


**Falkirk Council
Community Services**

**Minute of Meeting of Grangemouth Development Group
Monday 18 August 2008**

Present: Pete Reid, Strategic Projects Manager, Falkirk Council
Councillor Alistair McNeill, Chair - Grangemouth Development Group
Councillor Allyson Black
Councillor Joe Lemetti, Vice Convenor - Economic Development Committee
Councillor Robert Spears
Walter Inglis, Grangemouth Community Council & Grangemouth
Community Reference Group
Allan McCallum, Grangemouth Community Council
Malcolm Richards, Grangemouth Community Council
Les Burkey, Grangemouth Retailers Core Group
Lynne Rennie, Grangemouth Retailers Core Group
Nadeem Rabbini, Grangemouth Retailers Core Group
Drew Lambert, Reith Lambert, Surveyors
Robin McClory, ADF Architects
Frank McChord, Local Community Planning Officer, Falkirk Council
Julie Reid, Grangemouth Local Community Planning
Tom Gardner, Central Scotland Police
Mary Jane Armstrong, Town Centre Management Ltd

Apologies: Councillor Craig Martin
Councillor Angus MacDonald
Alastair Mitchell, Town Centre Management Ltd

Circulation: Maureen Campbell, Director of Community Services
Douglas Duff, Head of Economic Development
Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services

1.0. PREVIOUS MINUTES

1.1 Previous Minutes were accepted as being accurate. Proposed by Walter Inglis and seconded by Alastair McNeill, Chair.

2.0. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Les Burkey enquired how item 4.3 of the Minute (rent reduction for Grangemouth traders) should be progressed.

Councillor Lemetti stated he would meet with the Grangemouth Core Retailer Group in the first instance to discuss further.

3.0. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

3.1 Drew Lambert updated the group on regeneration masterplan progress:-

- Meeting held with HSE to review the masterplan in context of HSE hazard consultation zones for the town.
- Confirmed assessment criteria of HSE has been tightened, as of March 2008, with removal of significant clause (Clause 4C) which requires HSE to treat any application as if a town or community did not exist.
- Consequence of these legislation changes means elements of the masterplan would likely require some redesign, however the overall meeting was positive with HSE keen to work closely with the developers and Falkirk Council.

3.2 A plan of the consultation affecting Grangemouth Town Centre was circulated. Copy attached with this Minute.

3.3 Robin McClory explained in further detail consequences of HSE model on current design. Clause 4C related to the PADHI Plus matrix - a risk assessment model where all planning applications within consultation zone required to be assessed in relation to type, size and consequence to the HSE. HSE can take one of three actions:-

- a) Do not advise against.
- b) Advise against.
- c) Advise against with call-in to Scottish Ministers.

Pre March 2008 Clause 4C allowed HSE to recognise town centres. Post 2008 HSE must now assume no town centre in place.

Grangemouth Town Centre falls within two zones: inner zone and middle zone (see plan).

The Planning authority is obliged to take the HSE advice (items (a) and (b) into account when it makes a decision on any planning application(s).

3.4 Confirmation was sought by the group as to how the masterplan designs would sit with HSE assessment criteria.

Robin McClory noted that a HSE recommendation in the “do not advise against” category would in all likelihood not be achievable. Meetings with Falkirk Council and HSE have been positive and the developers were now progressing a revised

strategy where a detailed planning application or series of applications would be submitted rather than an initial outline planning application. This was currently work in progress, liaising with Falkirk Council Development Services.

Planning application strategy was to work closely with HSE, finalise basis of detailed planning applications in consultation zone with HSE and Falkirk Council, and examine the possibility of modifying the building uses within the hazard consultation zones.

Robin McClory clarified to the group that while it is not anticipated that there would be major changes to the proposals at this stage, subject to further detailed design, every effort must be undertaken to fulfill the requirements of the HSE.

3.5 Julie Reid questioned why this had not been looked at before. As previously, Pete Reid confirmed that through the consultation process it was made clear HSE consents would be a significant deciding factor; made more difficult by the recent legislation changes post consultation.

3.6 Councillor Spears requested that an officer from Development Services attends a future meeting to give presentation on the consultation zones and explain the PADHI matrix of assessment.

3.7 Walter Inglis expressed concern at the effects of redevelopment of the Town Centre caused by adjacent business users and stated the Community will no longer accept constraints or watering down of proposals beneficial to the Community by uncertainties created by and arising from the proximity of chemical and petrochemical businesses generating at or on the Community's boundaries.

