

## **14.14 Lowfield Street**

14.14.1 Land to the east of Lowfield Street is identified for a major, comprehensive, mixed use town centre regeneration initiative. The site lies within the town centre and forms the western boundary to Central Park. The regeneration proposals provide a major opportunity to reinforce the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole and introduce a mix of uses in this particular location (including the creation of a new public square) which can form a natural affinity with uses already in existence, to create a unique focal point for town centre activity. They provide an opportunity for sustainable shopping patterns to develop with consequential benefits for the town centre, allowing Dartford to maintain and improve its position within the retail hierarchy.

### *Design*

14.14.2 The site is in a very prominent location within the town centre and adjacent to the park. The form and design of ground floor retail uses needs to ensure a positive interface with the street frontages along Lowfield Street and the new public square. Uses on the eastern frontage adjoining Central Park need to contribute to the vitality of that space. Suitable uses will be capable of interacting with the adjoining external spaces and diversifying the town's evening economy – these could include cafes and cultural facilities.

### *Retail*

14.14.3 The site lies in close proximity to the northern end of Lowfield Street which is identified as a primary shopping frontage in Dartford town centre. It will therefore be important for the retail element to be well related to and properly integrated with the remainder of the town centre, including the proposed public square at the northern end of the site. Footfall surveys indicate that there is a significant fall in footfall south of the entrance to the Priory Shopping Centre just north of the site. Retail proposals should maximise the potential to increase footfall between the town centre primary shopping frontage and the site, especially the northern and western edges of the site. To achieve this, it will be necessary to reroute the traffic in Market Street which currently divides the regeneration area from the rest of the town centre.

14.14.4 It will be important that the retail element incorporates a store of sufficient size to anchor this sector of the town centre. A mixed convenience and comparison store would be acceptable.

14.14.5 Lowfield Street currently performs a retail role, with essentially smaller scale retail and service units, some of which perform a more local role. It will be important for any development scheme to help facilitate the continuation of such uses. Development proposals should therefore make provision for smaller shop units at ground floor level along Lowfield Street. These should be designed to accommodate a range of smaller retail and service businesses. The northern face of the site is also a suitable location for smaller retail units at ground floor level.

### *Residential*

14.14.6 The regeneration proposals should include a significant element of residential, mainly apartment accommodation which should be both above the superstore, looking out over Central Park, Lowfield Street, the New Market Street square, and south of Vauxhall Place where the development will be purely

*residential. Vehicular (including service) access and parking arrangements must be properly integrated with those of the superstore.*

#### *Access and Parking*

*14.14.7 Access arrangements will need to be carefully addressed including the need to consider:*

- the routing of public transport services (including Fastrack) through the town centre;*
- the retention of access for service vehicles in the area;*
- the retention and possible enhancement of general town centre parking facilities within the vicinity.*

*The creation of a new “Carriage Drive”, informed by relevant transport and environmental assessments, will form a new route south east of Dartford town centre. Its purpose is to provide a new route for traffic which will not separate the regeneration area from the rest of the town. The Carriage Drive will provide a link between High Street / Overy Liberty and Lowfield Street in such a way that extensive pedestrianisation is possible in Market Street and Lowfield Street, including the creation of a new public square. The route will need to take traffic further away from Market Street than the previously safeguarded scheme between there and Lowfield Street, tying in to Lowfield Street to the south of Heath Street; this will involve taking a route through part of Central Park. The alignment, design and detailing of the carriage drive needs to be dealt with carefully and sensitively to ensure that its impact on Central Park is minimised and that the Park’s Green Grid role is not compromised.*

*14.14.8 Careful attention will need to be paid to its exact route, the materials used, lighting and signage and the form of traffic management, which should limit its use to cars and light vehicles only, and also limit the overall volume of traffic using it. In assessing the optimum alignment for this proposal, consideration will be given to the following factors:*

- The environmental and visual impact of the drive, particularly on Central Park;*
- The consequences for air quality in Central Park and the wider area;*
- The need to provide a safe and secure pedestrian environment in the Park;*
- The materials used, the proposed street furniture and lighting;*
- The implications of the road on the floodplain; and*
- The resultant transport benefits;*

