

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 16 June 2011

PRESENT: Councillor Palethorpe (Chairman); Councillors Bottwood, Hadland, Malpas, and Yates

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Michael Hill

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th May 2011 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Baker spoke in respect of Item 6 – Proposed Boot and Shoe Conservation Area and commented that too much of Northampton's heritage had been lost and that he welcomed the preservation of older buildings in the area and favoured the proposed Conservation Area.

Mr Baker spoke also in respect of Item 7 – Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. He commented that he welcomed the report and its recommendations and remarked that Northampton was home to a number of pleasing old buildings in the town centre and noted that shop owners should be encouraged to make the lower part of shops more inviting, and reduce the amount of aluminium and plastic used in the structure.

Mr Varnsvery spoke in respect of Item 8 – Free Car Parking – Town Centre – Phase 1. He questioned what the consequences the introduction of free parking would be on the taxpayers of Northampton. He inferred that there was a lack of evidence to the report and the financial implication of the free car parking was not clear. He commented that the report was ill thought out and flawed and suggested that the establishment of a pre-decision scrutiny panel would have been a more positive approach.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

None

6. PROPOSED BOOT AND SHOE CONSERVATION AREA

Councillor Beardsworth congratulated officers on the report and the consultation process that had been undertaken, and leant her support to the proposed Conservation Area. Referring to page 18 (Appendix 3) of the report, she suggested that old style lighting be fitted to enhance the street scene.

Councillor Glynane praised the work of officers and commented that Northampton had done well in preserving its heritage. He suggested that an action plan be drafted to help drive and promote the Conservation Area and recommended that the possibility of heritage walks and guides be explored. He further commented that the proposed Conservation Area would bring

about opportunities for regeneration. He encouraged the motion of organising Conservation group to push forward the ideas encompassed in the report.

Councillor Wire DL commented that there had been considerable support for the proposed Conservation Area from the St James' Residents Association but reported that he would have preferred to have seen the shoe factories, in St James, encompassed into the conservation area. In response, Councillor Hadland explained that to include Churches shoe factory into the area would not work aesthetically, but suggested that consideration could be given to making it a listed building in the future.

Councillor Strachan expressed his satisfaction of the report and commented that the Labour group supported it. He asked for clarification with regards to section 4.2.2 of the report and the 'national permitted development rights'. He further questioned what plans would be put into place to ensure that the Council would be able to enforce issues related to the designation and asked if the Conservation Area would affect both internal and external parts of properties.

Councillor Yates, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, introduced and outlined the report. He explained that Northampton had emerged from a cottage industry and the heritage and history attached to the town should be regarded with utmost importance and the proposed Conservation Area would bolster the effort.

The Director of Planning and Regeneration explained that three options had been suggested and the consultation process had involved the distribution of 6,000 letters to residents. Of those who responded, 73% showed preference to option 1 with the majority of people wanting the area named the Boot and Shoe Conservation Area. In response to the comments made by Councillor Beardsworth, it was noted that further thought would be given to the street lighting and consideration given to ensuring that it would be sympathetic to the area. Addressing the issues raised by Councillor Strachan it was explained that the Conservation Area would only affect the external aspects of buildings and that the 'national permitted rights' of residents would result in residents having to make submission/application for changes to their properties such as the installation of satellite dishes and other external alterations. Responding to Councillor Wire's query, it was noted that should residents want to have the Churches Shoe factory listed as a building they would be able to make an application to English Heritage.

The Chairman commented that he was pleased with Conservation Area encompassing a larger area and encouraged the development of ensuring that the heritage of Northampton remained in tact.

RESOLVED:

1. That the consultation feedback and approved officer responses to the detailed representations set out in Appendix 3 of the report be noted
2. That a conservation area that covered the area as shown in Appendix 4 of the report be designated.
3. That the conservation area be named 'The Boot and Shoe Quarter' be agreed.
4. That the Director of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment be delegated to approve the finalised Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

7. SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Councillor Beardsworth commented that she was delighted with the report and congratulated the officers who had been involved. She reported that Northampton was home to many significant buildings and welcomed the sympathetic approach to Shopfront designs.

