, what timescale they to achieve the objectives and whether financial resources had been allocated to that work. Furthermore, clarification has again been sought from Central Bedfordshire Council on whether any supplementary planning advice would be issued in respect of the land south side of the High Street given that this has not altered since 2012.

Policy & Finance Committee set a deadline for this information to be received by its next scheduled meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## INDICATIVE MASTER-PLAN

At a recent meeting of the South Side Working Party, Cllr Goodchild offered to investigate the potential costs and timescales of commissioning an indicative master-plan design from a professional consultancy that he was working alongside in a professional capacity on a major development project for a mutual Client. Cllr Goodchild assured members that he has no current nor future pecuniary interests in the company he approached.

The consultancy was emailed with an enquiry on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 attaching extracts from the CBC Development Brief 2012 to inform on location, existing build and potential site area. They were advised that there were several potential calls for the mixed use development area including a Civic Centre, Arts venue, Museum, Health hub, Police hub, Multi-storey car park including space for market trader vehicles, Housing, Hotel, Retail and re-construction of the Rothchild garden.

The brief also indicated that there were access points at each end of the site and this would allow a service road to the new retail areas and the rear of the existing high street retail outlets thus providing relief to the High Street of delivery vehicles and buses.

The consultancy issued their proposals in short time and to take this exercise forward they suggested the following scope:

- One day site visit linked with a briefing meeting so that we can understand fully the site constraints, opportunities and importantly your vision for the site.
- Up to 4 high level masterplan options looking at varying uses and concepts.
- One day workshop to review the concepts and select a preferred option.
- Develop the preferred masterplan into a coloured presentation masterplan showing uses with floor area schedule and means of access, servicing and movement strategy.

In terms of timescales, the company advised the following:

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|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| • Site visit and initial concept design     | 1 week  |
| • Design workshop/subsequent scheme updates | 2 weeks |
| • Developing the preferred masterplan       | 2 weeks |

To carry out these works, the consultancy propose a fee of **£10,250** plus VAT. This would be inclusive of expenses (assuming 2 site visits) but excludes 3D models and CGI's.

In addition they would require a digital Ordnance Survey base to work from that the Town Council can provide or alternatively the consultancy can provide one at a cost of £320 plus VAT

The consultancy also provided a portfolio of their mixed use developments which will be available for members to view at the meeting.

## **CONSTRAINTS**

Following up on a concern raised by the Town Clerk that permission may be required from landowners prior to the commencement of any feasibility study, the consultancy has advised that it is fairly normal to carry out studies for private developers on third party land without informing the landowner. However, they felt that as a public body we may prefer to advise the landowners that we are looking at some feasibility studies involving their land, particularly if there may be any form of public consultation. In conclusion, the Town Council does not require permission but should, as a courtesy, advise landowners of its intent.

## **BENEFITS**

1. The commissioning of this master-planning exercise will provide valuable data on what a mixed development could bring to the town,
2. It will confirm Leighton-Linslade Town Council's determination to lead and strongly influence the planning process for the development.
3. It will also strengthen the relationship between the Town Council and the independent landowners and other stakeholders by placing an indicative design on the table thus building confidence and a resolve to make the project happen.
4. The master-plan will bring into focus the major candidate elements of the whole South Side redevelopment and provide a first plan of the sequential action steps needed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a). To use the £10,000 from the ear-marked reserve for consultation on town facilities as resolved by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and draw down up to £570 from General reserves to meet the outstanding balance in respect of carrying out a scoping master plan exercise on land south of the High Street.
- b). Request the Town Clerk to formally advise landowners of the Town Council's intention to commission a professional consultancy to carry out a number of feasibility studies leading to an indicative master plan involving their land.

**Cllr Russ Goodchild**

16<sup>th</sup> July 2022