

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Planning Committee: 6 March 2013**

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**DC11/236: Refurbishment of shopping centre and erection of new roof, entrance and associated works at The Artizan Centre, College Way, Dumbarton by La Salle Investment Management.**

#### **1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1** This application is subject to a letter of representation from a Community Council, involves land which is partly in Council ownership, and also raises issues of local significance. Under the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1** **Grant** planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Section 9.

#### **3. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS**

- 3.1** Planning permission is sought for the refurbishment of the Artizan Centre, College Way, Dumbarton. The site forms a pedestrianised shopping area within Dumbarton town centre which extends from High Street to Risk Street/St Mary's Way. Whilst the Artizan Centre was significantly upgraded and refurbished during the past decade, the majority of units have remained vacant. There are currently 29 ground floor units within the centre, with additional accommodation on the upper level. The pedestrian route which runs through the Artizan Centre (College Way) is an important link between High Street and the car parks located on Risk Street/St Mary's Way and Dumbarton Central Railway Station beyond.
- 3.2** As the previous refurbishment did not succeed in making the centre attractive to retailers and shoppers, it is now proposed to carry out a significant new refurbishment, the effect of which would be to transform the Artizan Centre from an open pedestrianised mall into a fully enclosed shopping centre. The existing shopfront canopies on both sides of College Way and the entrance canopies at either end of the centre would be removed, and the whole of College Way would be enclosed by an overall roof, with a large glazed entrance fronting onto High Street and a smaller glazed entrance to Risk Street. The roof would extend beyond the glass façade towards High Street, to form a small entrance canopy over the pavement. The proposed roof would arc over College Way and would be supported by a series of central columns. Parts of the existing concrete facades would be covered with coloured cladding panels, whilst existing smooth white render finish on other parts of the building would be repaired, cleaned and painted.

- 3.3** As part of the proposal, glazed doors would be installed to restrict access to the centre and maintain security whilst the shops are closed. Pedestrian movement through the centre would remain possible during opening hours, but at times when the centre was closed the existing pedestrian route through College Way would not be available. In order to ensure continuity of pedestrian access north from the High Street, an alternative pedestrian access route is proposed directly to the west of the centre. This would involve removing a brick wall at the side of the centre to reopen a historic access leading to the car park to the west of the Artizan Centre. The new pedestrian route would run along the western side of the centre, with an existing footpath area being widened and landscaped. Additional lighting would be installed and an external staircase would be relocated within the building, enabling the demolition of the existing stair block which sticks out into the footpath. As the new pedestrian route would follow the side of the building it would utilise part of the existing service area for some of the shop units, and alterations to the car park and service vehicle areas are proposed in order to minimise conflict between pedestrians and service needs. Provision would also be made for internal bin storage areas to avoid the need for external bins near the footpath. In order to accommodate the upgrade of the delivery area, a single row of spaces in the car park would be replaced by landscaping, and the size of the vehicular turning area would be reduced.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1** West Dunbartonshire Council's Access Officer has no objection to the proposal subject to the provision of a suitable alternative pedestrian route both during and after construction has been completed.
- 4.2** West Dunbartonshire Council Estates Service and Roads Service have no objection to the proposal.
- 4.3** West Dunbartonshire Council Environmental Health has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to the hours of construction.
- 4.4** West of Scotland Archaeology Service has no objection to the proposal subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief during the works.

#### **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 5.1** One letter of representation has been submitted by Dumbarton East and Central Community Council, which supports the application as it is likely to contribute to the regeneration of the town centre. However, they have requested that the Council ensure that the proposed alternative pedestrian access route is designed to a high standard and is safe and secure.

## **6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 6.1** The site lies within the defined Dumbarton Town Centre. Policy RET1 (Retail and Town Centre Strategy) supports town centres as the preferred location for retail development. Policy RET2 provides assessment criteria for retail proposals within town centres. In this case the proposal involves improvement to existing retail floorspace rather than the provision of new floorspace, and it is therefore not necessary to consider retail impact issues. The proposal would contribute to remedying an existing qualitative deficiency in the existing retail floorspace. Policy RET5 (Town Centre Enhancement) states that the Council will seek to improve the environment of Dumbarton town centre, and applications which contribute to improving the vitality and viability of the town centre will be supported. It is considered that the proposal is consistent with all of the relevant town centre/retail policies.
- 6.2** Policy T4 (Accessibility to New Development) indicates that development should be well integrated into walking, cycling and public transport routes. The proposal would have an impact upon an existing important pedestrian route and it is important to ensure that suitable alternative provision is made in order to satisfy the policy. This issue is considered in Section 7 below, and it is concluded that the proposed new footpath link would be appropriate.

## **7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

- 7.1** This document supports the provision of a mixture of uses and activities within town centres and recognises that development should integrate successfully and create links with the surrounding urban fabric. It is therefore essential that town centres provide a high quality, inclusive and safe environment. Well designed public spaces and buildings can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of a town centre. Actions to support improvements to town centres and to create distinctive and successful places are encouraged. This proposal would result in improvements to the town centre and it is therefore consistent with the SPP.

### Principle of Development

- 7.2** Dumbarton Town Centre has experienced a decline in the number of shops in recent years, and its regeneration is a priority for the Council. The Artizan Centre, situated right in the middle of the High Street and containing one of its main pedestrian access routes, currently detracts from the town centre due to the high proportion of units which are vacant. This vacancy rate is despite significant investment in the centre by a previous owner. The current owner therefore proposes a much more radical package of improvements, to transform it into a fully enclosed shopping centre. It is hoped that this would make the centre a more attractive location for both retailers and shoppers alike, and would restore the Artizan Centre to its former role as an anchor development within the town centre. Regeneration of the Artizan Centre has the potential to attract additional custom to Dumbarton town centre and to increase the footfall in the surrounding area, to the benefit of existing shops in

the High Street. It is therefore considered that in principle the transformation of the centre into a covered shopping centre is to be welcomed.

