

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE : 20 DECEMBER 2005

KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Committee a Finalised Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy. The Strategy is intended to help guide investment, improvements and growth to the town centre to the benefit of Kilmarnock and East Ayrshire generally. Following consultation and contributions from a broad range of stakeholders it provides the framework upon which a future detailed programme including proposals, funding bids and action plans can be identified and implemented.

1.2 The Strategy sets out a vision for the town centre and a programme of actions to strengthen and transform the town centre and improve all of the various functions that the town centre provides. The Strategy has been developed in the context of the Community Plan that has identified regeneration as a priority. A significant proportion of the central area of Kilmarnock Town Centre is identified as a priority area for investment in the recently approved Regeneration Outcome Agreement as it falls within areas classified as deprived using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2004. In addition the town centre lies very close to areas which fall within the top 15% of areas classified as deprived in SIMD 2004. The benefits of investment being channelled to these areas through the ROA will be maximised through corresponding regeneration within Kilmarnock Town Centre.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Kilmarnock town centre's relative position in the regional shopping hierarchy has been slowly eroded over recent years with the development of competing retail and other facilities in neighbouring authority areas and the Glasgow conurbation.

2.2 Recent planning consents and ongoing developer interest in large scale, out-of-centre retail developments, both within Kilmarnock and at other locations nearby, have also eroded the position and raised concerns about the continuing vitality and viability of Kilmarnock town centre.

2.3 The opening of the M77 presents further opportunities and challenges and the proposed new housing allocations as detailed in the Finalised Draft Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan potentially provide the opportunity to attract additional shoppers.

2.4 It is considered essential therefore that an effective and practical town centre strategy is produced in order to set out a vision for the town centre and a programme of projects and actions to enhance its position and ensure its future vitality and viability.

2.5 A summary of the Town Centre Strategy is included below and copies of the full detailed Town Centre Strategy have been deposited in members' lounges for information.

Planning Policy Context

2.6 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy has been produced within the context of the Finalised Draft Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan as well as the East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper, a consultative paper produced as part of the process of preparing the alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan. The Options Paper addresses, amongst other issues, the subject of retail and town centre development and provides a further strategic context that has informed the Strategy.

2.7 It is intended that once agreed by the Council, the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy should be incorporated into the Alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan.

Consultation Process

2.8 An extension consultation process to ascertain the views of key stakeholders followed the approval of the Draft Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy, by the Development Services Committee on 3rd May 2005. The consultees included:

- ✍ Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Limited
- ✍ Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire
- ✍ Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association
- ✍ Ayrshire Economic Forum
- ✍ Local Community Councils / organisations
- ✍ Various developers, retailers and their agents

2.9 The consultation process was undertaken on a structured basis with different groupings being invited to meetings, as follows:

- ✍ Formal meeting attended by retailer groupings within the town centre - Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership and the Board of Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Ltd
- ✍ Formal meeting with attendees drawn from all businesses operating from within the town centre area – including retailers, professional firms, financial sector businesses etc
- ✍ One-to-one meetings with other key stakeholders, targeting retailers, developers, agents, entrepreneurs and local community councils.

- ✍ Discussions with local parliamentary representatives, Des Brown MP and Margaret Jamieson MSP have also been held.

2.10 In addition, written representations were received from a number of interested parties.

2.11 The issues and comments raised in these meetings and written submissions received indicate a broad measure of support for the draft Strategy and there continues to be significant developer interest in the town. A summary of the main issues raised can be grouped as follows:

Shopping in the Town

- ✍ Strong support for strengthening and broadening the role of the town centre
- ✍ Need to extend the range of shops and have an anchor store in the town centre to draw shoppers in
- ✍ Domestic issues like litter, crime, fear of crime need to be tackled
- ✍ Improve parking, signage and connectivity to other parts of Kilmarnock and other communities
- ✍ Capitalise on the historic core

Living and Working in the Town

- ✍ Strong support for initiatives to extend living and working opportunities in and adjacent to the town centre
- ✍ The Top of the Town and other office proposals are important for bringing in new employment opportunities
- ✍ The Council should reinforce its civic presence in the historic core

A Vibrant Town Centre

- ✍ Improve the public realm
- ✍ Encourage a mix of old and new developments
- ✍ The town centre should be promoted as a place to live, work, shop and be a place to be enjoyed

3 THE STRATEGY

3.1 A Finalised Town Centre Strategy has been produced, incorporating feedback obtained through the consultation exercise. The overarching strategy is to promote the core of Kilmarnock town centre (defined as between the railway viaduct to the north, John Finnie Street to the west, St Marnock Street/Fowlds Street to the south and the inner ring road to the east) as the prime location for the development of major retailing activity and as the preferred location for further high quality office, high density residential and commercial leisure activities.

