

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Economic Development Manager

### Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee

27 September 2022

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**Subject: Development Strategy for the Artizan Centre**

#### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress made on the Artizan Centre proposals. It seeks approval for delivery of short term improvements, and for further work required to progress the redevelopment.

#### **2. Recommendations**

**2.1** It is recommended that Committee:

- Notes the progress made on Artizan Centre proposals
- Authorises procurement and delivery of Phase 1 short term improvements including the following:
  - Relocation of tenant(s) (6 months)
  - Demolition of the rear Artizan units (refer to Appendix 2) (10 months)
  - Design and delivery of temporary and permanent landscaping (12-15 months)
  - Development of meanwhile uses on newly vacated land (12-15 months)
  - Property improvements including external and internal works (6-15 months)
  - Further detailed feasibility and market studies (3-12 months)
- Authorises procurement and development of detailed feasibility studies to inform medium and long term development strategy
- Notes that the existing tenants will continue to be supported as part of the strategy.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1** Like many town centres nationally, Dumbarton town centre has been shaped by a number of factors over the recent years, including the ongoing trend of internet shopping and retail parks as well as most recently, the impact of the pandemic. The decline of retail in town centres is predicted to continue, requiring intervention, to reimagine and repurpose how town centres are used and perceived.
- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire Council successfully applied to the UK Government for Levelling up Fund (LUF) monies to tackle the decline of the town centre and deliver three key projects in Dumbarton: Glencairn House; Connecting Dumbarton and the acquisition, part-demolition and costs towards the redevelopment of the Artizan Centre. The Artizan Centre has now been purchased by the Council and this presents a unique and exciting opportunity to redefine the Dumbarton Town Centre (Appendix 1). £5.375 million (excluding optimism bias) of LUF funding remains to be spent by March 2025 to support the redevelopment of the Artizan site in line with the LUF outcomes.
- 3.3** A team of consultants was appointed to carry out a feasibility study and prepare a development strategy for the site. Their work has not yet concluded however it has informed the first stages outlined in this report and will inform later stages which will be brought back to a future IRED. The consultancy is almost complete but additional specialist feasibility and design work is required to make recommendations on detailed long term proposals.
- 3.4** The community have a central role to play in shaping the future of their town centre. A number of consultation events engaging the local community took place in early 2022, and an online survey was also published. People were asked how they feel about the Artizan and the town centre, what their aspirations are and what changes they would like to see introduced. Separate consultation events were held with external and internal stakeholders.
- 3.5** Community opinion clearly highlighted the importance of putting the heart back in the town centre and having a clean welcoming environment. Desire for vibrant shops, enhanced food and beverage offer, quality public and green spaces and need for improvements to the built environment featured frequently in the comments, which informed the progress so far and will shape the long term development strategy.

### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The overarching objective of the Artizan redevelopment is regeneration of the Dumbarton Town Centre which seeks to balance the need for economic

regeneration, place making and design quality, with the requirement for sound asset management. A high quality redevelopment of this large and prominent site would be transformational for the entire town centre and, by extension, for the whole of Dumbarton. It has a potential to create a lively, welcoming public space for the community in the heart of the town centre, correct the economic blight caused by long term vacancies and disrepair, and attract footfall and spend from both locals and visitors. By projecting a more confident image of Dumbarton it could generate a momentum for the town to establish itself as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

**4.2** Artizan Centre has a number of well-established businesses and an active frontage along the High Street, while the rear part of the centre is mostly vacant, some buildings are in need of significant repairs and many of the existing shop units do not meet the needs of the commercial and retail market requirements. The “Railway to Rock” route connecting the Railway Station and the Rock and Castle runs through the site and the High Street units are within the Town Centre Conservation Area. A number of key opportunities and challenges were identified by the consultants and these will be addressed through the redevelopment. They include but are not limited to:

- Retention of the existing retailers which bring footfall into the town centre.
- Reduction of the number of retail units to align with current market trends.
- Integration of the Denny Theatre and Concord Community Centre into the redeveloped centre. These well-used facilities can help support active use of the area and support development of evening uses.
- Introduction of new green spaces and public realm and square within the town centre
- Delivery of a development that would enhance the town and become a focal point of a 20 minute neighbourhood where daily services can be accessed within a 20 minute walk.
- New housing to bring more people into the town centre.
- Any new development should consider the context of the Town Centre Conservation Area
- Further evidence is required regarding car parking/ sustainable requirements within the Town Centre.

**4.3** Local Development Plan 2 (as amended, 2020) shows Artizan Centre as located within the identified town centre boundary. The Development Strategy for the town centre supports mixed use development and improvements to the Artizan Centre. Dumbarton Policy 1 supports a more diverse and vibrant town centre and encourages a range of uses, where these accord with Policy SC2 – SC2 identifies core town centre areas (Artizan sits within this) and supports use classes 1, 2, 3, 7, 11 and public houses. Revised urban strategy (2014) identifies the Artizan Centre as a possible Large Project. The strategy identifies the Artizan Centre as having a negative impact on parts of the town

centre and states the Council will support incremental change or radical redevelopment. Main uses in this area (including introduction of a traditional grid pattern to area to north) would be retail, office, some residential, leisure, food and drink and other appropriate town centre uses.

