

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 27 AUGUST 2002

KILMARNOCK “TOP OF THE TOWN” – CONSULTANCY REPORT

Report by Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this Report is to:-

- (i) Provide the Committee with a summary of the outcome of a Consultancy Report on a Development Programme for the Kilmarnock “Top of the Town” area.
- (ii) Seek support for the broad development principles presented in the Report.
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Development Services to further investigate the merits of establishing a Top of the Town Trust to develop and realise the preferred development options as recommended in the Study and to report the outcomes of those investigations to a future meeting of the Committee.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 7th May 2002 the Development Services Committee approved a strategy for the Regeneration of Kilmarnock Town Centre. A key element of the strategy was to promote office, residential, retail, hotel and leisure development at the “top of the town” area focused around the railway station, bus station and multi storey car park (refer to map at Appendix).
- 2.2 Preliminary work in advancing this element of the strategy was already being progressed with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and East Ayrshire Council inviting selected Consultants to submit tenders for the preparation of a 'Development Framework' for the northern end of Kilmarnock Town Centre – “The Top of the Town”. The detailed objectives of the study are highlighted in 3 below.
- 2.3 Following a detailed analysis of the tender returns, Gillespies, Chartered Architects and Town Planners in association with Rydens, Chartered Surveyors, were duly appointed in November, 2001 to carry out the study. Each of these firms are highly regarded professional practices who operate on a national basis in the UK.

2.4 The study was funded jointly by East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. Progression of the study was overseen by a Joint Project Team comprising Officers of the Council and of the Enterprise Company.

2.5 The Draft Final Report was submitted to Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and East Ayrshire Council in July 2002 for consideration.

3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 In summary, the objectives of the study were to:-

- Develop a vision for the “Top of the Town” area.
- Present an integrated development proposal to reinforce individual opportunities of the area.
- Help change external perceptions of Kilmarnock.
- Generate new jobs.
- Identify opportunities to increase the vitality of the town centre.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

4.1 In carrying out the study the Consultants undertook a detailed analysis of the study area identifying its strengths and weaknesses, primarily in relation to its ability to attract further significant job creating investments.

4.2 The Consultants undertook an extensive consultation exercise with the private and public sectors, and following this, identified a number of key themes that required to be considered in the preparation of a vision for future development. These included:-

- Opportunities for public sector relocation. (Scottish Executive Relocation Policy).
- Potential for job creation through new office developments.
- The need to increase “footfall” generally within the town centre, and specifically at the top of town.
- Opportunities to provide dedicated parking for new office developments within the existing and under-used multi-storey car park.
- Specific opportunities presented by the former Kilmarnock Infirmary site.
- The desirability of diverting traffic so as to improve traffic circulation around the “Top of the Town” .
- An initial investigation of the complexity of ownership and leaseholds within the area.

- 4.3 In developing its proposals, the consultants looked at the inter-relationship of these issues, not only within the study area but also to take account of the impact of other key developments ongoing and proposed within the wider Kilmarnock town centre area.
- 4.4 In developing the vision, careful consideration was given throughout as to the economic viability of any proposals and the likelihood of these being achieved.
- 4.5 The potential impacts of a number of external issues and trends have also been considered in preparing the report. These included:-
- ◆ Local Market Trends for office, retail and housing developments
 - ◆ International Inward Investment Trends
 - ◆ Scottish Executive Relocation Policies
 - ◆ Investment Trends of the major financial institutions.

5 THE VISION

5.1 The key elements of the vision are to:-

- ◆ Attract quality jobs to the town centre such as through the provision of high quality office accommodation which would complement developments at Rowallan Business Park.
- Provide improved housing in the town centre in order to attract people to live and to spend money within the area.

In order to facilitate this it will be necessary to: -

- Improve the public realm through overcoming traffic/pedestrian conflicts and, in certain areas, further improve the pedestrian environment.
- Introduce facilities to encourage an evening economy, such as restaurants and cafes.
- Encourage the improvement of the retail offer as a consequence of these actions.

6. DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

6.1 The study considers a number of development options to help realise this vision. In summary these are:-

- (1) *Option 1 – Minimum intervention* – This would include
- The development of 54-60 flats by Klin Homes Ltd (Klin) on the Infirmary site, owners of the site.
 - The development of a further 24 flats or 20,000 sq. ft. office accommodation upon part of the car park to the north of the viaduct, (owned by East Ayrshire Council).

- The possible development of 30,000 sq. ft. office accommodation to complement the existing Portland Gate development.
- The development of a better pedestrian environment outside the station, with better links to the town centre such as the introduction of phased lighting and the widening of the pavement on George Street.

