

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Development Sites and Policies Plan

Statement on Issues and Questions

Issue 6— Fareham Town Centre (DSP20-DSP33)

October 2014

DCD-10

6.1 Are policies DSP25 to DSP27 and DSP29 to DSP32 viable and deliverable? Is appropriate weight attached to the need for appropriate high quality layout and design?

6.1.1 The Fareham Waterfront area is the land between Bath Lane Recreation Ground and Lower Quay; it includes a section of the Town Quay Conservation Area¹. This area is considered to be an underutilised asset of the wider Town Centre, and the Council has an aspiration to improve its use in the future. Policy DSP25 will be applicable to all new developments in and around the Waterfront area, and has two main aims;

- Improving links between this scenic part of the waterfront and the wider Town Centre area.
- Protecting views to and from the waterfront.

6.1.2 Whilst, the Council is aware that opportunities to improve linkages are likely to be limited, given the constraints that exist in the form of the railway line, A27 and the Market Quay roundabout, there remains an aspiration to improve on the current situation. The wording of the Policy allows the Council to take advantage of any opportunities to improve linkages if they arise during the Plan period.

6.1.3 The Council is planning for the redevelopment of the Market Quay car park during the Plan period (Policy DSP27), but there may be other development proposals that have an impact on views into, and out of, the waterfront area that are not currently envisaged. Policy DSP25 aims at ensuring that any proposals take full account of the importance of maintaining the visual connections between Fareham Town Centre and the waterfront, whilst stopping any development that would further sever these key connections.

6.1.4 Policies DSP26, DSP27 and DSP29 are interlinked, and together form the Town Centre Central Area which is a key redevelopment proposal aimed at contributing to the regeneration of Fareham Town Centre. The Central Area includes the major redevelopment areas of the Civic Area and Market Quay, as well as the areas between them. Whilst the Council envisages the development of a masterplan (referenced in paragraphs 5.65, 5.68, 5.74 and 5.75) to deliver a cohesive scheme, there are clear elements of the wider scheme that can be delivered individually, which are set out in the individual policies.

6.1.5 Evidence shows that these two sites (Civic Area and Market Quay) offer significant opportunities for a mix of uses that can contribute to the overall vitality and viability of the Town Centre. The GVA Retail Study (DED04) confirms that both the Civic Area and Market Quay are key redevelopment opportunities and should be *“considered for improvement and change”*. For the Civic Area it states that *“any reconfiguration could include an element of retail space, but this must be well integrated with the existing shopping centre and contribute to the wider mix of town centre offer.”* It also notes

¹ <http://www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/planning/cacatq.pdf>

that *“Market Quay car park is a key redevelopment opportunity...and new development here should build on the leisure and eating/drinking elements found in the existing Market Quay development”*.

- 6.1.6 The majority of land and buildings in the boundary of the Civic Area (DSP26) are owned by Fareham Borough Council, some of which are subject to leases, except for the Library which is owned and run by Hampshire County Council and the Health Centre which is owned and operated by the Local Health Authority (Fareham and Gosport Clinical Commissioning Group). The Council has approached the other landowners and leaseholders in and around the site to gauge their likely involvement and timescales. Discussions with landowners and leaseholders have been positive and are on-going. The Council is confident that a comprehensive scheme for the wider Civic Area site can come forward. However, notwithstanding the support from other landowners, the Council recognises that a variety of development options involving different balances of mixes exist on the Council's land alone.
- 6.1.7 The site at Market Quay has two landowners, Fareham Borough Council and the Hampshire Constabulary. However, the Borough Council's land holdings are leased to a third party, who sub-lease the land back to the Council who operate the car park. The Head Lease arrangements for the car park include a Redevelopment Notice clause which permits, subject to conditions being satisfied, the Council being able to consider a redevelopment of the car park site. The Council understand that the Hampshire Constabulary are considering moving the majority of their operations to alternative facilities, but retaining a smaller presence in the Town Centre. The existing premises are therefore likely to become available in the Plan period. The Council continues to have ongoing discussions with interested parties and landowners, including re-provision for Hampshire Constabulary, and are confident that development will be feasible within the Plan period.
- 6.1.8 A viability assessment was done on all potential housing sites by Knight Frank (DHO10), which considered the viability of the Civic Area and Market Quay areas combined, given that they are interlinked and the potential for swapping some of the uses between the two areas. The assessment considered a range of options on the site including a range of flats, cafes and restaurants, offices, hotel and/or care home facilities, with the premise that proceeds could be potentially re-invested in funding a new library/theatre venue on site. The mix and inter relationship of these uses is necessarily complex and clearly susceptible to changes in different markets. Commercial development and public realm are considered from a different viability starting point to residential development, which said, the Knight Frank Report (DHO10) did consider the likely viability characteristics of these mixed use opportunities. The viability assessment (in DHO10) concluded that, at the time, a flat led scheme, supplemented by a care home and a hotel was viable. Replacement parking would be provided on both the Civic Area (replacement for existing facility) and Market Quay sites.

