

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Alex Jelley Economic Regeneration Manager	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A14/031	
Wards Affected	All	14th January 2015	
Title	DELIVERING OUR TOWN CENTRES		

Portfolio Holders: Cllr Derek Zanger and Cllr Mark Dearing

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- a) To provide an update on the progress being made on the Soan's Yard development in Kettering town centre
- b) To update Members on the progress made in establishing what commercial opportunities exist for Kettering Borough Council in light of the Kettering Energy Park proposals.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Kettering Borough lies within the South East Midlands, which is predominantly a growth area, and is expected to facilitate growth of some 13,100 homes and 16,200 new jobs by 2021.
- 2.2 Members have made their priorities for infrastructure and jobs-led growth clear – these are the prerequisites of growth. Members have indicated they wish to use the growth agenda to leverage three key and interrelated ambitions for the borough; namely:-
 - ◆ A better offer for our town centres
 - ◆ A better education and training offer
 - ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs
- 2.3 The mutually supportive role of these three aspirations cannot be over-stated. The town centres and the skills base will be persuasive to inward investors. Similarly, high grade employment supports vibrant town centres.
- 2.4 The Council has a vision to create town centres that are **Characterful, Distinctive, and Fun**. This vision has been externally validated by an independent planning inspector, and now sits firmly within our planning policy for Kettering Town Centre.

3. DELIVERING THE YARDS

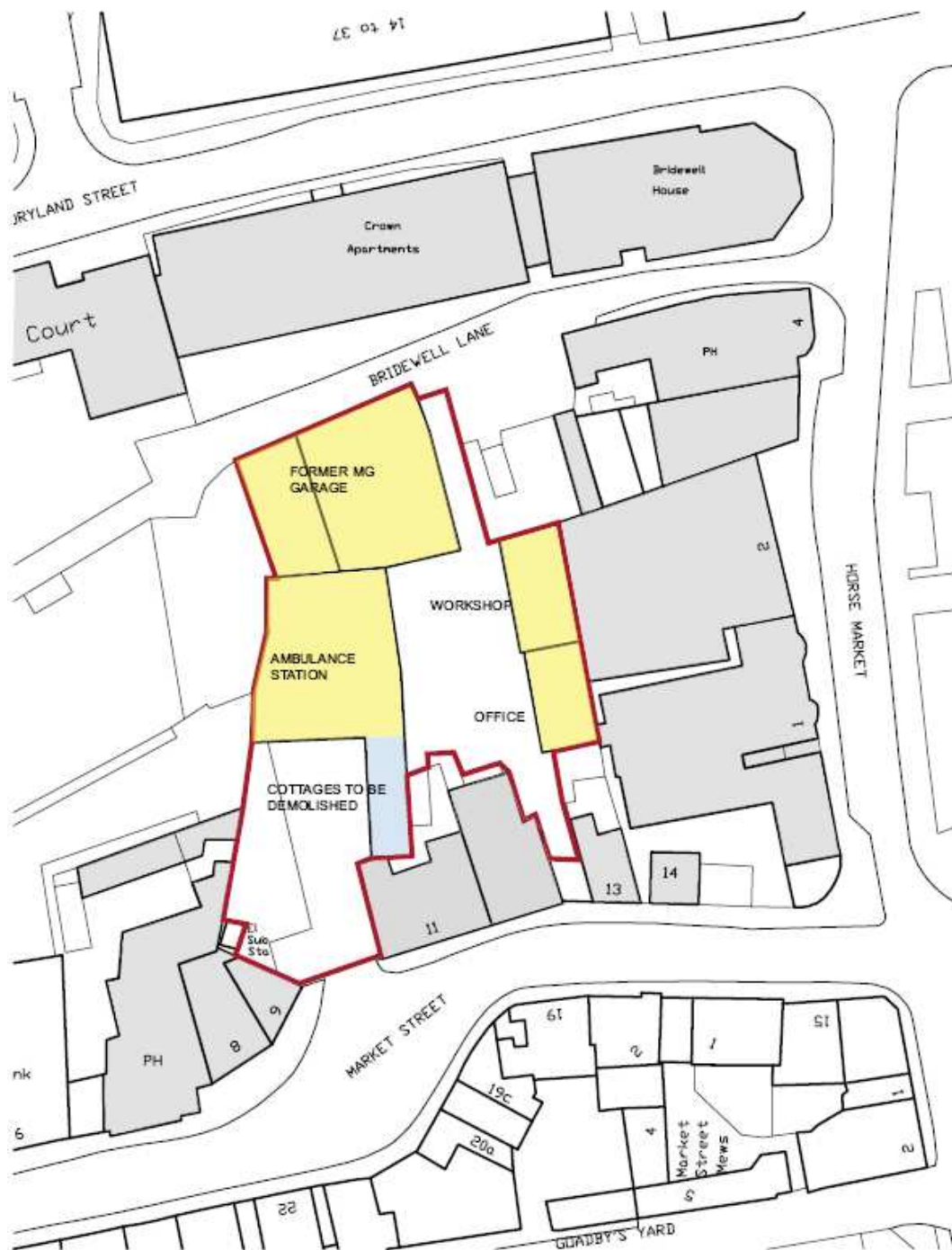
- 3.1 Our vision for The Yards (as set out in the Adopted AAP for Kettering Town Centre) is to establish a recognisable hub for niche and independent retailers that will act as a destination in its own right. One that brings together the heritage of the town with the needs of the 21st century shopper. It would form the link between the restaurant quarter centred on the award winning Market

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Place development, and the more main stream national retailers of the northern part of the town centre.

