

## Agenda item 9

### For decision – Saxonvale position statement

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#### Summary

Now that the former Notts Industries Pension Fund and Terramond land at Saxonvale has been purchased by MDC, this report recommends that FTC should begin to explore the possibility of working with MDC to bring forward a comprehensive regeneration of the site including FTC's land.

To guide these discussions, the report sets out a position statement that includes some proposed development principles. Those principles are not new; they draw on existing policy documents that have already been subject to public consultation over many years.

The report also proposes that there should be further public consultation prior to any planning application being submitted.

#### Background

Mendip District Council has now purchased the former Notts Industries Pension Fund and Terramond land at Saxonvale. This presents an opportunity to overcome the inertia that has held back the regeneration of this former industrial site over many years. With FTC owning 1.5 acres of adjoining land, there is also an opportunity to bring forward comprehensive regeneration to achieve optimum development of the whole site. This is a long-standing community ambition reflected in the adopted Frome Neighbourhood Plan and Mendip's draft planning policy for Saxonvale.

#### Early considerations

For this comprehensive regeneration to be achieved, it will be necessary for the two local authorities to work closely together. There will be a lot for the two bodies to consider. Here are examples of some of the early considerations – this is not an exhaustive list:

- What uses are needed and best suited to this town centre location?
- How do we ensure that the development complements rather than competes with the existing town centre?
- How do we make the most of the opportunity presented by the river whilst protecting the site's ecological value?
- What density of development is appropriate in this location?
- What are the design principles that should apply?

Commercial considerations will come into play too. For a development to get off the ground, there will need to be some realism around financial viability.

FTC has an important role to enable the community to be heard through this process. So, an early priority for the two authorities will be to set out how the community will be engaged.

So how do we get started?

### Existing policies

We are not starting with a blank sheet. Over time, the regeneration of Saxonvale has been a popular topic of discussion and various policy documents have been published following public consultation.

The key documents include:

- The Saxonvale Planning Brief & Design Codes adopted by Mendip District Council in 2005
- Frome River Strategy, 2012
- Town Design Statement adopted by Mendip District Council as a supplementary planning document in October 2015
- Frome Neighbourhood Plan 2008 – 28, which is now part of Mendip’s Development Plan
- Draft Saxonvale policy in Mendip Local Plan Part 2

In addition to guidance around good design and an appropriate mix of uses, these policy documents identify important community needs. This list is not exhaustive but includes the need for: affordable housing which despite the policy of 30% to be achieved on new residential development schemes is not being delivered in the town; workspace that enables local businesses to grow and is located close to town centre amenities; a broader choice of shops that meet a basic need for clothing and other comparison goods that local people currently have to travel out of town to buy.

### Position statement

It is recommended that Cllrs approve the following position statement as a basis for discussion with Mendip District Council around the development of a scheme at Saxonvale:

This statement draws on the policies and objectives within the Saxonvale Planning Brief & Design Codes 2005, Frome River Strategy 2012, Town Design Statement 2015, Frome Neighbourhood Plan 2008-28, draft Saxonvale policy in Mendip Local Plan Part 2 and evidence of need in the town.

- We wish to explore how FTC can work with MDC to deliver a high-quality comprehensive scheme that fully integrates with the existing town centre and provides sustainable transport choices, with good means of access for those on foot and bicycle between the development and the existing town centre and providing relief for Vicarage Street.

- We are prepared to explore the possibility of inclusion of FTC’s own land in any scheme.
- We support a mixed-use solution. The mix should include:
  - A broad range of dwellings in terms of size, cost and tenure. To address the pressing need for more affordable accommodation in the town, we would expect to see social rented and shared equity opportunities as part of the mix. The aim should be for 30% affordable in line with MDC’s own policy. We would also like to explore the possibility of delivering housing that meets the needs of young people and families who are currently priced out of Frome and the growing number of older people (‘downsizers’) whose future housing aspirations are not being met by either specialist retirement developments or mass-market housing products.
  - Retail space that broadens the comparison offer of the town centre through sensitive new development
  - Leisure e.g. restaurants, pubs and hotel accommodation that encourage greater evening activity and space for cultural activity that will enhance the town centre as a destination
  - Workspace that helps to meet the needs of growing businesses in the town and the opportunity for training providers such as SS& L to continue to operate in the town centre.
  - A well-connected riverside park to improve access to the river as well as other public spaces and a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the river that will better connect the development with both the existing town centre and surrounding residential areas and enable cyclists to avoid busier roads in the town centre.
- Our expectation is that the development closest to the existing town centre will be of a higher density with a gradation to lower density development towards Rivers Reach. Building heights should respect the topography.
- FTC would wish to see an opportunity for the community to be engaged pre-application.

#### Recommendations

1. Approve the above position statement on Saxonvale
2. Delegate to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with the Project Sponsor to:
  - a. begin to explore how FTC can work with MDC to deliver a comprehensive scheme including FTC’s land;
  - b. discuss with MDC how the community can be engaged in the planning process pre-application
3. A further report is brought back to Cllrs at a future meeting to update on progress