



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Special Policy & Resources Committee

DATE: 5th March 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Forward Planning & Economic Development Manager, Julian Rudd

SUBJECT: Malton Town Centre Strategy

WARDS AFFECTED: Malton & Norton directly, adjacent areas indirectly

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Malton Town Centre Strategy, which has been prepared for Ryedale District Council and Yorkshire Forward by WSP and Atisreal, and to agree an approach to taking forward the outcomes of the Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- a. That the Malton Town Centre Strategy be welcomed as a positive step forward and that the conclusions be generally endorsed;
 - b. That this Council resolves to give appropriate regard to the Strategy as an important material planning consideration in making development control decisions that affect the sites in question. Also, that the Strategy is used as the basis for discussions with landowners and developers about these sites;
 - c. That the recommendations of the Strategy inform the production of the Ryedale Local Development Framework, with a view to, where appropriate, allocating sites and / or producing development briefs, for further public consultation;
 - d. That the District Council works closely with Yorkshire Forward, North Yorkshire County Council, other key partners, and with landowners and developers to progress the outcomes of the Strategy;
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- e. **That detailed development briefs for individual town centre sites be considered at a subsequent meeting.**

3.0 REASONS SUPPORTING DECISION

- 3.1 The conclusions and recommendations of the Malton Town Centre Strategy are based on a detailed investigation of technical, environmental and market conditions in Malton. The preferred options take into account the responses from two public consultation events that aroused much interest (over 250 people attended the second event). The recommended Strategy and the approach to the specific sites has the potential to directly address a significant number of the threats and limitations that have been identified by local communities and again and again in reports looking at Malton/Norton.
- 3.2 The implementation of the Strategy is intended to turn around the significant leakage of shoppers to centres outside of Ryedale and Malton's decline in some of the retail rankings. It is also intended to bring forward new town centre housing (especially affordable units) and to provide new entertainment and leisure opportunities. The approach set out in the Strategy also seeks to improve conditions for pedestrians and shoppers, and to lift the public realm generally, whilst maintaining key highway links and enhancing parking provision. The Strategy identifies potential development allocations at a time when the Council is seeking sites that will help address Ryedale's housing, employment and retail needs for at least the next 15 years. The sites are in the most sustainable locations in Ryedale, all being within the town centre or in walking distance of the town centre and the public transport and facilities of Malton / Norton – the principal service centre of the District.
- 3.3 The Study does not represent an end in itself, but it sets out a clear direction of travel. There is further work required to progress and fine-tune the preferred options, including assessing the detailed highway impacts of proposals and negotiations over leases. There are also important decisions to be made about the Council's own service delivery and land ownership if some elements of the Strategy are to move forward. Nevertheless, the Study represents a significant step forward for Malton/Norton and merits status as an important material consideration in the determination of applications. It is vital that the Council is active in developing and progressing the recommendations for action.

4.0 BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The Malton Town Centre Strategy is the overview and master plan element of a Malton Town Centre Renaissance & Enhancement Study that has been undertaken for Ryedale District Council and Yorkshire Forward by WSP (planning and regeneration consultants) and Atisreal

(property consultants). As part of the Renaissance Study, detailed development briefs for 10 town centre sites will also be produced and these will be presented to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.

4.2 The Malton Town Centre Renaissance Study is part of a well established initiative and this Committee agreed in July 2002 to support an 'action plan' approach for each of its market towns, starting with the twin-towns of Malton and Norton, to promote the redevelopment and enhancement of specific sites and areas. The action plan for each town would act as a strategic plan, with a central vision and a list of key concerns/issues to be addressed through the subsequent actions promoted in the Plan. The initiative was established to feed into the review of local and regional economic strategies, with the potential to identify strategic sites.

