
MEETING: THE EXECUTIVE

DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2005

SUBJECT: BURY TOWN CENTRE – AMENDED ROCK TRIANGLE
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

REPORT FROM: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT

CONTACT OFFICER: HOWARD AITKIN- PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

TYPE OF DECISION: KEY

REPORT STATUS: FOR PUBLICATION

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

The report is made up of 3 parts:

- A report by Bury MBC which outlines: the background to Thornfield Properties Plc amended Rock Triangle Development Framework for Bury Town Centre; the planning/urban design principles which Executive is being asked to approve that will guide a future planning application and Section 106 negotiations; an illustrative masterplan that applies these principles; an outline of Thornfield's consultation programme and any outstanding issues that still need to be considered.
- A Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Thornfield Properties on the results of the six week consultation programme carried out between 6 July and 17 August, and its main conclusions (Appendix 1).
- The amended (post consultation) Development Framework (Appendix 2).

The consultation Development Framework is available in the Town Hall Members' Information Point or at Craig House Planning Reception (Bank St) and has been available from the start of the consultation period on the Council's website at www.bury.gov.uk on the Home Page.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):

Option 1 – Approve as a material planning consideration the amended (post consultation) Rock Triangle Development Framework and its planning/urban design principles (see paragraph 2.3) as a reflection of the changed circumstances since Executive Committee last considered Thornfield Properties' approach to investing in Bury Town Centre. To forward the report to Planning Control Committee to make them aware of the development principles that have been discussed with the East and West Bury Area Boards and other Bury Town Centre stakeholders ahead of the planning application stage.

Option 2 – To make alterations to the Development Framework before its adoption either as a result of amendments to the planning/urban design principles or of comments on Thornfield Properties results of consultation.

Option 3 - Not to adopt the amended Development Framework, outlining the reasons for this action.

IMPLICATIONS -

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations

All development costs will be met by Thornfield Properties.

Project risk has been minimised to date through the existing planning and CPO approvals and the extensive consultation programme Thornfield have agreed with the Council. This has provided a platform for the resolution of outstanding issues. To also aid in this process monthly pre-planning application meetings have been established.

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? **Yes**

Are there any legal implications?

Yes

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

Yes

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

All development costs will be met by Thornfield Properties and a section 106 agreement is proposed to allow for various improvement works to the public areas as detailed in the report. The proposed development will require the sale of council owned land within the development area and the negotiation of arrangements relating to buildings currently owned by the authority. Whilst the Authority will receive a capital receipt and development "super" profit arising from these sales this will be offset by additional costs. A separate report on the proposals for Hornby buildings/Sol Viva considered by the Executive on 24th August 2005 set out details of the proposed reduction in rental income from leases on these buildings. A report on the town centre car parking strategy is due to be considered by the Executive

in Oct 2005. This will identify a number of options for changes in car parking in the town centre and the implications for car parking income; there will be capital costs incurred to create replacement car parking provision and an overall net loss of revenue from existing council owned car parks. The appointment of a town centre manager, whilst expected to be self-funding in the longer term, will result in additional costs to the council initially of up to £40k p.a. At this stage it is anticipated that no additional highways, cleansing or grounds maintenance costs are to fall on the Council as a result of the development; however, such costs may only be determined once detail design, specification and finish standards on proposed highway adoptions are clearer. The estimated cost of any loss of income from car parks and buildings, maintenance costs and the additional town centre management costs will need to be built into the budget forecasts for 2006/07 and future years.

Staffing/ICT/Property:

The Council owns both Hornby Buildings and the adjacent The Sol building which now fall within the enlarged Rock Triangle area. A report detailing the proposed disposal of these buildings to Thornfield went to the 24 August Executive meeting where it approved that an additional Development Agreement be entered into with Thornfield Properties which would provide for the grant of a long leasehold interest in the site of Hornby Buildings and the adjacent Sol Building.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Scrutiny Interest:

Economy, Environment and Transport

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
30 August 2005	5 August 2005	Bury West – 18 July 2005 Bury East – 28 July 05	5 August 2005
Scrutiny Panel	Executive	Committee	Council
	21 September 2005		

