

place services

Ref: Urban Design assessment of development opportunity sites
Title: Council Depot and Car Park Site, New Street, Great Dunmow, Essex
Client: Uttlesford District Council
Date: December 2012

Place Services at Essex County Council working in partnership with Uttlesford District Council

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Executive Summary

Following consultation on the proposals for a draft Local Plan in June/July 2012 the council depot and car park site in Great Dunmow was identified as a development opportunity site. Through a process of viability testing, context analysis and urban design appraisal, the future development potential of the site has been explored and development principles established.

This document sets out the principles for the future development of the site, ensuring that any development fits into the surrounding context, while providing the town with a suitable mix of uses which meets the needs and requirements for the future growth of Great Dunmow.

The follow summary sets out the key development principles future proposals will need to address:

- Principles of the indicative layout and site analysis should be adhered to
- The future development of the Depot site should consider a mix of uses including public car park, commercial and residential; including a pedestrian link from the site to the High Street
- The public car park must be retained with no less than the current number of spaces (12no.)
- Expansion of the car park should be considered but not to the detriment of development on site
- The access to the site could take one of a number of options including; two-way link from New Street to the connected private road, one way link from New Street to the connected private road and access to the depot site from New Street and the private road but without connecting the roads.
- Linking the site with the adjacent private road would be a desirable
- Commercial uses on site should be focused adjacent to the existing commercial activity adjacent to Haslers Place
- Commercial buildings should be robust to cater for a wide range of commercial uses and activity as well as provide the local market with suitable commercial floor space not currently available
- The larger commercial buildings should be focused around the lowest levels of the site
- Residential units should be located to back onto the rear of the High Street facing properties taking into account over looking issues
- Residential development needs to respect the scale of the surrounding residential areas
- Parking for residential and commercial units needs to be adequate for use and apply to the Essex Parking Standards 2009
- Pedestrian links to the High Street from the site via Tudor Court is a key requirement needed to be included in any proposal

Purpose of this report

Uttlesford District Council is assessing the viability of a number of development opportunity sites in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet. This report follows on from another commissioned report undertaken by Carter Jonas titled; 'Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites' November 2012. The Carter Jonas report sets out the future viability of development options for each of the identified sites.

This report takes the findings of the Carter Jonas document and begins to establish urban design development principles and options for each site including future uses.

1. Local Context

Great Dunmow is a small market town of some 9,000 inhabitants situated midway between Braintree and Bishops Stortford. The retail centre of the town comprises the High Street and Market Place together with White Street where the Cooperative Store and main car park are situated. There is a mixed retail offer but this is provided almost exclusively by private traders or small local multiples with the exception of the main Banks who are represented. The centre serves the needs of the immediate community and tourists but otherwise shoppers will visit the Tesco store on the western side of the town for food shopping or the adjoining centres. Rental levels in the centre are insufficient to provide an economic return on the development costs and retail space will generally only be provided as part of a more profitable residential development.

Location

The site is close to the town centre and has good public transport links; however poor access to the site could limit potential uses and visitors to any development there. The site borders the conservation area of Great Dunmow with access on New Street which is within the conservation area. There are also more than twenty listed buildings in close proximity and of particularly importance are those fronting onto New Street. The site proposal should ensure the future preservation of these historic designations. The majority of this site has been appraised as GtDUN30 during the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

Council Depot and car park to the rear comprising some 2,950 sq metres (0.73 acres) with access off New Street as shown on the plan. Access to the Council depot site via New Street is poor.

The prime retail area in Dunmow is slightly to the north and close to the pedestrian link to the Cooperative store and main car park.



2. Policy and Viability Context

Emerging Site Allocation Policies (LDF Working Group Oct 2012)

Great Dunmow Policy - Development Opportunity Sites

The Council will support development and redevelopment opportunities for town centre uses in the following town centre locations.

- Council Depot, off New Street
- Post Office Yard

Development should form part of a comprehensive development or not prevent the development of any other part of the site. Development will need to be implemented in accordance with design guidance approved by the Council and other Development Management policies. Implementation of the proposals will be regulated by legal obligation in association with the grant of planning permissions.

Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites report (Carter Jonas Nov 2012)

Possible redevelopment

Speculative development on either site would only be viable for residential purposes but an ancillary town centre use looking for suitable premises, possibly within Use Class D1, could find either site attractive for a design and build solution. Such a user could struggle to find appropriate premises within the existing stock and be prepared to build their own premises designed for the use either as a owner occupier or be prepared to take a lease and pay a rent to justify development by others. The site might also provide additional town centre car parking if it enabled land to be released elsewhere to support High Street development but new links to the High Street would probably be required.

Viability

Speculative development on the Council depot site for most uses will not be viable and will only occur once an occupier has been identified for part of any proposed scheme.

Summary

- Speculative development only suitable for residential
- D1 design and build would be viable
- Development would provide an alternative to the current stock
- Owner occupier or lease out arrangement
- High Street frontage desirable as part of a land assembly
- Retain an element of public parking
- Explore options for a pedestrian links to the site from High Street

Summary of Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (Approved November 2007)

The site is outside the Great Dunmow Conservation Area though much of its boundary adjoins. Incidentally, the conservation area has recently been extended south of 74 High Street to protect the MOD building. The site does not contain any listed buildings, though 7 are identified as of relevance given they adjoin, albeit from their rear aspect, or facing on the opposite side of the street. The Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy also identifies the following to be worthy of conservation:

- A number of other buildings of architectural/historic value, namely the MOD Hall on High Street (opposite Braintree Road), 74 High Street (Peppers), 68-72 High Street, and the United Reform Church on New Street, with the importance of its grounds also noted.
- Important trees within the grounds of the United Reform Grounds.

3. Historical Context

Archaeology report

The site lies within the Roman and medieval town area of Great Dunmow. The Roman town was occupied throughout the Roman period with the town developing along Stane Street. Widespread small scale excavation has shown occupation sites throughout the central part of the present town with a range of cemeteries on the edge of the Roman town.

The study area is bisected by the main Colchester to Braughing Roman Road (Stane Street), upon which the town of Great Dunmow developed from the later part of the first century AD. It has been postulated that a Roman fort was originally constructed at the road junction of Stane Street and the Chelmsford to Cambridge Road which lies to the west.

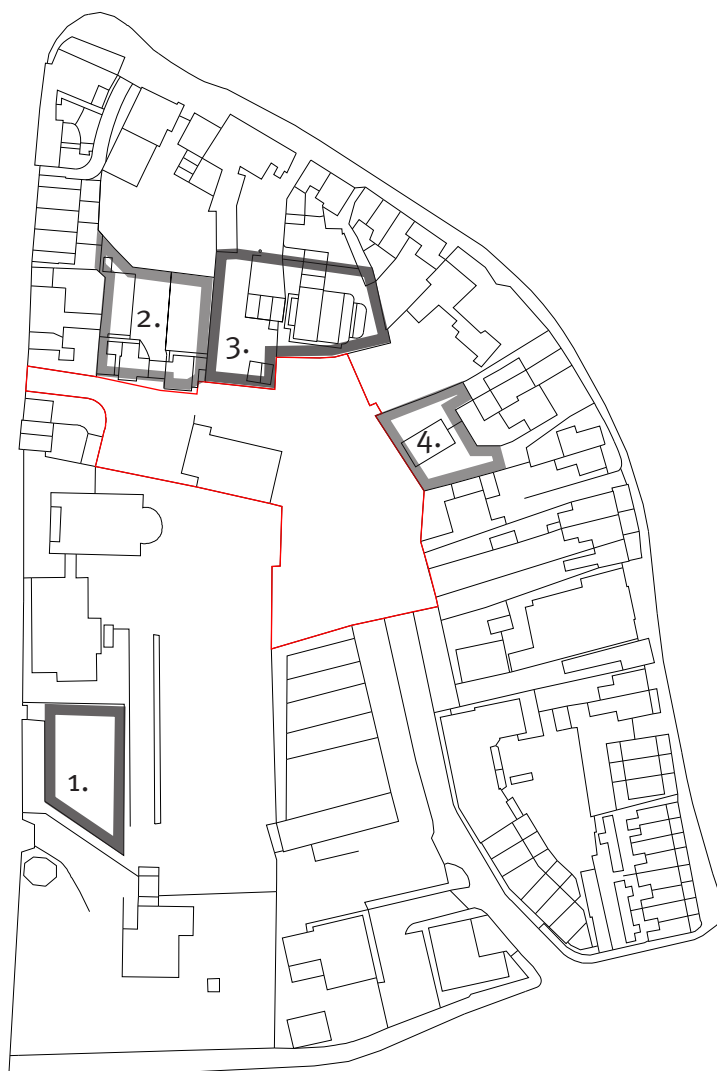
Evaluation within the grounds of the Congregational Church (1), immediately to the south west of the study area found evidence of Roman occupation dating to the 1st and 2nd century date. The archaeological deposits were located between 50 and 70cm below the modern ground surface. The features comprised ditches and pits, with no confirmed evidence of buildings.