4.3 The particular need for 'a proactive and managed approach, led by Ryedale District Council in partnership with others, towards the future development of Malton and Norton' was considered necessary in the light of several reports and studies, including those produced through the Malton and Norton Market Towns Initiative. These identified a wide-range of recurring themes affecting the future of the towns (as of 2003), including:

- Loss of young people, low growth, low proportion of population being of working age
- Lack of local skilled labour, over-reliance on manual workforce, much of which is imported
- Problems with HGVs and traffic in town centres and local road network congestion
- Over-reliance on manufacturing and agriculture and vulnerable sectors of the economy
- Under exploited tourism, low quality offer but potential to improve
- Need for quality sites for growth, especially employment, and more employment land generally
- Problems with retail unit size and quality
- Limited quality in leisure and entertainment, restaurants, pubs etc
- Forecast decline in competitiveness and growth unless action occurs
- Need to support and encourage growth of service sector and white-collar jobs, with more jobs in banking, finance, distribution, hotels and restaurants. Need also to address the potential skills shortage.
- Quality of town centres, pedestrian unfriendly, underused riverside
- Need for specialist retail offer, including market & farmers market
- Need for more housing choices and sites – develop town living
- Need to increase local population
- Need to upgrade transport interchange, create gateway and better links between rail and bus, with better parking

the following aim for its initiative to drive forward change and improvement in Malton / Norton:

‘A regeneration and enhancement project to identify, coordinate, encourage and facilitate land use actions and changes to tackle identified issues and problems, in particular those highlighted through the Malton and Norton Partnership, through a partnership approach. The Plan will aim to make best use of previously developed land, and will include allocation of key sites for redevelopment. The Plan will coordinate closely with the Transportation Strategy that is being prepared for Malton and Norton by NYCC, and with the work of the Malton and Norton Partnership.’

4.5 This initiative has led to two major studies of town centre development opportunities:

- A 2004 *River-Rail Corridor Redevelopment Study*, co-funded by Yorkshire Forward and Ryedale District Council, and led by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners. This examined 6 ‘hard to develop’ brownfield sites (including an 10 hectare site adjacent to the railway station) within the central river–rail corridor that links Malton and Norton. The sites have potential to accommodate development and enhancements that would address the identified issues and shortfalls that face Malton/Norton, but face several obstacles to their redevelopment, including common issues such as flood risk, access difficulties and problems of road network capacity. The River-Rail Corridor Study identified a preferred redevelopment option for each, together with an action plan for achieving this, and was endorsed by this Committee in June 2004. This has led to many negotiations with developers and landowners, however on the ground change has so far proved challenging in advance A64 junction improvements to provide town centre highway capacity. Development proposals have also been hampered by increasing difficulty in overcoming flood risk issues, and by slow progress in negotiations between landowners. Nevertheless, efforts continue to bring forward these sites and this will be taken forward through the LDF, unless schemes come forward ahead of that.
- The *Malton Town Centre Renaissance & Enhancement Study*, which is the subject of this report and is the second stage of the 2-part approach to evidence building needed to take forward the Council’s initiative and to inform the production of the LDF. This concentrates on Malton town centre as this was identified in the Ryedale Retail Capacity Study as being, by some margin, the principle retail centre of Ryedale and with most capacity to improve. Furthermore, Norton town centre issues formed part of

the considerations in the River-Rail Corridor Study. Further information on the content of the Renaissance Study (which is presented in the form of a Malton Town Centre Strategy) is set out in Section 6 below and at Annex A.

- 4.6 In reality, there has been a wide range of initiatives that have since identified and moved forward measures to address the issues set out in paragraph 4.2 above. These include North Yorkshire County Council's 2005 Malton and Norton Transportation Strategy plus the 2006 Ryedale Employment Land Review and the 2006 Ryedale Retail Capacity Study. There is also a direct relationship with current development proposals such as the Business & Technology Park (including an Enterprise Centre) at Old Malton and the joint scheme with North Yorkshire County Council to enhance Commercial Street. This Council's collection of developer contributions to fund A64 junction improvements is also stems from this original initiative, as do many elements of the 2005 LDF Core Strategy. The market has also responded in certain areas, such as the improvement in the range of restaurants and bars that has occurred in Malton. Nevertheless, there remains much to address through LDF policies and proposals and through individual projects.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 All but one of the ten sites considered in this Study are within the development limits for Malton and Norton, as defined in the adopted Ryedale Local Plan. The only exception is land at the former Showfield off Pasture Lane, which is also designated as a 'Visually Important Undeveloped Area'. Two of the sites (land at Highfield Road and East Mount / Old Maltongate) are designated as public open space in the Local Plan. Several of the sites fall within the 'Town Centre Commercial Limits' and / or in the Malton Conservation Area, and / or contain listed buildings.
- 5.2 The Study deals with proposals linked closely to achieving the Council's priority of providing opportunity and choice for all in housing and employment. There are also strong positive associations with other Ryedale District Council priorities of diverse and vibrant communities and a sustainable built and natural environment. There is a strong positive relationship between this Study and the aims and action plans of the Access and Communication, Developing Opportunities and Landscape and Environment Themes of the Ryedale Community Plan.

