

Management Committee

9 November 2016

Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan – Site Update – Commercial Road

For Decision

Briefholder

Cllr Jeff Cant

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

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Statutory Authority

Purpose of Report

- 1 To enable Management Committee to determine the next steps required regarding the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan in relation to the Commercial Road (South) sites. (Appendix 1).

Officer Recommendations

- 2
 - (i) To note and agree the preliminary findings of the Cushman and Wakefield site assessment contained in this report.
 - (ii) To agree that officers be instructed to progress discussions with parties with land interests in the Commercial Road (South) sites and the Harbour Management Board.
 - (iii) To agree that a report back should be made as soon as possible, and that the progress be tracked on the Management Committee Action Plan and be reviewed by committee monthly.

Reason for Decision

- 3 The decision enables the Council to progress the implementation of this very important key development site within the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan. It complements the other development work recently approved on the jewel site of the Peninsula and allows the opportunity to deliver multiple sites in parallel working in partnership with the private sector.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

- 4 The Commercial Road site lies immediately to the west of the town centre and is bordered by Swannery car park and Swannery Court (a residential building) to the north, Commercial Road to the east, the inner harbour to the west and Cosens Quay slipway to the south. The site is predominantly surface car parking.
- 4.1 Utilising funding from Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, the Council commissioned Cushman & Wakefield (C&W) to undertake a study to establish the feasibility of developing the site, taking into account financial models and intelligence gathered from soft market testing. The preliminary outcome of this study is presented in this report to inform members' consideration of next steps for this site.
- 4.2 For the purposes of the feasibility study, the site has been divided into two, divided by Westham Bridge. The area to the north of Westham Bridge is approximately 3 acres, and the area to the south of Westham Bridge is approximately 1.6 acres.
- 4.3 This report deals primarily with the southern site of 1.6 acres, and as such aligns to the area covered by the funding bid submitted to Dorset LEP for harbour wall replacement. In addition to the prospect of the flood alleviation works this section of Commercial Road also offers better development opportunities and integration with the existing operations, facilities and the town centre core. It is therefore an appropriate sequential redevelopment site to the Peninsula as part of the Weymouth Town Centre Master Plan.

Commercial Road Site – Policy Context

- 5 In terms of planning policy, the joint West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan, adopted in October 2015, sets out the ambition to deliver at least 600 new homes and significant retail and business opportunities within Weymouth town centre over the plan period. Development proposals in the area will also be guided by the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan. In relation to Commercial Road, the local plan states that “the land to the west of the primary shopping area will be developed with a mix of uses complementary to the primary shopping area”.
- 5.1 This is consistent with the wider strategic aims for Weymouth town centre:
 - To retain and enhance the area's rich and distinct local character and notable landmarks
 - To have an attractive public realm benefitting from the waterfront location;
 - To support a thriving town centre with a range of national and independent traders, a rich and varied cultural offer throughout

the year and an active night-time economy, and reduce the co-location of uses likely to cause anti-social behaviour;

- To fill the gap in activity between 5pm–9pm, primarily by introducing more family friendly activities in appropriate locations;
- To improve the first impressions of the area, primarily by making the main arrival points (the Swannery Car Park, Lodmoor Car Park, railway station, and ferry terminal), and the links from these to the main shopping and leisure areas, into a more pedestrian friendly, safe and attractive environment, with positive and active frontage development;
- To recognise the need to manage residual flood risk.

5.2 The Commercial Road development area falls within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area.

5.3 The Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan adopted in October 2015 envisages the following for the Commercial Road area:

- Retaining and investing in Melcombe Regis Car Park and Park Street Car Park
- Redeveloping the Weymouth Marina Car Park and Harbourside Car Park for mixed use development including restaurant and café uses, with residential uses above ground floor level
- Redeveloping Cosens Quay car park for harbour user facilities
- Enhancing the public realm and quality of building design, in order to attract people in to the town centre.

Commercial Road Site - Flooding

6 The majority of the Commercial Road opportunity area falls within Flood Zone 3, indicating an annual probability of flooding greater than or equal to 1 in 100 year for river flooding or greater than or equal to 1 in 200 year for coastal flooding. Given the allocation of site within these flood zones, any proposals at ground floor level would need to be limited to uses described as 'less vulnerable' in terms of flood risk, i.e., buildings used for shops, offices and other businesses, assembly and leisure and car parking. Any residential development would need to be elevated to mitigate flood risk and provide appropriate flood resilience measures.

