

2 October 2008

St Matthew's Quarter Update

Ward(s): St Matthew's

Portfolios: Cllr Adrian Andrew – Regeneration and Enterprise

Summary of report:

This report provides an update on progress with the delivery of the St Matthew's Quarter project, including progress with the temporary relocation of the market. Panel members are asked to receive this progress report.

Panel members are also asked to undertake the following:

- The report includes a summary of the discussions of the Markets Working Group held on the 3rd September 2008, and Scrutiny Panel is asked to endorse the recommendations from that meeting.
- Since the work of the Markets Working Group to temporarily relocate the market to Park Street and the Bridge is largely complete, the Panel is asked to replace that Group with a St Matthew's Quarter Working Group to consider a wider remit around the redevelopment of the St Matthew's Quarter.

Background papers:

Minutes of Markets Working Group meeting, 3rd September 2008.

Reason for scrutiny:

The temporary relocation of the market is a vital element of the St Matthew's Quarter project to regenerate one of the key areas of Walsall town centre. As such, Scrutiny Panel recognised the importance of the project and the need to provide a detailed input into the market relocation. Subsequently, the Markets Working Group was initiated to provide this level of input, and the Group was directed to consider the design options for the relocation of Walsall market and potential funding and management options. As noted below these tasks have been largely completed.

Progress with market relocation

The Markets Working Group and Scrutiny Panel have been working with the Market Traders' Association, Council officers and market specialist consultancy Quarterbridge on the design and layout of the temporarily relocated market. This process concluded with a planning application for the relocation of the market which secured planning consent at Development Control Committee on the 27th August 2008.

Preliminary work to enable the relocation of the market has commenced with the removal of the planters in Park Street and other street furniture, whilst the electrical

contractor is currently on site. The first phase of refurbishment of the existing stalls has commenced and it is anticipated that these will be installed in their new locations from week commencing the 6th October 2008. It is currently envisaged that the market move will take place in phases and be completed by the first week of November. The plan for the temporary relocation of the market was considered and endorsed by Scrutiny Panel on the 19th June 2008, and a series of recommendations made to Cabinet at its July 2008 meeting.

Progress with the St Matthew's Quarter project

Despite unprecedented market conditions, the developer remains committed to the project. Its discussions continue with intended anchor tenants for the development, and with officers in respect of the revised scheme layout.

The delivery of the project requires the acquisition by the developer of Council-owned land in Digbeth and Lower Hall Lane, and is expected to facilitate the permanent relocation of the market into Lower Hall Lane. It will also provide the opportunity to review options for the future management of the market and these matters will be set out in a formal development agreement between the Council and Norton & Profitt/St Modwen and include the basis for the disposal of Council-owned land, the arrangements for the permanent market and the development timetable.

The development agreement has been the subject of ongoing discussions with the developer, but more recently in terms of the Council's financial context and the wider market conditions, a review of delivery options for the market has been undertaken. A key driver in this review has been the commitment from both parties that the project should bring about a step-change in the offer that the market provides in enhancing both the St Matthews Quarter and the wider town centre. It is important that the new market is seen to be an integral part of the St Matthew's quarter development, forms one of the key anchors of the scheme, and as such is delivered and managed in the most effective way. The options for how the market can best be delivered to secure these objectives will be presented to Cabinet in November. In broad terms the options of either the Council or the developer owning and managing the market in isolation are likely to be less attractive for largely financial and management reasons than the creation of a joint venture company to deliver the facility.

The progress outlined above will be reported to Cabinet at its meetings on the 22nd October and 19th November 2008. Thereafter, the detailed proposals will be developed and will involve consideration by the proposed St Matthews Quarter Working Group, Scrutiny Panel and be the subject of further reports to Cabinet when appropriate.

Markets Working Group Meeting – 3rd September 2008

The Markets Working Group met on the 3rd September 2008 to consider progress with the temporary market relocation element of the project. The Group considered some of the detail around the refurbishment of stalls, their location, day to day management, licensing and operation, maintenance contracts, promotional activity for the relocated market, and other operational issues. The Chair suggested that the focus for the group should be widened to consider the St Matthew's redevelopment in its entirety.

