

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE 11 DECEMBER 2002

**REPORT OF THE FORWARD PLAN AND REGENERATION MANAGER
(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Cllrs. Bulgin and Croad)**

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION FOR TAUNTON

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Borough Council's contribution towards the engagement of consultants to work on an Urban Design Framework for the town centre including masterplanning for two key areas, and an Urban Extension Study.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Implementing the Vision for Taunton requires the completion in the next year of an Urban Design Framework for Taunton town centre and masterplanning for key sites. Continuing the partnership which Taunton Vision has established provides the opportunity to share the costs of this important work. At the same time it is necessary to prepare an Urban Extension Study for Taunton and it would be ideal to use the same consultants.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council meeting on 15 October 2002 agreed the report of the Taunton Vision Commission and on the following day was agreed by Somerset County Council. The Vision for Taunton has been equally funded by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA), the Borough Council and the County Council.
- 3.2 The Vision for Taunton refers to the preparation of an Urban Design Framework for Taunton town centre and within this the preparation of detailed masterplans for major regeneration sites at Firepool and Tangier. These brownfield sites are allocated for mixed use redevelopment in the local plan. The Vision also refers to the preparation of an Urban Extension Study for Taunton, the purpose of which will be to identify the preferred strategy for the future development of the town as a Principal Urban Area, including the identification of a strategic employment site and any necessary strategic infrastructure, such as a new motorway junction and park and ride site.
- 3.3 The Executive meeting on 23 October 2002 agreed an interim policy for Taunton town centre redevelopment sites and delivering an urban renaissance.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 It has been agreed that the SWRDA, Borough and County Councils jointly fund the engagement of consultants to work on the Urban Design Framework for Taunton town centre and masterplanning of two key areas. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) have also

offered their support and assistance. It is important that the work is complete by the end of 2003. A draft brief for the Urban Design Framework has been prepared for consideration and agreement with our partners. Plans of the areas are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4.2 The first stage is the preparation of an Urban Design Framework. This will provide a context for the further enhancement, linkages and development of the town centre, comprising supplementary planning guidance. Within this framework the second stage will be the preparation of detailed masterplans for the regeneration of two areas:

- Firepool, including north of the railway, Somerset County Cricket Club and Coal Orchard including the Brewhouse
- Tangier, bus station, Castle Green and Goodlands Gardens

The masterplans will provide the basis for the delivery of a detailed, market tested solution for implementing the urban renaissance elements of the Vision for Taunton.

4.3 The cost of engaging consultants to undertake the Urban Design Framework is unknown, but is anticipated to be in excess of £200k. The costs of the Vision for Taunton have been shared between the SWRDA, Borough and County Councils and it is suggested that a similar partnership will continue for this next stage of work. To enable consultants to be appointed early in 2003 it would therefore be appropriate to recommend the Council to make a supplementary estimate to the budget for 2002/3 for a contribution of £50k towards the cost of consultants.

4.4 The County Council is preparing a draft brief for the Urban Extension Study for Taunton, as required by the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG10). The purpose of this will be to identify the preferred strategy for the further development of the town as a Principal Urban Area. It will identify a comprehensive community extension in a public transport corridor, including a strategic employment site and any necessary strategic infrastructure, such as a new motorway junction and park and ride site. The cost of this work is not known at this stage, but the Borough Council will be expected to make a contribution and it would be appropriate to make provision for a sum of £50k in the budget for 2003/4. There are interrelationships between the Urban Design Framework and the Urban Extension Study in terms of transport, economic development and land use issues. There would therefore be benefits from engaging the same consultants for both studies.

5. **CONCLUSIONS**

5.1 To progress the Vision for Taunton it is necessary to engage consultants to work on an Urban Design Framework for Taunton. The draft brief will need to be agreed with our partners and the Borough Council will need to contribute £50k in this financial year to the cost of consultants. There is an opportunity to continue our partnership with the SWERDA and County Council to share the costs of this important, urgent work to enable Taunton to attract investment and fulfil its role as a Principal Urban Area within the centre of the region.

5.2 The Vision for Taunton also refers to an Urban Extension Study to identify the future strategy for Taunton's development and the necessary infrastructure investments. A brief for the engagement of consultants will need to be agreed with our partners and the Borough Council will need to contribute £50k in the next financial year towards this.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that:

- 1) the Leader and responsible Executive Councillors be delegated to agree the final wording of the briefs for the engagement of consultants
- 2) the Council be recommended to agree a supplementary estimate for £50k in the current financial year towards the cost of engaging consultants for the Taunton town centre Urban Design Framework and masterplanning of major sites
- 3) provision be made in the 2003/4 budget for £50k contribution towards the cost of engaging consultants for the Taunton Urban Extension Study
- 4) the projects be steered by the Reference Group of members agreed by the Taunton Deane LSP.

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