

Report of: Planning Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 22 January 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Improvements to Old Grey Friars Street



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To ask Executive Board to apply for an Order to remove general vehicular rights from part of Old Greyfriars Street, to facilitate the implementation of the Westgate Development.



Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment



Ward(s) affected: Carfax

Report Approved by:



John Goddard - Portfolio Holder

Kate Chirnside - Legal Services



Anna Burson - Financial Services



Policy Framework:

Adopted Oxford Local Plan



Recommendation(s):

1. To submit the application to the Department for Communities and Local Government for an Order under Section 249 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to adopt the proposal to improve the amenity of that section of Old Greyfriars Street which will remain after the implementation of Westgate Centre planning permission by the extinguishment of vehicular rights over the remaining section of Old Greyfriars Street



To accept the offer from Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners to act as the City Council' agent and submit the application on its behalf.

Background

1. A detailed planning application (reference 06/-1211/FUL) was submitted to the City Council on 13th June 2006 for the partial redevelopment, refurbishment and extension of the Westgate Centre, Oxford. The detailed description of development, which accompanied the planning application, was for:
2. 'A mixed use development including the alteration, refurbishment, part redevelopment and extension to the existing Westgate Centre to provide new retail and residential accommodation within use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C3 and D1; erection of a replacement multi-storey car park at Abbey Place and new access onto Thames Street; provision of new bus facilities and a bus priority route, environmental improvements to the public realm; associated highway access and landscape works; and other associated works and uses.'
3. The Strategic Development Control Committee (SDCC) considered the planning application on 30th October 2006. At that meeting the Council resolved to support the planning application subject to conditions and an accompanying legal agreement.
4. The planning application was referred to the Secretary of State via the Government Office for the South East (GOSE). Confirmation was received on 18th December that the City Council were authorised to determine the application itself. Planning permission is just about to be granted.

Improvements to Old Greyfriars Street

5. The implementation of the planning permission requires the stopping up and diversion of part of the existing highway and creation of new highway, and the removal of general vehicular rights from part of Old Greyfriars Street.
6. It falls to the City Council under the requirements of Section 249 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to apply to improve the amenity of the street and remove the general vehicular rights from part of Old Greyfriars Street as shown on Plan 1.
7. The approved development will lead to the downgrading in transport terms of Old Greyfriars Street from a busy traffic through-route (the existing bus priority route), to a landscaped pedestrian lane more fitting to its new role as a residential street. New housing on the western side of the street will face the existing residential area on the eastern side, such that this part of the street will become entirely residential.
8. The Westgate Partnership is applying for an Order under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (the Act), to stop up and

divert the relevant sections of the highway as shown on Plan 2 attached.

The New Old Greyfriars Street

9. The footprint of the new housing on the eastern side will also extend over part of Old Greyfriars Street, leading to the narrowing of the street along this section. The northern part of Old Greyfriars Street (broadly to the north of its junction with Turn Again Lane), will be built upon as part of the planning application proposal and the closure of this part of the street is being sought by The Westgate Partnership under the separate Section 247 application.
10. It is proposed that the remaining section of Old Greyfriars Street (see Plan 1) be pedestrianised and landscaped in order to create an attractive setting to the residential properties and upgraded environment for pedestrians using this part of the city centre. To facilitate this change, the exclusion of all vehicles along this section of Old Greyfriars Street (with the exception of emergency services, access and disabled drivers) is required. The majority of vehicles will be prevented from accessing the new pedestrian environment through the installation of a physical barrier.

Wider Advantages

11. In traffic terms, the alteration of the role of Old Greyfriars Street will be achieved through the creation of a new hierarchy of city centre vehicular and pedestrian routes. In particular, this will involve establishing a new bus priority route in a north – south direction along Castle Street and Norfolk Street, thereby diverting traffic away from Old Greyfriars Street.
12. The impact of the proposals, and the wider changes to the highway network, were subject to detailed assessment as part of the planning application both within the Transport Assessment and as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. Key principles to highlight include:
 - all bus traffic will be diverted onto the newly created bus priority route along Castle Street and Norfolk Street;
 - a new servicing entrance / exit to the Westgate Centre, specifically the new department store, will be created off Speedwell Street, thus avoiding the need for servicing vehicles to use Old Greyfriars Street; and
 - access will be maintained for emergency service vehicles and disabled drivers, as well as for access to residential properties.

Implications for the City Council.

13. Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, the Westgate Partnership's planning consultants, have offered to act as agents for the City Council in this

matter and submit the application at no expense to the Council. It is likely that the procedure will entail a con-joined inquiry with the Section 247 Order and Compulsory Purchase Order.

Conclusion

14. It has emerged that the alterations and improvements to Old Greyfriars Street from a bus priority route to a quiet pedestrianised street as an integral part of the Westgate Development is something that requires more than inclusion in the normal highway orders being pursued directly by the applicants. These alterations and improvements to Old Greyfriars Street will improve the amenity of the remaining section of Old Greyfriars Street and be of benefit to the existing and new residential occupiers.
15. Due to the intricacies of the Planning Act it falls to the City Council, as the Local Planning Authority, to make the necessary application itself to the Department of Communities and Local Government. Section 249 enables the City Council to make an application to the Secretary of State to extinguish vehicular rights in order to give effect to the City Council's resolution to adopt this proposal for improving the amenity of Old Greyfriars Street.

Recommendations

16. To submit the application to the Department for Communities and Local Government for an Order under Section 249 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to adopt the proposal to improve the amenity of that section of Old Greyfriars Street which will remain after the implementation of the Westgate Centre planning permission by the extinguishment of vehicular rights over the remaining section of Old Greyfriars Street.
17. To accept the offer from Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners to act as the City Council' agent and submit the application on its behalf.

Background papers: None

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