#### Pedestrian Route

- 7.3** The proposal will result in College Way being inaccessible at times when the centre is closed, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that a suitable alternative pedestrian route is provided. The proposal includes a new pedestrian route to the west of the centre which would result in significant improvements to the area at the edge of the western car park. New provision would be made within the building for bin storage, and a set of external stairs would be relocated within an existing building. This would assist in widening the route, improving forward visibility and improving the appearance of the area to the west of the centre, which currently appears dilapidated and would therefore benefit from the proposed improvements. The new pedestrian route would reopen a historic access to High Street from the car park which was previously closed off, and would remove several hidden corners which currently make the area seem insecure. Improvements would also be made to the delivery area to avoid conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. The new route would ensure that convenient access remains at all times, and appropriate planting, lighting and materials would enhance the amenity of the area.

- 7.4** The new footpath would run around the side of the shopping centre building so it would inevitably be slightly less direct than College Way, and it must be acknowledged that the fact that some shop service entrances would open onto it is not ideal. However, the existing pedestrian route via College Way is itself unsatisfactory, particularly outwith business hours. The route through College Way involves a dog-leg near the north end of the centre, meaning that people entering the centre cannot see through it to the other side, and as this section of College Way is enclosed by the vacant shops on either side it is not overlooked at all outwith retail hours. Even during the daytime the fact that the shops are vacant means that natural surveillance is limited. College Way is therefore a route which many people would feel insecure using at night. The proposed new route would be open to the car park, and although it is slightly less direct it is considered to be a more secure route than that which it would replace.

#### Design and Appearance

- 7.5** The existing pedestrianised area and the shop fronts within it are looking tired, and are in need of improvement. The area to the front of the Artizan Centre and along College Way appears cluttered and enclosed because of the low balconies, even though there is currently no roof. The existing canopies hinder maintenance of the building and are difficult to keep clean, which further detracts from their appearance. It is therefore considered that the existing condition of the centre detracts from the appearance of the town centre. The proposal would enclose the shop fronts on College Way within the shopping centre, and the various internal improvements planned would make the interior of the centre more attractive than the existing street. Externally, the main changes would be the new roof and entrance onto High Street, along with refurbishment of the whole exterior. The new High Street

entrance would feature a high arched roof, and would be entirely glazed. It is considered that this would create an attractive focal point in the middle of the High Street. New coloured panelling on the upper levels and the repair, cleaning and repainting of the existing white render areas would brighten and improve the appearance of the building. It is considered that the proposals would serve to enhance the appearance of the Artizan Centre to the benefit of the wider town centre. It is important that the finishing materials used should be of a suitably high quality, and this could be controlled by a condition.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1** This proposal seeks to refurbish the Artizan Centre with the aim of creating a more attractive retail destination which would contribute to the successful regeneration of Dumbarton town centre. The proposal would improve the appearance of the centre, whilst providing a suitable alternative pedestrian route which would also serve to improve access between the High Street and a nearby car park. The proposal accords with all relevant policies of the local plan, and is therefore considered to be acceptable.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

- 1. Exact details and specifications of all proposed external materials, including cladding panels, the roof, render and roller shutters shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**
- 2. Exact details and specifications of all ground surfaces, bins, seating, external lighting, external CCTV cameras, railings and walls shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**
- 3. Notwithstanding the approved plans, final landscaping details to include the number, siting and type of trees and shrubs to be planted shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**
- 4. Prior to any work being undertaken which would prevent or restrict pedestrian access along College Way between High Street and Risk Street/St Mary's Way, the alternative pedestrian route and vehicular delivery area between High Street and Risk Street shall be implemented as shown on Drawing No. 061/090/203 D. Thereafter, this route shall be maintained and kept available for use at all times unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.**
- 5. All bins used by units on the western side of College Way shall be stored internally within the designated areas as shown on**

**Drawing No. 061/090/203 D, and no bins, waste or stock may be stored on or adjacent to the pedestrian footpath at any time.**

- 6. No development shall take place within the development site until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, agreed by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service and approved by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the developer shall ensure that the programme of archaeological works is fully implemented and that all recording and recovery of archaeological resources within the development site is undertaken to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority in agreement with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.**
- 7. During the period of construction, all works and ancillary operations which are audible at the site boundary, or at such other places that may be agreed with the Planning Authority shall be carried out between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 1pm on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.**
- 8. No vehicles making deliveries to, or collecting material from the site during construction shall enter or leave the site before 8am or after 6pm.**

#### **Informatives**

- 1. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.**
- 2. The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this decision notice:**
  - a) A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);**
  - b) A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.**
- 3. This grant of planning permission does not authorise the installation of any illuminated fascia signs which would require the submission of a separate application for advertisement consent.**
- 4. The plans referred to as part of this decision are: Drawing No(s). 061-090-100 B, 061/090/202, 061/090/203 D, 061/090/302, 061/090/303 A, 061/090/304 & 061/090/305.**

**Elaine Melrose**  
**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental**  
**and Economic Development**  
**Date: 15 February 2013**

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**Appendix:** None.

**Background Papers:**

1. Application forms and plans;
2. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010;
3. Consultation responses;
4. Scottish Planning Policy; and
4. Letter of representation.

**Wards affected:** Ward 3 (Dumbarton)