6.0 REPORT

6.1 In March 2007, a partnership of WSP planning and regeneration, Atisreal property consultants and Bauman Lyons architects were appointed to carry out the Malton Town Centre Renaissance Study. The Study is funded by Ryedale District Council (using Planning Delivery Grant) and Yorkshire Forward. The brief was to:

'Carry out a town centre renaissance and enhancement study to identify and agree actions to bring new economic vitality to Malton town centre. This will require full regard for urban design issues, changes to traffic flows and management, and other actions to boost retail and leisure activities and town centre living and working. This work will, crucially, promote and guide redevelopment of several key brownfield sites in the town centre, and agree an approach that will allow the town's livestock market to be successfully relocated [should this be considered appropriate].

6.2 The requirement was for a comprehensive overview of the potential of ten identified areas for redevelopment and enhancement, and strong recommendations about the most suitable future strategy to be adopted towards each site in order to deliver the aims of the project. The output should be a master plan and overview, supported by individual development briefs detailing the preferred strategy for each site / area. The recommendations for each area must be deliverable and viable and be informed by meaningful public consultation. The outputs from the Study must be easily transferable to the emerging Ryedale Local Development Framework and projects should be capable of being taken forward within the short-medium term.

6.3 In addition to addressing relevant issues (e.g. housing needs) that are set out in paragraph 4.2 above, the key objectives for the Study included: -

- Development that expands and strengthens the sub-regional role of Malton/Norton and which assists in bolstering Malton's role as the main service centre for the remainder of Ryedale.
- Strengthening of Malton as a quality retail centre that Ryedale residents are more likely to use for their shopping needs. Address identified retail deficiencies and support and facilitate new development, redevelopment and enhancement that will address the significant leakage of local shoppers to adjoining areas and general retail health issues, including under representation in certain sectors.

- Implement enhancements to Malton Market Place and Wheelgate, and lift the overall quality and visual appearance of the historic town centre.
- Investigate successful relocation of the Livestock market to alternative site within or adjacent to Malton (NB this takes forward the recommendation in the Ryedale Retail Capacity Study, which was endorsed by this Committee in April 2006, that the Council fully explore the potential of the Cattlemarket site, so as to determine the most appropriate mix of uses, potential sites for relocating the livestock market to, the investment market's view of the site, and so on'.
- Enhance town centre café bar/restaurant/pub activity and increase opportunities for outdoor drinking and eating in attractive surroundings.
- Encourage an enhanced specialist retail sector, including an enhanced role for the markets, in particular the farmers market, and increased opportunities to purchase locally produced food.
- Create a significantly more active and more public town centre, with new quality public space provided.
- Enhance Malton town centre as an environment for pedestrians and shoppers and create environments that have safe and convenient access for the motor vehicle but which have priority given to pedestrians in appropriate areas.
- Maintain an accessible and viable town centre, and improve town centre parking facilities to help support other key objectives.
- Speed the effective implementation of the Malton and Norton Transportation Strategy, including improved management of traffic movements.

