



The Rock Triangle development site - Bury town centre

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

14 January 2003

1. Introduction

The Rock Triangle site has been identified by Bury Metro as a site suitable for comprehensive redevelopment. Thornfield Properties plc have been appointed by Bury Metro to develop plans to redevelop and regenerate the site.

Thornfield appointed a consultancy team in mid 2002 to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the site and identify the opportunities for development.

The appraisal and analysis was distilled into a Development Framework, a draft of which was produced in October 2002. The Framework sets out the aims of the scheme and outlines the development principles to guide the redevelopment process. A leaflet summarising the Framework was prepared together with a consultation response form.

An illustrative masterplan is contained in the draft Development Framework. This shows a series of building blocks based around new public spaces, open space and car parking with linkage improvements for pedestrians, bus, cycle and car users. The uses proposed include retail, food and drink, residential, offices, and leisure to be delivered as part of a mixed use scheme.

2. Consultation Programme

To encourage responses to the draft Development Framework, a series of meetings and presentations were organised during October and November 2002 including public meetings.

Copies of the summary leaflet and response forms were circulated widely, and sent direct to interested parties, as well as being made available through the planning department of Bury Metro. Full copies of the draft Development Framework were made available for inspection at the planning department in Bury town centre (Craig House) as well as at the central information desk at Bury Town Hall.

The meetings and presentations included:

Bury Metro - Area Board East

An initial introductory presentation was made to the Area Board meeting on 15th October 2002. A special meeting was convened on 7th November 2002, which was open to all members of the general public, and a joint presentation was made by Thornfield and Bury Metro representatives. A news report in the Bury Times (1st November 2002) publicised this meeting.

Bury Metro - Area Board West

An initial presentation was made to the Area Board meeting on 17th October 2002 with a more detailed presentation, made by Thornfield and Bury Metro representatives, on 21st November 2002. The news report in the Bury Times (1st November 2002) also publicised this meeting.

Town Centre Traders Forum / The Rock Working Group

The Village Hotel was hired as a venue for a special 'breakfast' meeting on 24th October 2002 at which Thornfield made a formal presentation to traders in the town centre and on The Rock as well as to other interested parties. At the same meeting, the consultancy URBED gave an update on their commission (from Bury Metro) to produce a Bury town centre vision report.

Westfield Shoppingtowns Ltd

A meeting was held to introduce the project to the owners of the Millgate shopping centre.

URBED / Town Centre Vision Workshop

Meetings were held between representatives of URBED and Thornfield to discuss the Rock Triangle project and its relationship to the wider town centre vision work being carried out by URBED. Thornfield also attended, and contributed to, the town centre vision workshop organised by URBED as part of their commission.

Government Office for the North West

An initial introductory presentation was made to officers of the Government Office for the North West on 25 November 2002.

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

CABE is an executive non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, its principal aim being to promote the importance of urban design. CABE have an interest in town centre mixed use projects generally and may wish to be formally consulted on the proposals for this site. A copy of the Framework document has been forwarded to the CABE design review advisory group for comment.

3. Responses

The following responses were received (and comments on each are given as and where appropriate):

3.1 Area Board and Special Meeting Responses

Bury Area Board West – 17th October 2002

The following points were raised:

- need for weatherproof areas

Comment: Areas to be incorporated into the scheme design.

- need to plan for effective maintenance of the site

Comment: In order to maintain quality, it is envisaged that the scheme will be actively managed in conjunction with the local authority. The option of creating a town centre management company is being considered by the authority and the scheme could be integrated into that initiative.

- need to ensure that access through the site is available at all hours

Comment: The scheme is designed as an open scheme and the final design will need to provide safe, secure and monitored routes for pedestrians.

- site will require additional car parking

Comment: The site's important role as a town centre car park is to be maintained and enhanced. A balance has to be struck between the need to create a dense urban development and the need for additional car parking. The intention is to minimise the surface car park elements and provide multi-storey car parking within the site.

- public must have access to the church at all hours and be able to park near the church

Comment: To be incorporated into the scheme design.

- height of buildings should not exceed 4 storey

Comment: No building would be higher than 4 storeys, respecting the local pattern of development.

- need to ensure existing tenancies are catered for in the new scheme

Comment: There are a number of businesses operating within the scheme. Wherever possible, these will be relocated into the new development although it is recognised that certain operations would be best suited to off-site relocation (e.g. car repair garages).

