



## CABINET REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>GREYFRIARS SITE DEVELOPMENT – PROGRESS REPORT AND PROPOSED WAY FORWARD</b>
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**AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC**

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	4 <sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2015
<b>Key Decision:</b>	NO
<b>Within Policy:</b>	Yes
<b>Policy Document:</b>	No
<b>Directorate:</b>	REGENERATION, ENTERPRISE AND PLANNING
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	COUNCILLOR T. HADLAND
<b>Ward(s)</b>	Castle

### **1. Purpose**

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- 1.1 This report provides a progress update on the Greyfriars site and recommends proposals for bringing the site forward for development.

### **2. Recommendations**

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- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the current progress being made with the demolition and clearance of the site.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the commissioning of a “concept plan” for the Greyfriars site within the timescale outlined in the report, in order to help bring the site forward for development.
- 2.3 Cabinet is asked to agree that plans are commenced for a new improved facility for coaches on the west island site of Greyfriars to act as a small transport hub within the site to complement North Gate and replace the Victoria Street Coach Stop.
- 2.4 That a further report is brought to Cabinet in due course.

### **3. Issues and Choices**

#### **3.1 Report Background**

- 3.1.1 Cabinet will be aware that work is currently underway with the Contractors, DSM, to demolish the old Greyfriars bus station building on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and subsequently clear the site to make it ready for future investment and development.
- 3.1.2 Alongside the demolition and clearance, a parallel process is underway to bring the site forward for development. In August 2014, a large public consultation event was held at the Guildhall to gauge people's ideas and aspirations for the site. 189 people offered just over 300 separate ideas for what they wanted to see on the site. A broad mix of end uses was suggested including: cultural, retail, leisure, transport hub, residential, commercial and community. A Cabinet Report detailing the outcome of this consultation was presented on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014.
- 3.1.3 The Council has already had a number of approaches from developers and investors who would be interested in taking the site forward.
- 3.1.4 Cabinet will also be aware that a range of Council led strategies and programmes have been put in place throughout 2014 in the Town Centre to drive higher levels of visitors and expenditure. These include free parking, the Business Incentive Scheme, the opening up of Abington Street and the improvements to the public realm and the Borough Council is working with National Express to relocate evening coach services to the North Gate Bus Station later this year
- 3.1.5 The future development of Project Angel, FOUR Northampton and the University development will also bring around 19,000 potential new customers into the town centre within the next three years.

#### **3.2 Issues**

- 3.2.1 It is considered it is now the right time to bring forward the Greyfriars site in the midst of the town centre and which is in the ownership of the Council.
- 3.2.2 There is also a need to respond to and build on the results of the public consultation, which demonstrated that there is wide public support for a mixed use development on the site. As outlined at 3.1.2, the public supported such uses as: cultural, retail, leisure, transport hub, residential, commercial and community.
- 3.2.3 As was stated in 3.1.3 and 3.1.4, there is great potential for further retail/leisure development in Northampton town centre and the Borough Council has ambitions for a modern development which would attract a regional customer base.

3.2.4 One area of work which has recently commenced is a feasibility for a new improved facility for coaches to act as a small transport hub within the site to complement North Gate and replace the Victoria Street Coach Stop, to provide a more accessible and customer friendly point for coaches. It is suggested that the western island site would be the best location. The facilities at Victoria Street such as Bus Shelters and Toilets have been designed so they can be relocated elsewhere in the town.

3.2.5 It is suggested that we procure an overarching “concept plan”, which would provide the evidence base to be able to recommend to NBC the best mix of uses on the site. Another important part would be to properly define the “red line” around the development, so that all areas of opportunity could be included. Appendix 1 provides further information. A possible timetable for the Concept Plan would be:-

4 <sup>th</sup> March	Cabinet approves the commissioning of a Concept Plan.
End March 2015	NBC commences procurement process by invitation to tender.
End April 2015	Organisation selected to undertake concept planning.
End June 2015	Draft Concept Plan detail.
July 2015	Further Cabinet Report recommends the way forward.

3.2.6 A full tender specification will be written to attract a nationally significant company. Recommended expertise includes:

- Strong commercial experience of retail or leisure led developments;
- Strong credibility in the sector including experience of concept and master planning;
- Experience of working with mixed retail/leisure developers in a town centre environment;
- Ability to analyse and present complex metrics in a persuasive way;
- Good networks and the ability to effect introductions with senior retail managers;
- Experience of the funding and investment market to be able to recommend financial strategies;
- Ability to write a development brief.

### 3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 **Do nothing:** not recommended, because the Greyfriars site would remain empty and derelict and Northampton would not benefit from development,

future business rates or additional retail spend. The reputation of the town centre would suffer a detrimental impact.

3.3.2 **Commission a full masterplan:** not recommended because this could produce too much of a prescriptive approach in terms of physical massing of buildings, when what is needed is a more flexible approach regarding the future mix of uses.

3.3.3 **Commission a concept plan:** recommended. This would produce a range of options based on evidence to permit NBC to be able to shape the best and most economically sustainable mix for the site.

## **4 IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS)**

### **4.3 Policy**

4.3.1 Recommendations within this report are within current policies.

4.3.2 The development of Greyfriars is part of the 2012-2015 Corporate Plan and forms part of the “Northampton Alive” strategy and suite of projects.

### **4.4 Resources and risk**

4.4.1 Suitable financial arrangements will need to be put in place to be able to commission and pay for the concept plan. Cost estimates are being sourced and these would be managed within existing budgets. With the exception of the initial survey work being commenced as stated at para 4.6, there will be no requirement to pay for any actual development to be undertaken in advance of the concept plan being approved at a future Cabinet.

### **4.5 Legal**

4.5.1 There will need to be appropriate procurement, tendering and contracting arrangements put in place.

### **4.6 Equality and Health**

4.6.1 This report is a progression from the earlier public consultation and the imminent demolition and clearance of the Greyfriars site.

4.6.2 Any option chosen from the concept plan will support the Council’s objective to promote equality and health. For example, the early feasibility work being carried out regarding transport (para 4.6 refers) will have a direct impact on public transport accessibility to the Town Centre for disabled and other vulnerable groups.

## **4.7 Consultation**

4.7.2 As stated above, the results from the public consultation event in August 2014 are being taken into account, the recommendation in this report to commission a concept plan to provide the best mix of uses for the site. Alongside this, our work with commercial organisations who we met at BCSC has provided us with a wide range of experts in the retail/leisure field who have been advising us on appropriate ways forward.

## **4.8 How the proposals deliver priority outcomes**

4.8.2 Northampton Alive: A vibrant town.

## **5 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

5.1 Appendix A shows the proposed site plan of the new improved coach facilities.

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