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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 3rd March 2022

Present: Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Robert Iredale

Co-optees Chris Friend

In attendance: Councillor Peter McBride, Cabinet Member for
Regeneration
Councillor Eric Firth, Cabinet Member for Town Centres
Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director, Development
David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer, Economy &
Skills
Helen Roberts, Architect, Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios
George Wilson, Architect, Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios

Observers: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje

Apologies: Councillor Gwen Lowe
Andrew Bird (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Gwen Lowe and Andrew Bird, Co-Optee.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The amended Minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2022 and the meeting held on 8th February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Interests

No Interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

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6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7 Update on the Huddersfield Blueprint including the Cultural Heart

The Panel considered a report providing an update on the Huddersfield Blueprint which included the Cultural Heart presented by Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director of Development. David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer for Economy and Skills, Councillor Peter McBride, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Councillor Eric Firth, Cabinet Member for Town Centres were also in attendance.

Cllr Peter McBride advised that the update provided detailed examples of the Cultural Heart and the overall blueprint, along with the progress made by the consultants, who guided the development of the project.

Joanne Bartholomew gave a presentation which highlighted the key points in respect of the 10-year vision which included:

The George Hotel:

The Hotel had come into the Council's possession in 2020. Since that time work had taken place on the first phase of physical repair to the building to ensure that it was watertight and fit for the next phase of development. The project was complex and due to be completed by January 2023. The main objective was to secure the most sustainable long-term future for the building.

Work had progressed with a specialist development manager to identify an optimum use and offer for the building that was attractive to the market. Specialist advice identified the need to increase room numbers and sizes, deal with accessibility issues throughout the building and ensure the food and beverage space could be maximised. The ambition was to deliver a 90-bed hotel space.

The listed status of the building was a major consideration and work had been undertaken with conservation architects with experience of hotel development. The next stage of the work was to develop a final design for the new hotel for Cabinet to consider in Summer 2022. Ahead of this the concept would be marketed to the hotel sector during March and April 2022.

The Northumberland Street Regeneration Project including Huddersfield Market

The Project was looking at the existing Huddersfield Open Market area with an intention to be the location for the future Huddersfield's Market offer. The long-term vision was considered at Cabinet on 18th January 2022, with the objective being to have a destination that was attractive to a wide audience and also support the business and commuter activity that was emerging in the area of town. A series of initial design options with business cases were being prepared and the project would be considered alongside other proposals for possible levelling up bids, should a further round be announced from the Government. The project had been impacted

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by the TransPennine Route upgrade, and it was unlikely that the project would be delivered before 2025.

New Street

The replacement of the public realm for New Street was underway and had undergone consultation. The project envisaged a revitalization of the street as a high-quality pedestrian space with room for events and pop-up stalls. Work had concentrated on investigating statutory undertaker apparatus and cellars in the area. The remainder of the construction work would commence in August 2022 with an anticipated end in January 2024.

Kingsgate Cinema

The Council was working with the owners of Kingsgate Shopping Centre and the Light cinema group to bring a cinema into the town centre. Planning permission had already been granted and conditions associated with this were being discharged. The construction contract was being tendered by the owner of Kingsgate and the construction period would last 18 months.

103 New Street – Student Accommodation

The property would deliver approximately 120 student bedspaces in the former co-operative building. The project was near completion with the developer programme showed the project being complete for occupation in the summer of 2022.

Bus Station

Huddersfield Bus Station improvements were part of the wider Transforming Cities Fund programme being delivered across West Yorkshire. The Council, working with the Combined Authority were currently developing the project and business case. The current programme took to the submission of an initial planning application and the programme was:

- Outline Business Case (OBC) submission - April 2022
- OBC approval -- July 2022
- Consultation – Autumn 2022
- Planning -- December 2022

Town Centre Living

The aim was to utilise heritage buildings to change and diversify the housing offer in Huddersfield town centre and support wider town centre uses. Officers were concentrating on buildings within public ownership, primarily Estate Buildings and Somerset House. At Estate Buildings there was the potential to provide around 30 high quality, well sized residential units, with the completion expected to be in early 2023. At Somerset Buildings there was the potential to provide around 14 high quality, well sized residential units with development taking place 2023-24.

Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor – Including the National Health innovation Campus

The Council was embarking upon a master planning exercise for the future growth around the railway station, the Southgate site and land between Leeds Road, the Stadium and St Andrews Road. The aim was to provide a planning framework to deliver regeneration based on high quality employment uses, with Phase 1 of the

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concept being the National Health Innovation Campus which gave a focus for business and employment growth in the area. This would help shape the future for some of the towns underutilized assets bringing into focus assets such as the Station Warehouse and Crown House. The work on the masterplan started in early February 2022 and will be completed in the summer of 2022.