6.4 The ten specific sites / areas that the consultants were asked to investigate and make recommendations for were:

- Livestock Market Area, including relocation or retention of the Livestock Market
- Malton Market Place
- Land between Greengate and Wheelgate
- Wentworth Street Car Park
- Former Showfield off Pasture Lane
- Recreational site off Highfield Road
- Tennis and Bowls Site at Old Maltongate / East Mount

- Former Mount Hotel area
- Wheelgate
- York House

6.5 The master plan element of the Renaissance Study has now been received from WSP et al and the Executive Summary is reproduced at Annex A under the title 'A Strategy for Malton Town Centre'. A copy of the full Town Centre Strategy will be emailed to all Members and a presentation for members and officers will take place at 5pm on 5 March 2008, ahead of the Policy & Resources Committee. The detailed development briefs for the identified sites / areas that flow from the Strategy will be considered at a subsequent meeting of this Committee, as their content depends on Member's acceptance of the over-arching principles and approach.

6.6 The detailed assessments and recommendations of the Town Centre Strategy can be seen in the Executive Summary at Annex A and in the full version of the Strategy will be emailed to all Members (please note that the draft will still contain some typographical and drafting errors). Further information will also be provided at the presentation and question and answer session with the consultants on 5 March. Consequently, this report does not repeat the detail that is set out in the Strategy. Furthermore, whilst independent consultants have prepared the Strategy it has been produced with comments from District Council officers and with some contribution from North Yorkshire County Highways officers.

6.7 In view of the above, this report seeks to inform and assist member's response to the Strategy. The following factors are considered pertinent:

- Malton and Norton are identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) as Ryedale's Principal Town and the Council is required through the RSS to deliver economic growth and local regeneration at Malton and to strengthen the role and performance of the town centre. This is notwithstanding all of the other imperatives to act in such a way.
- The Ryedale Retail Capacity Study, which was endorsed by this Committee in April 2006, highlighted that Malton's national retail ranking has fallen 171 places between 1995 and 2004, whilst other nearby centres, such as Beverley, Thirsk and Northallerton has improved their position. It also noted that 'One notable weakness in Malton's retail provision is the quality of the comparison retail offer. In particular, a key deficiency is the lack of breadth and depth in the clothing sub-sector, with only a small

number of units and a limited range of operators. In terms of loss of local shoppers to centres outside of Ryedale, the Study showed that town centres and individual foodstores located within Ryedale retain approximately 63% of all convenience expenditure of residents, which is a relatively low level of retention, even given the rural nature of the District. Furthermore, Malton town centre retains only 17% of the overall comparison expenditure of residents. The overall retention of stores located within the District is only 25% of all comparison expenditure. The main outflow for both convenience and comparison expenditure is to stores located in and on the edge of Scarborough and York. These have a significant influence over the shopping habits of the District's residents.

- The Ryedale Retail Study concluded that there is scope for some additional convenience floorspace (up around 30,000 sq ft by 2015) and that it would be clearly undesirable to see the retention rate, which is currently at 63%, fall further. Consequently, there is a need to increase the health and vitality of the existing shopping centres and to react to individual application for new or expanded stores. Indeed, the study recommends that the Council should adopt a policy aspiration that seeks to gradually increase this retention level to 80% over the LDF period.
- The Retail Study also established that there is a clear quantitative and qualitative need and capacity for further comparison floorspace (up to around 77,500 sq ft) within the District. This principally relates to the retail offer within Malton, which is considered to be failing to fulfil its maximum potential as the District's principal centre. The Study identifies that it would be difficult to accommodate the floorspace requirements of retailers within the existing primary shopping area of the town. Malton town centre contains a large amount of property that is small and unsuited to the requirements of modern-day retailers. Therefore, in order to meet the demand from high street operators that are currently missing from Malton there is a need for a development to provide newer, larger units than those that presently exist. This will be necessary if Malton's position in the retail rankings is to be maintained or improved. Overall, there is scope to increase the current retention levels for both convenience and comparison goods.
- The recommendation to relocate the Livestock Market will raise significant opposition and / or concern in some quarters and there will be few people who have not enjoyed the experience of wandering through the Livestock Market when in full-swing. Conversely, it is difficult to justify the long-term use of this key