- 6.1.9 The evidence from the Retail Study and Viability Assessment (DHO10), coupled with the fact that the Council is a majority land owner, and has in-principle support from all other landowners, means that both the Civic Area and Market Quay sites can be considered viable and deliverable during the Plan period. The Council is committed to regenerating Fareham Town Centre, in line with the focus in the Core Strategy (CS7 and CS8) and the Town Centre Strategy, vision and objectives in the DSP Plan (Paragraphs 5.33 and 5.34), and will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to bring forward a comprehensive but flexible masterplan that will help deliver a viable scheme.
- 6.1.10 The Retail Study (DED04) states that whilst the Shopping Centre *“sits between the main Civic Area and Market Quay it does not provide optimum linkages, particularly at night when the shopping centre closes. Alternative routes are not clear and offer unsafe environments.”* The Study highlights the need to improve this situation so that uses in the Civic Area are not, as now, seemingly cut off from the rest of the Town Centre. To that end, the Council has produced Policy CS29 which seeks to encourage the development of improved links through the remodelling of the shopping centre. The Council is in ongoing discussions with the owners of the Shopping Centre to understand the possibility of improving these links. Whilst the Council is aware that any remodelling may be costly, this could be done in combination with re-development. The proposal would create an extremely important component to improving the permeability of the central area and delivering a far better environment for the Town Centre as a whole. Options for the delivery of this Policy will be considered as part of a masterplan for the wider Town Centre Central Area.
- 6.1.11 The current “gateway” into Fareham, from the railway station is considered to be uninviting and unsatisfactory. The site is currently a mix of industrial uses, a Fire Station, a tool hire business, ancillary parking and an uncontrolled access to an aggregates depot that extends alongside the rail lines leading into the station. The owners of the aggregates depot wish to continue their operations for the foreseeable future; therefore their site is not included in the boundary of the redevelopment area. There are a variety of landowners which have all been engaged as part of the development of LP2. All landowners have agreed “in-principle” to the redevelopment of the site. The Fire Station have also indicated that they would be willing to relocate if alternative facilities are found. The Council sees the comprehensive redevelopment of this “gateway” site as a key element of the overall revitalisation of the Town Centre. This is reflected in the conclusion from the Retail Study (DED04) which states that the *“site can form a key gateway to the town centre, introducing a high quality environment at the western end of West Street.”*
- 6.1.12 The Retail Study recommends a number of uses that could be appropriate adjacent to the station, including A1, A2, A3/4, A5, potentially a hotel and or health facility alongside a mix of residential and/or employment uses. An initial assessment of viability was undertaken by Knight Frank (DHO10)

which looked at the LP2 housing sites. It considered a number of options revolving around a mix of residential units and offices. The site was shown as having marginal viability for a purely flatted scheme, alternative, mixed use, options were shown as slightly less viable in the current market. However, the Council remains committed to improving this “gateway” to the town, as recommended in the Retail Study. The Council will continue to pursue a mix of uses on the site that satisfies this desire for a vibrant, high quality environment on the site, which is considered to be key to the overall regeneration of Fareham Town Centre.

