

AGENDA ITEM NO.

**COMT
CABINET**

**22ND NOVEMBER 2005
15TH DECEMBER 2005**

**THE GRAND CINEMA, RAMSEY
DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
(Report by PLANNING POLICY MANAGER)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the result of public consultation on the draft Development Brief and to consider the Council's response. The Cabinet is asked to approve the amended Development Brief for its use in the potential re-development of this part of the town.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A draft version of this document was released for public consultation by Cabinet on 15th September 2005 and the consultation period extended until 18th November 2005. It has been advertised locally and affected properties have been leafleted.
- 2.2 As a result of comments received in writing, a number of revisions have been made to the document.
- 2.3 The adoption of the Development Brief as Interim Planning Guidance will be an important step towards achieving the most appropriate form of re-development for this area. It will help to ensure that forthcoming schemes are of a high architectural and urban design quality, and are well integrated with existing developments. In addition, it will assist the Council in delivering a suitable community facility as part of the development package.

3. THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 3.1 37 written responses have been received from statutory agencies, local organisations and members of the public, containing 110 separate comments for consideration. A summary of the respondents, their comments and the Council's response is contained within Annex 1.
- 3.2 Most comments have given rise to minor text or graphic changes. The most significant concerns and the Council's responses are outlined below:
- 3.3 *Demolition of existing buildings:* if implemented in full, the Brief may result in the demolition of the existing cinema building and No. 29 Great Whyte. It is accepted that the existing cinema building is

something of a local landmark and has been associated with the town for many years. Although its re-use for a limited range of functions is conceivable, it is unlikely that these re-uses will bring about a comprehensive improvement of the environment within and adjoining the site. There is also the question as to whether a future re-use in the existing building would be viable, given the demise of the most recent cinema use, or whether that re-use provides a facility available for a wide range of the community. It is the Council's opinion that the existing building, whilst of local interest, is not worthy of retention at the expense of a new, high quality facility which provides not only a suitable community function but also has the potential to deliver architecture of equivalent or, as intended, superior quality. In relation to No. 29, the same principles apply: it is an attractive building but is in a poor state of repair. Its retention (even in part) has the potential to curtail the comprehensive and viable re-development of the combined sites, at the expense of improvement to the wider area and the delivery of a community facility. Given the outcomes of the Ramsey Action Plan which identified a need for a range of community facilities in the town, the Council considers that the delivery of an appropriate community facility on this site is desirable and outweighs the potential loss of these buildings.

- 3.4 *Loss of parking:* parking would only be lost if some or all of this particular area were to be included in the re-development. From the Council's perspective, allowing development on the existing parking area may be essential for the delivery of much-needed community facilities and improved public toilets. The public consultation has raised parking in general as a significant concern in the town, echoed by Development Control Panel. This is a broader issue that cannot be fully addressed within the remit of this document, but the Council is planning to re-visit the parking strategy for the town centre.
- 3.5 *Provision of housing:* objections have been received in relation to the provision of residential units in the town centre. If this concern relates to the loss of retail property arising from the development of this site, then the objection does not apply as no existing retail properties exist on the site. The provision of new retail property would depend on viability. Rejection of dwellings in the town centre would lead to a reduction in the viability of the town centre itself, and would be contrary to national policy in relation to town centres. This would be contrary to the Action Plan 'Vibrant Town Centre' initiative. The provision of a community facility in addition to housing would help to extend the viability of the town further.
- 3.6 *Community facility:* whilst there was general support for the provision of these facilities, some respondents requested uses such as a cinema, theatre, entertainments centre and youth centre. It is unlikely that this site could deliver such facilities, not least due to its restricted size. Also, this site is just one of a number being considered for the delivery of a range of appropriate community uses. Consultation is currently underway with local groups to establish what facilities would be best suited to the town, including considerations for their on-going management and maintenance.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The revised document will incorporate a number of changes as a result of the public consultation process. The promotion of appropriate site analysis and a comprehensive design strategy is unchanged.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Cabinet authorizes the revisions to the document as presented in Annex 1.
- 5.2 That the Cabinet delegates adoption of the revised document, incorporating minor consequential amendments, as Interim Planning Guidance to the Executive Member for Planning Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Planning Services.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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