

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE: DENNY TOWN CENTRE**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 18TH JUNE 2013**  
**Authors: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Denny Town Centre regeneration project but more particularly, focuses on disabled access requirements and options within the town centre. This aspect of the development must be considered as a requirement of the Council's Planning Committee's decision on the Phase 1 development.
- 1.2 The report reviews available options including a public lift and additional ramp. In balancing the benefits and draw backs of each option, it recommends that the Council should proceed to deliver Phase 1 on the basis of the present design with no additional provision for a lift or ramp.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At Council on the 5 October 2011 it was agreed to progress the regeneration project in Denny through a Council led phased option terminating the partnership agreement between the Council and Henry Boot Developments Ltd
- 2.2 The Council led scheme involves:-
- Securing planning approval;
  - Finalising the acquisition process and relocation strategy;
  - Progress demolition of the Church Walk Blocks;
  - Provision of a first phase block on Stirling Street, accommodating existing retailers and a Library, with associated improvements to parking and public realm; and
  - Marketing of the remainder of the site to other interests (including foodstore operators).
- 2.3 The Council submitted two planning applications in April 2012 for the regeneration of the town centre:-
- an outline planning application detailing the overall regeneration masterplan for the town centre with the intention that Phase 2 and 3 sites be marketed for retail development including a foodstore; and
  - a detailed planning application providing detailed plans, elevations and artists impressions for Phase 1 including the car park, library, shops, town square and public realm.

There have been several rounds of consultations on the town centre scheme - Denny residents had an opportunity to review application plans held at Denny Library and the Regeneration Office and formally comment on the applications through the statutory planning application process.

- 2.5 A report was submitted to Planning Committee in relation to the detailed application on 30 January 2013. The application was approved subject to various conditions. Further, members of the Committee requested that the applicant be asked to consider the approved arrangements for disabled access. The Council being the applicant in this case, a review of the disabled access arrangements has been undertaken by officers and the outcome is being reported now to Members for a decision on the review.

### **3.0 ACCESS OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

- 3.1 Demolitions of three sections of the 1960's mixed retail and residential blocks have been completed. A difference in levels of up to 4m currently exists on the site. This height difference is representative of the existing site topography, and is evident in the various existing stepped arrangements that provide access to the Stirling Street Blocks.
- 3.2 The detailed planning consent, for the first phase of development, includes a mixed retail building that will also incorporate a new public library and a community room. External works include a new car park with dedicated disabled parking and a new public realm space with new high quality landscaping.
- 3.3 The scheme comprises traditional retail units set within the context of a high street and is dual fronted to address the site topography. The design of the Phase 1 building ensures the change in level to be accommodated, with ground level access on Stirling Street and at the car park. The current proposals include a goods/service lift for occupants within the service area at the core of the building.
- 3.4 Comments relating to pedestrian access around the site were made during the planning committee hearing. The Council has taken cognisance of the comments and assessed the options for disabled access provision including the placement of a lift within the development. Appendix 1 provides a schedule identifying a summary of the issues relating to each option. The options are:

Option 1 – Pedestrian Ramp

Option 2 – Installation of a combined passenger & goods lift within Phase 1

Option 3 – Installation of a stand alone passenger lift within Phase 1

Option 4 – Installation of a passenger lift located outwith Phase 1

Option 5 – No Design Change

## **4.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The above options have been examined fully in respect of their legal, financial, planning and risk implications as a basis for reaching a decision. The report recommends that no changes be introduced to the design for the following reasons:

### **Design Implications**

- 4.2 The provision of the extended car park accessed from Davies Row includes additional accessible parking bays, located immediately adjacent to the building for ease of access. Further additional provision of accessible parking has been allowed for on Stirling Street. This will assist in providing almost immediate access to the building for persons with mobility problems. A great deal of consultation, analysis and design investigations has taken place to ensure that the proposals are safe. The design will incorporate the use of robust, carefully chosen materials within all public realm areas.

The new public realm proposals are arguably the most important element within the masterplan and put people at the heart of the development. Accessibility within the public realm is always considered during design development. The current proposals seek to minimise clutter within the public footpath and allow the public to engage and activate the area, providing a minimum of 1:20 graded continuous access route containing accessible seats/resting points along the way, allowing users to stop if required. This continuous accessible route encourages greater social interaction and promotes a safer environment.

Given the above and including careful consideration of public safety, and the design impact that a pedestrian ramp would bring about, the favoured solution is the continual accessible route that is currently being promoted within the masterplan (option 5).

### **Legal Implications**

- 4.3 Provision of a public lift in the building would add to the legal complexity of the development. In Options 2 & 3, where a public lift is provided in the building the property will prove very difficult to market to retailers or investors. The legal responsibility for the well being of the public utilising this facility would therefore continue to fall to the Council. In Option 4, although Phase 1 would be marketable, the external lift will continue to be the Council's legal responsibility.

## Financial Implications

- 4.4 The cost to the Council in providing each option is summarised below:

<b>Costs</b>	<b>Option 1 Pedestrian Ramp</b>	<b>Option 2 Combined passenger and goods lift</b>	<b>Option 3 Stand alone passenger lift within Phase 1</b>	<b>Option 4 Stand alone passenger lift outwith Phase 1</b>	<b>Option 5 Existing design</b>
Construction	£275k	£158k	£178k	£200k	Nil

- 4.5 Although Option 1 (ramp) is identified as having the highest construction cost it is likely, with the exception of option 5, to have the lowest ongoing management and maintenance costs. The ongoing costs are likely to be extremely high with Option 2 (internal combined lift) having both a requirement for commercial and public service so requiring regular maintenance. Options 2 & 3 are centrally located in Phase 1 so both the lift and surrounding corridors are likely to suffer from vandalism with the potential for opportunist break-ins to the retailer units.

If either of these two options are chosen, it will make the building less attractive to potential occupiers with the clear possibility of vacant units. Option 4 (external lift), will not affect Phase 1 however it will still have high maintenance and monitoring costs and is likely to suffer excessively from vandalism with the possibility of periods of being out of operation for repair. The last option, continuing with the original design providing disabled access around the town square has no additional construction cost and no additional maintenance and monitoring cost.

## Planning Implications

- 4.6 The proposals for the regeneration of Denny Town Centre fully accord with the strategies and policies of the Falkirk Council Structure Plan and Denny Local Plan.

## Risk Implications

- 4.7 Option 1 directs the public away from the main commercial area of Stirling Street to a more concealed area which although potentially covered by CCTV provision is likely to feel more remote and unsafe by the public and may be subject to criminality. In relation to Options 2, 3 and 4, given that there would be no on-site monitoring, the lift is likely to suffer from maintenance and vandalism problems which could affect the emergency call system, resulting in health and safety problems. Option 5 directs the public around the town square to the carpark where there is more natural surveillance therefore having no identifiable risk.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report has set out the options for the provision of additional means of access between the levels of development taking place within Phase 1 of the Denny Town Centre regeneration project. Following consideration of the full implications of each of these options, it is recommended that the Council should proceed with the existing design.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Executive agree that:-

the Council should promote Option 5, being the present design as outlined in the approved detailed planning application for Denny Town Centre.

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Director of Development Services

10<sup>th</sup> June, 2013

Contact Officer: Colin Frame Ext: 0972.

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Denny Town Centre Regeneration files – not for publication