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Thornfield Properties first became interested in the Rock Triangle part of Bury Town Centre as a response to large parts of it being designated in the Bury Unitary Development Plan as Bury Town Centre “Opportunity Sites”. This designation was a recognition that for this sector of the town centre a comprehensive approach was needed to guide future investment and help strengthen the town centre’s overall vitality/viability.
- 1.2 Subsequently, this part of the town centre was described in the Council’s ‘Bury but Better – Town Centre Vision and Development Strategy’ as the Eastern Gateway and identified as an area of potential mixed use.
- 1.3 Thornfield’s original Rock Triangle Development Framework was approved by Executive in February 2003. This was followed in July 2004 by a planning approval for mixed use including retail, leisure, food and drink, office and residential uses.
- 1.4 A compulsory purchase order (CPO) inquiry was held in November 2004 to complete the land assembly within The Rock Triangle and The Order was confirmed by the First Secretary of State on 30 March 2005 and was published on 15 April 2005.
- 1.5 Thornfield’s original proposals were made at the time when both Thornfield and the new owners of the Millgate Shopping Centre (Westfield Shoppingtowns) had intentions to implement major retail proposals within the town centre. However, since that time Westfield have pulled back from their plans and the Millgate Centre is currently being marketed for sale. Before Westfield took this action there was a brief period when it looked likely that Thornfield and Westfield might have developed a jointly funded ‘Alliance Scheme’
- 1.6 It is important to register the Alliance Scheme’s brief existence because it indicated that Thornfield, Westfield and Bury Council, through a joint approach, were beginning to agree a development strategy for the core town centre that would have fully integrated the significant **new** development with the **existing** centre. The Thornfield Scheme was being seen as part of the town centre, and not a peripheral development.
- 1.7 Reflecting the recent changed circumstances, Thornfield have now reassessed their own approach to its Bury Town Centre investment and continued to work closely with Bury Council to present an amended Rock Triangle development proposal that builds on the analysis work started during the Alliance Scheme period.
- 1.8 In this respect a significant step was taken when Thornfield, **post Alliance**, changed their development team to more fully embrace the skills needed in working up what is now a **town centre expansion scheme** within the retail capacity projections for Bury Town Centre outlined within the Council’s Drivers Jonas Retail study of December 2003.

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 The Bury But Better Town Centre Vision and Development Strategy

The 2003 Bury But Better strategy established a vision for Bury Town Centre that can be taken forward in the way in which the Council responds to major development proposals. In this respect the strategy saw the next steps as being taken under 6 broad themes as set out below with comments as to their potential relevance to the amended Rock Triangle Development Framework.

- **Reinforcing Bury as a market town** – by expanding the shopping centre at the same time as protecting and enhancing the market attraction, accommodating and retaining independent traders, regenerating The Rock.
- **Making the most of Bury's heritage** – making the centre more legible by the mapping and signposting of attractions and quarters.
- **Creating an accessible town centre** – overcoming the barrier of the ring road, (central to the strategy but as a stand alone project prohibitively expensive and therefore needs to be co-ordinated with adjacent development proposals), improvements to disabled access, reprioritising of junctions e.g. removal and reconfiguring the Rochdale Road roundabout.
- **An attractive, compact town centre** – defining an urban quality zone for the town centre to give it added distinctiveness, preparing planning briefs to guide specific development proposals, to concentrate environmental improvements to the identified “gateways” identified in the masterplan, e.g. the Eastern Gateway.
- **Managing the quality of the town centre** – the appointment of a town centre manager, the organising of events and animation of public spaces, improving safety and lighting, commissioning public art.
- **Broadening the role of the centre** – promoting town centre housing as part of schemes such as the Rock Triangle proposal, developing mixed uses and promoting the evening economy.

In their conclusions to the Bury But Better vision, the Council's consultants highlighted a number of problems that have been encountered by Westfield and Thornfield in coming forward with proposals for the town centre. It was some time after the vision was approved by Executive that the two developers were able to formulate a revised “development fit” which focused more on the connections between Millgate and the Market; The Rock Triangle area; and taking greater account of the importance of regenerating Bury's traditional high street – ‘The Rock’.

2.2 The Amended Thornfield Rock Triangle Development Framework

In the amended Thornfield Rock Triangle Development Framework the key aims are now set out as being:

- to address the poor environmental quality of the area through the development of new buildings of architectural merit and new urban spaces which create a place of distinction and local pride.

- to provide for an expansion of the town centre through the development of new retail and leisure units to meet the identified need and contribute to the on-going success of Bury Town Centre.
- to integrate new development into its surroundings and improve connections and accessibility for all transport modes.
- To provide a range of facilities and accommodation that will fulfil the needs of the local population and provide jobs and job opportunities in an accessible location.
- To diversify and bring life back into a run-down area of the town centre with a mixed use scheme capable of promoting day-time vitality, the evening economy and town centre living.

