



## Carriageworks Community Vision

### Discussion Paper for Stakeholder Group

22 November 2011

#### **“V” is for vision**

From the quantitative responses:

The most common desired use is community facilities, followed by arts.

Most people want development led by the community, although many don't mind so long as it happens.

From the qualitative responses:

People want to retain the character of the area. They want it to be vibrant and creative. They want it to attract people to the area. They do not want a development dominated by multiple brands or one that excludes the existing local community.

#### **“V” is for viability**

The consultation process has helped us start to identify the community vision - what people would like to see on the site and how it should be developed. We didn't seek to temper these ideas with checks on their viability. And yet if they are not viable, for whatever reason, they almost certainly will not happen (having said that, early proofs of viability are no guarantee of long term success!)

Viability has to be achieved in the physical design. The proposed uses have to fit on the site, the design has to comply with planning and building regulations, people have to respond well to the appearance of the buildings and so on.

Viability also has to be achieved in the finances of the development and its long term use. If the development will lose money hand over fist it will not happen. It is possible to appraise any particular development using a conventional approach; using standard building costs, borrowing funds on a commercial basis, calculating the land value, working out the profit that the developer will want for their effort and risk, and then taking all the costs and profit away from the value of the finished

development. If there is a positive sum left over then the development might be able to go ahead. But if its a negative sum then its back to the drawing board.

Stokes Croft likes to challenge convention, so it is important to look at other approaches. Raising finance from non-commercial sources, self-build, community led development that requires lower profit margins, different approaches to risk, judicious phasing - all can help reduce costs. But there must still be value in the end uses on the site. This value could be entirely social (e.g. if a philanthropist decided to fund the whole development) or it might be derived from selling a greater or lesser part of the development to reimburse the people or organisations who have lent the funds. Either way, the scheme must show that it can deliver sufficient value to justify the investment.

### **How does the community relate to the site?**

The site is clearly important to the local community, and people see its potential contribution to the future of the area. Three quarters of people want to see community facilities on the site but we think that “community” means something broader than just a community centre or rooms for hire (of which there is already a good supply in St Pauls). We think it means space that is accessible, that fulfils a function in the community, that directly contributes to the vitality and character of the local area. If this is right, then there are many uses that fulfil that brief; including retail, small business space, creative and performance activities and community activities. But aside from the uses, the important factor is the accessibility of the site. It is not about a large site with a frontage of shop units and private space behind, it is about opening the site as a whole so that it becomes part of the fabric of the local area, contributing to the local economic, social and environmental character (the sustainable mix), through which local people can pass without reason and without having to be keyholders.

### **Open space**

The consultation responses made many references to open space and this was seen by many to be of major importance. People wanted to see space that was open and inclusive; a place that would integrate well with the adjacent streets and reflect local creative culture. The idea of creating a vibrant market place was also a popular theme. Clearly, creating generous public open space might have the effect of reducing building density (and hence viability of development) and this will need to be carefully managed in the design.

Within the open space the question of parking needs to be addressed. Car parking is very space hungry, is extremely expensive if it is underground, and prevents other

more desirable uses if it is above ground. But if it is not provided it can impact upon the value of units and lead to surrounding streets becoming congested by off-site parking.

### **Above the ground floor**

Much of the response has focused on ground floor activities. Some people do refer to activities above and these have included everything from residential, small business and arts space, to rooftop swimming pools. The difficulty is in establishing the financial viability of these uses i.e. showing how their value is going to justify (or reimburse) their cost.

A conventional viability appraisal of the site will say that residential use has to be the dominant use. If this were to be the case, the consultation indicates that people want a mixture of types of unit, a mixture of tenure, and a mixture of value. They do not want a mono-type development whether it is all private to sell flats (especially if it is a gated community), or all social housing.

A non-conventional viability appraisal may point to the wider benefits of alternative uses. The challenge then lies in showing sufficient value in these uses. In past years viability may have been achieved with the use of capital grants. But these are now mostly gone and are unlikely to return in the foreseeable future.