town centre site as an informal and shabby parking area for the great majority of the time. The approach put forward seeks retention of the Livestock Market, which is recognised as an important facility for Malton and the surrounding area, within walking distance of the town centre and this appears to be the best compromise. Furthermore, the Council's own Retail Capacity Study concluded that 'Given the close adjacency of the site to the defined town centre, the site also appears to offer good potential for retail uses, perhaps as part of a mixed-use development. Further work would be required to establish the most suitable mix of uses for the site. Nevertheless, on the basis of our initial assessment, we consider that the site would be an appropriate location for a small number of unit shops to attract the type of comparison sector outlets that are presently missing from Malton's offer.' However, the recommended Strategy will require detailed negotiations and a funding package that will almost certainly depend on an element of enabling development alongside the Market operation on the former Showfield site. This also requires detailed assessment of the highway implications of the proposal (as do many of the recommendations of the Strategy).

- The proposal to release part of the Wentworth Street Car Park for a new medium – high grade supermarket will raise some concerns in terms of retail capacity and impact on other traders. However, the consultants have given many examples of the beneficial impact of such an approach in similar circumstances to Malton's (including nearby Beverley). The proposal also has clear potential to add a significant new dimension to the town centre retail offer.
- The proposals to create a largely traffic-free section along the northern side of the Market Place were strongly supported at the public consultation for this Study. These reflect the conclusion of the Ryedale Retail Study which concluded that 'Town centre congestion and vehicular-pedestrian conflict is a key shortcoming, particularly in Malton' and that 'We consider that the District Council should seek to tackle these environmental shortcomings...for instance, the Council could consider the removal of some/all car parking from Market Place in Malton, which would result in a more pedestrian-friendly environment better suited to the conservation area setting, particularly if Market Place was at least partly pedestrianised. Redevelopment of the Cattlemarket site may be a suitable location for the relocated parking. Improvements to some shop frontages along Wheelgate could also be targeted through the LDF'. Nevertheless, there will inevitably be concerns from some traders and it will be necessary to assess the detailed highway

implications through a more detailed proposal and consultation. This latter point is taken forward in the Strategy through recommendations for Wheelgate.

- Proposals for residential development on part or whole of several of the sites can help achieve the Council's five-year housing land supply and bring increased activity and life to Malton town centre, whilst addressing the crucial need for more affordable housing units.
- The proposals for York House will require negotiations with several parties if they are to be progressed. However, the proposal offers a potential solution to the accommodation needs of several users and a valuable use for a very important building. Similarly, the potentially beneficial scheme to create a new road access to the rear of Wheelgate will now need careful negotiations with landowners.
- There will be implications of several of the proposals for parking provision and regimes in Malton. Initial discussions with the Commercial Services Manager have indicated that around 15 paying parking places would be lost through the first phase of the Malton Market Place scheme, together with a number of free places. However, moving the Saturday market to the new traffic free area would release many more of the spaces that are currently occupied by the market when it operates. The Livestock Market area currently provides around 60 informal parking spaces and the proposals of the Strategy would significantly increase this provision, and so could replace spaces lost at Wentworth Street. However, sale of the Wentworth Street site to a supermarket operator may introduce some free parking for supermarket users. It will be important to replace long stay provision that may be lost (with a potential increase in long stay spaces at Water Lane) and to agree the length of any free provision. It would be preferable to accommodate the parking needs of a relocated Livestock market on the new site. However, as with other detailed considerations, these matters will need to be taken account of in progressing the recommendations of the Strategy.

