

The Ginns Commercial Development Plan

EXE 210409
Item 19

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Cath Giel, Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Fergus McMorrow, Acting Chief Executive
REPORT AUTHOR: Bob Collins, Interim Assistant Director

Summary and Recommendation: To advise Members on the outcome of a study commissioned to examine the development potential of The Ginns, Whitehaven.

Recommendation: That Members consider the range of actions set out in Section 6.2 of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Following the withdrawal of ASDA's interest in developing a supermarket at The Ginns, White Young Green were jointly commissioned by Copeland Borough Council and West Lakes Renaissance to produce a Commercial Development Plan for the area. Maple Grove Developments Ltd and Morbaine Ltd who are both land owners in the Plan area also contributed financially and intellectually to the study.
- 1.2** The Ginns site totals approximately 3.4 Ha of previously developed land and is currently made up of a mix of uses including occupied and unoccupied employment/commercial space, housing, informal car parking and vacant land.
- 1.3** The Plan evolved and was informed by a number of work streams which included a Baseline study, a review of the local property market context, planning policy context and site planning context.
- 1.4** A financial appraisal of the proposed Commercial Development Plan was also carried out.

2. THE BASELINE STUDY

- 2.1** The baseline study was carried out by examining existing reports and investigations undertaken to support the planning application for the ASDA retail development and through consultation with landowners together with primary research in terms of ecological interest within the site.
- 2.2** The study identified constraints and opportunities relating to landscape, archaeology and ecology; existing buildings; transport; land quality; flood; existing services/utilities; land ownership; commercial property analysis; planning context and existing commitments ; and ecology.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 3.1** The key findings of the Baseline Study have been utilised to inform the Commercial Development Plan.
- 3.2** In view of the site characteristics and ownerships the Development Plan divides The Ginns into three separate zones.

Zone A owned by Maple Grove Developments is located in the south east part of the site, within the flood zone 3A which restricts the types of development which are capable of being considered for the site to less vulnerable uses. The only use considered suitable for this Zone is B2/B8 which could provide starter units, relocation properties for similar use-types and light industrial or storage premises. It is proposed that only part of the site is developed due to the site constraints and high remediation costs. The development could provide circa 14,000 sq ft of employment space.

Zone B owned by Morbaine Ltd is the area of the site in closest proximity to Whitehaven Town Centre which presents relatively few obstacles to redevelopment. This site has a reasonably high profile adjacent to the existing retail offer on Preston Street and the site could provide either leisure or retail uses. The development could provide circa 20,000 sq ft of retail space in a single building.

Zone C is owned by Copeland Borough Council with the exception of the 16 residential properties on the site. This zone is located at the highest point of the site adjacent to the junction between Coach Road and The Ginns. The existing Back Ginns terraces severely restrict the redevelopment potential of the area. It is proposed that this area is best suited as a residential zone due to the topographically challenging position and the existence of terraced housing which would be very costly to remove. The development could provide three distinctly new different residential models namely Apartments; Wide Frontage Housing

(Homezone); Narrow Frontage Housing which in total would provide 41 new housing units.

- 3.3** An indicative Masterplan for the whole site was also produced together with an assessment of the transport infrastructure required to support the development.

4. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 4.1** Apart from the residential development (8 Townhouses) on Coach Road all other appraisals show a negative position in terms of developers profit and land value.

Zone A(Commercial) would require circa £1.6 m funding assistance

Zone B(Retail) would require circa £1.4 m funding assistance

Zone C (Residential) would potentially not require funding assistance especially if the profit from the development of 8 townhouses fronting Coach Road was used to cross subsidise the affordable housing elements on the other residential developments.

5. DELIVERY

- 5.1** Due to the nature of the development proposals each zone can be considered separately within the context of the overarching plan although it would make sense for certain elements of the works to be carried out on a joint basis e.g. remediation and infrastructure and highway improvements.
- 5.2** Zones A and B are controlled by the Private Sector and it appears that the development potential for both zones is restricted and currently unviable without public sector funding support . Both owners are keen to work with the Council in finding solutions to enable development.
- 5.3** Zone C is controlled by the Council and could be developed in isolation but would need some land assembly and some title cleansing as well as extensive consultation with the local community.

6. SUMMARY AND WAY FORWARD

- 6.1** The findings of the study imply that the potential to deliver a comprehensive development at The Ginns looks unlikely based on the proposed Commercial Development Plan although a comprehensive regeneration scheme would more likely result in better outcomes for the Town.

6.2 There are a number of options and actions for the Council to consider in taking the project forward namely:-

A. Enter into discussions with Supermarket operators to establish whether the market conditions are more conducive to a Supermarket development than they were when ASDA withdrew from the earlier scheme. The recent West Cumbria Retail Study provides evidence that there is an under supply of convenience shopping facilities in the Town and highlights that both Tesco and Morrisons are overtrading at their Whitehaven stores

B. With regard to the Zone A and B areas

- Continue to work with the Private Sector land owners in supporting their endeavours to find occupiers for their site
- Consider seeking finance to acquire and remediate these sites so that they are prepared and open ready when the market improves

C. With regard to the Zone C Residential area:

- Examine the possibility of acquiring any of the existing Back Ginns terraces should they come on to the market for sale.
- Enter into discussions with the Homes and Communities Agency to establish the potential for a mixed tenure housing development with HCA grant support.

7. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

7.1 The study was carried out and completed during the financial year 2008/9 at a total cost of £58,851 financed by Copeland Borough Council, West Lakes Renaissance, Maple Grove Ltd and Morbaine Ltd. Copeland Borough Council's contribution was £13,210 i.e 22% of the total cost.

7.2 The future financial implications will depend on the nature and timing of the development of the site. Should the Council decide to bring forward development of Zone C this may result in a direct cost to the Council depending on the level of positive value created from the sale of homes fronting Coach Road. In view of the present economic climate the Council is not recommended to pursue development immediately and therefore there are no financial implications at the moment.

8. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

The development of The Ginns site is a key project within the Whitehaven Regeneration Programme which will assist in meeting the Council's Regeneration and Corporate objective for the transformation of Copeland to a prosperous future.

List of Appendices: None

List of Background Documents:

The Ginns Development Plan-Final Reports deposited in Members Room

List of Consultees:

Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Leader
Councillor Cath Giel, portfolio-holder
Head of Development Strategy
Head of Development Operations
Head of Finance and Management Information Systems
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	None
Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Monitoring Officer comments	No Comment
S. 151 Officer comments	No further comments to make

Is this a Key Decision? No