

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

15th January 2020

Market Hall Site Meanwhile Uses

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Karen May, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	Sanders Park
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	Yes
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

1.1 This report outlines the proposals for meanwhile uses on the former Market Hall site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1.1 Note the report and consider the three options appraised for the temporary use of the former Market Hall site

2.1.2 Approve Option 1 as the preferred option to be implemented

2.1.3 Delegate authority to the Chief Executive after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships to implement Option 1

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

3.1 The Former Market Hall / Hanover Street Car Park site has been a long standing identified regeneration opportunity for Bromsgrove Town Centre. The first phase of the development site has been a success with the delivery of a new Waitrose store to the town. However, the second phase of the site has proved more challenging to deliver. The developer appointed to deliver a development on the entire site (Hinton Group) was unable to provide a commercially viable scheme for the second phase based on the agreement they had in place with Bromsgrove District Council. As a result, the development agreement with the developer was not renewed / extended and the site reverted back to Bromsgrove District Council control.

3.2 Hoardings have remained around the site for a number of years, creating an unsightly view in the heart on the town centre. To prevent this key gateway site in the town centre from continuing to be an unattractive and untidy vista to locals and visitors, work has been underway to assess options for *meanwhile uses* for the site whilst work to consider the more permanent development options to be delivered at the site is undertaken.

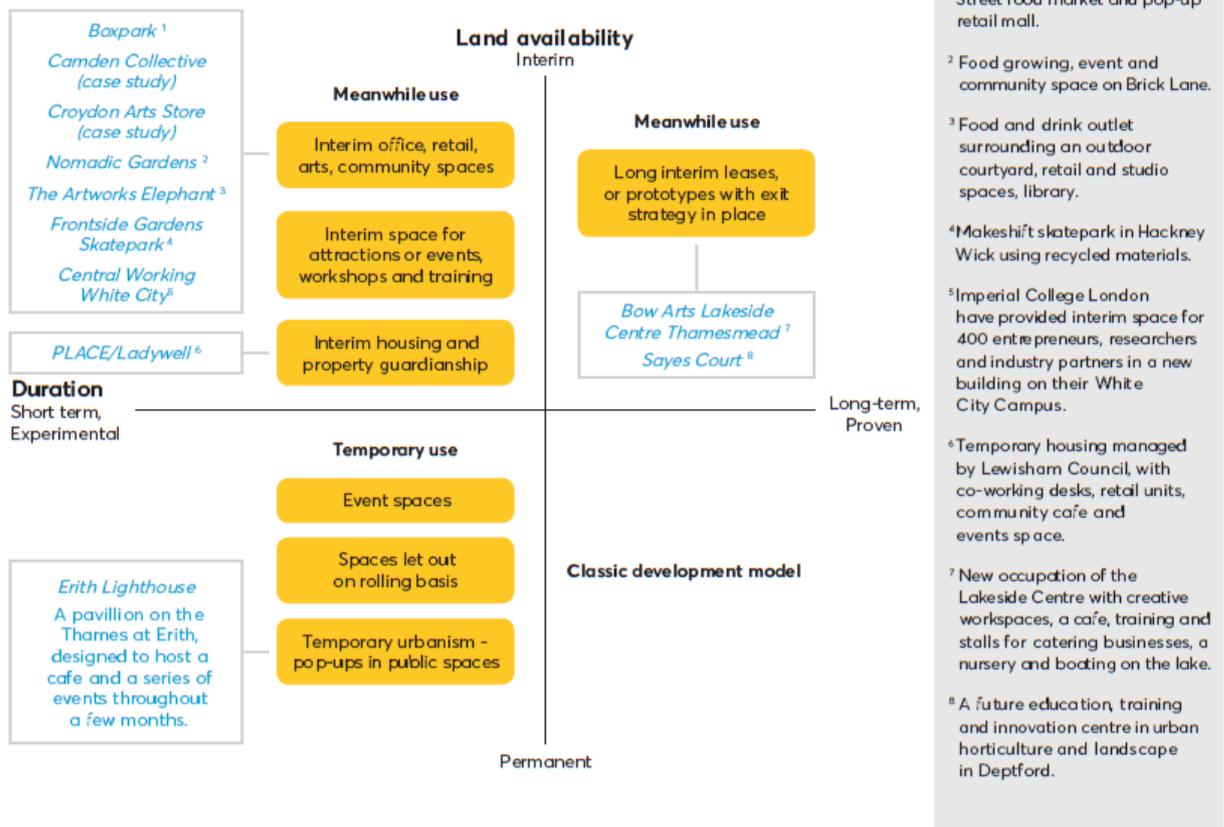
3.3 In parallel, a tender has been advertised for a multi-disciplinary team to assess options for a permanent use of the site and the former Dolphin Centre site. It is envisaged that

the professional team will be appointed in January 2020 and complete the work (designs, viability appraisal and soft market testing for the preferred options) by September 2020. However, it is worth noting that any physical redevelopment of the site will not happen for at least 18 months, so it is important that action is taken at the site in the meantime, in order to overcome the current issues identified above.

