CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

12 FEBRUARY 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO LEADER - ENVIRONMENT

CANNOCK CHASE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

RUGELEY TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS – DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

KEY DECISION - YES

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider the responses received on the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) - Issues and Options DPD consultation, 2008.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the responses to the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Issues and Options consultation are noted and that they be used to help determine the Preferred Options version of the document.

2.2 That a report be submitted to a future meeting to approve the Preferred Options version of the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan for consultation.

3. Conclusions and Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 The Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide the central planning policy for the future development of Rugeley Town Centre over the next ten years. The Plan has now completed the first round of consultation, in order to generate debate and obtain as wide a view as possible on options for shaping the future of the town centre. The second stage of consultation, Preferred Options, will be carried out in Spring 2009.

3.2 Progress continues to be made on the preparation of the AAP, however for reasons detailed in the Background, Section 1, delays have been encountered beyond the Council’s control that will delay the publication of the Preferred Options Plan until Spring 2009. It is considered that the recommendations detailed in Paragraph 2 be approved.
4. **Key Issues**

4.1 Consultation on the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Issues and Options, was carried out from 10 March to 21 April 2008, although as this stage was a continuous process, events and responses were still ongoing until mid-June.

4.2 The consultation programme was considered to be very successful. A total of 53 exhibitions/presentations had been held, in which over 800 people had been spoken to and 462 responses had been received from 114 respondents. Of the wide range of comments received the following emerged as general concerns:-

- Need for a larger supermarket,
- Need for additional shops particularly clothes shops,
- Too many charity shops,
- Too many fast food outlets,
- Car parking too expensive for a small market town,
- Need to upgrade/link the Trent & Mersey Canal with the town centre,
- Need for more leisure facilities for the young.
- Open up culverted Rising Brook.

Views on Spatial Options

4.3 The responses on the AAP consultation pointed to Option 2 as the Preferred Option: Promote edge of centre retail balanced by a strengthened core town centre, combining most of Option 1 (consolidate existing core town centre), but as its key feature, included the development of a new large foodstore on the former Celcon site, Leathermill Lane, followed by Option 3: Expand the town centre to the east. This was the most ambitious and would develop Option 2 by integrating a developed large food store on the Celcon site, with new shops in the town centre between the two sites. The new shops could be provided by extending the traditional street pattern from Market Square/Market Street/Albion street across existing car parking towards the canal and the former Celcon site. This could be developed through a staged approach progressing from Option 2 in the short term to Option 3, over time.

Views on Opportunity Sites

4.4 The most popular choices of the future development options for the ten Opportunity Sites were as follows:-

1. **Aelfgar/former Squash Courts** – Commercial leisure, remain in education use.


3. **Former Bow St. Nursery** – Redevelop for mixed office/residential, food and drink.

4. **Adj. Red Lion public house** – Additional town centre car park, redevelop for mixed
5. **Former Market Street garage** – Redevelop for residential or mixed residential/retail.

6. **Bus Station and Market Hall** – Redevelop for mixed uses of new market/shops/flats/bus station/car park, any other uses.

7. **Wellington Drive** – Retail food store, any other uses.

8. **Former Celcon site, Leathermill Lane** – Large retail foodstore, medium sized foodstore with non food retail units.

9. **Former Horsefair Health Centre** – Redevelop for residential, mixed residential and offices.

10. **St. Joseph and Ethelreda’s car park and land to the rear** – Clear the buildings for extra car parking.

**Other Issues**

4.5 **Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM)** would expect the need for a large new food store to be demonstrated in an edge of centre location and how links would be achieved to the core shopping area. In GOWM’s view, there is a need to identify the extent of primary shopping area and any proposals for change and to quantify proposals for new convenience and comparison goods floorspace. There is also a need to link to the Regional Spatial Strategy policies.

4.6 **Transport issues.** There is a need to improve the poor links between the two railway stations and the bus station/town centre although the bus station was considered to be in the right place. There is a need to improve facilities for cyclists, including signage, storage and changing facilities. The canal needs to be integrated with the town centre.