- need a specific meeting to discuss mobility around the site

Comment: Meetings are to be held at the detailed design stage with local interest groups with a view to accommodating specific requirements within the scheme design.

- need to locate a major store at both ends of the development to encourage use of the whole site

Comment: The intention is to create a lively mixed use feel throughout the development to encourage footfall throughout the site and on to The Rock and other areas of the town centre. This will be reflected in the scheme design.

- affordable rents need to be established for current tenancy holders such as charity shops

Comment: The provision of small unit accommodation (suitable for current tenancy holders) will be included within the final scheme design. The rents on such premises would by their very nature be more affordable than say the larger unit stores.

Bury Area Board West – 7th November 2002

The following points were raised:

- need to have regard to disabled needs and requirements

Comment: see above.

- are there not enough retail units in the town centre?

Comment: The Drivers Jonas retail study, commissioned for Bury Metro, identified a number of weaknesses with the town centre and the opportunity to increase the market share through a qualitative improvement in the town centre shopping offer. The Rock Triangle scheme will be designed to complement existing provision and accommodate a range of retailers new to the town.

- Implications on emergency services / need to have regard to heavy goods vehicles moving along The Rock / traffic calming measures should be introduced

Comment: The scheme will be the subject of a transport assessment which will be required to consider the issues of emergency traffic and access routes, heavy goods access and the need for traffic calming measures.

- Need to adhere to local disabled parking standards

Comment: To be incorporated into the scheme design.

- Need for a timescale for development and impact on existing businesses. Concern over uncertainty of timetable.

Comment: The development timetable envisages planning applications being made in early 2003 and it is the intention of the developers to keep businesses informed of progress on planning and land assembly matters.

- Scheme should be at no cost to the taxpayer

Comment: The delivery of the project is the responsibility of the private sector (working in partnership with Bury Metro). The private sector would fund the costs of development.

- Importance of security

Comment: To be incorporated into the scheme design. Contact has taken place with the architectural liaison department in the Greater Manchester Police (see comments below).

Bury Area Board West – 21st November 2002

The following points were raised:

- Town centre requires high quality housing

Comment: To be incorporated into the scheme design.

- There will be serious traffic congestion caused by the proposed downgrading (of The Rock) to traffic

Comment: The indicative highway proposals will be tested through a transport assessment. The needs of the car users will be balanced against the need to improve pedestrian accessibility and to cater for other transport users.

- Essential that a facility for young people is introduced

Comment: A report (from URBED) commissioned by Bury Metro identified the potential for a cinema in the town centre. This could be incorporated into the scheme subject to end user interests and requirements.

- There is a conflict of interest between the demands of the developer and those of the general public

Comment: Although a private sector led scheme, the local planning authority have control over the type and form of development to ensure that it is appropriate taking into account the wider public interest.

- The scheme should include something for the elderly, young people and a town centre supermarket with no more card or sports shops.

Comment: The key benefit of a mixed use approach to development is that a range of attractions can be provided to meet the needs and demands of different members of the community. Although at this stage details of end users are not known, the potential to introduce a town centre supermarket is recognised in the draft Framework.

- Need for further consultation

Comment: There will be an opportunity for the general public to comment on proposals at the planning application stage with the possibility of further public meetings.

3.2 Group Responses

Cyclists Touring Club

A letter has been received suggesting that the developers should consider inclusion of cycle lanes and other safety features for cyclists.

Comment: To be incorporated into the scheme design.

Accessibility user groups

Liaison has taken place between Bury Metro and the Bury and District Disabled Advisory Council and Bury Metro Access Group. Leaflets have also been sent to Bury Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted People, Bury Deaf Society and Shopmobility. It has been agreed that specific consultation will need to take place but at a more detailed stage than the Development Framework. Other disability groups in the Borough will need to be involved in the process. The consultation would be an ongoing process beginning with a planning application, leading through to more detailed consultation at building regulations stage.

Comment: Meetings to be held to discuss requirements and to incorporate proposals into the scheme design.

Greater Manchester Police – architectural liaison unit

A copy of the draft Framework was sent to the Greater Manchester Police. The architectural liaison unit offers support for the mixed use development approach and recommends discussions at the detailed stage to discuss designing out the potential for crime.