(2) *Option 2 – Medium Intervention* – This would include

- Rerouting of traffic through Garden Street, the enhancement of the environment through the station, the introduction of new lighting sequences at John Finnie Street/West George Street and the pedestrianisation of George Street leading to an additional pedestrian square.
- The development of 54-60 flats on the Infirmary site by Klin
- The development of 24 flats or 20,000 sq. ft. office accommodation on part of the car park to the North of the viaduct
- The development of the Square of Ales to create an attractive pedestrian square with high profile office development to the east of the square.
- 60,000 sq ft office on the Foregate North car park, and Clydesdale Bank with dedicated parking in the multi storey
- Potential leisure use to the south of the square.

(3) *Option 3 – Maximum intervention* – This includes:-

- Re-routing the traffic through Garden Street.
- The development of a high level link from the railway station through existing buildings and spilling out into the square.
- The development of the Infirmary site by Klin to provide 54 - 60 flats.
- The development of 24 flats or 40,000sq. ft. office accommodation on part of the car park to the north of the viaduct.
- The pedestrianisation of the Square of Ales, extending along George Street.
- The removal of the Clydesdale Bank building and its replacement with landmark office buildings of 80,000sq. ft. with dedicated parking within the existing multi storey.
- Potential leisure use to the south of the square.

6.2 Each of these options are evaluated in detail in the Report which concludes that Option 2 provides the most realistic basis for the development of the Top of the Town.

- 6.3 Further analysis is being undertaken to determine the specific scale of the proposed developments most appropriate to the area and in particular how this relates to Traffic and Parking matters.

7 MECHANISMS TO REALISE THE PREFERRED OPTION

- 7.1 The study considers mechanisms as to how the preferred option might be best realised: -

- (1) The marketing of sites nationally to a single developer either through land sale or a joint venture.
- (2) The possibility of the establishment of a "Top of the Town Trust", which would be a public/private sector partnership supported by a facilitator with development experience to act as a vehicle for the development and realisation of the opportunities.

- 7.2 The Consultants suggest in the study that the establishment of a Trust would give an opportunity for the Council to be more involved in a partnership development and would help ensure community ownership of the vision. Other possible advantages of a 'Trust' mechanism are that it will engage local developers and better influence design issues which is particularly important for Kilmarnock and the town centre in particular.

- 7.3 A number of key actions will require to be undertaken to realise the preferred option including:-

- ◆ The resolution of traffic circulation and parking issues
- ◆ Further clarification of land ownership
- ◆ Establishment of general support for the Vision
- ◆ The identification of potential Trust Partners
- ◆ Identification of a possible facilitator
- ◆ The establishment of a development programme
- ◆ The production of a Masterplan for the area
- ◆ The preparation of a marketing brochure/prospectus

8. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The study identifies a number of key development themes aimed at revitalising the Top of the Town area, all of which, if approved by Committee, will be pursued in their own respect.
- 8.2 One of the key themes is that of bringing more jobs into the town centre, primarily by the construction of a new office development which could support up to 250 jobs.

- 8.3 The proposed new office development could take advantage of the town centre's excellent infrastructure, i.e. within easy travelling time of the A77 (M77), next to bus/railway stations, plentiful car parking and adjacent to a wide range of high street shops. In addition to this, we will build on the example of the recent success of Kilmarnock 'delivering' Rowallan Business Park, with blue chip companies such as First Choice Plc and National Australia Bank call centres, collectively supporting over 1,000 new jobs on the site.
- 8.4 One of the key sites for such a development is the environs of the flat surface car park at East George Street, Kilmarnock. If a development is secured and proceeds from the study, it is forecast that the existing users of the flat surface car park could be easily accommodated in the under-utilised multi-storey car park.
- 8.5 The above development proposal could be developed in tandem with the additional funds of £2.7M awarded to the Council from the Road Transport Fund, through the Scottish Executive.
- 8.6 It is proposed that a "Development Prospectus" be produced which would outline the aims of the Council and that of the development and then be marketed to potential investors developers both in the national press and other relevant mediums. This practice is now increasingly becoming more common with Councils and other public sector bodies.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposals are consistent with policy.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None at present

11. LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no legal or personnel implications at this stage.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 It is recommended that the committee:-
- (a) Notes the content of this report.
 - (b) Support the broad development principles of the preferred option identified in the report

- (c) Authorise the Director of Development Services to proceed towards the establishment of a Top of the Town Trust to facilitate and lead the realisation of the preferred option and to seek a development partner or partners, subject to approval of specific actions by the appropriate committee at appropriate stages as required.

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services

SC/DAH/PM
21 August 2002

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (1) "Strategy for the Regeneration of Kilmarnock Town Centre" –
Development Services Committee of 7th May 2112
- (2) Kilmarnock "Top of the Town" - Gillespies

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AGENDA