Councillor Wire welcomed the report and offered his appreciation to the officers involved. He commented that it was often necessary to look above the shopfronts to get an appreciation of some of the buildings and reported that it would be a positive step to move away from less desirable shop fronts to enhance the look of the town centre.

Councillor Yates, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, outlined the report and commented that there was a drive to encourage distinctiveness and individuality to the town's shops of which the Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document supported. He further commented that the development of the town would be gradual and improvements made over a number of years, rather than with immediate effect.

The Director of Planning and Regeneration explained that the Council adopted the original Design Guide in 1998 and that the more recent Guide encompassed much greater emphasis from Government. It was reported that a wide range of people had been involved and consulted and that the overall feedback had been very encouraging and the potential of the document could be regarded as a positive marketing tool.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Planning and Regeneration for the report and the officers involved. He emphasised that the document was not specific to Northampton Town Centre, but would be applicable to the entire town.

RESOLVED:

1. That the representations made to the consultation on the draft Shopfront Design Guide SPD and agreed the associated Officer responses in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.
2. That the Shopfront Design Guide attached in Appendix 2 of the report as a Supplementary Planning Document to replace the Shopfront Design Guide April 1998 be approved.
3. That the Director of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment be delegated the power to amend the presentation of the document (including the pictures used) prior to its publication.

8. FREE CAR PARKING - TOWN CENTRE - PHASE 1

Councillor Mennell commented that she was delighted with the report and welcomed the recommendations. She questioned if there were any further plans to decrease the annual cost of residents parking permits.

Councillor Beardsworth addressed Cabinet and while she welcomed the report she expressed some concerns with regards to the financial implications and questioned what the consequences would be if fewer people visited the area. She further questioned whether there were significant shopping offers that would encourage people to visit and noted that she would not be in favour of the Free Car Parking should it come at a cost to other services and

suggested that the report be taken to Overview and Scrutiny to examine the procedures to ensure there would be limited financial loss.

Councillor Glynane commented that he was encouraged that 'pay on foot' car parks would lead to an increase in visitors and shoppers in the Town Centre. However, it was noted that he had concerns about financial risks and did not want any consequential shortcomings passed on to tax payers. He concurred with Councillor Beardsworth suggestion that the report should be taken before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Strachan welcomed the proposals and hoped that the free Car Parking would attract visitors and new trade to the area. In reference to the evaluation due to take place in February 2012, he asked how the costs of the implementation on the recommendations would be measured.

Councillor Hadland, as the relevant Portfolio Holder introduced the report. He stated that free Car Parking was a serious attempt at encouraging and attracting people to Northampton. He further commented that extensive research had been conducted on the matter prior to the election and town centre parking had proved to be of major concern to residents. He congratulated the officer's ability to deliver the report in a short space of time especially as the Administration had wanted the free parking implemented before Christmas 2011. Referring to the aforementioned financial risks, he reported that the report did not take into consideration the amount of extra money being brought into the Town by an increase of shoppers, with people being attracted from further a field. The evaluation, to be held in February 2012, would provide information of the effect of free car parking and Councillor Hadland expressed his confidence that it would be of success and significantly improve the Town Centre.

Councillors Malpas and Yates welcomed the report and reported that the free parking on Sundays would attract people into the Town Centre and provide people with an increased incentive to visit Northampton.

The Chairman stated that the reaction of business to the proposed free parking had been very positive and he welcomed the report. It was noted that the incentive of free parking would be critical in attracting people to Northampton and spending money and booting trade. He commented that Overview and Scrutiny had not established a work programme but would welcome any measure taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the introduce of a free one hour car parking and a 40p reduction for the second hour in the following town centre premier car parks be agreed:
 - Mayorhold
 - St Michael's
 - St John's (multi-storey)
2. That car parking charges be reduced by 20p for the first hour (where one hour charges apply) and by 40p for the second hour in all of the other town centre premier car parks be agreed.
3. That free Sunday car parking in all town centre premier car parks be introduced

4. Cabinet noted the financial implications of the proposal contained in the report, as set out at paragraph 4.3.
5. That authority to implement changes to the proposal contained in the report, in response to the statutory consultation process, if deemed necessary and appropriate to do so, be delegated to the Chief Executive
6. That further proposals to improve town centre car parks may be brought forward to Cabinet as they are identified and developed.

9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

The meeting concluded at 19.08