4.7 Following the partial collapse of the Rising Brook culvert in Lower Brook Street and its impact on the war memorial above it during the consultation period, relocation of the latter to its original site in Anson Street, near to the Library, together with de-culverting of the Rising Brook in the town centre, become important local issues. The Environment Agency have already asked the Council to consider de-culverting of the Rising Brook in the town centre in the future, whenever it has the opportunity. SCC had also announced proposals for a super-school at Rugeley based on the Hagley Park site, resulting in the merger of the two secondary schools and the Aelfgar 6th Form centre and possibly a new primary school. This has implications for the release of the Aelfgar site, Opportunity Site 1.
REPORT INDEX

Background Section 1
Details of Matters to be Considered Section 2
Contribution to CHASE Section 3
Financial Implications Section 4
Human Resource Implications Section 5
Legal Implications Section 6
Section 17 (Crime Prevention) Section 7
Human Rights Act Implications Section 8
Data Protection Act Section 9
Risk Management Implications Section 10
Equality and Diversity Implications Section 11
Other Options Considered Section 12
List of Background Papers Section 13
Annexes to the Report i.e. copies of correspondence, plans etc
Report Author Details
Background

Rugeley Town Centre acts as the principal service centre for the north of the District and provides shopping, leisure facilities and a focus for public transport for residents and visitors. The Area Action Plan provides an opportunity to determine where such future growth should be directed over the next 10 years and beyond.

The Plan identified three Options for comment and which were not necessarily exclusive. Option 1 was based on consolidation within the existing core town centre. This option focussed on the core town centre area bounded by Horse Fair, Elmore Lane and St. Pauls Road/Lichfield Street/Forge Road. Key features included a new medium sized foodstore on the market hall/bus station site or Wellington Drive.

Option 2: Promote edge of centre retail balanced by a strengthened core town centre, combined most of Option 1, but as its key feature, included the development of a new large foodstore on the former Celcon site, Leathermill Lane.

Option 3: Expand the town centre to the east, was the most ambitious and would develop Option 2 by integrating a developed large foodstore on the Celcon site, with new shops in the town centre between the two sites. The new shops would be provided by extending the traditional street pattern from Market Square/Market Street/Albion street across existing car parking towards the canal and the former Celcon site.

The Plan also identified ten ‘opportunity sites,’ which were the subject of public consultation. These included the Aelfgar Centre; land adjacent to the Vine public house; former Bow Street nursery; land adjacent to the Red Lion public house; former Market Street garage; Wellington Drive; Bus Station/Market Hall; former Celcon block site, Leathermill lane; former Rugeley Health Centre, Horsefair; and land adjacent to the Catholic church/car park, St. Paul’s Road.

Consultation on the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Issues and Options was carried out from 10 March to 21 April 2008. However, as this first consultation stage is a continuous process, the Council started the dialogue commencing with the Rugeley and Brereton Community Forum on 3 March and subsequent events, exhibitions and presentations through to June.

The consultation programme was considered to be very successful. A total of 53 exhibitions/presentations had been held, in which over 800 people had been spoken to and 462 responses had been received from 114 respondents.

A number of new initiatives were carried out including exhibitions at a market stall, Rugeley Leisure Centre, workshop sessions with Chase Voluntary Services and the ‘hard to reach’ groups, meetings with Rugeley Town Council, Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce, the two secondary schools via their Youth Community Councils, the Phoenix Club for the over 50s and the Rugeley Rotary Club. Meetings have also been held with British Waterways in the context of identifying potential improvements to the Trent and Mersey canal-side environment as well as
improving linkage with the town centre, together with Tesco, owner of the former Celcon site. Exhibitions were also held at the more traditional venues including Rugeley Area Office in Anson Street and Rugeley Library.

The Issues and Options stage of the Area Action Plan, included consultation with the public, landowners, businesses and other stakeholders as part of the process, whose views are important for the future of Rugeley Town Centre.

Revised timescale

It had been intended that the next consultation document, Preferred Options, would be published in December 2008. However, new issues have been identified outside the Council’s control, that have led to additional work having to be commissioned, in the interests of producing a document that is ‘sound’, under the new development plan system. In particular, these related to the need to carry out a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, retail capacity study/town centre health check update and Tesco’s own emerging development intentions for Opportunity Site 8, former Celcon Block site, Leathermill Lane/Power Station Road. The first two matters in particular, have lead to a delay in publication of the Preferred Options document to Spring/early Summer 2009.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

Meetings with the Environment Agency (EA) on the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD, identified a new requirement to carry out a separate more detailed, Level 2 SFRA for the town centre, in view of a large proportion of the town centre lying within flood risk zones 2, 3a and 3b, identified in the Level 1 SFRA for the District, received in April 2008. Failure to have agreed to carry out this work could have been met by objections from the EA at the Examination, on the grounds that the Plan was ‘unsound’. The Level 2 study, will provide more detailed and accurate information on areas subject to potential flood risk.

