

EDGAR STREET GRID MASTERPLAN

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY, ENVIRONMENT/PLANNING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

CABINET

17TH JULY, 2003

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To give views on the preferred masterplanning option for the Edgar Street Grid site in Hereford.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards. It was included in the Forward Plan published on 7th May, 2003.

Recommendation

THAT the preferred masterplan for the Edgar Street Grid site be based on Option 3, as a basis for further consultation, and that an implementation plan be developed on this basis.

Reasons

As a result of feedback from the Consultation exercise, technical and design issues and in particular in order to generate sufficient capital to implement the proposals Option 3 is preferred.

Considerations

1. During 2002, Herefordshire Council and Advantage West Midlands agreed to jointly commission a masterplanning exercise to inform the redevelopment of the Edgar Street Grid site in Hereford. Hereford is an important sub regional employment and service centre for a large rural hinterland. The majority of rural Herefordshire and parts of the City fall within Advantage West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone and within the West Midlands Objective 2 area. Significant investment is required in order for the City to move forward and fulfil its potential as a sub regional employment and service centre which will help to address wider issues in the County's rural economy. The 43 hectare (100 acre) Edgar Street Grid site immediately to the north of the existing city centre offers a strategic opportunity to address these issues.
2. In maximising the contribution to wider economic development, a range of issues must be addressed including traffic congestion, poor strategic infrastructure, a lack of high quality leisure facilities and the need to strengthen the retail offer of the centre.

In working towards this, the preparation of a deliverable masterplan will serve to integrate the site with the city centre, stimulate a new civic and cultural presence on site, enhance the tourism offer and facilitate city living through the establishment of a vibrant and high quality location.

3. In March 2003 DTZ Peda were commissioned to lead a multi disciplinary consultancy team to prepare a strategic vision, masterplan and implementation strategy for the Edgar Street Grid, located immediately to the north of Hereford's historic city centre. The Council's Regeneration Board has overseen the Consultants' work to date. The study area incorporates the area of land bounded by Edgar Street (the A49), Newmarket Street, Blue School Street, Commercial Road and the railway line. The site extends to approximately 43 hectares (100 acres) and incorporates a number of significant uses including the Livestock Market, Hereford United Football Club, railway station, various commercial uses and a number of buildings of architectural and historic importance such as the Blackfriars Friary.
4. In addition to these existing uses, the study brief took as its starting point the Council's proposals for the area in the draft UDP. Several uses requiring a city centre location were identified including a site for the Council Headquarters, Police Authority Headquarters, a Primary Care Trust facility, potential learning village, multiplex cinema and a public transport interchange. These uses could provide opportunities for new development within the masterplan area.
5. The brief for the masterplanning exercise set out the following key objectives:
 - to create a main focus for regeneration within the context of an historic city centre;
 - to create a development that is accessible to sustainable transport modes, that contributes to development in the wider city centre, with an emphasis on the development and improvement of sustainable access links to the city centre and other adjacent areas;
 - to utilise key locations and physical attributes associated with the project area including opportunities offered by the Livestock Market site, the existing railway station and the former canal basins;
 - to set an aspirational, but achievable and robust masterplan for the project area within the context of sustainable developments reflecting the heritage of the city and the use of the new and emerging economy of the 21st century;
 - to focus on delivery and the mechanism for implementation.
6. The timetable for the commissioning and completion of Consultants to undertake the Edgar Street Grid masterplanning work is summarised below:

Brief agreed by Cabinet 3rd December, 2002

Consultants appointed February 2003

Consultation with key stakeholders March – May 2003

Members Seminar presenting masterplan options 5th June, 2003

Public consultation on masterplan options June/July 2003

Masterplan options to Cabinet to select preferred option 17th July, 2003

Implementation Plan for preferred option to Cabinet September/October 2003

7. In preparing options for the future development of the area, the following key actions have been undertaken:
 - a review of existing technical studies relevant to the site;
 - detailed site analysis of technical issues by members of the consulting team (including the wider policy context, the economic context and opportunities of Hereford, engineering, archaeology, flooding, highways/transportation, the property market context/conditions, existing planning consents, development requirements and design considerations): It must be noted that at the time of writing the technical work on traffic modelling was not complete and so no capacity analyses of the proposed junctions has yet been carried out.
 - an extensive consultation exercise (including meetings with officers, a range of interest groups, the establishment of an advisory forum and the presentation of emerging options to Members of Herefordshire Council as part of a workshop session).
8. The work undertaken to date has informed the establishment of a series of criteria that any masterplan option must satisfy and four masterplan options 1(a), 1(b), 2 and 3. The criteria and masterplan options are set out in Appendix 1 attached, in particular in the section on the development framework. Option 1a most closely reflects the proposals published in the draft UDP, while the others explore different possibilities. All four options have been subject to a wide ranging consultation exercise. This has included coverage in the Hereford Times, letters to stakeholders and to all occupiers of premises on the site and a call in facility with exhibition material at the Council's Planning Offices at Blueschool House, Hereford. All Ambition Groups of the Herefordshire Partnership have been consulted as have all services within the Council. There has also been an opportunity for the public to comment over the internet.