Comment: Meetings to be held to discuss requirements and to incorporate proposals into the scheme design.

Westfield Shoppingtowns Ltd

A copy of the draft Framework was sent to Westfield, owners of the Millgate shopping centre in the town centre. They consider that the site forms an important edge of centre site and that the Thornfield development interest should be encouraged. However this should not be at the expense of investment in the town centre itself and any comparison goods retail floorspace should be restricted to bulky goods retailing. There is a concern that if a food store operator were to relocate into the scheme that the vacated store could be used for unrestricted retail use.

Comment: The mix of uses will be determined prior to the submission of a planning application. The application will be accompanied by a planning statement, which will cover retail planning issues. It should be noted that the site currently accommodates a large amount of unrestricted retail floorspace, which could be re-provided as part of a redevelopment scheme. Liaison with Westfield will continue during the progress of the development. The need for restrictions on use would be derived from the outcome of the planning studies.

Showmen's Guild of Great Britain

The Guild do not welcome the plans to redevelop the site although no reasons have been given to substantiate the point.

Comment: An annual travelling fair is held on the site and it is assumed that the objection relates to the possible loss of this location for the event. Bury Metro are in the process of considering alternative locations to accommodate the fair.

3.3 Individual Responses

For reasons of confidentiality, the names of individual responders are not disclosed. However the responses can be summarised as:

- Support: Need to ensure access to retained properties in day and evening and retain Chapel Street.
- Support: redevelopment is a good idea. Need to consider traffic movements in detail though and keep traffic away from residential areas.
- Support: redevelopment is a good idea but should keep traffic away from residential areas.
- Support: In favour of development but concerned about more traffic through residential areas.
- Support: Should also consider extending the development area to the north.
- Support: No heavy traffic should be allowed to use Parsonage Street.
- Support: Need to retain bus stops and to consider re-routing of buses to enhance access.
- Support: Do not want heavy traffic using residential streets.

- Support: Wish plans every success.
- Need to ensure pedestrian links to the Bury Markets as well as along The Rock.
- Concerned about traffic in the area and possibilities of congestion.
- Object: If The Rock is to be closed then emergency services would not be able to access the town centre. Main concern is with potential for traffic using Bell Lane, Wash Lane and Parsonage Street.
- Object: No detailed plans on traffic flows available.
- Object: There are enough retail outlets in the Borough but see the argument for more residential development.

Comment: The vast majority of concerns relate to traffic and in particular whether the final highway scheme would create additional movements on residential streets. A full transport assessment has been commissioned to assess various options and end solutions and liaison with local residents can continue during the development process.

4. Conclusions

The extensive consultation programme has elicited a range of responses from various organisations and individuals. The regeneration of The Rock Triangle area has been widely supported and encouraged and there is a general recognition that the revitalisation of this area will make a positive contribution to the vitality of the town centre as a whole and in particular to trading patterns on The Rock.

The Rock Triangle forms a key project in the delivery of the vision for the town centre, a vision that is currently being drawn together by consultants URBED for Bury Metro. Because of this, it was particularly critical that extensive consultation took place between the URBED and Thornfield teams to ensure the proposals for the Rock Triangle integrate with the wider vision and this has been done.

It is recognised that, whereas comments at this stage in the process are sought largely on the principles of development contained in the draft development framework, many comments received have related to detailed issues such as traffic and accessibility. These comments are invaluable however because they enable the Thornfield design team to take them into account in drawing up scheme proposals and enable the eventual design to reflect matters which are seen as locally important.

5. Next Steps

A revised Development Framework has been prepared which reflects the comments received and includes amendments to text and the illustrative masterplan contained within the document.

The Development Framework has been re-presented to Bury Metro and a report to the Council's Executive Committee will be tabled by Officers seeking ratification of the Framework as a material consideration in the determination of a future planning application for the site.

The Thornfield team are currently in the process of preparing a detailed scheme layout, transport assessment and relating documentation and material. This scheme layout will respect the principles laid down in the Framework and enable the consultation process to continue to its next logical stage when comments will be sought on the detail, rather than the principle, of the proposals.

It is envisaged that a planning application would be submitted in the early part of 2003. There will be an opportunity for further consultation as part of the statutory consultation process and it is also envisaged that follow-up presentations will be made to the area boards and review meetings held with the various groups that have expressed an interest in the project.