

**COMT
CABINET**

**22ND AUGUST 2006
7TH SEPTEMBER 2006**

**URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK AND MASTERPLAN
ST MARY'S URBAN VILLAGE, ST NEOTS
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Urban Design Framework and Masterplan examines the redevelopment opportunities on land to the west of St Mary's Church, between High Street and Brook Street, St Neots. It presents the planning policy context for the comprehensive redevelopment of this area, which may involve the creation of a new mixed use development for this part of St Neots, together with improved car parking and pedestrian linkages.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to consider this draft document and the comments that have been received, and adopt the document as Interim Planning Guidance.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Most of the site has been in poor repair for many years. Various redevelopment schemes have been proposed over the years, and as the site is split between several owners it has been difficult to assemble.
- 2.2 The site is currently used for a number of different uses, including a DIY shop, storage buildings, a garage mechanics, a tanning studio, a tattoo parlour, a church hall, and formal and informal car parking.
- 2.3 There are several interesting buildings within the boundaries of the site, some of which are listed. Among those listed is Brook House, one of the finest buildings in St Neots, its setting unfortunately let down by the garage mechanics' buildings next door.
- 2.4 Part of the site has been allocated for residential development for a number of years, but there has been little chance of it being implemented in the past for the reasons stated in paragraph 2.1. As a result, parts of the site have gradually deteriorated.
- 2.5 There is currently agreement amongst most of the landowners to bring forward their land for redevelopment. Efforts are being made to get agreement with all parties. Failing this other measures at the Council's disposal may have to be considered.

3.0 THE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK AND MASTERPLAN

- 3.1 The purpose of this document is to ensure that a well planned and appropriate development can take place on site, something which contributes to improving the built environment of the town.
- 3.2 Particularly important is removing the inappropriate uses that currently exist, detracting from the setting of Brook House and St Mary's Church.
- 3.3 The Masterplan sets design parameters for the successful development of the site, ensuring that future proposals achieve imaginative and distinctive solutions. Indicative layouts are shown that illustrate what could be achieved.

4. CONSULTATION EXERCISE AND RESPONSE

- 4.1 A public exhibition was held in the St Mary's Church Hall in the afternoon of 7th July. Notices were posted to local residents and businesses informing them of the exhibition. Public notices were also placed in the local press and the local newspapers also ran stories highlighting the exhibition before and after the event. The local press were also present at the exhibition asking those who attended what they thought about the proposals. Over 50 members of the public attended, and the views of those who filled in their questionnaires have been attached to the appendix.
- 4.2 The Masterplan was also presented to the Council's Development Control Panel on 19th June, St Neots Town Council on 12th July, and the St Neots Town Centre Initiative on 13th July.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Production of an Urban Design Framework and Masterplan is best practice and will help to secure the most appropriate form of development over the whole of this site.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Cabinet authorises the revisions to the document as presented in Annex 1.
- 6.2 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

Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations June 2002

Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPG Sept 2004

Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment SPG Sept 2004

St Neots Town Centre – The future, Civic Trust May 2004

Contact Officer: Mike Huntington
 01480 388404