

## Overview Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3 May 2018

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)  
Cllr David Hurley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:        John Caller  
                          Lee Croxton  
                          Leslie Hills  
                          William Lambert  
                          Sara Langdale  
                          Gary Harding  
                          Lauren Sullivan

**Note:** Councillors:        Lyn Milner and Michael Wenban were also in attendance

David Hughes	Chief Executive
Stuart Bobby	Director (Corporate Services)
Sarah Parfitt	Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Vicky Nutley	Lawyer (Place) – Medway Council
Elizabeth Thornton	Property Services Manager
Lauren Wallis	Committee Services Officer (minutes)

**Note:** Stewart Deering, Philip Duckworth, Peter Langly-Smith and Piers Slater, representatives of Reef Estates Ltd were also in attendance.

### 57. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Michael Wenban, Cllr Gary Harding attended as Cllr Wenban's substitute.

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Makhan Singh, Cllr Lauren Sullivan attended as Cllr Singh's substitute.

### 58. To declare any interests which members may have on the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest members must state what their interest is.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 59. To consider whether any items in Part A will be considered in private or any items in Part B in public

None.

**60. To consider a report in respect of the disposals and acquisition of interests in land belonging to the Council and the redevelopment of land belonging to the Council**

The Chair welcomed representatives of Reef Estates Ltd to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation from Reef Estates Ltd which set out their proposal for a strategic joint venture to regenerate Gravesend Town Centre. The proposal was focused around three key elements – the St George’s Centre, the Eastern Quarter and the Western Quarter, all of which would require planning consent. Subject to planning permission, the following was proposed:

- St George’s Shopping Centre

This proposal would look to stabilise and invigorate the retail environment by introducing a leisure element at the rear of the site and to enhance the physical environment which would include consideration of the structure of the canopies in the mall. This would include improving the overall ‘look’ of the mall area, improving and modernising the entrances to the shopping centre and would include the rear access, new branding and the development of a specific leisure area with a boutique cinema and a small number of restaurants.

- Western Quarter

There was no planning permission in place for this area and therefore a new application would need to be submitted at the appropriate time which was likely to include residential and retail space as well as provision for car parking. The removal of the retail box units permitted by a previous consent, and a reduction in car parking would allow the arrangement of buildings and their relationship with the church to be reconsidered. The breakdown of massing would achieve an attractive permeable environment. There would also be a new route to the St George’s Centre from the church. Currently, the proposal provided a significant number of residential units, the exact tenure of which was yet to be established.

- Eastern Quarter

This element would build upon the planning consent that was already in place but was likely to suggest some variations to enhance to scheme. This would be a similar approach as the Western Quarter but without the hotel element. The scheme would include residential and retails space as well as provision for car parking. The proposal as it stands also provided for a significant number of residential units, the exact tenure of which was yet to be established.

Overall Reef Estates Ltd hoped that the mix of retail, restaurants, leisure and residential across these areas would to encourage and invigorate a day and night time vibe with a community feel.

Reef Estates Ltd advised that it had undertaken work with a number of local authorities across the country including one with Gloucester City Council and the regeneration of the Kings Walk Shopping Centre which had some similarities to the scheme being proposed in Gravesend Town Centre. Reef Estates Ltd had also undertaken projects in Acton, Bow,

Oxford city centre, Chiswick and Camden and invited Members and officers to come and inspect the results of one of these projects.

The Chair invited question from Members as follows:

- Concern was expressed about the proposed reduction in resident parking. Reef Estates Ltd clarified that the number of public parking spaces would remain the same. However given the proximity of the train station with its links to London and bus services, it was considered that a reduction of residential parking spaces was sensible and also in line with Government guidance.
- The need to “Gravesham-ise” the proposal was raised together with the need to include the river and the Town Pier. Shops, residences and restaurants etc should be designed for the Gravesham demographic to tempt people away from Bluewater. This was accepted by Reef Estates Ltd who advised they intended to take account the river and its locale together with local architecture.
- Following a question with regard to the timeframe of the proposed scheme, Members were advised that Reef Estates Ltd had invested a great deal of time and money undertaking due diligence which indicated their commitment to this initiative. Reef Estates Ltd was advised of the need to push forward proposals as the community had been disappointed by lack of action on previous schemes.
- Reef Estates Ltd confirmed that they would be engaging with local stakeholders in an effort to address any issues raised and there would be extensive consultation.
- With regard to the St George’s Centre, the use of interactive landscaping was suggested as well as public art. It was also suggested that an integrated play scheme throughout the centre might encourage families to visit and to stay awhile.
- The issue of the canopies was raised and whilst it was recognised that light needed to be introduced to the St George’s Centre, shelter from the rain might also need to be considered.
- Members were advised that during initial discussions with the church a play area had been mentioned.
- The accessibility for people with disabilities was raised and Members were advised that it was intended that high quality disabled access of all kinds would be included in the scheme as well as replacing steps with ramps where possible. CE advised that a good consultee would be the Gravesham Access Group of which Cllr Harding was a member.
- Members noted that the residential elements of the schemes would include studios, 1 bed, 2 bed and 3 bed properties.
- It was requested that all elements of the scheme including the leisure element be designed to cater to the whole age and wealth demographic.
- It was confirmed that it was hoped that the proposed boutique cinema would comprise of 3 to 4 small screens with 3 to 4 national chain restaurants above it. The need to integrate national, regional and local retail providers was also highlighted.
- Gravesham’s need for affordable housing was raised and Members were advised that proposals included affordable housing as well as an emphasis on the private rented sector.

The Chair highlighted the fact that if any Members were involved in the consultation process with Reef Estates Ltd then they would not be able to take in the determination of any planning application consideration in relation to these proposals.

The Chair thanked the representatives of Reef Estates Ltd for their interesting presentation and for the explanations and answers given.

**61. Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved** pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded during the following item of business because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that, if member of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**62. To consider a report in respect of the disposals and acquisition of interests in land belonging to the Council and the redevelopment of land belonging to the Council**

The Committee noted the indicative detailed financial information with regards to the proposals and the need for this to remain confidential at this stage for reasons for commercial sensitivity whilst negotiations were ongoing, with a further report to be considered in due course once these negotiations had been concluded.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm