



JOINT MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC AND RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANELS

THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 2006 2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor David Brailsford
Councillor Dorrien Dexter
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Kenneth Joynson
Councillor Albert Victor Kerr
Councillor Andrew Roy Moore
Councillor John Nicholson (Chairman)

Councillor Stanley Pease
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Gerald Taylor
Councillor Michael Taylor
Councillor Mike Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Azar Woods

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Chief Executive
Grantham Town Centre Manager
Corporate Head of Finance & Resources
Head of Planning Policy & Economic
Regeneration
Scrutiny Support Officer
Democratic Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor Graham Wheat
Councillor Mrs Mary Wheat
Councillor John Wilks

The chairman, with the panel's consent, allowed comments from members of the public to be made after the presentation on the Grantham Masterplan.

1. MEMBERSHIP

The panel was informed that from the Economic DSP, Mrs Kaberry-Brown was being replaced by Councillor M Taylor and Councillor Mrs Smith was being replaced by Councillor Exton for this meeting only.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Conboy, Kirkman, Lovelock and Mrs Williams.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Scrutiny Officer advised that Grantham members, depending on the nature of the presentation, may have personal interests to declare. He added that members of the Development Control Committee should be aware that what

they said at this meeting may have some bearing on any future planning applications, although this would be some time in the future.

Councillor Mrs Wheat declared a personal interest by virtue of her appointment as a director of Grantham Town Centre Management Partnership.

Councillor Ms Gibbins also asked that it be recorded that because she was a resident of Grantham, she may have a potential personal interest.

4. DRAFT GRANTHAM TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

The Grantham Town Centre Manager gave a presentation on the final draft of the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan.

- This was the draft final stage of the document. The masterplan process had started in September/October and funding had been received from Lincolnshire Enterprise. Consultants had been appointed following a tender process and they had completed a baseline review of the town. This had been completed in February 2006, and had identified areas for potential significant step changes for Grantham to succeed as a sub-regional centre.
- The second stage had been about design and development in core areas of the town.
- The third stage had been masterplanning, based on conclusions of the previous two stages.
- The current masterplan had reviewed the previous initial plan. Some proposals had been carried forward but several were out of date and had been discounted.
- The strategic element of the plan included the need to be incorporated in the council's Local Development Framework and creating areas for development that would protect the town centre and its future.
- The key issues in the plan were:
 - Design: to align with historic themes (e.g. education); address poor arrival points (e.g. railway station); over dominance of traffic; poor connectivity; one dimensional retail offer (which needed to be diversified with leisure and community provisions); and pedestrianisation.
 - Economic and market concerns: potential in Grantham should be taken advantage of; there was a shortage of opportunity sites and stock; office space was an untested market but the baseline review had identified a lack of quality office accommodation.
 - Transport: heavy congestion, poor signage etc.
- The vision was to achieve a bustling and lively centre with an emphasis on traffic calming, generated sites with mixed use; and an alternative transport system.
- Vision objectives:
 - building on a connected Grantham (economic, physical, social).
 - providing an exemplary public realm (setting and pedestrian experience).
 - Improved east-west linkage.

- Creating a sustainable transport approach with public transport, walking and cycling.
- Consolidating, improving and diversifying the town centre.
- Creating a town of different parts: commercial, historic and natural
- Providing a clear delivery strategy: a robust policy, reduced investment risks, governance and management, key components and developer engagement.
- Appointment of a business champion to champion development across the town. Grantham needed to have a brand to demonstrate that it was going in a forward direction with a coordinated approach.
- Various groups had been consulted on the masterplan: business club, Grantham Future, the National Trust, civic society, tenants associations, independent retailers and developers.
- Key projects were: station point, Grantham Lanes, Green Mile, Car Park Management, Traffic Management, Reduction of Through Traffic, Public Transport, St Peter's Hill, Market Place, Guildhall, High Street & Westgate, Castlegate square and station square. All were detailed in the masterplan document.
- Although not all the projects would be funded by the council, with funding sought from other public organisations and the private sector, the council may want to consider a separate fund to contribute to delivering the strategies. It would also need to provide strategic leadership of the overall project.
- There was already budget allocation within the Lincolnshire Enterprise plan for public realm projects and a few projects within Grantham had been identified to be of interest to them.

5. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

One member of the public explained that having recently moved to the town, he found the place friendly and good for shopping and eating. He thought the proposed shuttle system and closure of the bus station was wrong, especially given the existing traffic congestion, and he asked about plans to deal with north-south traffic.

The Town Centre Manager replied that the traffic issues were being addressed and that the masterplan proposed a series of considered changes. He acknowledged that the proposal for single lane traffic on Westgate would divert traffic onto the High Street and Wharf Road but that priorities needed to be made and managed. The Chief Executive added that the shuttle system was a county council proposal and the Westgate scheme would make that area of the town more attractive. A traffic study by the county council will be completed later in the year and would provide a reliable study to assess the impact of the proposed schemes.

Another member of the public explained that he had only heard 'disabled access' mentioned once in the presentation. He asked where disabled parking would be allocated in the proposals. The Town Centre Manager explained that

the masterplan did provide for disabled parking; the proposals only restricted access to other drivers from the town centre.

