

**URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR LAND AT CHEQUERS COURT  
HUNTINGDON  
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The land between the High Street and Nursery road was identified as an area of opportunity in the Civic Trust's Vision statement for Huntingdon Town Centre. The Hillier Parker Shopping Study 2001 identified a need for additional shopping floorspace in Huntingdon and confirmed that the best location would be in the Chequers Court area.
- 1.2 Recent enquiries including an application on sites adjacent to the town centre for considerable amounts of floorspace have prompted the urgent need to provide a planning and design framework for the Chequers Court area. This is in order to ensure the proper regeneration of the area and to maintain the viability and vitality of the town centre in accordance with Government advice.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to consider the Framework and approve it for consultation purposes. Once representations have been received and considered, the guidelines will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance and used when considering the development proposals.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The owners of Chequers Court have recently carried out a modernisation project of their units that run from the High Street to link with the recent development of St Germain Walk and are keen to start the second phase of the redevelopment of Chequers Court. Their intention is to complete the modernisation programme with a facelift of the units fronting the High Street in order to create a main entrance that will lead into the rear part of Chequers Court. This is the part to be redeveloped and includes the large square fronted by the three storey government offices and buildings containing existing retail units on the east and south side.
- 2.2 An agreement has been reached with the District Council ( owners of Trinity Pace Car Park ) and the owners of the car park serving the most recent shopping development to include additional land as part of the new proposal that will complete and complement the existing St Germain Walk development.
- 2.3 The site will be accessed via the existing entrance from the Nursery road adjacent to the Sainsbury store and from a new link close to ATS. This new link will be for traffic from the east and west being

served by the contra flow road along Nursery Road as proposed in the Market Town Strategy.

- 2.4 Initial work on the design of the junction, the contra flow lane and on the impact on the ring road of traffic generated by the proposed development indicate that it will work satisfactorily.

### 3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 This framework has been produced through close co-operation with the District Council's Consultants acting as estates, planning and urban design advisers and an agreement on a shared vision. It is considered to be realistic and implementable within the near future although there is an option to carry out a further phase on land outside the control of the District Council and the owner of Chequers Court.

- 3.2 The framework recognises the opportunities that the site provides to improve the quality of built form of the town, to create a better destination for shoppers and visitors to the town and one that adds to the retail offer available to the people of the Huntingdon area by :-

- Increasing the amount of car parking spaces in line with the needs recognised in the car parking study
- Integrating the new development with the existing High Street with better and safer pedestrian links
- Allowing bus penetration into the site and creating bus facilities
- Increasing the variety of shops
- Allowing the downgrading of Hartford Road within the conservation area to access only for residents and businesses in the area

- 3.3 A preferred option is illustrated in the framework . It envisages a total of 10000 sq metres of new retail development on two levels facing Chequers Court and the Sainsbury car park. The surface car park will be reduced in capacity (250spaces) to accommodate the development and to allow a more satisfactory, and safer layout for pedestrians with additional planting. The loss of car parking will be made up with the creation of a multi-storey car park ( 650 spaces) above the retail element. The total height of the building is not to exceed the adjoining retail development.

- 3.4 Active frontages are envisaged for all sides of the development. It is particularly important that the southern face the development retains interest and attracts pedestrian traffic leading to and from Newtons Court and the High Street. Care must also be taken to reduce the conflict between pedestrians, service vehicles and cars using the multi storey car park on this side of the development.

- 3.5 The preferred option is capable of development in phases. The redevelopment of the ATS site and land to the rear of properties in

Hartford Road would form a second phase that would complete the enclosure of the at grade car parking area and be in accordance with the overall design approach.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Discussions will be held with local Members , the Town Council and the Town Centre Partnership on the future shape of this document and to share in its ownership. In addition there will be a consultation process with the usual statutory bodies. Any comments or changes will be brought back to the Cabinet before it is adopted.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That Cabinet approve the Framework as a base for further discussion and consultation.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

A Vision for Redevelopment- Development Guidelines February 2002.  
Planning Guidelines produced by Shillam and Smith October2001

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