Evaluation to the rear of 46 High Street (2) identified significant Roman deposits on the area of land immediately adjacent the access road to the present car park. These deposits comprised potential structural deposits, which would have fronted onto Stane Street and other larger pits relating to rubbish, domestic or industrial activity in the area. Occupation dated from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

Further evaluation to the rear of 52 (3) and 72 (4) High Street found no archaeological deposits of significance.

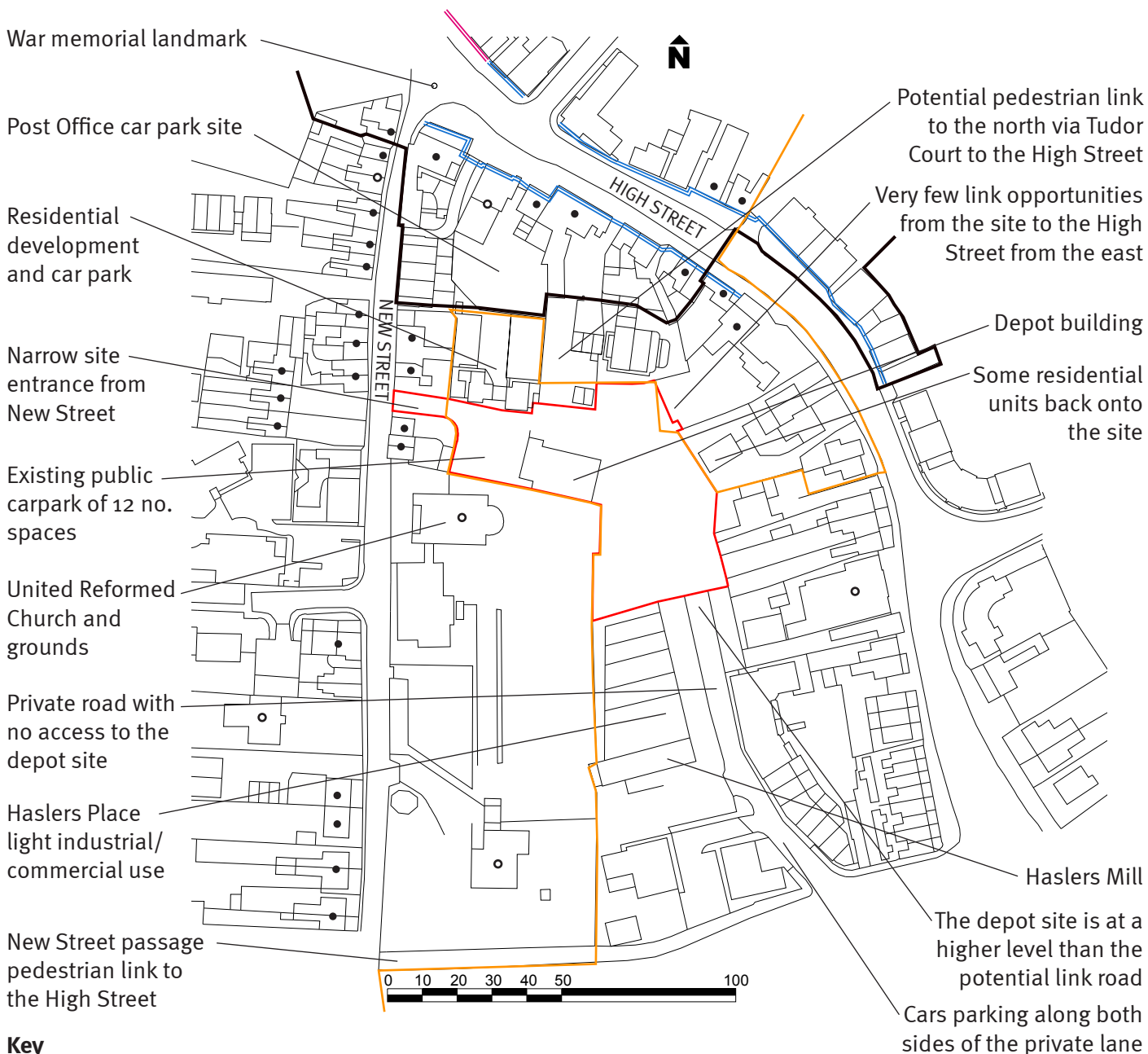
Evidence of medieval or Saxon occupation is absent from all of the evaluations described above, however, work on the western side of New Street has recovered quantities of both Saxon and medieval pottery indicating its presence in the immediate vicinity.

