

**TO:** SITTINGBOURNE AND SWALE WEST AREA FORUM  
**DATE:** 29<sup>th</sup> November 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Sittingbourne Town Centre - Proposed Changes to Local Plan  
**BY:** Head of Development Services  
**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** Following the Council's decision in September on its preferred option for retail development in Sittingbourne, proposed changes to the Swale Borough Local Plan have been prepared. These will be submitted to the Local Plan Inquiry for consideration by the Inspector, but prior to that public consultation is being undertaken on them. As part of that consultation, the views of the Area Forum are being sought through this report.

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**Implications:** Human Resources Implications: None

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Finance Implications: The Executive have already agreed that the cost of this consultation exercise be covered from the remaining unallocated funds from the Planning Delivery Grant

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Legal Implications: None

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Crime & Disorder Implications: The Crime Reduction Officer has been consulted on the proposed changes to the Plan

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Sustainability Implications: The proposed changes will be the subject of a sustainability appraisal to be undertaken by independent consultants

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Risk Implications: None

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**Decision Required:** **The Forum is asked to consider the proposed changes to the Local Plan and advise of its comments on them.**

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1. Members will recall that on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2005 a special meeting of Full Council approved Minute 283 of the Executive Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005. This Minute reads as follows:

(1) *That the following Option be the preferred option for future retail development in Sittingbourne:*

*'A re-orientation of the town centre along a north/south axis with the existing town centre linked to a new mixed retail development north of the railway line by a suitable string of commercial/retail developments in the area of the railway station. To the north there would be a retail anchor within a mixed retail scheme and leisure uses. The south of the Forum Centre would be developed in keeping with the new pedestrian/cycle link across the railway line. Other land within the Milton Creek area, and the area alongside St. Michael's Road would emerge as residential-led mixed-use communities.'*

(2) *That the preferred option as set out above be subject to public consultation during October/November and a Sustainability Appraisal be commissioned, both to be funded through the Planning Delivery Grant.*

(3) *That a specialist retail consultant be appointed to take forward the necessary level of background analysis to support the Council through the Local Plan Inquiry, funded through the Planning Delivery Grant.*

2. To incorporate this agreed preferred option into the Local Plan First Review, I have prepared a series of changes to the Plan and, in accordance with recommendation (2), these are to be made available for public consultation from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2005. The proposed changes are presented in Annex 1 to this report. As part of the consultation the Area Forum's views are invited on the proposed changes.

3. The consultation period ends on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006, and it is my intention to report the representations received, including those from the Area Forum, to the Executive when it meets on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2006. In the light of the representations submitted, the Executive will be asked to agree any amendments to the proposed changes and these will then be put before the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector as part of his consideration of matters relating to the Area Action Plans for Sittingbourne Town Centre and for the land around Milton Creek.

4. With regard to recommendation (3), I am currently undertaking a tendering process to secure the services of a consultant. Bids for the work from suitable consultants are invited by 21<sup>st</sup> November.

Brian Lloyd – extrn. 7118

15<sup>th</sup> November 2005

List of background documents - None