

Subject:
Baltic Bridge Regeneration Project

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 22nd October 2008

Report of: Head of Regeneration

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration and Leisure

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the issues and options arising out of the feasibility and consultation work that has been undertaken as part of the Baltic Bridge Regeneration Feasibility project within Waterfoot (Whitewell Ward).
- 1.2 To approve a further programme of measures for the regeneration of Waterfoot town centre as described in option 2.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objectives.
- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
 - Delivering Regeneration across the Borough (Economy, Housing)
 - Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- The Council must be clear that if an option to deliver on a regeneration programmes is chosen then this must be feasible particularly in the current market climate and the long term future. Failure to select a feasible scheme will result in adverse publicity and may have potential

cost implications towards the Council through capital and revenues budgets.

- Financial implications may also result from the under utilisation of a Council asset.

4. BACKGROUND, ISSUES AND OPTIONS

4.1 Baltic Bridge comprises an area of land situated within Waterfoot comprising land owned predominantly by the Council and Green Vale Homes (Rossendale Council's Stock Transfer Organisation) and incorporating the now redundant Baltic House (previously the Waterfoot Neighbourhood Office).

4.2 Rossendale Council's Regeneration Department over the last twelve months have been working on a feasibility assessment in partnership with Green Vale Homes and support from external consultants Gillespies to identify issues and options available to better utilise the Council's and Green Vale's land holdings for the benefit of residents and businesses within Waterfoot Town Centre.

4.3 The aim of the feasibility work was to reconcile the need for specific economic outputs beneficial to Waterfoot Town Centre and Rossendale as a whole; with improved public realm facilities including better car parking and environmental provision; against a viable and deliverable regeneration scheme.

4.4 Community consultation was undertaken through various means including one on one meetings with local businesses, schools; focus group sessions with professional stakeholders and community members; and specific public consultation events including public meetings and drop in sessions.

4.5 The revitalisation of Waterfoot is supported by the local community and businesses that operate and reside in the area. Nevertheless, several issues and findings have arisen out of this work, these are:

- Better utilisation of existing land holdings. The work showed that there is:-
 - Desire to retain Baltic House (not necessarily in Council control) but as a historical building of local significance.
 - Need to retain both types of car parking restrictions and current numbers of parking bays within the centre of Waterfoot. Consultation did show that better utilisation of these car parks could be undertaken and would be supported.
 - Need to better utilise the existing play area.
 - Potential to remove the existing bus turning circle and provide a through way retaining existing stands.
 - Potential to develop a town square and public realm along a Victorian vernacular.
- Better support for economic sector within Waterfoot and not just within town centre but covering both Whitewell and Hareholme wards as a whole including measures to bring vacant properties back into use, improve business support packages and development of the Victorian Arcade.

- Support and assistance to Green Vale Homes in identifying and meeting their housing programme through the delivery of decent; secure; affordable housing for local people.

However, there was a lack of support for market housing within centre of Waterfoot which would impact on the viability and deliverability of any proposed scheme.

4.6 The potential options to move forward on this are as follows:-

4.6.1 Option 1

Do nothing - No further direct funding implications for the authority or commitment of resources. However, this could lead to the continued decline of Waterfoot Town Centre through an increase in empty commercial premises; poor utilisation of the existing car parks and play area and lack of external investment that could be attracted through a defined regeneration scheme.

4.6.2 Option 2

- Support and assist Green Vale Homes to improve / redevelop Mytholme House.
- Rossendale's Estate's Manager to prepare issues and options report for taking forward re-utilisation of Baltic House (Waterfoot Neighbourhood Office). This has relatively low resource implications for the Council as it fits within the current workload programme of Officers.
- That the Planning Unit and Regeneration teams look at the wider issue of regeneration for Waterfoot.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 Waterfoot Neighbourhood Office (WNO has now been vacant since the housing stock transfer in March 2006). Since that date we have continued to incur rates, maintenance and other costs as follows:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Rates	3,100	3,300	5,900
Maintenance	700	0	400
Insurance	800	800	800
Other	5,600	3,700	1,000
Total	10,200	7,800	8,100

5.2 During that period the WNO has had a number of attempted break-ins. The property is therefore becoming increasingly at risk whilst in its unoccupied state.

- 5.3 As the property is not occupied only essential maintenance is being incurred.
- 5.4 The fact that the property has been left empty for so long does not bode well for its ultimate value. The current property market is difficult enough; longstanding empty properties attract a negative perception (which impacts negatively on values), albeit they maybe empty for legitimate reasons. As part of the Councils rolling valuation programme WNO was last valued in May 06 at £400k at a time when it had only recently been vacated.
- 5.5 Any continuation of the current status can only have a continually negative impact on the ultimate realisable value of WNO.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 A thorough consultation exercise has been undertaken that has raised a number of issues and concerns around the original proposed concept, which need to be taken into account when reaching a decision.
- 8.2 The feasibility study has demonstrated that there is much support for some regeneration measures within Waterfoot aimed at revitalising the town centre.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That following the consideration of feedback from the public consultation exercise, the Baltic Bridge scheme be not proceeded with and option 2 pursued.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 With other departments; Portfolio Holder; Ward Members, Community groups; Residents; local Businesses and Schools.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes
- Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes

12. BIODVIERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Files and supporting information	Regeneration Office, Room 120, Futures Park, Bacup