



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 28th September 2021
at the Harlington

Councillors: R. Schofield (Chairman), R. Fang, A. Hope, K. Kuntikanamata, K. Jasper, R. Richmond, R. Robinson, S. Tilley, P. Wildsmith, B. Willcocks, G. Woods, J. Wright.

Also attending: Janet Stanton – Town Clerk
Wendy Allen – Office Manager

EC Sept 2021 ITEM 1 APOLOGIES

Members received and accepted apologies of absence from Councillor Chenery, due to health reasons, Councillor Einchcomb who was on holiday and Councillor Oliver who was on holiday.

EC Sept 2021 ITEM 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robinson declared that he had an interest in Item 5 – COMMERCIAL MATTER, due to the fact that he lives next door to the people involved.

EC Sept 2021 ITEM 3 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

EC Sept 2021 ITEM 4 COMMERCIAL MATTER

Members had previously received and noted the following Land Purchase Discussion Update Report (Appendix 1) from Councillor Schofield on the closure of W.C. Baker & Son. Councillor Schofield summarised his report and outlined the following:

- W.C. Baker & Son is to close after 112 years.
- Mr Baker had offered FTC first refusal on the purchase of the 234 Fleet Road, as he was keen to see the land being used for community value.
- As agreed at the Council meeting on 1st September 2021, FTC has now received 3 valuations.
- Mr Baker has not yet put the property (234 Fleet Road) on the open market.

A wide-ranging discussion on the benefits and potential issues of developing a new venue took place. The following was discussed:

- Valuation of 234 Fleet Road.

- The options within Gurkha Square.
- The skate park area of The Views.
- Impact of increased building costs.
- Short term and long-term implications of purchase of 234 Fleet Road.
- The impact of presence of a new venue on the high street.
- Increase in open and transparent community and business engagement.
- Issues with refurbishment options.

The following two resolutions were unanimously agreed.

RESOLUTION

1. The Clerk is instructed to advise Mr Baker that the Council will not be making an offer at the present time.
2. The Council will consider options for development of a new community multi-functional venue.

EC Sept 2021 ITEM 5

DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council is on Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 7pm in the Harlington.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed: **Date**.....

Chairman

Council Meeting
Wednesday 29 September 2021
Appendix 1

AUTHOR: Cllr Bob Schofield
DATE: 24 September 2021
SUBJECT: Land Purchase Update Discussion Paper

1. UPDATE ON CLOSURE OF W.C. BAKER & SON

- 1.1. Local business W.C Baker & Son on Fleet Road is closing after 112 years of trading,
- 1.2. Mr Baker had offered FTC first refusal on the purchase of the land.
- 1.3. Mr Baker was keen that the land be used for community value.
- 1.4. Potential covenant on the land.
- 1.5. A quick response is required from FTC.
- 1.6. Mr Baker's family have subsequently elected to put the property on the open market.
 - 1.6.1. It will be marketed by [REDACTED], but at the time of writing the property has not been openly advertised.

2. Benefits of acquiring Mr Baker's land and developing on Gurkha Square

- 2.1.1. If FTC owned this land, it reduces the proportion of Gurkha Square being taken up by development.
- 2.1.2. Building on this land removes any overlap with the library.
- 2.1.3. Requires less HDC land and therefore increases the residual area of Gurkha Square
- 2.1.4. Maintains a high street presence which supports the sustainability of the high street.
- 2.1.5. Full accessibility into building.
- 2.1.6. Development opportunity for HDC Civic Quarter.

3. Other options for FTC owning the land

- 3.1.1. Future use of the land in a land swap.
- 3.1.2. Potential for compensation land for use of green space if The Views development progressed. (see later)
- 3.1.3. Independent development for community use.
- 3.1.4. FTC would own land with a commercial value

4. Potential issues remaining despite ownership of land :

- 4.1.1. Development still occupies a part of Gurkha Square.
- 4.1.2. Access to the new Harlington "get in" (rear stage access) and servicing is not improved.
 - 4.1.2.1. Relies on retaining Mr Baker's delivery bay.

5. Independent Valuations

- 5.1. FTC has requested 3 independent valuations from commercial property surveyors of the property and land.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6 What is a reasonable value?

[REDACTED]

6.2 FTC is a public body using public money.

6.3 FTC is not buying land to take a financial risk.

6.4 The mean or the median prices are close and can be justified

[REDACTED]

6.7 Should FTC wish to buy the land, payment options include:

6.7.1 Public Works Board Loan. But only on the basis of community value and not for commercial return. A time-consuming exercise

6.7.2 Funds from the Harlington Reserve on the basis that this is part of the Harlington development.

6.7.3 Loan from the Harlington Reserve Fund, with agreed repayments. If not deemed directly related to the Harlington development.

7 Does purchase of the land have to be tied to the Harlington development?

7.1 The purchase of Mr Baker's land could be deemed to add value to FTC's assets and therefore purchased irrespective of the Harlington.

8 So what concerns remain?

8.1 The ownership of the land does not guarantee planning permission from HDC for the Harlington development.

8.2 Public opinions and perceptions of a Harlington development on Gurkha Square.

8.3 Openness with the public.

8.3.1 Initial public consultation was successful, but overturned by a radical and vociferous group of residents

8.4 Leadership of the Harlington development is not solely in FTC hands

8.5 A key issue is that the Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 Fleet Civic Quarter requests development proposals "are consistent with a comprehensive regeneration plan for the whole site.

8.6 A new Harlington on Gurkha Square is the preferred solution but

8.6.1 HDC's Civic Quarter Working Group have not met since January and there is no scheduled date for the next meeting.

8.6.2 As previously explained a major issue is the options developed by HDC's Consultants are not revenue creating. Funding of the development becomes a significant issue.

[REDACTED]

9.3.10

10 Do FTC need Baker's land if the Views is a possible development?

- 10.1 If HDC are prepared to offer land on a long-term lease on a peppercorn rent there is no compelling requirement to require a land swap, but it may ease progress.
- 10.2 Baker's land could be promoted as compensation land replacing the green space occupied by development

11 The downsides to a Views development are:

- 11.1 There has been no more than a very cursory investigation of the proposal.
- 11.2 No high street presence which inhibits the overall viability of the scheme and reduces its influence on the sustainability of the high street.
- 11.3 Future HDC development of the Civic Quarter could totally screen the new Harlington and it could be lost at the back of a housing development.
 - 11.3.1 Equally a Civic Quarter development could develop a very attractive access boulevard to link the new Harlington to the high street.
- 11.4 The above makes it very clear that there are potential downsides to developing the Harlington outside an overall master plan.

12 The bottom line –

- 12.1 Do members consider there is value in acquiring Bakers Land?
- 12.2 If members remain of the opinion that there is value to the Town Council in purchasing this asset, then the Clerk should be instructed to make a formal offer to the Estate Agents?
- 12.3
- 12.4 Do members support developing and promoting a New Harlington on Gurkha Square?
- 12.5 Do members support developing and promoting a New Harlington on the Views?
- 12.6 Do members believe that until such time as HDC either develop a master plan for the Civic Quarter or declare their intention to abandon an overall development plan that FTC suspend all activity for a New Harlington?
- 12.7 From the above debate Members are required to draft resolutions.