Commercial Road –Land Ownership, Existing Use & Current Values

7 The Commercial Road development area largely comprises of surface car parking, the numbers of which are detailed below.

Car Park	Number of Spaces
Weymouth Marina	80
Harbourside	111
Melcombe Regis	286
Park Street	144

- 7.1 The Commercial Road (South) site south of Westham Bridge is subject to a mix of freehold and leasehold interests. The Weymouth Marina and Harbourside car parks are included within this southern site area.
- 7.2 The site plan attached as Appendix 1 indicates there is a relatively small area of council ownership, and for even those sites that there are many leases in place which limit the ability of the council to independently take forward any scheme.
- 7.3 The Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan was prepared on the basis of initial feasibility and viability assessments, but more detailed work on development viability has subsequently been undertaken to guide the implementation stage.
- 7.4 The current use values of the existing occupations and sites are high, and any redevelopment scheme would only work financially if those current values can be increased for those parties currently controlling them. The Council has limited influence here but would be able to operate as a facilitator to assist in delivery.
- 7.5 This is a different approach to the Peninsula where the Council does own all of the site, and where there are only limited occupier interests that can be managed as part of a wider redevelopment scheme.
- 7.6 The current car parks included within any Commercial Road (South) scheme would most likely reduce in size or be displaced altogether. Part of the Council's role in facilitating that site redevelopment could be an investment into Park Street and Melcombe Regis Car Parks, both of which are owned freehold by the Council.
- 7.7 The Town Centre Master Plan envisages the retention and investment in these car parks, and it would be prudent to allow consideration of such investment alongside development of the Commercial Road site to release either their value in facilitating the development or augmenting it.

Indicative Development Option

- 8 Initially as per the Master Plan assumption a modelled scheme was considered including the whole of the Commercial Road (South) sites. However, this is not perceived as realistic given the range of private current interests, and has thus not been considered further at this time.

- 8.1 Any scheme now coming forward would most likely contain a mixture of restaurants, housing (both market and affordable), marina facilities, enhanced public realm and parking. In considering end user options C&W have undertaken some soft market testing and are satisfied that there would be good market interest in a mixed use development including these elements. C&W will also draw on the recommendations of the Weymouth Traffic and Movement Strategy and Public Realm Study, both of which are further commissions using LEP funding. The issue of mix of any private and affordable housing and the percentage of both is no doubt something that will need to be considered and will be a factor in viability terms as will any Environment Agency requirements if residential is to be included. An additional and new factor in viability terms will be the consideration of the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule which was implemented in July 2016. The levy currently imposes a financial charge on residential uses only.

Summary and Next Steps

- 9 In order to fully assess viability of the Commercial Road South site the council needs to secure the input of other parties having land ownerships and interest. As such it is considered appropriate that discussions take place with those owners and occupiers, and with the Harbour Management Board, to look at issues, options and proposals to take forward any redevelopment options.
- 9.1 The focus of these discussions will be to determine if there is any owner/occupier interest in looking at the current sites and uses and combining some or all of the South sites to include in a redevelopment proposal. As part of this to consider what might be required to achieve this, and how the Council could assist in delivering such a scheme.
- 9.2 The intention would be to revert with a fuller assessment of viability following these discussions.

Implications

Corporate Plan

Development of the sites within the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan and the local plan are supported by way of employment gain and a mixed use scheme development.

Financial

At this time, to commence these discussions, there are no financial implications other than officer time.

Equalities

There are no equalities issues at this time.

Environmental

The consideration of any new scheme would include an assessment of the environmental protection issues resulting from the scheme. Further, any scheme would be subject to the usual planning, environmental and statutory requirements.

Economic Development

There is the potential from any successful scheme to provide additional employment, and to add to the economic prosperity of Weymouth.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

None at this time.

Human Resources

None directly arising.

Consultation and Engagement

Asset Management Group.
Town Centre Master Plan has been subject to consultation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Site Plan

Background Papers

Weymouth Town Centre Master Plan.

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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