The archaeological requirements if development proceeds will comprise an initial phase of trial trenching followed by open area excavation of significant deposits identified. One of the trenches will need to be specifically targeted at the line of Stane Street.



4. Site Analysis

The plan below highlights the principle context surrounding the Depot site, including the opportunities and constraints for the future use of the site. The site, currently a combination of a public car park and council depot, provides 12no. Town centre parking spaces. There are very few currently opportunities to link the site to the High Street. Surrounding piecemeal infill residential developments has limited a wider, more comprehensive scheme. Opportunities to link the site with Haslers Lane and a potential link through Tudor Court remain a possibility. Development needs to respect the surrounding residential sites to the east and the setting of the church to the south. The site area is 2,950sqm.



Key

- Site boundary
- Primary street frontage
- Secondary street frontage
- Town centre boundary
- Conservation area boundary
- Listed buildings
- Building that make important architectural contribution to the conservation area

Photographic survey with annotation



Top left/right: The existing site entrance off New Street is narrow and in close proximity to the neighbouring listed residential buildings.

Middle: The potential link to Haslers Lane is via a narrow private access road which accommodates a large number of on street parking. The surrounding commercial and residential units front directly onto this road. The current high vacancy of the commercial units maybe improved if the private road was connected to a redeveloped depot site, increasing footfall.