- 3.2 The site comprises of two adjoining land titles, the first being the former ambulance station / CAB offices locally known as the Oasis Centre which was acquired by the local authority in 1978. The second, previously known as Soan's Yard comprising of a disused MG garage, stand alone workshop with two storey offices and an open yard area was acquired in a very dilapidated state in 2008, using Growth Area Funds from the government.



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- 3.3 The Executive Committee in January 2012 endorsed the marketing of the Yards in line with the proposed method of disposal. It was recommended that the Yards be marketed for redevelopment with the option to lease the site and take a build licence to provide the greatest flexibility for interested developers and achieve the best outcome for the Council this being a rent providing an ongoing revenue stream.



- 3.4 In January 2013 the Executive Committee agreed to let the Yards development site to Kevin Jones for retail, restaurant and office use – which would involve refurbishing and redeveloping the majority of the existing buildings.
- 3.5 In October 2013 the Planning Committee approved a planning application for the change of use of the site. This enables a mixed use scheme to come forward comprising retail, office space and a restaurant.
- 3.6 During the course of 2014 the Developer has marketed the site and sought to discharge the pre-commencement conditions attached to the planning permission. This was achieved in late autumn, and demolition of the 'cottages' (the 1930s extensions to the former ambulance station) commenced thereafter. The following photographs detail the current state of the works:

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4 Current Proposals

4.1 The Developer is currently pulling together the relevant detail for the Reserved Matters planning application – which is due to be submitted within the next month. This will set out the breakdown of business uses within the development site – and is based on an understanding of the demand that exists within the local area.

4.2 Those of you that frequent The Yards’ Facebook page will know that the Developer has been advertising the flexible spaces and is now beginning to sign up businesses. Most recently, the announcement that the old Ambulance station will be turned into ‘The Yards Exchange’ which will be:

“a space where a multitude of businesses can sell their wares without the risk or cost of a store. There will be a central till point for customers to buy goods at...businesses will be grouped and will work on a rota system, meaning you will have to do your allocated shifts but then you can be as flexible as you like.”

4.3 The following diagram is the current proposed arrangements – though these are subject to businesses taking up residence within the newly created units. The key elements to note are the newly created pedestrian link through from Market Street, the Yards Exchange (concession stall holders within the Ambulance Station) and the new Food Court for the old MG garage.



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5 *Wider Benefits*

- 5.1 The aim for The Yards development is to create a distinctive destination within the town that delivers niche, independent retail outlets alongside an anchor restaurant/bar. This will bring something new to the town centre – something that will create a higher degree of footfall along Market Street, Market Place and Horsemarket. One of the reasons that the Developer was chosen was that he understood the symbiotic relationship that must exist with the existing retailers and other businesses for this project to be a success.
- 5.2 Kevin Jones, the selected developer for **The Yards** development off Market Street has also taken the lease on 1 Horsemarket – which has been converted into two units. A successful online interior furnishings business, Giftwarez, opened the first of its shops there in 2013 – something that has brought a new sense of purpose to the old building and wider area. Alongside this a micro unit was created and let to a business that had previously traded on Kettering Market – the Corner Deli – last year.
- 5.3 Kevin Jones has also been working with the University of Northamptonshire's 'Hothouse' project, based at Chesham House Enterprise Centre, to deliver a marketing strategy that encompasses the Soan's Yard site itself, along with Market Street and Horsemarket. 'Hothouse' involves teams of marketing students from the University working together with their peers and tutors to deliver marketing solutions to small businesses who would otherwise be unable to afford it. It's a great initiative, and the feedback we've had so far has been really positive. Now that development of the site has commenced, we're looking forward to seeing the graphics and advertising material that has been worked on.
- 5.4 Future plans also include regular film nights, where we would utilise the Council's Big Screen and the enclosed space made available by the completed project. As details of the development are firmed up, and events begin to be planned for the new space, we will report back.
- 5.5 This exciting project is a strong example of how the approach taken by Kettering Borough Council is paying dividends in terms of attracting investment into the town centre. It will play a major role in revitalising that part of the town centre, and create a hub for niche and independent retailers – a destination for shoppers in its own right as well as an interesting place to walk through.

6 **ENERGY PARK OPPORTUNITIES**

- 6.1 At the meeting of the Executive Committee in November, Members recognised the significance of the Energy Park proposals at Burton Wold for the future growth of Kettering Borough, and endorsed the engagement of external specialist advice to prepare an options appraisal of the commercial

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opportunities that might exist for Kettering Borough Council. Since then Local Partnerships have been engaged to offer financial expertise and Kingscote Enterprises have been brought on board to offer specialist advice on the energy sector.

- 6.2 Work is under way and proceeding as planned on this exciting project – we're expecting to have draft outcomes back towards the end of January and will be in a position to bring a report back to Executive within the next couple of months.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND USE OF RESOURCES

- 7.1 Members have made their priorities for infrastructure and jobs-led growth clear – these are the prerequisites of growth. Members have indicated they wish to use the growth agenda to leverage three key and interrelated ambitions for the borough; namely:-

- ◆ A better offer for our town centres
- ◆ A better education and training offer
- ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs

8. RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Committee:

- a) Welcomes the progress being made on site, and in terms of the marketing of it as evidence that the project is on track to deliver its stated aims.
- b) Recognises the wider impact the proposals are already beginning to have in terms of revitalising that part of the town centre.
- c) That Members acknowledge the progress being made to assess the commercial opportunities at Kettering Energy Park.