In response to a question from the Panel around connectivity, (including cycle lanes) and how people who were not fully mobile would benefit, Joanne Bartholomew advised that Officers were working on a Movement Strategy which would be shared with Scrutiny at a future meeting.

The Panel raised concerns on information being in the public domain prior to it being presented to Scrutiny when Portfolio Holders and officers had been asked to present the information at Scrutiny Panels prior to it being available to the public. Councillor Peter McBride advised that the programme was extremely large which required professional guidance, and that Scrutiny was presented with the information as soon as it was possible.

The Panel asked a question regarding the original plan/intention for the George Hotel as it had changed from a 60-bed hotel with a rugby league museum to a 90 bed hotel with no museum. The Panel noted that no survey had been carried out. The Panel was concerned that the decision to change the plan had not been open and transparent and agreed that engagement with other parties would have been beneficial. Joanne Bartholomew acknowledged the Panels comments, and advised that an update on work with the development partner would return to Scrutiny. The Panel was advised that commitments had not been made as there were further business cases and commercial work to consider which would go through the Cabinet and Scrutiny process. Joanne Bartholomew further added that there was a significant amount of work to be done across the whole of the blueprint around the gateway points, at which Scrutiny can be applied.

The Panel asked questions around the price point of the hotel highlighting concerns around the business case for the purchase, renovation, and commercial operation. Joanne Bartholomew advised that with regards to the strategic acquisition of the building, Kirklees Council wanted to have a say in the hotel in the future, and controlling the asset was important to Cabinet. The 2.4 million pounds of Heritage Action Zone funding was for the building only. The development management company was in the business of understanding how to go to market and work with the hotel market, and Kirklees would be guided by their advice. The development management relationship helped engage in a professional management way with the hotel sector. There would then be a point which the Council would understand which partners were interested in doing business commercially, at that point a business case would be submitted to Cabinet with regards to capital investment and ongoing revenue agreement. At this point in time there was not a commitment to a hotel.

Councillor McBride advised that the George Hotel was an iconic building and one of the most important buildings across the Town. Rugby League was founded within that building and attempts were made to keep rugby league within, promises that had been given at that stage were genuine. The key elements in that area of the

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town were the improvements to the station, as it was the main route across the Pennines and would generate more business. The first point of reference for anyone arriving at Huddersfield Train Station would be the hotel. When the hotel was brought up to date it would accrue business from the station.

The Panel raised concerns about the decision to purchase the hotel and felt it was important that there was confidence that due diligence had been carried out. It was also important that purchases, such as the George Hotel were not made without a sound understanding of costs, commitments, risks along with the associated opportunities.

Delivering the Cultural Heart Programme

The Panel received a report on the Cultural Heart Programme presented by David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer of Economy and Skills. The report provided information on the Council's vision for a new Cultural Heart to be built around Queensgate Market and the existing Library and Art Gallery building, which he referred to as the Flagship Project and key regeneration project for the town centre. The vision included:

- Events/live music venue
- Food Hall
- Museum and art gallery
- Town Park
- A new library
- Replacement Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP)
- Improved links to the University
- New Restaurants and bars

On 16th November 2022, Cabinet approved the Cultural Heart, part of the Huddersfield Blueprint-Gateway 1 report. The report set out the Strategic Outline Case for the programme as the first step in the strategy for developing a robust master plan and the Outline Business Case at Gateway 2. The Outline Business Case followed the Green Book methodology and provided Cabinet with the appropriate information to determine the future direction of the programme beyond Gateway 2 and ensure the Council's resources were committed appropriately.

The Panel received updates on the recommendations noted at the Scrutiny Panel on 7th September 2021.

A legal framework firm had been appointed to assist legal services with the appointment of consultants and contractors, to secure vacant possessions of properties on the site and advise generally on other property related matters. The architects (Feilden Clegg Bradley) and the Engineers (Arup) were successfully appointed in October 2021. Negotiations were ongoing with existing lease holders of properties on the site and predominantly those associated with the Piazza Shopping Centre to free up the site for redevelopment.

The Council's vision for a new Cultural Heart was a significant undertaking beyond the normal resources and operation. Council Technical/Quality, Masterplan and

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Finance groups had been set up to provide technical and financial checks and balances at appropriate milestones. The sustainability strategy had been established and was in the process of agreeing the formal targets which would be measurable. The Social Value Portal was being used to measure outputs.

The Panel asked questions regarding the underground tunnels in the Town Centre and asked if more premises would be served underground, enabling the streets to be clear of traffic. David Glover advised that keeping the underground was a consideration as there were benefits of keeping them, but there were no plans to extend.

The Panel raised concerns around inflation costs within construction which could cause financial difficulties. The Panel asked if there would be further borrowing or re-scoping aspects of the plan. David Glover advised that inflation was one of the risks within the project, but that there was an allowance built into the budget for inflation.

