

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE -25 JUNE 2003

KILMARNOCK TOP OF THE TOWN DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Report by the Director of Development Services Department

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to

- (a) provide an update to the Committee on the development proposals for the Top of the Town;
- (b) seek authorisation to proceed with public consultation on changes in traffic circulation associated with the proposed development
- (c) seek authorisation to proceed with the necessary site investigations and land acquisitions to accommodate the widening of Garden Street, through the use of appropriate powers under the Roads (Scotland) Act linked to the suggested changes in traffic circulation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 27 August 2002, the Development Services Committee supported the broad principles of the Consultancy Report on a development programme for the Top of the Town area of Kilmarnock town centre and, in particular, the development of 60,000sqft of offices on the Foregate north car park site. Subsequent to that meeting, design consultants were appointed to progress the proposals for an office development on the site of the Foregate surface car parks.

2.2 Four firms of consultants were invited to bid for this work and, following detailed analysis of tender returns, a team of consultants led by Page and Park were appointed in February 2003. This work was funded jointly by East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. Progression of the work was overseen by a project team comprising officers from East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.

2.3 The draft report of this design study was submitted to East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire in May 2003.

3 OFFICE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1** The proposals involve the construction of 72,000sqft of offices on the Foregate north and south surface car parks. Offices of this size could accommodate 500 jobs. This particular site has been chosen for development because of its key location near to public transport links (bus station, railway station) and also close to cycle and pedestrian routes within the town centre.
- 3.2** In order to make the multi-storey car park more attractive to motorists, Page & Park report sets out proposals to improve the multi-storey car park by adding a new glazed façade to the northern elevation to house new pedestrian stairs and a lift.
- 3.2** The location of the offices in the town centre, with good public transport links, will be a key factor in attracting office employers to Kilmarnock – this would be further improved by improvements to the railway timetable to allow a more frequent service to and from Glasgow.
- 3.3** Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire proposes to submit an outline planning application for the development of offices on the site in July. This will include a full Traffic Impact Assessment which will:
- Assess the implication of traffic generation on the roads in the vicinity both with and without the suggested changes in traffic circulation in Green Street, Garden Street, Portland Street and Union Street (see section 4 below)
 - Review the overall balance of car parking in the town centre including the adjacent multi-storey based on a realistic estimate of parking requirements for the new office and taking into account the new on-street parking order currently being promoted by the Council.
- 3.4** The Council have also appointed King Sturge to advise on the commercial aspects of office development on the Foregate car park site, following an analysis of bids from four firms of surveyors.

4 TRAFFIC CIRCULATION CHANGES PROPOSED

- 4.1** In order to exploit the potential of the development fully a number of road alterations are proposed. Specifically it is proposed to re-route the existing one-way system up Garden Street, which would require to be widened, restrict traffic on Green Street, and reverse the direction of traffic flow on Union Street. Land adjacent to Garden Street will need to be acquired in order to implement these proposals. An indicative layout is shown in Appendix 1.
- 4.2** The aim of this would be to divert the high volume of through traffic on the streets at the top end of Portland Street and adjacent to the proposed development.

This would:

- make it possible to integrate the proposed office into the surrounding area
- provide the opportunity to improve the walking links between the town centre and the railway station
- improve the public realm to enhance the setting of the listed railway viaduct and some of the other remaining historic buildings in the area and make the area more attractive to pedestrians
- create the possibility of developing a gateway area to the town centre

4.3 An initial analysis of the implications for private road access and public transport services was carried out as part of the evaluation of the options for the Public Transport Fund programme for the streets around the town centre. This showed that the revised roads proposals are feasible.

4.4 Before proceeding to the legal and contractual steps required to implement these changes it is proposed to undertake a public consultation exercise on the proposed changes in the traffic circulation system

4.5 In order to establish any technical issues which may arise in widening Garden Street it is proposed to undertake detailed site investigations. It is also proposed to take initial legal steps to secure the necessary land for the project.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposed office development forms part of the town centre regeneration strategy approved by the Committee last year. The Top of the Town project is also incorporated into the Ayrshire Economic Forum's Development Strategy as a 'Gateway' project and into the Developing Opportunities strand of the Community Plan.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The alterations to the one-way road system, including the widening of Garden Street, the acquisition of land for road works and the alterations to the roads around the proposed development site are estimated to cost in the order of £3 million.

6.2 The Council has recently been awarded an additional grant of £1,020,000 from the Scottish Executive for the roads elements of the Top of the Town proposals. A request will be made to Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire to provide £500,000 and an application is being made for an ERDF grant of £1.5m to cover the costs of road and public realm improvements.

6.3 The office development and improvements to the multi-storey car park are estimated to cost £9.267m. Initial appraisals suggest that the development

will be eligible for ERDF assistance of £1m and with some form of rental guarantee the office development can be commercially viable.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** A Stopping Up Order will require to be promoted for the closure of Green Street to through traffic. A Traffic Order will be required for the proposed changes in the one-way system. The Orders will be promoted in accordance with the statutory procedures, including advertisement in the local press. The roads-related elements of the proposed development can be undertaken through the Road Traffic Regulation Act and the Roads (Scotland) Act. The improvements in the surrounding area can be implemented through Roads or Planning powers or the new Powers of Wellbeing within the Local Government in Scotland Act (2003).
- 7.2** The planning application for the office development and any other elements which may require planning approval will require to be considered in due course taking account of the Local Plan, consultations and any objections.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) note the overall proposals set out in the Page and Park report;
 - (b) agree to commence public consultation on the proposed changes to the town centre traffic circulation system;
 - (c) agree to proceed with the acquisition of land required for the widening of Garden Street by Compulsory Purchase Order, subject to this process not being completed by agreement until a final decision has been taken on whether to proceed with the project;
 - (d) agree to undertake site investigations required for the widening of Garden Street

Stephen Chorley
12 June 2003

SC/JR

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1** **Kilmarnock Top of the Town Consultancy Report – Development Services Committee of 27 August 2002**
- 2** **Strategy for the Regeneration of Kilmarnock Town Centre – Development Services Committee of 7 May 2002**

- 3 Kilmarnock top of the Town Final Report – Gillespies – November 2002**
- 4 Kilmarnock Top of the Town Draft Report – Page and Park – May 2003**

For further information on the content of the report, contact Robert Paton, Head of Economic Development, on 01563 576143

Implementation officer: Dave Hewet