Option 3 is emerging as the preferred Option, the key features of Option 3 are:

- the new A49/Commercial Road link joins the A49 in the vicinity of the Courtyard Arts Centre, raising the profile of this venue and allowing in the longer term for a reorientation of the football ground. Details of the junction with A49 will be subject to agreement with the Highways Agency. There are concerns about the capacity of existing junctions to deal with these new proposals. These concerns will need to be addressed in the next phase of the work.
- a new civic focus away from the Market site (as proposed in the UDP) to the Blueschool Street area.
- the introduction of retail uses onto the Livestock Market site. This serves to help the overall economic viability of the scheme and ensures the Council is making best use of its assets. However retail uses need careful handling from a planning point of view. One of the main objectives of the study is to integrate with the existing city centre and it is important that what is effectively a separate focus for investment is not created which would compete rather than complement the main shopping areas to the south. In particular city centre shopping uses are not to be preferred on the Market site. This could weaken the retail emphasis in the existing centre which contributes to the vitality and viability of the historic core. It

is essential that this is maintained. In terms of other retail uses, the capacity in the City to accommodate additional food retail is limited and a case would need to be made to or by the Council, acting as planning authority, that additional provision of this nature could be justified by other considerations. Bulky goods retailing could be another possibility, for which there is a need to identify additional land.

- Other uses such as a Hereford Learning Village, multiplex cinema and public transport provision/interchange are not explicitly provided for in the option as it stands. These need to be further considered as part of the development of the implementation plan.

Links to other strategies

The brief requires consultancy teams to integrate fully with other strategies and development policies. Foremost here is the Council's transport role. As part of the development of the implementation plan, detailed consideration is needed to the implications of the road proposal on which Option 3 rests and this should be set within the context of the Hereford Transport Review. Consultation with the Highways Agency will also be essential. Advantage West Midlands have also asked for clarification of how the proposals for the Edgar Street Grid link to the City of Living Craft proposals and the emerging ideas for a Hereford Learning Village. Finally, while the current UDP proposals have been taken as the starting point for the study, it is acknowledged that there may be a need to revise the relevant UDP policies following the conclusion of the work. This can be accommodated within the UDP process.

9. Next Steps

Once Cabinet has confirmed the Council's favoured masterplanning option this will be the subject of further consultation and the Consortium of Consultants will develop an implementation plan. This implementation plan will set out how the Council and its partners could achieve the development of the favoured option. It is anticipated that the consultants will complete this work during September 2003, a further report will then be brought to Cabinet for consideration. Progress on implementation will be linked to the success of the Hereford Markets Bill and the Unitary Development Plan process. It is anticipated that the Council and Advantage West Midlands will commission a further study on the future requirements of the Livestock Market.

Alternative Options

The alternative options are options 1(a), 1(b) and 2 as described in the report. A further alternative would be to do nothing and allow the site to evolve without preferred masterplan

Risk Management

Risk Management issues will be dealt with as part of the implementation proposals developed by the Consortium of Consultants led by DTZ Pineda.

Consultees

A wide ranging consultation exercise has been undertaken including press and radio coverage inviting comments from the general public, direct one to one meetings with a series of land owners and leaseholders on the site and meetings with an Advisory Group consisting of other stakeholders and interested parties in the City. A briefing meeting for all

Herefordshire Council Members took place on 5th June, 2003.

Background Papers

None identified

MASTERPLAN OPTIONS

This section provides a brief overview of the evolution of the masterplan options, drawing on the consultation process and our detailed analysis of current conditions, policy objectives and future opportunities.

Consultation Responses

As already noted, an extensive consultation process has been undertaken and is still ongoing. This process has been critical to informing the preparation of masterplan options with key emerging messages including:

- the importance of addressing traffic congestion on Edgar Street and the Inner Ring Road (New Market Street and Blue School Street);
- support for the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road in order to enhance linkages to the city centre;
- the need to enhance the quality and diversity of leisure facilities;
- the need to enhance the quality and variety of retail provision;
- support for the introduction of a waterway in the general area of the former canal basin;
- support for the principle of a mix of uses within the area;
- the need to maximise revenue generated from public assets in order to support project funding.

Design Aspirations

Whilst the masterplan area incorporates a number of attractive buildings and active pedestrian routes, it has over time been severed from the city centre (predominantly by the Inner Ring Road) and has evolved in an unplanned manner. In re-knitting the masterplan area with the city centre, a number of design objectives must be satisfied:

- reinforcing the vitality and quality of the city centre;
- reinforce existing land uses around the site boundary to integrate it more effectively with its context;
- reinforce the vibrancy of the Courtyard Arts Centre, Widemarsh Street and Commercial Road;
- provide better access across and into the site for pedestrians (including links from the city centre to the station);
- break down the barrier between the area and city centre;
- provide new public open space;
- provide adequate car parking for new uses and to serve the city centre;
- reinforce key vistas and views from the site to city centre landmarks.