The main changes from Thornfield's earlier February 2003 proposal are:

- The part closure of the Rock and Rochdale Road to through traffic and the re-positioning of the new link road between Rochdale Road and the top end of the Rock to embrace the full extent of their development as a town centre extension.
- A reassessment of retail and leisure opportunities, in particular the addition of a department store as a key business anchor, the inclusion of a multi screen cinema, the omission of the major food store element, the relocation of The Sol nightclub and an increase in the proposed number of apartments around an improved St John's Gardens.
- The inclusion of the Hornby Buildings/The Sol Nightclub block as a key redevelopment proposal together with associated revisions to public realm proposals in this area to ensure there is a good relationship between the Millgate Shopping Centre , The Rock and The Rock Triangle/ Eastern Gateway area.
- A greater emphasis on how public transport access, provision for the disabled, car parking and improved pedestrian movement patterns can serve the enlarged core town centre and connect with surrounding areas.
- Other major changes include the relocation of the Minden Medical Centre to a dedicated site adjacent to the Department Store, the relocation of LA Fitness and the relocation of the United Reformed Church to the site of the School Brow car park.

2.3 The Rock Triangle Development Framework's Planning and Urban Design Principles

Based on the key aims and project changes set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 the proposed (post consultation) planning principles that will guide further scheme development are set out below :

Place and Urban Design

- Buildings should be sited where they front the main streets.
- Buildings facing The Rock should be designed so as to provide an active streetscene.
- Any perceived bulk of large development blocks should be minimised and absorbed within a finer grain of built structures.

- A new Hornby Buildings should be developed of high architectural quality and of increased size.
- Blank walls and servicing areas should be minimised.
- Buildings should be set at different heights to create variety.
- Buildings fronting onto the new link road should present attractive frontages and contribute to the streetscene.
- Frequent windows and doors should be included so as to provide activity and animation to the streetscene.
- The Minden Medical Centre, Bury United Reformed Church, LA Fitness centre and Sol nightclub should be relocated as and where appropriate.
- The opportunity to reconfigure/ redevelop the Thwaites public house should be encouraged to improve the integration of this property/ site with the surrounding new development.
- A new central street for pedestrians should be created through the site west-east and new buildings should face onto this street.
- New public squares should be created.
- Public art, which could include specialist lighting, should be incorporated within the scheme design proposals.
- St.Johns Gardens and links to and from it should be enhanced.
- The pedestrianised part of The Rock should be upgraded as part of the development scheme.
- The Angouleme Way/Rochdale Road roundabout should be removed to improve accessibility, particularly for pedestrians.
- Safety and accessibility should be integrated into scheme design.
- The site should be covered by the town's CCTV system.
- Durable and high quality materials should be used throughout.

Movement

- The function of Rochdale Road between The Rock/Hornby Buildings and Angouleme Way/Rochdale Road roundabout should be replaced with a new link road along the eastern edge of the site.
- Priority should be given to pedestrians on key pedestrian routes and existing poorly performing/ non existent routes improved/ created in particular connections to and from the Market and the Millgate Centre along Angouleme Way and Clerke Street.
- A new town centre multi storey car park of a size to be agreed with Bury Council should be provided to incorporate safety, security and access for all features.
- The retention of car parking numbers to serve the town centre during construction should be agreed with Bury Council.
- Provision should be made for shopmobility services to improve accessibility for the mobility impaired.
- New bus stops/ lay-bys should be integrated into the final scheme.
- Taxi ranks that extend over and above current facilities should be incorporated into the final scheme.
- New cycle routes and parking for cyclists should be provided.
- Appropriate servicing routes and layouts should be developed.

Economics and Use

- A range of uses should be included within a mixed use development.
- Space for up to 50,000sqm of mixed retail; and food and drink floorspace should be provided to include for a new department store and large format retail stores.

- Space for smaller retail units should be incorporated to provide an opportunity to relocate existing traders and provide space for local independent retailers.
- An area of the site should be specifically identified for apartments.
- Additional uses above ground floor retail should be incorporated where ever possible.
- Provision should be made for new leisure facilities including a multi screen cinema together with food and drink outlets.
- An area of the development site should be identified for a new primary health care facility with full access facilities for those arriving by car, bus, cycle or on foot.
- The developer should explore with Bury Council the scope to jointly fund a Town Centre Manager.

The amended Rock Triangle Development Framework (Appendix 2) illustrates these planning principles in 3 masterplan diagrams as part of the ongoing design process leading up to the submission of a planning application:

- Plan 1 - Proposed new public spaces (based on an analysis of the existing town centre public spaces).
- Plan 2 - Proposed active and passive building frontages.
- Plan 3 - The **illustrative masterplan** showing : the position of the department store; the new medical centre; the retail, leisure, residential mix and indicative building block height levels; the key circulation pattern and public realm proposals.