- 6.1.13 Policy DSP30 is flexible in terms of the uses that will be allowed on site in order to allow for the market to identify the most desirable and appropriate uses. There remains a requirement for a comprehensive approach to the development of the site. This will ensure that individual parcels are not delivered in a way that could restrict the deliverability of a wider scheme. The current wording of the Policy allows for the retention of the Fire Station if a potential relocation is not found to be possible. Whilst it is likely that any proposal will deliver a flatted element, the flexibility allowed for in the Policy means that this is one of many options for the site, and so the site does not contribute to the Borough’s overall housing supply. Given the flexibility in Policy DSP30, coupled with recent improvements in market conditions, the Council remains convinced that with suitable masterplanning a high quality, comprehensive gateway redevelopment can be delivered over the Plan period.
- 6.1.14 Russell Place is a largely undeveloped backland area of the Town Centre of poor visual quality. It includes some small industrial uses alongside a range of inefficiently arranged, differently surfaced parking areas which serve both residential properties and businesses on West Street. There are a large number of landowners across the site, making a comprehensive redevelopment challenging to achieve. The Council has, however, had a positive response from the majority of landowners, who have been engaged in the Local Plan process about the principle of redevelopment. An initial assessment of viability (DHO10) of housing sites considered a flatted scheme on the site, but the assessment struggled to show a viable scheme due to the existing use values on site. This evidence has been noted by the Council and so the site does not contribute to the Borough’s overall housing supply. However, the Council has an aspiration to improve the overall Town Centre environment and provide beneficial uses and Policy DSP31 should, therefore, be considered on this basis. The Council believes that by providing a policy framework that allows redevelopment to happen at Russell Place, through Policy DSP31, LP2 can deliver a suitable redevelopment which would significantly improve this part of the Town Centre.
- 6.1.15 The Corner of Trinity Street and Osborn Road is another poor quality and untidy area of Fareham Town Centre, but unlike Russell Place, it is located in a very visible and important corner location. The site is also located

adjacent to the Osborn Road conservation area². The majority of the site is a mix of youth facilities and used as a public car park together with a community building which delivers a range of youth services. Both the car park and the community building are owned by Fareham Borough Council, with the youth centre building subject to a lease with Hampshire County Council. A small section of the site, which is privately owned, benefits from extant planning permission for a flatted scheme. The Council has an aspiration to deliver a comprehensive mix of community facilities and residential on the wider site. However, alternative options for delivering replacement community facilities and residential units on the Council owned sections do exist. An initial assessment of viability (DHO10) of housing sites considered both a housing and a flatted scheme on the wider site, with the housing option shown to be viable in the current market. However, given the extant permission for a flatted development on a small section of the site the Council is unable to ensure delivery of the wider site in a comprehensive manner at the present time. Policy DSP32 is, therefore, flexible enough to cover both outcomes but given the uncertainty the site does not contribute to the Borough's overall housing supply. Despite this, the site has the potential to deliver significant townscape benefits, especially in light of its strategic location and proximity to the Osborn Road Conservation Area. Policy DSP32 provides a suitable framework to deliver a redevelopment that will have benefits to the Town Centre as a whole.

- 6.1.16 Whilst DHO10 shows that viability remains a concern for schemes at Russell Place and the Corner of Trinity Street and Osborn Road, the Council considers it important to consider recent market improvements which influence overall viability. The positive policy framework, established in Policy DSP31 and Policy DSP32, alongside recent market improvements, gives added confidence that redevelopments that bring townscape benefits at both Russell Place and the Corner of Trinity Street and Osborn Road are achievable during the Plan period.
- 6.1.17 The DSP Plan should be read as a whole, whilst also taking into account the other parts of the Local Plan (Core Strategy and the Welborne Plan). The Core Strategy has an overarching Design Policy (CS17) which states that “*all development, buildings and spaces will be of a high quality of design*” and sets a number of high level design principles. The Council is also producing a Design SPD, referred to in the DSP Plan, which will provide detail of the character of different parts of the Borough as well as providing more detailed guidance on the principles set out in Policy CS17. All developments will expect to have due regard to Policy CS17 and the Design SPD, and it is therefore not considered necessary to repeat this guidance in the policies for the Town Centre.

² <http://www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/planning/cacaosborn.pdf>