*Further work will need to be undertaken to determine inter alia:*

- Whether the link should be one way (towards Lowfield Street) or two way; and*
- Whether the route should be available at all times or just between certain hours (eg not overnight).*

*14.14.9 The “Carriage Drive” will help underpin wider aspirations for this part of Dartford town centre: the remainder of the ring road, even when converted for two-way operation, will not be sufficient to deal with expected traffic without this link.*

#### *Environmental Improvements*

14.14.10 Significant opportunity exists for the regeneration proposals to bring about environmental improvements to Market Street and Lowfield Street, including the provision of a new public square at Market Street. Improvements in this vicinity need to integrate Central Park, the setting of the War Memorial and the Library, the new public square and links with the High Street. Proposals need to create a strong sense of place and provide multi-functional space.

#### Community Facilities

14.14.11 Provision for relocating the Dartford Judo Kwai facility needs to be considered as part of the overall regeneration proposals and it may be preferable for this to occur offsite.

14.14.12 Additionally, there is a children's play facility within Central Park which provides an important resource for visitors to the town centre. There must be no diminution in the scale or quality of the existing facility and any impacts upon it must be offset by replacement provision to at least the same standard as existing facilities. The provision of community facilities to serve the new residential community is also appropriate and this should include healthcare and possibly meeting room facilities.

#### Green Grid

14.14.13 The Green Grid notation currently covers Central Park – this provides a structural network of spaces and movement corridors within the Borough designed to achieve sustainability objectives. The regeneration proposals provide the opportunity to extend Central Park and thus enhance its Green Grid role - to include the playing fields to the rear of the Glentworth Club. The detailed design of this aspect should provide for the full integration of the extended area with the existing Park.

#### Archaeology

14.14.14 The County Council's Areas of Archaeological Potential maps indicate that there is one area of potential interest within the overall site – part of a much wider area which extends over much of the historical core of the town centre. This is identified as an area of known archaeological potential where clarification of the nature of this potential is required, in the Draft Supplementary Guidance on Archaeology published by Kent County Council. Early dialogue with the County Archaeologist is recommended. Developers will be expected to provide information on the nature and quality of any archaeological remains and these findings should influence the form of the proposed built development. An appropriate condition will be attached to any planning permission.

#### Flood Risk

14.14.15 The site lies within the fluvial flood plain and tidal flood zone and development should conform with policies NR6 (Fluvial Flood Risk Area – Developed Areas), and NR7 (Tidal Flood Zone). The Environmental Agency prefers residential schemes that provide living accommodation above the flood level and sleeping accommodation above flood risk level. All proposals must be accompanied by a flood risk assessment. Central Park itself, and the area within which the carriage drive will be located lies within an area notated by Policy NR6a (Fluvial Flood Risk Area – Undeveloped, Sparsely Developed Areas and the Functional Floodplain) – early dialogue with the Environment Agency is recommended.

### **TC11 Lowfield Street**

**Land is identified on the east side of Lowfield Street for a mixed use town centre regeneration scheme primarily for retail and residential uses with other supporting uses. Proposals should:**

- 1. Be of a high quality of design that reflects the site's prominent, town centre and park-side location and respects the amenity of Lowfield Street and the Town Centre Conservation Area;**
- 2. Provide retail uses that are well related to and properly integrated with the town centre;**
- 3. Provide retail frontage on both the north and west sides and incorporate unit shops as well as a major store;**
- 4. Maximise the residential opportunities in this important town centre location;**
- 5. Incorporate a positive land use and design interface with Central Park as well as addressing the potential for enhancing Central Park and its Green Grid function;**
- 6. Provide a new public square in Market Street which is free of traffic;**
- 7. Incorporate a new carriage drive route which connects the High Street/ Overy Liberty and Lowfield Street, based on relevant transport and environmental assessments and which incorporates operational characteristics that include:**
  - A low design speed (20mph);**
  - Light vehicles only;**
  - Some limited, paid on street parking; and**
  - No uncontrolled vehicular access into the park itself.**
- 8. Secure appropriate provision for the replacement of existing community facilities;**
- 9. Incorporate new community facilities;**
- 10. Include a well designed and integrated extension to Central Park in the southern part of the site; and**
- 11. Incorporate a visual impact assessment.**