In August, the Council was informed by the Council’s consultants, Halcrow, that the topographical data they had assumed the EA possessed for the full Plan area, was not in fact available and that additional work would have to be carried out. However, at a subsequent meeting with Halcrow in September, they informed the Council, that the EA were now seeking a more detailed form of modeling, to identify the presence of defences, water velocity and depth through the preparation of hazard maps. This had a knock-on effect on the work that had to be carried out. The draft report was been received, but as of January was still awaiting the approval of the Environment Agency before the final report could be released.

Retail Study

It also become evident that in order to produce a ‘sound’ document for the Examination, additional work needed to be carried out as part of the evidence base, and in particular to justify the need for a retail food store at Opportunity Site 8, the proposed Tesco store site. The Council’s consultants, White Young Green (WYG), have therefore been commissioned to provide a quantitative capacity analysis for Rugeley. The opportunity has also been taken to update the Retail Health Check studies previously carried out by WYG in 2003, as they were now 5 years old, and would be 8 years old by the time the Examinations of the Core Strategy and Rugeley AAP are.
carried out in 2011. Both of these pieces of work will also be useful for the Cannock town centre expansion proposals, together with the current redevelopment plans for Hednesford Town Centre.

However because the Christmas shopping/New Year sales shopping patterns could have invalidated the on street questionnaire survey, this work had to be delayed until early January. As a result, WYG consider that the draft Preferred Options document would not be complete until March, and as it may not be possible to meet the deadline for the last Cabinet meeting in the current cycle to approve the Preferred Options document, there is a risk that this may be delayed until May/June.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

The Issues and Options version of the AAP was the first stage 1 of the consultation process. The Town Centre AAP will set out a planning framework to guide future development. It will include general guidelines for the area as well as identifying specific sites which may be suitable for redevelopment over the next ten years and beyond. The Key Issues section of this report details the issues raised during the Issues and Options consultation last year.

Section 3

Contribution to CHASE

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare the Local Development Framework, the various components of which including the Rugeley Town Centre AAP, will contribute towards achieving all of the CHASE objectives.

Section 4

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for the Council as a result of this report; any costs associated with the production of the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan are contained within existing budgets.

As referred to in the Risk Management Implications, the finalized Development Plan Document may well have implications on the level of Housing Planning Delivery Grant receivable by the Council.

Future reports will be presented for consideration as work on the final version of the Document progresses; detailed financial implications will be included as and when appropriate.

Section 5

Human Resource Implications

There are no human resource implications in the report.
Legal Implications

The Council is required by Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme. The Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan is identified in this Scheme. The Council is required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) 2004 to consult upon the document as set out in the Regulations before submitting it to the Secretary of State.

Section 7

Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

There are no identified implications in respect of Section 17 (Crime Prevention) arising from this report.

Human Rights Act Implications

The process of preparing Development Plan Documents is set out in Government Planning Regulations. It provides the opportunity for third parties to be consulted in the development of draft policies and proposals and to make representations on submitted documents. In the case of Development Plan Documents, those representations must be considered by the Council and unresolved representations are considered in public, by an independent Planning Inspector, through an Examination into the soundness of the plan. The Inspector's report following the Examination is binding on the Council.

The process of formulating and adopting the policies of Development Plan Documents is likely to have implications which affect individuals' rights and possessions and due account must be taken of the need to adopt procedures which take account of the right of individuals to make representations in respect of the policies and to adopt policies which, as far as possible, enable in the public interest to be balanced against individual rights.

The proposals set out in the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Issues and Options are considered to be compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act arising from this report.
Risk Management Implications

A failure to produce a sound Development Plan Document could have implications for the Council. In particular this would prevent achievement of milestones detailed in the Local Development Scheme and could result in the loss of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no implications in the report.

Other Options Considered

The decision to prepare the AAP was originally detailed in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2005 and is included in the current LDS, March 2008. The Council is therefore committed to prepare the document in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations. No other options have therefore been considered.

Background Papers

Responses on the Rugeley Town Centre – Issues and Options, March 2008, available in reception and in the Members Room.

Annexes to the Report

None

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