

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 5 March 2008**

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**Subject: Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the outcome of a recent public consultation event relating to the final draft of the Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan.
- 1.2** The Committee is requested to approve and adopt the Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan as supplementary planning guidance, as a strategy for the regeneration of the town centre.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** A previous report to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee of 9 January 2008, advised that consultants Broadway Malyan had submitted a finalised draft of the Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan to the Council for consideration.
- 2.2** The Committee agreed that the finalised draft Masterplan should be the subject of a second public consultation, prior to adoption as supplementary planning guidance.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** A public exhibition on the draft Masterplan was held on 8 and 9 February 2008 at a vacant shop unit within the Artizan Centre, Dumbarton. The event was widely advertised to the public, local businesses and organisations, through the local media, invitations by letter and a leaflet drop to all households in Dumbarton. It is estimated that approximately 300 people attended the exhibition over the course of two days.
- 3.2** Exhibition boards outlining the main proposals within the Masterplan were on display with comments forms for the public to complete. The main proposals

of the Masterplan were outlined in the report to Committee on 9 January namely :

- A large retail unit to the north of the Artizan Centre with decked parking, to anchor the town centre;
- A new vehicular access from the A814 to service the unit;
- A new public space, including parking spaces, between the retail unit and the Artizan Centre;
- New retail development on the corner of High Street and Risk Street, with decked parking;
- The creation of a new street between the former Co-op building and 20 High Street; and
- New retail development with residential use above between High Street and St Mary's Way.

**3.3** The Masterplan also recommends proposals for adjoining areas. These relate to new commercial and café/bar developments along the quayside to the rear of High Street and civic, community and Council related uses on the Old Academy Building redevelopment site.

**3.4** A total of 141 completed comments forms were received. Of these, 45% supported the Masterplan that had been prepared, 23% were not in favour of the plans that had been prepared and 32% were not sure. Generally, recent comments seemed to support the comments of the first exhibition. Over the course of both days, the main general concerns that were raised related to the following issues;

- The perceived closure of the Denny Civic Theatre which is a valuable resource for the town, was a key issue. Many felt that if the theatre was demolished, then a new purpose built facility should be built prior to demolition taking place.
- Most agreed with the proposed uses in the plan. Some felt that it had too much reliance on retail uses, when there are vacant units in the town at present. Some questioned who would fill the new units. Some people felt that there should be a reduction in rent and rates for shops. Many wanted a better mix and quality of shops on offer.
- Most agreed with the location of uses. Some felt that the civic quarter should be closer to the town centre and some did not want the Denny Civic Theatre to be lost from its current location.
- Most agreed with the car parking proposals. There was support for multi-storey parking so long as it was well designed, clean, safe, well lit and

well managed. There was a mix of views regarding the provision of parking, some felt provision was adequate, and others did not, particularly if Council offices moved to the town centre. Some felt parking was too concentrated close to the large retail unit and that this could negatively affect businesses on the High Street. Most felt that parking should remain free. Disabled spaces were regarded as being over-provided by some people but others felt there should be availability of disabled parking on the High Street.

- In terms of access issues, there weren't as many comments but comments generally related to suggestions that the High Street should be car free, that there should be better disabled access to the High Street, that a bus and taxi hub should be provided, that there should be no isolated paths or underpasses, there should be better connections to the Railway Station and that there were concerns about increased traffic close to Church Court (sheltered housing) where the proposed new square would be.
- Most supported the proposed town square and its location. Some felt it could be more central or that the focus should be on the High Street or riverside. There were concerns that it could attract anti-social behaviour and how that would be tackled. Some people felt that the square should have a feature e.g. a fountain.
- In terms of priorities for the Council to deliver, various were mentioned which were; attracting a local supermarket, moving Council offices to the town centre, replacing the Denny Civic Theatre and Concorde, getting a better quality and range of shops, addressing flood defenses, attracting employment and businesses, addressing drug and alcohol issues, creating facilities for young people and developing the waterfront.
- Matters that people felt the Masterplan failed to address were wide ranging including traffic, facilities for young people, quality of shops, addressing existing underpasses, providing flood defenses, opening up the toilets on Quay Street, providing a covered bus stance, providing more information on the Civic Theatre, lowering rents and rates, tackling anti-social behaviour, providing leisure facilities, focusing the plans on local people and Levensgrove Park.

### **3.5 Business for Dumbarton**

Correspondence has been received from Business for Dumbarton who represent local traders within the town centre. They support a number of

aspects of the Masterplan including the relocation of Council offices to the east of the town centre, the proposed building of new homes in the area and accept that a new supermarket would attract more shoppers to the area. However, they have expressed concern regarding the proposed reduction of parking at the quayside, particularly if new residential development went ahead in this area. This element of the proposals would also restrict access for servicing shops. They are concerned that the proposed multi-storey car park at the west end of the High Street would charge users and that parking provision seems to be concentrated towards the supermarket. A number of their members would be directly affected by proposals for a multi-storey car park at Risk Street and High Street but they are concerned at the lack of direct dialogue so far regarding this matter. They are also generally concerned about access matters for the High Street area and that the Masterplan could exacerbate access problems, although they note that access is well provided for in relation to the new supermarket.

- 3.6** The Council will require to take account of the comments received from the public and Business for Dumbarton in taking the Masterplan forward and in finalising the document. It is clear that there are concerns about particular details of the delivery of the Masterplan; however it is considered that such matters can be addressed as development proposals proceed. As matters progress further reports will be prepared for the Committee's consideration.
- 3.7** The Masterplan contains a delivery strategy. This recommends in the short term, as a priority, that particular areas are delivered which consist of the larger retail blocks and the majority of deck access car parking to the west and north of the Artizan Centre. Progress with delivering these areas will require the co-operation of landowners and interested developers.
- 3.8** The results from the exhibition indicate that the Council must also develop plans for replacement facilities within the town to address concerns about the future of the Denny Civic Theatre, move forward with plans to relocate offices to the town centre as soon as possible to improve the footfall in the town, and consider further the implications of future development on town centre car parking.

**3.9** Impact Assessment

No impact assessment has been required at this stage.

**4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1** Delivery of the Masterplan will require commitment from various Council Departments, and will involve a restructuring of Council facilities once implemented, however at this stage any impact on personnel is unknown.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** Initial re-development costs have previously been provided. Further consideration will require to be given to these and any available funding, prior to the Council embarking on the implementation of specific projects within the Masterplan.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** Failure to progress with the Masterplan to the next stage could contribute to the further decline of the town centre.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1** The draft Masterplan sets out a series of actions for revitalising the core town centre area of Dumbarton. Its delivery will require partnership working between the Council, the private sector (in particular Jermon), landowners and other stakeholders.

## **8. Recommendations**

### **8.1 The Committee is invited to:**

- **Note the results from the public consultation;**
- **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to finalise the draft Masterplan, to take account of the comments received as part of the consultation exercise and any other editorial matters; and**
- **Approve and adopt the Masterplan as supplementary planning guidance, as a plan for the regeneration of the town centre.**

**Elaine Melrose**

**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Date: 20 February 2008**

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**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** Dumbarton Town Centre Draft Masterplan

Reports to Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee, 5 September 2007 entitled Dumbarton Town Centre Projects 2007-2008 and 9 January 2008 entitled Dumbarton Town Centre Masterplan Update.

**Wards Affected:** 3