Drew Lambert reiterated that the meeting with HSE had been positive and it was his clients intention to progress the original masterplan and submit a series of detailed planning applications.

3.8 Councillor Spears enquired whether the present credit crunch crisis would affect delivery of the scheme.

Drew confirmed that it was still his clients intention to fully deliver the scheme. The developers were a large property company with financial backing to deliver the regeneration. There was a need however to remove all uncertainty for funders and the present phase of this regeneration proposal fitted well with the current development cycle where delivery would occur as the market started to emerge from the current downturns.

3.9 Les Burkey asked how long regeneration would take.

Robin McClory noted that it may take an anticipated 2-3 years for works to commence on site subject to there being no significant legislative changes, all

required statutory approvals and permissions being granted and with the overall financial situation improving.

- 3.10 Les Burkey intimated that the current performance of the town centre as a consequence of ASDA opening was not reassuring for traders or the community, post the extensive community consultation of the masterplan.

Pete Reid confirmed that there was much professional activity being undertaken to ensure that the planning and legal positions of the developer and Council were progressed. Les' statement was understood especially after all the consultation activity, as the community did not always understand the procedures. Alastair McNeil suggested a press release or statement of current activity could be issued.

4.0. TOWN CENTRE PROMOTION

- 4.1 Mary Jane Armstrong updated the group on present activity:-

- Farmers Market is not trading successfully despite banners, radio advertising and leaflet drop in ASDA. TCM Ltd were subsidising the markets until December when they would be reviewed. These markets were always uncertain due to the weekday format instead of weekends. All operators are committed at weekends in major retailing centres.
- The Cheque It Out campaign had awarded their first prize. Acknowledged that the scheme had some initial teething and management problems at out-set but these had now been resolved with the businesses.
- Les Burkey stated the Cheque It Out campaign was a good scheme for retailers and there was a need to ensure the town continued to be talked up within the community.
- The Christmas campaign is starting in November with all events booked.
- Replacement tenancy board changes were being finalised.

- 4.2 Walter Inglis suggested some additional community research about the town centre could be undertaken as to what they wanted.

Pete Reid cautioned that similar previous exercises had shown national retailers were wanted and unrealistic expectation of what could be delivered now in terms of the current dated design of the centre and retail hierarchy of Grangemouth. He confirmed that he would review the marketing of vacant units but these were difficult to let giving fit-out costs of traders against short term nature of leases on offer.

- 4.3 Councillor Spears stated the Cheque It Out campaign had not worked and failed. This was denied by Les Burkey who confirmed that the retailers felt it had worked well. Mary Jane Armstrong confirmed that due to its success in Grangemouth, the scheme was being rolled out to the other district centres where retailers were keen to adopt this campaign.
- 4.4 Pete Reid noted that there was now a good strong retailer core group representing traders in Grangemouth and there was a need for this group to communicate with all other town centre traders. Potential with Falkirk College to be explored regarding promotion of the town centre or including market research.
- 4.5 There was some discussion about previous traders represented in the town and traders now needed for the town. Pete Reid reiterated the present difficulty of attracting traders to Grangemouth given current retail unit sizes. Drew Lambert considered the size of units available in Grangemouth were currently too small for national traders. Drew Lambert confirmed letting space in Grangemouth is currently difficult.
- 4.6 Les Burkey expressed concern that the retailers currently expressing an interest in the masterplan may not come when the scheme is completed.

Drew Lambert advised that the retail offering within the masterplan would be change to meet tenant demand and as the economy started to pick up retailers will be looking for space.

5.0. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 Pete Reid suggested now was the correct time to form a sub group to consider a location and design for reestablishing the “Old Toon Knock” (town clock). He advised he saw this as a community based project which Falkirk Council would be happy to facilitate similar to the Bo’ness Mining Memorial. Local community based groups could apply for external funding and suggested like the Bo’ness Project, the Community Council may wish to take a specific lead.

Walter Inglis advised that the matter would be put on the agenda for the next Community Council meeting.

Pete Reid suggested early discussions with Bo’ness Community Council would be useful to indicate how their project was delivered.

- 5.2 Les Burkey raised concerns about the roof in York Arcade and water penetration. Pete Reid agreed to have this investigated and repaired.

Joe Lemetti apologised he would not be able to be at the next meeting due to the Mod.

The date of the next meeting will be changed due to October week school holidays and Mod.

6.0. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.