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ; PRE-APPLICATION STAGE

3.1 Consultation Programme

In line with local and national guidelines Thornfield have carried out an extensive consultation programme on their amended development proposals. This programme and its main conclusions form Appendix 1 to this report. Briefly the consultation programme comprised of :-

- 15 June presentation to lead members/ officers to outline the intended consultation programme.
- 6 July breakfast launch/ briefing at The Village Hotel to local traders/ town centre interests.
- 6 July – 17 August, 6 week consultation programme with press announcements of public exhibition and availability of Rock Triangle Development Framework at Craig House Planning Department Reception. Availability of scheme leaflet and free post response slip.
- 6 July - posting of previous Development Framework, amended Development Framework, The Bury But Better Town Centre Vision and “how to respond” details on the Bury MBC web site.
- 6 July - meeting with Bury and District Disabled Access Council
- series of meetings with individual traders/tenants affected by the proposals
- 18 July – Bury West Area Board.
- 18 July - meeting with police and crime prevention officers
- 18 July – meeting with Government Office for the North West

- 22/23 July manned public exhibitions at The Met on Market Street
- 28 July East Area Board
- 28 August – meeting with Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- 28 August – meeting with Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive.
- Correspondence with Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment
- Correspondence with URBED (BMBC Town Centre Masterplanning advisors)
- Correspondence with Daniel Thwaites as owners of affected public house adjacent to the proposed New Hornby Buildings.

The consultation programme was carried out with attendance by Bury Council officers at most of the meetings and with an input into the final Statement of Community Involvement.

3.2 Results of Consultation

With reference to the results of the public consultation in Appendix 1 :-

- 79% supported Thornfield's proposals with 15% undecided and 6% not in favour citing the loss of Hornby Buildings, the location of the new medical centre and future traffic problems as issues.
- 94.5% supported the statement that the Rock Triangle development area will benefit from regeneration with 5.5% undecided.
- 83% of respondents welcomed leisure facilities as an addition to the town centre's attraction.
- 78% agreed that the proposals would benefit shoppers and attract more people to Bury.

Issues that were consistently raised throughout the consultation programme and have now been more fully incorporated into the revised Amended Rock Triangle Development Framework at Appendix 2 were:-

- ensuring the development will be accessible to all and in particular that the design of the car park will provide a safe and secure environment for all.
- the incorporation of a range of smaller retail and food and drink units to accommodate smaller businesses and independent traders
- the provision of additional shopmobility services
- access to and from the medical centre to include car park provision adjacent to the buildings, footpath connections and crossings to bus stops and pick up/ drop off points for taxis and emergency vehicles.
- the phasing of the development so that provision of car parking to service the town centre is maintained throughout the development's construction stages.
- good pedestrian and public transport facilities both within the new development and in its connections with the existing town centre.
- the importance of the New Hornby Buildings and surrounding public realm in forging **new** development and **existing** development together so that they perform as one enhanced vital and viable town centre.
- the importance of involving Thwaites as the owners of the public house adjoining the New Hornby Buildings in discussions to upgrade their facility to better serve the enhanced town centre.
- The development of local construction training programmes to develop local skills and provide jobs.
- The provision of a town centre manager to service the whole of the enhanced town centre attraction.

Appendix 5 of Thornfield's Statement of Community Involvement lists the detailed changes that have been made to the Amended Development Framework Document.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- The Thornfield amended Rock Triangle Development Framework takes forward the work started under the Alliance Scheme proposal to build a town centre mixed use "extension" scheme that is fully integrated within the existing Bury Town Centre. In this respect the amended Development Framework implements a significant part of the Council's approved Bury But Better Town Centre Vision and Development Strategy.
- To help in the process of further scheme development and continuing consultation Thornfield have assembled a revised design team that has carried out many similar successful schemes in Britain and abroad.
- The Thornfield consultation programme has established broad support for their revised development approach to investing in Bury Town Centre and has highlighted further detailed issues which they will take into account in pre-planning application discussions and further scheme design.
- Their current project timetable is to submit for outline planning consent later this year with commencement of the first phase of development December 2006 with projected completion by December 2008.

List of Background Papers:

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres

Bury UDP : adopted August 1997

The Rock Triangle Development Framework : February 2003

The Bury But Better Town Centre Vision and Development Strategy : November 2003

Bury MBC Driver Jonas Retail Study : Updated December 2003

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