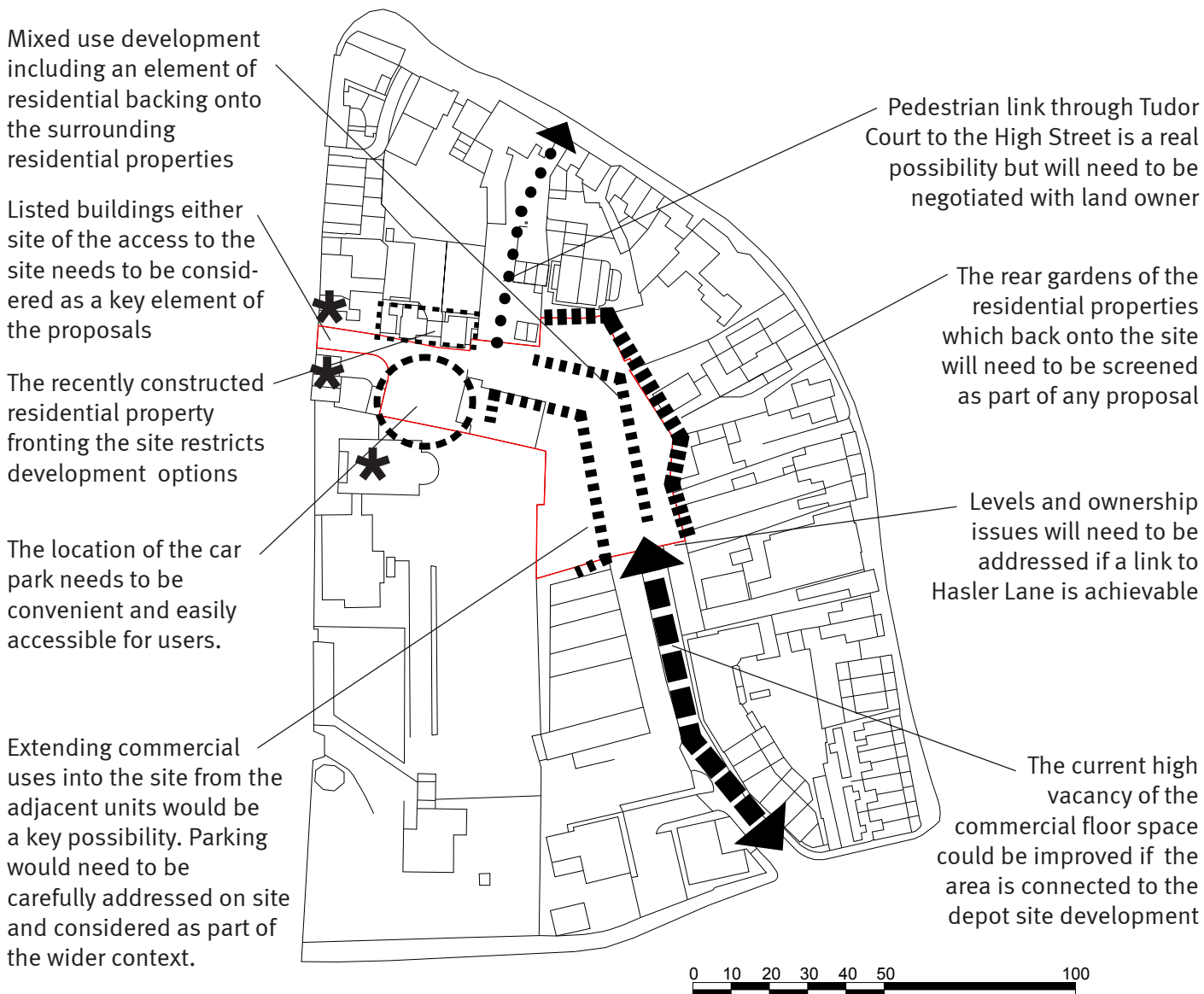
Bottom: Currently the only feasible pedestrian access to the High Street from the site would be via Tudor Court, through the private/residents car park. The recent residential development adjacent to the site will need to be carefully considered as part of the sites development.

Key Principles

The development principles plan below highlights the key criteria for the future development of the site. The plan indicates the opportunities and constraints of the depot site.

Development principles:

- Pedestrian link to the High Street (through Tudor Court is currently the most achievable)
- 12no. minimum space car park within close proximity to the High Street link and doctors surgery
- Sensitive commercial development to the west of the site adjoining the exiting commercial units
- Opening up the site to link with the private road just off Haslers Place
- Mixed use residential development backing onto the eastern site boundary
- Carefully screened site boundary to the east
- Protect and enhance the setting of the church and churchyard
- Provide adequate parking (associated to end use) on site while considering the implications of other dispersed parking as a result of the development
- Consider the implications of the surrounding residential development, especially the new residential units fronting onto the site



Indicative Outline Proposal

The site would be suitable for a mix of residential, commercial and office uses with the existing public car park retained.