The Panel raised concerns regarding ward councillors not being consulted or engaged in the project. David Glover advised that advice from the consultants was needed prior to engagement with Councillors, partners and end users. The project was at the stage where engagement with Councillors was now possible. The Panel advised that Councillors were end users and a recommendation was put forward that Councillors were engaged at an earlier stage.

The Panel raised questions on sustainability, with regards to the plans that were in place to reduce cars and emissions in the centre and what the future plans of other assets such as museums out of town were. David Glover advised that sustainability and plans for other assets were a consideration and would flow through the design.

The Panel raised concerns regarding recommendations previously made by the Panel, as these were 'noted' but were not actioned. David Glover advised that the project was not at the stage to action the recommendations, but reassured the Panel that the recommendations were recognised.

The Panel received a presentation from Helen Roberts and George Wilson, architects from Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios who had been appointed through a public competitive process for master planning and architects. They provided a summary of activities to date, which were:

- Reviewed the SOC Scheme summarised in Cabinet Report,
- Had undertaken detailed discussions with Kirklees stakeholders from the Library, Museum and Art Gallery, Highways, Major Projects and Parks and Open Spaces,
- Developed a detailed schedule of accommodation for each element of the brief,
- Produced Assessments of Significance for Queensgate Market and the existing Library, and met with Historic England and the Civic Society,
- Undertaken an impact analysis to determine the required capacity for car parking,
- Liaised with specialists in the location for the new 2,200 capacity venue,

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- Produced a variety of options for the location of key elements of the brief,
- Begun to draw conclusions on the principles and layout of the proposed Masterplan.

The vision for the park provided a major destination space which acted as the connector, the enabler, and the facilitator of a new vibrant outdoor cultural life for the town. The architects were working with Reform, a local landscape architect whose brief was to create:

- An inviting, welcoming place, all day, all year round,
- Culture - Art, Heritage, Performance and Literature,
- Nature - Biodiverse, Resilient, Healthy,
- A destination in itself – A reason to visit and a reason to stay,
- Space for all – Everyone welcome.

The next steps were:

- To further develop the approach to creating a new welcoming inclusive entrance and extension to the old Library,
- Look at options for developing the park to the north of the site,
- Look at the carbon and financial costs of removal/retention of the tunnels,
- Develop outline schemes for costing for all the cultural venues.

The Panel raised concerns around antisocial behaviour and safety of the public in the park, ensuring it was suitably illuminated on an evening for people walking through the park as the evening economy played an important role. It was noted that the park should also be a green open space and an open concrete jungle should be avoided. George Wilson advised that the park would be welcoming and be a family friendly useable space, 24 hours a day. The space would be lit, and it would be key that the buildings around the space would have the capacity to survey the park. With regards to a green space and flexibility of the space, part of the concept of the rooms was around having defined areas where competing activities would not take place at the same time.

The Panel noted that the presentation lacked information on active travel accessibility, getting across the ringway, using active travel modes which needed to be factored in, retained and enhanced. It was also noted that those with disabilities such as with dementia and the visually impaired would need to be considered as using stairs was quite a challenge. George Wilson advised that inclusion and diversity factors would be built into the design response. A key part of the sustainability targets was around transport, trying to promote a modal shift towards more active modes of transport. It was noted that the Queensgate ring road presented challenges but cycling facilities would be included in the development of the scheme.

The Panel asked questions around the users of the park with regards to the music venue, building in the accessibility needs, for example using speakers. George Wilson advised that there would be a variety of events in the park, and conversations were taking place with the landscape team and venue specialists on

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where equipment could be stored. The tunnel access could house some equipment such as barriers and staging, but it would be likely that individual events would be serviced through service vehicles.

The Panel asked a question around electric charging points, Helen Roberts advised that it was a requirement of the new car park to supply a certain number of electric charging points.

The Panel asked a question on the considerations of carbon production on concrete, David Glover advised that concrete was not the most sustainable material but there were low carbon concretes available and other materials would be considered.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the report and thanked officers and the architects for their attendance. The Panel welcomed plans relating to the Huddersfield Blueprint and the Cultural Heart and recommended that detailed consideration continue to be given to the following areas. It was agreed that:

1. Joanne Bartholomew submits a report on the Movement Strategy to a future Scrutiny Panel meeting.
2. Communication and engagement should be improved with Councillors and Scrutiny throughout the project.
3. Considerations are given to connectivity including how people travel around the town and between the bus and train stations.
4. Cross party working on plans for the Huddersfield Blueprint be considered,
5. The Cultural Heart plans factor in safety, accessibility, and sustainability.
6. The use of underground tunnels for deliveries be considered, favouring pedestrians within the town.

8 Work Programme 2021/22

The Panel considered the work programme for 2021/22 municipal year with Playable Spaces to be scheduled for the meeting on 7 April 2022.

RESOLVED: That the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year be noted.