A number of recommendations were proposed by the Working Group, which are

reproduced in appendix 1. In particular, it is proposed that the Markets Working Group is renamed the “St Matthew’s Quarter Working Group” and endorsement for this is sought of the Panel. The renamed Working Group will consider some further elements concerning the market, including a review of the impact of the relocation, a review of the cleaning and electricity maintenance contracts and the feasibility of a Sunday market. Furthermore, the Working Group will consider the detail of the proposed development agreement and the options for delivering the new permanent market, before making recommendations to the Panel, and ultimately Cabinet. Terms of reference will be drafted at the Group’s first meeting before being presented to Scrutiny Panel for approval.

It is proposed that the new Working Group will meet in the first week of December 2008.

Resource and legal considerations:

Authority will be sought from Cabinet at its meeting on the 22nd October 2008 for the preparation of a Development Agreement with Norton & Proffitt/St Modwen, which will include the disposal of the Council’s interests in the St Matthew’s Quarter. A report to November Cabinet will consider the options for delivering and managing the new permanent market. The terms of the Development Agreement and any preferred delivery model will clearly have financial implications, though the exact detail will be reported to a future meeting of Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet.

External legal and surveying advice has been required to work on the development agreement, and other consultancy support has been required in the design of the market in its temporary location. All of these costs have been met, and will continue to be met through existing approved resources.

Citizen impact:

The delivery of the St Matthew’s Quarter redevelopment will make a huge impact on the overall attractiveness, vitality and viability of the town centre, and will be hugely beneficial to the retail and leisure offer and the environment of the town centre. The successful implementation of the scheme will lead to the creation of job opportunities and make Walsall a more attractive place to live, work and shop. In short, the project will be very positive for Walsall’s and its citizens.

Environmental impact:

The delivery of the St Matthew’s Quarter project will have a hugely positive environmental impact. Central to the scheme will be the demolition of largely unattractive buildings, including the Overstrand Restaurant, within the core of the town centre. These buildings will be replaced with buildings of a much higher quality of design, and vastly improved public realm. The quality of the market infrastructure and market square will also be improved through the delivery of the scheme, making the general town centre environment and shopping experience much more enjoyable. In the short term, the temporary relocation of the market to

the area around the Bridge and Park Street will include the provision of refurbished stalls and enhance the vibrancy of that part of the town centre. Scrutiny Panel will have the opportunity to be involved in the development of this project.

Performance management:

The delivery of the wider St Matthew's Quarter project, and the market relocation element, are both included on the Council's project management database. As such the projects will be performance managed on a monthly basis. Central to those elements of the project within the control of the Council will be the provision of a development agreement and future management arrangements for the market. Scrutiny Panel has the opportunity to contribute towards the development agreement and the future management arrangements for the market, therefore aiding the Council's service delivery and transformation of the town centre.

Equality Implications:


The introduction of a wide range of retail, leisure sector and other jobs within Walsall town centre will be open to all Walsall residents. The project will provide a good opportunity to help to deliver the aspirations of "Think Walsall", which aims to ensure that the benefits of large capital projects are felt by local people, through training opportunities, supply chain jobs and other economic benefits. Scrutiny Panel has an opportunity to contribute towards this positive equality impact.

Consultation:

To date, a variety of external organisations and Council service areas have been involved in the St Matthew's Quarter project, including those bodies/individuals consulted through the market relocation planning application. Central to this process has been the involvement of the Market Traders' Association, the Markets Working Group and Scrutiny Panel. This involvement will continue through the future work of the St Matthew's Quarter Working Group and Scrutiny Panel.

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Appendix 1: Markets Working Group Meeting – 3rd September 2008

Recommended that:

- a) Karen Sands will arrange for Members to look at the refurbished market stalls
- b) New licence conditions should be issued to traders once they move into their new locations
- c) The group will receive information on the cost of the market square cleaning contract and electricity maintenance contracts at the next meeting
- d) The group will look at the feasibility of a Sunday market, following the market relocation being complete
- e) Promotional activity in Walsall Pride and Team Spirit on the market relocation should take place
- f) The feasibility of car parking in market square be investigated further
- g) The Markets working group now takes on a new and wider remit and be named “St Matthews Quarter Working Group”
- h) The St Matthews Quarter Working Group will review the impact of the market relocation, at a meeting during the first week in December, after 4 weeks of trading and report back to the full panel.