### **Community ownership**

Many people said that the development should be led by the community. What does this actually mean? Does it mean that the development should be owned by everyone living within a defined area? If it does, it raises huge questions not least about organisation, accountability and representation but also about finance; who provides the funding, does the funder get a return on their investment, and who is in charge of financial decisions? There are obviously answers to these questions, but it will be a long and time consuming process not only to resolve them but also to acquire the site, work up a scheme and then deliver the development. For some people that will be mean years of intensive commitment.

Alternatively, does it mean an approach that ensures that the uses on the site do not veer off in directions that are at odds with the community. If that is the case, it could potentially be a development led by the private sector but with suitable layers of accountability and consultation.

A third option could be that those parts of the site that fulfil the “community facilities” brief are managed (owned even) by a community owned organisation, while other parts are subject to a different regime.

## **The emerging vision**

A single vision (proposal?) emerged from the workshop. It embodies the contributions from people who responded to the consultation, and while it has not been the subject of a rigorous viability appraisal it does take into account the need for viability and therefore adopts an approach that “feels” like it could be deliverable.

Vision statement needs to embrace diverse use while establishing the key qualities that must be included in any development proposal. The developer must be allowed max flexibility within that remit.

*The Carriageworks and Westmoreland House site will provide a new pedestrian route cutting the corner from Stokes Croft to Ashley Road. The route will take the pedestrian through buildings and into interlocking streets or spaces.*

*The spaces will be lined by small and medium sized units designed to give flexibility in their use whether as shops, non-retail businesses (including artists), a market, local services and space for occasional hire. The intention will be to make a place, indoors and out, that is vibrant, energetic, creative and attractive where local enterprise and creativity thrives. As such, the spaces will help provide for the needs of local residents, and also attract visitors from further afield.*

*Above this mixture of uses at ground floor level there will be a mix of mostly residential spaces ranging from affordable flats to rent through to apartments to buy. There will also be some family housing with gardens.*

*Building design will be to high environmental standards, and full use will be made of the roofs to create gardens, allotments and opportunities for biodiversity. Godwin’s Carriageworks will be restored while the other buildings might or might not be retained, but if they are kept their appearance will be significantly improved.*

*The development process will have significant community input and it might or might not be led by a local community enterprise. Equally the long term management of the site will have an impact upon the community (especially the ground floor) and this needs to be addressed in any future ownership structure.*

*The local community wants to see the dereliction of this site addressed as a priority and it will work with any organisation that shares this vision for the future.*

## **What do we need to ask in December?**

The second round of consultation will start on Thurs 1 December and last for one week, including two open days over the weekend. This is an opportunity to a) make sure that our interpretations of the survey responses are correct and b) to attract support for the emerging vision.

We will be aiming to keep the consultation simple. We will break the vision down into component parts and ask people whether they support it or not. They will be able to add comments if they think it appropriate. The parts will be:

- Access through the site
- The activities at ground level
- Residential uses
- Car parking
- The form of buildings and whether existing ones should be kept / lost
- How the development should be led / delivered

## **How to ask the questions?**

The consultation will take two forms.

Firstly online via a questionnaire on the Carriageworks website. The opportunity to take part will be promoted via the email list, post to those who have requested it, Facebook and Twitter. Support documents will also be available.

Secondly at the drop-in at the weekend. This will comprise exhibition boards describing the issues and asking for response. Volunteers will be needed to meet and greet, and guide people through the process answering questions when needed.

Our voxpop film will also be online and at the drop-in.

The media will be informed of the consultation.

## **What will the final Vision document look like?**

The document will include:

- A description of what we did - the methodology
- A summary of the survey responses - this won't get into fine detail but will point to the website where the full responses are available
- A topic based discussion (broadly using the six headings above)
- The vision statement

The document will be illustrated with images from elsewhere. It will include a site plan and while there could be very indicative plans to show, for example, how the open space works, there will not be any site designs.

## **What happens next?**

1 December	Consultation starts
3 & 4 December	Drop-in events
7 December	Consultation ends
12 December	Contact Group meets to consider final vision
15 December	Stakeholder Group meets to agree final vision