3.2 The Strategy addresses and deals with the full spectrum of town centre related issues – retailing, accessibility, business, commercial, residential, the

built environment and promotion and marketing and encourages appropriate investment and development within the existing town centre to consolidate its strengths while acknowledging that significant physical restructuring of the area could be required to help deliver a more lively, vibrant and healthy centre. The Strategy also recognises that retail, housing and other key uses at edge-of-centre locations can provide potential synergistic benefits to the town centre by improving run down environments increasing footfall and activity and inspiring both local and developer confidence in the town.

3.3 A series of sites and specific actions or projects have been identified to help meet the strategic aims of the Town Centre Strategy. These include sites and actions, within both the town centre and outside it, taking into account both current development proposals and ideas for future projects. Key actions include promotion of prime town centre sites considered to have potential particularly for retail and commercial development, including:

- ✍ the King Street/Fowlds Street/Queen Street area
- ✍ and areas around the Foregate and Burns Mall.

3.4 Development proposals for all sites identified within the Strategy and for all uses will be assessed on the extent to which they contribute to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. However certain key proposals have been identified, and include:

- ✍ the potential for relocation of Kilmarnock College to a site within the town centre
- ✍ the development of high density residential led mixed-use developments at the southern end of the town centre;
- ✍ promoting appropriate high quality office accommodation, meeting both private sector and Council requirements, within the town centre;
- ✍ pursuing and supporting the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for the John Finnie Street and Bank Street Outstanding Conservation Area;
- ✍ promoting a Business Improvement District (BID); and
- ✍ progressing a Town Centre Living Initiative.

3.5 Underpinning all the proposals is the need for:

- ✍ improved infrastructure, particularly in terms of providing improved access to the town centre from outlying residential areas and between the key retail areas of the town centre core, Glencairn and Queens Drive;
- ✍ improved design and public realm solutions regarding proposed developments that meet both developer requirements and are respectful and responsive to their wider physical environments, positively contributing to Kilmarnock's identity and enhanced sense of place;

- ✍ a sustained commitment to maintaining the appearance of the town centre through programmes for concerns such as street cleaning, litter, graffiti, etc; and
- ✍ an effective marketing and promotion programme to publicise initiatives, events, developments, etc and promote a positive image and instil confidence not only in the town centre and Kilmarnock but in East Ayrshire generally amongst investors, developers, retailers, businesses, visitors and residents.

4 NEXT STEPS

4.1 Preparation of an Action Plan which seeks to deliver the vision and aims of the Strategy has been identified. The Action Plan would include existing, ongoing and future planned projects, as well as ideas for potential projects. It is considered that identifying and implementing early successes or 'wins' is considered imperative in order to build momentum in the Strategy and developer and community confidence in the town.

4.2 The projects identified within the Strategy are by no means conclusive or finite and should be developed and implemented as a matter of the highest priority. A project team dedicated to town centre issues, comprising officers drawn from within East Ayrshire Council and representing Departments and Sections including Planning, Roads, Economic Development and Property Services, Legal, Corporate Communications, Housing, Leisure and Neighbourhood Services, will be established to prioritise and implement the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

4.3 The active involvement of all those who have contributed so far and others who have a contribution to make is vital as it ensures ownership of the Strategy within the local and business community and a continuing interest in the delivery of it. As such it is considered that effective partnership working be given the highest priority to turn the Strategy into reality. Existing bodies such as Promoting Kilmarnock offer the potential to resolve town centre issues and for project identification although structures and involvement in individual projects and actions will be tailored as required.

4.4 It is recommended that the Strategy be formally launched early in the new year to raise awareness of the Strategy and built commitment to it by stakeholders and the Council's partners. Thereafter it is proposed that regular progress reports are submitted to committee and to all stakeholders.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy has been prepared within the overall context of the Council's East Ayrshire Community Plan and been considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team. Once approved the Strategy will be material in the consideration of future retail and other planning applications affecting Kilmarnock town centre.

6 FINANCIAL/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** During the consultation period on the draft Strategy presentations were made amongst others to the Minister for Communities and Minister for Finance and Public Reform when it was intimated that the Council would be preparing an Action Plan and costed programme of works for which financial support would be sought from the Scottish Executive and other external agencies in addition to utilising the Council's own resources contained in the Regeneration and Efficiency budget.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee

- (i) approve the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy as a basis for action by the Council and its partners to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre;**
- (ii) agree that it becomes a prime material consideration in the assessment of all future town centre related planning applications or proposals;**
- (iii) agree to the preparation of detailed action plans in conjunction with stakeholders and the Council's partners to drive forward the implementation of the strategy as outlined in section 8 of the strategy;**
- (iv) agree that this report and strategy is remitted to Policy and Resources, Housing and Community Services committees in respect of their interests;**
- (v) note that it will be formally launched in the new year;**
- (vi) authorise the production of further promotional materials, including quality, glossy brochures and other related documents; and**
- (vii) otherwise note the contents of this report.**

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services

28 November 2005 (KD/SA)
FV/AN

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. East Ayrshire Local Plan Spatial Development Options Paper
2. Consultation Draft, Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025

3. Kilmarnock Town Centre Action Plan, Roger Tym & Partners in association with Jones Lang LaSalle

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