A final comment was received about how town centre facilities, particularly the hospital, were already stretched and yet housing development was increasing. He asked how this was going to be managed.

The Chief Executive explained that the council was working proactively with the Primary Care Trust to assess the impact of town growth on public services and that this was taken into account by the PCT during its decision-making.

6. PANEL DISCUSSION AND OBSERVATIONS

The officers present were questioned by the panel, who made the following points and observations.

- There were no proposals for Watergate House or for the small shops along the east side of the High Street.
- There was no indication of where the post office sorting office would be relocated if proposals were accepted. This would cause particular problems for vulnerable people having to collect post that could not be delivered.
- A member explained that royal mail already offered a redelivery service either to a persons home or their local post office.
- It appeared as though the proposed new location for the cinema was in place of the conduit.
- Masterplanning should be able to be done in-house by the council's officers, as it had already come at a great cost to the council.
- The masterplan should be a document to prompt public discussion and should therefore not be as detailed and should be less officer-led. The proposals were also too ambitious.
- The masterplan needed to encompass anticipated town expansion by addressing infrastructure and community provisions. Co-ordination was essential for the whole scheme, before and during development, possibly by an independent person as in Leicester City Council.
- Pedestrianisation proposals in the Market Place area were not suitable because there would still be single-lane traffic.
- The bus station should be moved to the railway station and should not be removed altogether from the town.
- Without an east-west bypass, none of the proposals could be given serious consideration because of the impact on traffic. The Pennine Way linkage would be appropriate for this.
- What would happen to people's property affected by the proposals if they did not want to relocate?
- A list of project priorities would be beneficial to the council to facilitate resource planning in the short and long term.
- There was a covenant on the land occupied by the Baptist Church and so this should be considered in light of the proposals.
- The removal of the bus station would have serious implications on the area when school children were waiting for buses at the end of the day.

- Opening of the front door of the Guildhall could have serious impact on the insurance of many valuable artefacts belonging to the Grantham Charter Trustees.
- There was concern that leisure and entertainment proposals, particularly in the Greyfriars area, would cause disturbance to GOPD schemes.
- The masterplan document was misleading in stating that Grantham Charter Trustees were represented on the Strategy Board.
- Was Grantham too small to be considered for a Park and Ride scheme?
- The masterplan did not mention public consultation. The projects would be good for the community, but a lot of people would need consulting.

In response, officers explained:

- Consultants had considered Watergate House but because the town had been stretched in a north-south direction, focus needed to be on consolidating the core area before other secondary areas were considered. The east-side of the high street posed particular challenges for redevelopment because of fragmentation and economics. However, Watergate was a north side gateway, and this had not been addressed in the masterplan.
- Relocation of sorting offices had not caused problems elsewhere.
- There was no intention to move the conduit, just to relocate the cinema in the market place area to achieve step-change improvements in night-time economy. The consultants had already accepted that illustrations within the masterplan document were inadequate.
- There was always a challenge in striking a balance with costs when producing a masterplan because it needed to be a compelling document to attract investment but without lavish and unnecessary spending. It needed to reflect best-thinking and be at an appropriate standard for inclusion in the Local Development Framework.
- The masterplan did need to be clearer in explaining that funding would come from other organisations, and not just the district council.
- The redevelopment of the canal basin site was running complementary to the town centre proposals.
- The growth agenda for Grantham had been identified by the county council working in partnership with the district council. Infrastructure and resourcing issues were therefore understood by the county. A strategic director and a portfolio holder would be overseeing the whole scheme.
- The original proposal for total pedestrianisation had been stopped because of costs; it was more feasible to have an experimental scheme.
- The proposed bus service arranged were good practice from other authorities. In relation to traffic in the market place area, the county council had determined that it was not safe to reroute traffic along Union Street. The decision to relocate the cinema to this area was made after this came to light.
- Planning permission had been granted for the Pennine Way scheme but this had stalled because planning permission could not be given for the housing because it involved greenfield sites.
- Relocation was being pursued by negotiation, which was the desired approach. Ultimately, compulsory purchase orders would be required. It

was anticipated that no residential properties would be affected.

- The need for a priority list was acknowledged, although this would take time to complete. Any costing would be indicative because of inflation implications. Consultants were starting to undertake costing analyses of the major proposals. The comments of the Section 151 officer in the report to cabinet number PLA611 were read, as they explained that an evaluation of financial implications would be completed before cabinet's adoption of the masterplan.
- The implications for school transport was part of a number of delivery issues that would be addressed during the drawing of detailed plans. Insurance implications at the Guildhall would also be looked into.
- Officer were conscious of the implications of encouraging night-time economy and this was being considered carefully.
- The masterplan would be amended to better reflect the membership of the Strategic Board.
- There was potential for a Park and Train scheme at Gonerby Moore.
- There had been various consultation and the new masterplan had considered very documents and studies, including the original plan. Formal and structured public consultation would be organised at a later stage.
- The proposals were potentially achievable because there had already been major developments in Grantham in the past ten years.
- The council should be looking to the county council to achieve equitable funding for Grantham.

Conclusion:

To forward the points and observations made throughout the meeting to the cabinet for their consideration during discussion on this item at its meeting on 4th September 2006.

7. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.07p.m.