Development breakdown

block	storey	units	type	car parking	garden
a	2.5	3no.	2/3bed town houses (120sqm)	3no. (on plot and on street)	45sqm
b	2.5	2no.	1bed apartments (75sqm)	100% underdeck	terrace
c	2	3no	2bed apartments (90sqm) and ground floor retail (90sqm)	200% on plot	terrace
d	3	2no.	2/3bed apartments (90sqm) and ground floor retail (90sqm)	200% parking	40sqm
e	2.5	2no.	2/3bed apartments (110sqm) and ground floor retail (100sqm)	200% parking on plot	20sqm
f	3	1no.	Sub-dividable commercial unit (500sqm)	10 spaces under deck	na

10no. short stay parking spaces along the link between Hasler Lane and the site.

Options for various sized residential and commercial units may increase or decrease depending on market demand, viability and parking space provision, the residential units will have to be robust to allow for a variety of future end users.



Consultation

As part of the preparation of this report the following groups were consulted on in regard to the future development of the site;

- Strategic Development Management, Essex County Council Highways
- Conservation Officer, Uttlesford District Council
- Tree Officer, Uttlesford District Council
- District, town and parish councillors
- Historic Environment Specialist, Place Services

Relevant district, town and parish councillors were invited to a 'walk and talk' meeting on site to walk around the site and discuss key issues including setting out their aims objectives for the site. The 'walk and talk' day was held on Tuesday 11th December 2012. A summary of the comments are included below as well as any additional thoughts the councillors provided.

Strategic development highways comments

- Linking the site to the private road would be feasible
- A one-way access road would be possible but enforcement on the private section of the road would be quite difficult
- The private road would need to be adopted to control vehicle access and on street parking
- Parking solutions need to be flexible to reflect the urban situation and uses

Walk and Talk summary

- Linking the depot site with the private road at Haslers Place may help increase viability for the current uses
- Local taxi company working out of the Arts Centre increases the volume of on street parking
- The future of the ECC owned property 'The Old Manse' on New Street needs to be incorporated in any development proposal
- The council would like to sustain and possibly increase parking revenue from the site
- Parking needs to be positioned
- Residential mixed use would be desirable on site
- Commercial uses linking with the current commercial uses along Haslers Lane would be a desirable fit
- The current careful balance between uses and parking needs to be understood as not to move the parking problem else where
- Pedestrian link to the High Street is a key requirement and needs to be adjacent to car parking
- Links to the surgery on New Street needs to be improved

In addition:

A one-way system in New Street is not workable and we need to be aware of creating a major increase in traffic flow when developing proposals for the sites. There is a blind pinch point which does lead to traffic backing onto the High Street on occasions. Traffic could be restricted leaving New Street to left turns only which would help.

It was immediately apparent that once the buildings are cleared we could very easily double the area of the Council car park without watering down any other options.

We could arrange a pedestrian link down through Tudor Court. To pay for the resurfacing of their car park is small change in the scheme of things.

There are some issues with a about complete access from Haslers Yard, although there is scope for a limited amount of access without the current commercial uses swamping the area.

We should give Uttlesford Housing Department a chance to explore residential options here because due to self-financing of the Housing Revenue account we could well be able to be a stakeholder “extraordinaire” here. It would require a specific brief from Housing.

We could use it as a temporary public car park until all options have been explored.

To continue with the artisan theme, live work units is one consideration we should explore. The Old Manse is interesting but not for commercial use; the best use would be for top end residential conversion.

Councillor invited to contribute:

Caroline Fuller Town Clerk, Cllr Davey, Cllr Davies, Cllr Barker, Cllr Mackman, Cllr Ranger

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This document has been prepared on the request of Uttlesford District Council and has been produced by Place Services, a trading company of Essex County Council.

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Reference Documents

Uttlesford District Council Local Plan (2005)
Uttlesford District Council
2005

Parking Standards: Design and good practice
Essex County Council
2009

Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites
Carter Jonas
November 2012

Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals
Uttlesford District Council
Approved November 2007

Retail Site allocation policies
LDF Working Group
October 2012