7.0 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.1 The Council has choices about:

- whether it accepts and endorses the conclusions and recommendations of the Strategy;
- whether it affords the Strategy any weight in decision making in advance of the LDF;

- whether it acts to progress the outcomes and recommendations of the Strategy.
- 7.2 Your officers believe that there are strong reasons for accepting the general conclusions of this Strategy and for actively progressing the outcomes, particularly through the LDF. The development of these sites in the general manner proposed would closely reflect national and regional policies, and, vitally, would do a considerable amount to address many of the issues that have been highlighted as threats or deficiencies in the Ryedale Retail Capacity Study, Amion Report, the Malton and Norton Health Checks and a considerable number of reports before them.
- 7.3 It is important, though, to consider carefully the weight that should be attached to the Strategy at this stage. It does reflect closely many national and regional policies and it has been completed in the light of a considerable input from local residents, together with a detailed assessment of local conditions. It is therefore quite valid to use it as an important material planning consideration in assessing any planning application that may be received in advance of developing the Strategy and accompanying development briefs through the Ryedale LDF. In these terms it could be used to reject an application that, for example, was incompatible with the overall Town Centre Strategy or the specific recommendations developed for one of these sites.
- 7.4 However, it is clear that there is still further work required on the finer details of some of the proposals in the Strategy, including detailed analysis of highway impacts of the various proposals. It must be noted that this Council hasn't carried out a formal consultation with bodies such as North Yorkshire County Council (although their Highway Officers have had some input into the Study) and English Heritage about the proposals in the Study and it would therefore be wrong to give the full status of 'supplementary planning guidance' to the Study at this stage. Consequently it is believed that further work should now be undertaken with a view to incorporating the outcomes of the Study within the emerging Ryedale LDF, where further public consultation would be required if the sites are to be formally allocated.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 At this stage, the proposal is to endorse the Strategy, to give it some weight in the planning process and to take it further through the LDF and through specific work with partners. The risk involved in giving the Strategy any greater weight than that is discussed above and is considered to be unacceptable.

- 8.2 However, there would conversely be a huge risk in rejecting the outcomes of the Strategy, in giving it no weight in decision-making and of ignoring it in the LDF. Whilst fine-tuning is required, the potential benefits to the economy and the community of achieving the preferred visions for these sites are enormous. To abandon this approach would mean that there was little scope for transformational change and improvement of Malton town centre, Ryedale's principal shopping area.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The recommendations of this report do not have direct financial implications. However, there potential financial impacts in taking forward those elements of this Strategy where there will almost certainly be a need for public sector funding, such as public realm improvements to Malton Market Place and Wheelgate. However, these projects would be considered through separate bids for funding.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 A broad range of strategies and policies from national to local level support the principles behind this Strategy of making market towns such as Malton and Norton the focus for physical and economic development and social/community life in rural areas. These factors give a clear mandate to take forward the proposals for the identified sites, as does the input through consultations with the general public and specific consultations with local retailers and farmers.
- 10.2 However, the aim must be for any development to provide maximum benefit to the local community. In particular, issues such as strengthening Malton as a retail centre and reversing leakage of shoppers, together with provision of housing and affordable housing, and an enhanced town centre with improved parking and public areas, can and should be addressed through the development of these sites. Indeed, the Strategy describes the current situation as a 'once in a generation' opportunity to strengthen Malton's position as the retail and service of Ryedale, such is the importance of the potential relationships between the key sites in question.
- 10.3 This Study sets out a clear way forward for these important sites, in a way that achieves this aim and addresses the future of the town's livestock market. In promoting an approach that seeks to reverse the leakage of shoppers, the Strategy is also supporting way forward that is sustainable and allows people to shop closer to their home. The Strategy does not take the Council and partners to a final destination or plot out every step of the way in getting there – but it does firmly establish the direction and move us a considerable way towards achieving that. It is now the challenge facing the Council and its partners to progress the Strategy in a way that realises all of the

benefits that may be possible, whilst reacting in a reasonable way to any concerns that exist or may emerge.

Background Papers:

Malton & Norton River Rail Corridor Enhancement Study, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2004

Ryedale Retail Capacity Study, Roger Tym & Partners, 2006

Malton and Norton Healthchecks, Malton & Norton Partnership, 2001 and 2003

Malton and Norton Initial Business Plan, Malton and Norton Partnership, 2007

Malton and Norton Economic Needs and Impact Analysis, Amion Consulting, 2002.

OFFICER CONTACT:

Julian Rudd, Forward Planning & Economic Development Manager, Tel: 01653 600666 ext 327, E-mail: julian.rudd@ryedale.gov.uk