

5 Property Market Conditions

5.1 Current Land Values

Land values are driven by supply and demand in a specific location and assuming statutory consent for such use is/can be secured.

Some uses are more sensitive to location than others – retail being an example. Hence as the subject site is not seeking to be part of the town’s retail core, the land value supportable by such use has been adjusted to reflect this. Retail values have recently in the County been slightly depressed due to the state of the market, but this is not seen as a longer-term issue, indeed values are expected to rise as wider development in the Growth Area is delivered.

To optimise the value/benefit of the site to the town, the team have evolved an indicative design which includes the following uses:- residential, car parking, college, hotel, office, retail & innovation centre.

In this location we consider residential use generates the highest residual land value, followed by retail and offices, with car parking being a net cost i.e. deficit to the residual land value. Hence with the quantity of car parking needed to maintain the supply of car spaces serving the town centre as a whole combined with adequate provision of car parking for the uses such as residential and offices adds considerable cost to any project and makes it challenging to achieve a positive overall land value from a mixed use scheme.

To just provide an all-residential use scheme whilst theoretically generating the highest residual land value would fail to achieve any contribution back to the town centre and would not receive statutory consent to implement. Hence the scheme needs to be mixed use to ensure it contributes to Wellingborough town centre but as a result ‘walks a financial tight rope’ in terms of generating a positive residual land value.

Despite being prudent in this scheme, there are very positive signs in the significant rise in residential site values, driven by institutional investors, particularly for smaller sites near the town centre, that can, as planned, sustain quality “urban quarter living”.

5.2 Supply and Demand Sectoral Profiling

When seeking an optimum combination of uses applicable for the site we have had regard to factors including:- Wellingborough’s positioning in the region, the existing provision of accommodation for various uses in the town and nearby, the situation of the site in the town centre and the uses to enable car parking for the benefit of the town centre to prevail. We have also sought a combination of uses on the site that contribute to the town as a whole as opposed to pulling/competing with for example its existing retail focus.

With the significant forecast population growth of the town, residential use is a one for which demand is reasonable to anticipate. There is a strong planning assumption driving town infill and Brownfield land redevelopment that will continue to support high demand. Also to ensure optimum residual site value is achieved and to meet anticipated demand the majority of the residential has been assumed to be in flats as opposed to houses, with a percentage of each assumed to be available for Affordable Housing,

Retail demand in this location in part we anticipate will be created by the increased pedestrian flows created by the development and provision of uses within it, as well as the improvement in site visibility and physical connectivity across the site and to and from the town centre. Hence the unit sizes have been kept modest and rents attributable likewise.

We consider the current office use ‘offer’ in Wellingborough to comprise mainly dated space. We have therefore made the judgement that new space benefiting from being close to the town centre with car parking will be attractive and successful. There may be a premium for the quality of the site with “mews and lanes” set amongst listed buildings, particularly for the professional services sector.

5.3 Needs Assessment for Additional Development

There is a known interest for the potential relocation of the Innovation Centre and of the Tresham Institute to the site, combined with the proposed high quality scheme design, new squares, streets and car parking, will provide an attractive environment which will attract commercial occupiers. This will be further supported by the sites proposed good links to the town centre and by the increasing new demand that the major planned housing developments around the town will generate.

Commercial and mixed-use development is a judgemental and largely speculative activity, requiring a developer to invest to deliver the site. However recent market activity in the town, including land sales and rental deals, give credence to a strong demand for housing and office markets, with hopeful signs for improving market for the retail market. However the retail element will in part be driven by the possible relocation of some existing retail business from existing to new, better located premises within the development. It will also likely be driven by niche retail and retail associated with the new site uses (such as the college), particularly those that do not compete with the town centre core.

6 Sustainable Design Principles

6.1 Introduction

This section describes the principle intentions and objectives that prospective Developers will have to adhere to. The Development Brief sets the guiding principles for high quality design that makes most efficient re-use of this Brownfield town centre site. Delivering a viable and sustainable new "town centre quarter" with a strong sense of local identity that will be a catalyst for a shift in image and uplift in value and enhancement of the town centre as a whole.

The site use will be significantly intensified, with a critical mass of development (housing, employment, retail, leisure and education) to enable it to perform as a town centre quarter.