Transportation

Our detailed analysis has confirmed that the highways network is already operating above capacity which causes considerable congestion and delays - particularly along the A49 and Inner Ring Road. Therefore, in order to facilitate any development within the masterplan area, a fundamental redesign of the highways network is required. This will incorporate the downgrading of the Inner Relief Road (thereby also serving to enhance links to the city centre from the area) and a new link from Commercial Road to the A49.

Flooding

The study brief noted the historic use of part of northern area as a canal basin and the potential requirement for flood storage capacity to be provided on site. Our research has demonstrated that the introduction of a formal waterway would not serve as a flood alleviation measure but would be highly attractive in design terms and serve to act as a

focus of activity for this area. On this basis, a waterway and separate flood alleviation measures are proposed within the masterplan options.

Hereford United Football Club (HUFC)

HUFC provides an important community facility for Herefordshire and has a well established presence within the masterplan area. However, the ground is in a poor condition and in need of modernisation. Further enhancements to the ground would probably be required if the team were promoted to the Football League. Consultations have identified the potential for the development of facilities associated with the club including a conference room, bar facilities, an enhanced club shop and other sports related uses. Our design analysis has confirmed that as part of any redevelopment proposals the ground should ideally be set back from the A49 in order to reduce visual impact and enhance pedestrian linkages around the area.

The redevelopment of the ground will require a significant financial commitment and whilst this is a long term aspiration for all masterplan options, it is recognised that in the short term funding is not likely to be available for such a course of action.

Council Offices Accommodation

The study brief identified the fact that the Council is seeking a new site for its own headquarters within a city centre location. Whilst precise floorspace requirements have yet to be confirmed, consideration has been given to the potential of the masterplan area to accommodate the development in several related buildings that would be appropriate in terms of the relationship of scale and massing to the surrounding area and could also act as a catalyst to introduce other occupiers and uses within the area. Two general locations have been considered:

- the Livestock Market site - in line with proposals already incorporated in the emerging UDP;
- Blue School Street/Catherine Street area - whilst the Council already has offices in this area, such a development would play a major role in linking the site to the city centre and promoting wider regeneration.

Development Framework

The stages of the process set out above confirmed a series of common themes that must be incorporated in any masterplan option for the area. These development requirements establish a series of common themes to be incorporated in any masterplan. Therefore, each masterplan option incorporates:

- enhanced connections with the city centre;
- a mix of uses including residential, retail, leisure, commercial and cultural;
- the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road and a new road link between the A49 and Commercial Road;
- a waterway in the north eastern area of the site around which a range of uses including residential, commercial, leisure, live/work, pub and hotel could be provided;
- reinforcement of the historic core around Widemarsh Street/Conningsby Street;
- new mixed use development along Widemarsh Street;
- retention of the football club within the masterplan area;
- provision of Council office accommodation;
- environmental enhancements and enhanced pedestrian linkages.

Key differences of each option are set out below and highlighted on the exhibition masterplan options boards:

- *Option 1a* - this option most closely follows that identified in the emerging UDP, with council offices proposed on the Livestock Market site and an enhancement of football

club facilities in the general area of the current ground;

- *Option 1b* - in line with consultation responses, consideration is given to new retail development on the Livestock Market site. In association with the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road, this would facilitate an enhancement of city centre retail provision and generate revenue to support infrastructure provision within the masterplan area. The option also proposed the development of Council offices around Blue School Street;
- *Option 2* - consideration is given to Council offices and arts related uses on the Livestock Market site in order to create a Civic/Cultural presence;
- *Option 3* - this option mirrors Option 1b with the exception that the new Commercial Road - A49 link joins the A49 in the vicinity of the Courtyard Arts Centre in order to contribute towards raising the profile of the venue. This also allows for a radical relocation of the football ground in the longer term.

Funding and Delivery

The masterplan options create an opportunity to establish a planning framework for long term change and the future development of the city. However, the delivery of such an ambitious plan will require major commitment from the public and private sectors in bringing forward development and securing wider benefits. Such commitment will include dedicating resources to driving the project forward, strategic land acquisitions and ensuring that development proposals are consistent with masterplan aims.

In delivering the project, enabling infrastructure works will be required (including the new Commercial Road - Edgar Street link, waterway, environmental enhancements, land acquisition and public realm works). At this stage, only the masterplan options promoting additional retail development (1b and 3) generate sufficient funding to complete such works.

Given that the potential council offices development would not generate any land value if brought forward on the Livestock Market site (options 1a and 2), it is not considered to be viable to promote such options without identifying other funding sources to support the wider regeneration aims.