- 4.4** It is considered that a mix of uses within the future redeveloped Artizan Centre would bring vibrancy back into the town centre and help sustain high levels of footfall. The uses could include:
- Active frontages on the ground floor – retail or community uses that create a reason to visit and spend time in the town centre and increase dwell time
  - Housing – different tenure mix to repopulate the town centre, bring additional footfall and vibrancy and contribute to delivery of 20 minutes neighborhood principles
  - Public spaces and connections - green and sustainable public realm, facilitating community participation and involvement, creating opportunities for active travel and connecting Denny Theatre with the Artizan site, and the Railway to Rock connectivity route.
  - A new development – focal point to increase footfall and create a strong focal point within the site
- 4.5** The Council is committed to sustainable regeneration of the Artizan site and delivering the vision of a more active and vibrant town centre. While long term (next 2-8 years) development options are being explored, much of which will stretch beyond the Levelling Up Fund timescale and will need to be self-sustaining, we plan to focus on a number of short term improvements (Phase 1) which can be delivered within the next 12 – 15 months.
- 4.6** Phase 1 focuses on small scale early interventions and on setting the direction of travel for long term redevelopment. It will address urgent and priority requirements, and establishing a high standard of design and delivery. Proposed Phase 1 deliverables and activities include the following:
- Relocation of tenant(s) (6 months)
  - Demolition of the rear Artizan units (refer to Appendix 2) (10 months)
  - Design and delivery of temporary and permanent landscaping including extension of the Connecting Dumbarton to link the Railway with the River (12-15 months)
  - Development of meanwhile uses on newly vacated land to animate and bring more activity to the town centre and make best use of vacant land, and opportunities presented (12-15 months)
  - Property improvements including external and internal works (6-15 months)

- Further detailed feasibility and market studies to determine feasibility of a possible future new development, housing and other new uses on site (3-12 months)
- 4.7** An important consideration is that disruption and impact on current tenants is minimised. The early demolition works will focus on the area of the Artizan to the rear and west block with the highest number of vacant units and act as a catalyst for future improvements.
- 4.8** New permanent and temporary landscaping will be delivered within the site as to improve the environment for the users. This could include public greenspace on newly vacant land, public realm improvements, temporary or permanent connection with Denny Theatre and a cycle route connecting the Railway and the River Leven, along the Railway to Rock connectivity spine. Meanwhile uses can be introduced to animate and bring more activity to the town centre and make best use of vacant land. Proposed meanwhile uses could include introduction of short term community uses and pop-up shops to vacant units (if available) or outdoor community or commercial events.
- 4.9** Specialist consultants will be commissioned to undertake detailed feasibility studies and market research to inform next phases of the development. The studies would include:
- A feasibility study and market research to determine feasibility of an anchor development
  - A feasibility study and market research to determine future new uses on the vacant plots including possible new retail and housing
- 4.10** A deliverable and feasible long term vision for the site will be developed following completion of detailed feasibility and market research studies and discussions with partners. A number of options will be explored and proposals will be brought back to a future IRED Committee.
- 4.11** Parking remains an important factor of any new development. It will be necessary to set out how future demand for parking in Dumbarton Town Centre can be managed, and how an approach to parking can contribute to the wider policy aims of changing behaviours, reducing dependency on the car and encouraging alternative ways to access the town centre including public transport, walking and cycling..
- 4.12** The support of existing retailers, businesses, community planning partners the community and community-led organisations that already do much to contribute to the vitality of the town centre will be important in delivering the vision for Dumbarton. A robust communication and engagement plan will be produced to ensure that our ambitions for the town are properly conveyed and that existing stakeholders in the town centre benefit from the vision.

- 4.13** A successful redevelopment of the Artizan site would contribute to the delivery of national policy priorities including 20 minute neighbourhoods, carbon reduction, place making and community empowerment.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** Delivery of the vision will require commitment from various Council services and the utilisation of existing staff resources. The cross-Service collaboration, particularly across Regeneration, Planning, Asset Management and Roads/Transportation and partnerships with external partners will continue.

## **6. Financial & Procurement Implications**

- 6.1** Funding from the Levelling Up Fund must be drawn down by March 2025. A monitoring and spending plan has been established with Central Government, to agree a project spend timeframe. To comply with requirement of the fund, continuous progress must be demonstrated. Delays could reduce the funding currently available. The LUF grant itself does not commit the Council to fund any specific component, however, to make best use of resources it is recommended Phase One proposals proceed.
- 6.2** A proportion of the £5.375m available in the Artizan budget will be spent on Phase One works and activities. Any remaining funds will go towards enabling future long term development(s) on site, subject to approval by a future IRED Committee.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** If the LUF grant is not drawn down within the timescales required (March 2025), or grant conditions are not met, there is a risk that not all the funding will be made available resulting in the further delays and deterioration of Dumbarton town centre.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 8.1** An assessment has been carried out. The redevelopment of the Artizan has relevance to a number of equality groups, and positive impacts were identified for each.

## **9. Environmental Sustainability**

- 9.1** In line with the Council's Climate Change Strategy, there will be 'zero carbon' approach proposals emerging from the Artizan Vision. This will make a positive contribution to environmental sustainability. In particular additional greening of the centre and contributions towards a 20 Minute Neighbourhood.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1** As indicated above there has been extensive consultation on the future of the Artizan Centre. The views expressed in those engagement events have informed plans for the short term interventions and will help shape the long term strategy. Further individual and group consultations will take place during the next stages. This work will continue, to help ensure confirmed development will solidify the town as the heart of the community.

## **11. Strategic Assessment**

- 11.1** The vision will support Council's strategic priorities to:
- improve economic growth;
  - improve environmentally sustainable infrastructure; and
  - improve the wellbeing of communities.

**Chief Officer:**

**Service Area: Regulatory & Regeneration**

**Date: September 2022**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 - Artizan Redevelopment Area  
Appendix 2 - Artizan demolitions Phase 1  
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

**Background Papers:** IRED Report 10 June 2021 Levelling Up Fund and  
Community Renewal Fund – Proposed Bids  
IRED Report 15 September 2021 New Regeneration  
Officer Post (LUF) (Fixed Term)

**Wards Affected:** Dumbarton