Meanwhile uses

- 3.4 *“When it works, it creates pride, a sense of achievement, a can-do approach, and a more vibrant, interesting place for the people that live and work there, now and long into the future. That’s the real power of Meanwhile use”¹*
- 3.5 Meanwhile uses refer to the interim occupation of vacant premises and land, during periods of redevelopment, until the landlord secures a tenancy agreement or lease. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) describes it as a process of “intelligent use of unproductive buildings and underused land.”
- 3.6 Figure 1 below illustrates the variety of meanwhile uses in terms of scope and length based on a case study of 51 sites in London. ²

Figure 1: What do we mean by meanwhile use?



¹ Meanwhile Space (2019), *Meanwhile Space: Ten Years in Practice*

² Bosetti, N. and Colthorpe, T (2018), *Meanwhile, in London: making use of London’s empty spaces*, Centre for London, 11

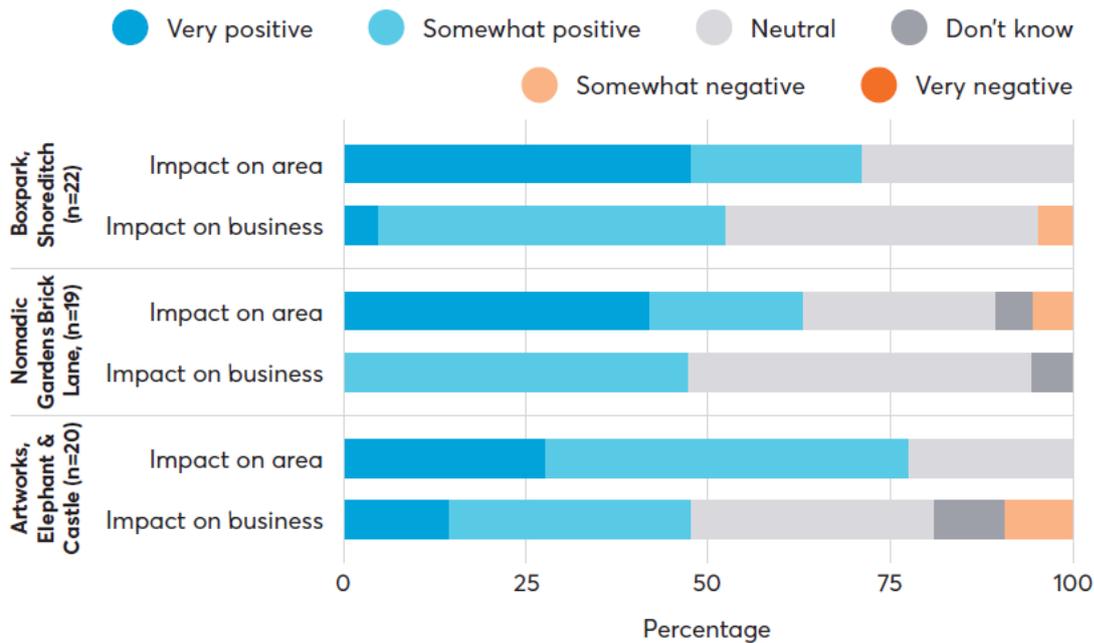
The value and impact of meanwhile spaces

3.7 The Centre for London Report³ identifies that meanwhile uses offer value in three ways:

- Efficiency – although they are time limited, the meanwhile activities deliver a more efficient use of urban land.
- Affordability – meanwhile uses increase the supply of affordable space, which can be used by local traders and businesses to pilot, experiment and try new ideas at low cost and risk. Also, they provide space for non-market uses such as arts, education and training.
- Flexibility – they offer a platform for temporary projects to raise interest or for artists to showcase their work or ideas

3.8 Figure 2 summarises the results of a survey that measured the impact of meanwhile uses on places and businesses.⁴ The survey results show that c. 70% of respondents saw positive or very positive impacts on the area and c.50% saw positive or very positive impacts on their business.

Figure 2: Survey of 60 shop owners and shopkeepers working near large London meanwhile projects



Survey questions: 'Overall, how would you rate the impact of [this scheme] on the area?' and 'Overall, how would you rate the impact of [this scheme] on your business?'

#BirdBox

3.9 The meanwhile use of the former Market Hall site in Bromsgrove town centre is proposed to be a high profile project creating a gateway to Worcester Road, an area of the town centre that has attracted a variety of entrepreneurial independent businesses and an area that has the lowest vacancy rate of the town centre. It could foster a culture

³ Bosetti, N. and Colthorpe, T (2018), *Meanwhile, in London: making use of London's empty spaces*, Centre for London, 14-15

⁴ Ibid.,16

of social engagement and innovation; an opportunity to unlock a space to become an integral part of the changing landscape of the town centre.

