

**Proposal:** Consultation on the draft Development Brief for the CMK Theatre Multi-Storey Car Park site

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### **1.0 Recommendation**

1.1 The the Committee note the contents of the draft Brief and offer any informal comment that they may have on it.

### **2.0 Introduction**

2.1 The draft Brief has been informed by an analysis of the site and a resulting understanding of the opportunities and challenges as well as an understanding of the existing policy position. It has also been shaped by an initial informal consultation with a steering group including local Ward members, CMK Town Council and MK Forum.

2.2 The 0.2125ha site is located within CMK on the corner of Avebury Boulevard and Marlborough Gate. In planning policy terms guidance for the Theatre car park site outlines a favourable context that supports the Council's aspirations for the site. This includes requiring new development to make a positive contribution to improving the vitality of the city centre as well as improving the overall mix of uses. Policy also supports residential, cultural and leisure uses as well as compact, higher density development that will bring more people into CMK for a variety of reasons.

2.3 The Council is required to initiate the preparation of a Development Brief through the adopted protocol for the preparation of development briefs, which sets out a process for stakeholder engagement. The protocol includes the Development Control Committee (DCC) as a consultee at the formal consultation stage.

2.4 The formal consultation period for this Development Brief runs from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September for 6 weeks until 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

2.5 The aim of this report is to summarise the key content contained within the draft Brief.

### **3.0 Aim/purpose of the Development Brief**

3.1 The aim of the Development Brief is to provide clear planning and design guidance for this site, which will help attract high quality bids as well provide a degree of clarity and confidence for developers when preparing planning applications. It is not intended to stifle the creativity of

development but rather provide clarity on what the key elements of any schemes should be. A key aim of the Brief is therefore to streamline and speed up the process of submitting and determining planning applications.

- 3.2 The Brief will also be used to help determine any future planning application(s) albeit with limited planning weight, solely as a material planning consideration and not as development plan policy or supplementary design guidance.

#### **4.0 Scope of the Brief**

- 4.1 The Development Brief has been informed by the site context and reflects national and MKC planning policy, best practice, MKC Council Priorities as well as the results of an informal consultation on the issues and aspiration for the site from local stakeholders.

#### **5.0 Content of the Brief**

##### Planning Policy

- 5.1 The Development Brief concerns an existing non-functional multi-storey car park site within the designated Primary Shopping Area of CMK.
- 5.2 The brief provides a summary of key relevant policy and other guidance for the theatre car park, and outlines a favourable policy context that supports the Council's aspirations for the site. Policy SD2 of Plan:MK states that *"CMK will continue to be promoted as the focus for retail, office, residential, cultural and leisure activity within the context of the wider aspiration to provide a high quality environment and visitor experience. New development should make a positive contribution to improving the vitality of the city centre and should aim to improve the overall mix of uses. The site is located within the Primary Shopping Area where improvements to the quality of the environment, public realm and the shopping and , leisure and cultural experience of the area will be sought"*.

##### Site Context

- 5.3 The site is located in a key strategic location within CMK along its eastern edge facing Campbell Park, as well as being on the corner of Avebury Boulevard and Marlborough Gate. It neighbours the MK Theatre building and is adjacent to the Xscape.
- 5.4 Access is taken directly from Marlborough Gate. Consequently the site is served by infrastructure that connects to the wider MK grid road network. A redway also runs directly adjacent to the site along Marlborough Gate.

##### Development Opportunities

- 5.5 The Brief highlights Milton Keynes Council's high aspirations and expectations that development of the site can help contribute to a dynamic, exciting, interesting and prosperous city centre. It goes on to say that the Council are committed to a placemaking led scheme that delivers social, economic, health and environmental benefits and value to end users, as well as other residents,

employees and visitors of Milton Keynes. There will be a special focus on the inclusion of community and leisure uses to cater for the growing residential population in CMK.

#### Summary of Opportunities and Constraints

- 5.6 The site is located in a highly visually prominent position when assessed from 2 different perspectives. Firstly, when entering CMK by bicycle, foot, bus or car from the east and can therefore help demarcate this key gateway into CMK as well as helping with wayfinding. Secondly, it occupies a prominent position overlooking Campbell Park so along with Hotel la Tour could start creating a real skyline for CMK when viewed from the east. In both cases this allows the opportunity for a landmark building to be established on the site. This might include the development oversailing the classic infrastructure to the south east corner creating a dramatic entry into CMK from Avebury Boulevard to the east.
- 5.7 The site is situated in a highly accessible location in CMK, within walking distance of a range of city centre uses, notably Campbell Park.
- 5.8 The development could contribute to a greater variety and mix of uses within the Primary Shopping Area which results in increased 24/7 pedestrian activity, and people coming into CMK for new/different reasons.
- 5.9 The site could also widen the residential tenure availability with more affordable housing provided within the city centre.
- 5.10 Redevelopment of the site presents an opportunity to improve the quality of the public and pedestrian routes surrounding the site, notably through the incorporation of active frontages. Redevelopment can also importantly address the highly unattractive publicly accessible route behind the Theatre by closing it off to the general public.
- 5.11 The variety of surrounding building massing, architectural style and materials means there is significant flexibility available in the design of the development to allow for an architectural 'statement' building that contributes to the architectural stock of CMK.
- 5.12 There is an existing vehicular access and separate egress, off Marlborough Gate which could potentially be used for servicing of the site.
- 5.13 While the existing lower level of the ground floor car park level could be seen as a constraint it might also be an opportunity to accommodate on site parking for the development.
- 5.14 There are other buildings in close proximity to the west and north. Development on the site will need to respect daylight, sunlight and privacy of surrounding buildings, although this is potentially mitigated by the fact that all have their backs and service areas facing adjoining the car park site boundaries.
- 5.15 While the logical back to the development is facing north (the rear of the Theatre), development will need to positively address the other 3 sides of the site.

### Key Design Principles

- 5.16 Lower floors that delivers independent community, culture and leisure focussed uses which will widen the CMK offer will especially be supported. Residential uses on upper floors will further add to the vitality and prosperity of CMK.
- 5.17 The development should improve the attractiveness and safety of the adjacent public realm for all through the incorporation of active frontages to face onto Avebury Boulevard, Marlborough Gate and the western elevation addressing 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 5.18 Any 'back of house' services should be located along the northern side of the site to face the rear of the Theatre. Servicing and car park access should be taken off Marlborough Gate.
- 5.19 A higher density of development should be pursued which maximises pedestrian footfall in the area increasing the animation, interest and vibrancy of the public realm thereby increasing its social value
- 5.20 A landmark corner of exceptional architectural quality is sought at a key gateway and on a key frontage which improves the reputational and economic standing of CMK.
- 5.21 There is an opportunity to maximise the potential of the expanded site through the inclusion additional floorspace which might include oversailing and incorporation of the public realm and pedestrian routes into the fabric of the development. Critical in this regard is to improve the environment around the existing underpass.
- 5.22 Finally, this should be an eco-friendly sustainable development that adds to MKC's green aspirations.

**Annex:** Theatre MS Car Park Site, CMK - Draft Development Brief