Most guidance contained in this document relates to the development site, though certain principles are included in relation to the immediate surrounding area (particularly in relation to movement) where it is important to establish this context. This Brief supplements the policies of the Borough of Wellingborough Local Plan through:

- Consulting with local businesses, landowners and other interested parties including Tresham College;
- Setting out a detailed masterplan for the site that defines adoptable highway, access, development blocks, plots, density and uses across the site and leads to a phasing plan for implementation;
- Identifying design principles that will assist in determining planning applications and highway agreements.

6.1.1 Design principles for the site

The design principles to be applied to the development site have been established as part of the methodology to formulate a robust Brief for the site and form the basis of the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B). These were developed through early project workshops with the consultant team and client to support the objectives of sustainable development for the site.

Sustainable development requires flexible, active environments that respond to change and meet the current needs of human populations within a framework of environmental concerns. These will be achieved if social, economic and environmental objectives are balanced. These strategic goals need to be translated into locally specific and relevant principles for the High Street site. The following core principles are to be carried forward as mandatory design elements for the future development of the site.

1. Expanding the town centre offer
2. Creating a legible urban place (built form, routes and spaces)
3. A landscape structure (green spaces and links)
4. A connected movement network (access, parking and connectivity)
5. A mix of uses including housing and employment
6. A programme for education & skills
7. A sense of local identity enhancing the historic buildings context
8. Conserving energy, managing waste

6.1.2 The development site

The development site is shown in Figure 6.1 and comprises circa 2.5 ha. Existing development covers about 50% of the core site area, excluding the main car park(s), with a greater proportion of this located to the southern third of the area. The site currently provides town centre related car parking (surface), a range of small scale retail outlets located mostly along High Street, small workshop space for light industrial activities, community facilities, and office related employment space. The majority of residential use exists beyond the site to the north and west.

Fig 4.12 | Implications of Historic Development



Key

-  Sub - Block Structure
-  Historic Frontages
-  Park
-  Key Buildings
-  Local Squares
-  Green Linkages

6.1.3 Existing building implications

Given the complex urban context of the site, a number of buildings will be affected by new development (identified through the building quality assessment) either through demolition or alteration and addition (Figure 6.2). The Developer will need to work with the Council to agree those parts of the new development that require agreement with 3rd parties. The Council has sought to acquire properties likely to be affected or initiated discussions with others.

Fig 6.2 | Building Constraints



Key

-  Buildings to retain
-  Buildings affected by new development

Existing Uses on or around the site will be affected by the development



New renovated housing near Leighton Place. Planned to be within the new residential part of the “Mews and Lanes” area of the development



Existing retail on the High Street with small passageway through to main site. It is important to keep the retail uses alive and well in their existing locations or if necessary offered better locations.



Existing housing on West Street which will overlook the proposed new car park. Wherever possible the effect of intensification of this important town centre site will need to be thought through to try and reduce its affect on people living and working in the area.



Some areas of the site are derelict or semi-derelict and allow for the site to be cleared ready for development.



Some buildings with uses that sit right in the centre of the main development site would need to be demolished. The Council would work with current users to help them find alternative premises.



It will be important to improve the backs of existing buildings so that they are enclosed and safe and in some areas redesign the area to enhance the views valued listed and other quality buildings.

6.2 Principle 1: Expanding the Town Centre Offer

The Site Context is shown in Figure 6.3 and indicates the strategic position of the development site in relation to the town core. Most of the town centre facilities are within a 5-10 minute walk of the site and therefore suggests a future role for the site as a logical extension to the centre. The diagram indicates how the site includes both town centre functions to the south and east and residential neighbourhoods to the north and west. The site is therefore on a natural boundary of between these significantly differing 'character contexts' and requires that future development resolves land use compatibility.

As an extended town centre / 'edge-of-centre' location, sustainable regeneration will require a mix of uses providing a viable balance of: employment, a range of residential types (being a high density mix of social and market housing); parking and other uses.

The site is to be retained and improved as a secondary retail area and it must be complimentary to, but not competing with, the Town Centre core.

Existing employment that makes a positive contribution to the strategic vision for the site will be enhanced and/or offered alternative accommodation within site that is commercially comparable to the current location.

Active ground floor commercial uses will be prioritized along the High Street/Oxford Street edges to better ensure that these streets perform as successful secondary frontages.