- 3.10 The proposed name of the meanwhile use concept is *Bird Box*. The reason for this name is multi-faceted but the origins reflect some of the key architectural features that exist on many of the buildings in the surrounding area (please see below)



Giinger, Hair Salon, Worcester Road

- 3.11 The *Bird Box* is located in the conservation area and is steeped in rich history and heritage and architectural significance. Recent Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) investment has seen many of the properties close to the space undergo high quality shop frontage improvements bringing a new lease of life to Worcester Road. The name of the space provides a further connection to this part of the town.
- 3.12 The ethos of *Bird Box* is to promote a meanwhile space that attracts ideas, initiatives and activities that can nest, grow and migrate. A space where creative ideas can be discussed, developed and grown, innovative space where entrepreneurs can come and go, establish collaborative proposals and contribute to the wider cultural offer in Bromsgrove town centre.
- 3.13 By adopting a tailored and bespoke approach to the space it could encourage and attract community and social spaces, food and beverage markets, creative workshops, hi-tech incubators and niche retail start-ups. If the concept is proved, it could act as a pilot / pathfinder and be a key driver and attractor for the creative industries and digital and technology sectors offering bespoke and high quality workspace on a more permanent basis.

Financial Implications

- 3.14 Three options have been appraised for a temporary use of the former Market Hall site:
- Option 1 – Bird Box high quality
 - Option 2 – Bird Box standard quality
 - Option 3 – temporary car park

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

15th January 2020

3.14.1 Option 1- Bird Box high quality

Appendix 1 illustrates the concept designs for this option.

The capital cost to deliver this option is £276,664. The cost was prepared by external cost consultants. However, the council's contractor has prepared a cost report for the same specification and achieved a reduced cost of £210,180.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unlocks the potential of the former market hall site• A high quality, innovative use of a prime but derelict site in Bromsgrove town centre• Could act as catalyst for further pop up and meanwhile uses in void retail properties in the High Street• Sends a strong statement of intent in terms of quality place making (perception)• More likely to attract quality users• Brings Bromsgrove town centre into line with neighbouring areas offering a pop-up meanwhile use; Digbeth, Worcester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exceeds the existing budget• The more intensive uses of the site may require a planning application to be submitted

3.14.2 Option 2 – Bird Box standard quality

Appendix 2 illustrates concept designs for this option.

The cost of Option 2 is £101,155.

This is a medium value scheme, retaining some ideas from the first option, at a reduced cost. This has been achieved by removing the perimeter planting and design work to the flooring and hoardings.

The site has been designed to maximise the current surfacing where possible and remove the softer elements like artificial grass flooring. The number of seating options has been reduced. A timber trip rail runs the perimeter of the site.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unlocks the potential of the former market hall site• The revised proposals are more aligned to the available budget• The site would still be able to be utilised by interested parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower quality site• A lower quality setting may be less attractive to higher end operators / events / activity• Does not unlock the full potential of the site

3.14.3 Option 3 – temporary car park

The cost of Option 3 is £33,750.

This option is to gravel the site and provide temporary and informal car parking. This proposal has not been designed but a cost has been established from the Council's civil contractors which would see the site levelled and then gravel put in place.

The cost for this option would include a small trip rail fence to be installed but the cost does not include any lining of spaces, which would be difficult to achieve on a gravel surface, and so it would be an informal arrangement with cars parking as they see fit. The cost for this option does not include the installation of a parking meter, which would be an additional cost.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer additional car parking spaces in the town centre• Potential revenue generation for the District Council• Lowest cost option	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not unlock the potential of the site• Will not act as a town centre attraction / catalyst• No opportunity to introduce pop-ups / events / creative uses in the town centre• Loss of opportunity to stimulate creative collaborations / activities in the town centre

3.15 Option 1 – Bird Box high quality – is recommended as the preferred option for implementation. This would require an one-off allocation of £110,180 in the capital programme, as there is already £100,000 retained deposit from the development agreement that expired in February 2019.

3.16 There is the possibility to generate income from letting the space on the site to traders, pop-up shops and other users. Further work needs to be done to establish the appropriate rent levels, however, it is not anticipated that they will generate a significant rate of return relative to the capital investment in the site.

Legal Implications

3.17 There are no legal implications.

Service / Operational Implications

3.18 The council's framework contractors have confirmed that completion of works can be achieved before Easter 2020, subject to Cabinet approval.

3.19 The council will need to put in place site management / security arrangements. This may have further staff and cost implications.

3.20 If either of the two Bird Box options is approved, then a programme of events will be delivered on the site.

- 3.21 Appendix 3 outlines a high level programme of events that could be delivered on the site. North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) and the council's events team will agree a coordinated approach to avoid duplication and confusion.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.22 The proposals are aligned with the council's equality and diversity policies.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The risks associated with the delivery of the physical works will be managed by the council's framework contractor in accordance with the approved processes and procedures.
- 4.2 The risks associated with the delivery of the events and activities will be identified, assessed and managed through the event management plan that will be prepared by NWEDR and the council's events team.

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Bird Box High Quality
Appendix 2 - Bird Box Standard Quality
Appendix 3 – High level event programme

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7. KEY

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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