



PRESS RELEASE

Guildford Vision Welcomes North Street Developer Choice Review and Calls for Evaluation Reassessment

Guildford, Monday 22 April 2013: Guildford Vision Group (GVG) welcomes the sensible move by the Executive Committee of Guildford Borough Council (GBC) to defer the appointment of a developer for the North Street town centre redevelopment scheme.

In the light of new information the proposal to defer was put to the Executive by Cllr James Palmer at its meeting on Thursday evening.

Two speakers from GVG addressed the meeting and supported the late move by GBC, referring to the impact of the arrival of PRUPIM, the property arm of The Prudential that is the new owner of the Friary and much of the development site.

Julian Lyon, one of the GVG speakers, also called for GBC to use the delay to get another professional opinion on the choice of developer. He pointed out the good governance benefits of a second opinion; the Council's current retail adviser could benefit from the developer choice.

GVG also pays tribute to the support of those many members of the public who came to the GVG public meeting on Monday 15th April. The meeting was attended by Cllr Palmer and other councillors. GVG thanks Cllr Palmer, who spoke at the meeting, for initiating the deferral and now calls on him, the Executive and the officers to use the delay wisely.

"We were encouraged by the debate and the comments we received at our Monday meeting," says Bill Stokoe, director of GVG. "We believe GBC should now use the agreed delay to have a considered review of its developer choice. We also think the criteria and scoring adopted by the Council's evaluation panel is skewed and should be reassessed."

The North Street development is only one of three significant schemes currently in prospect. Given the inevitable added transport burden of the proposed food store on the Bellerby site and the Solum scheme at the station, GVG maintains there is ever more need for a comprehensive town masterplan, involving the primary landowners.

On a related topic, GVG can report (as mentioned by Councillor Palmer at the GVG meeting on Monday) that Surrey County Council (SCC) is planning to have a public consultation on 17th and 18th May at Holy Trinity Church.

It is understood SCC will be putting forward some possible schemes to relieve congestion in and around Guildford. GVG calls on its supporters to join in the consultation so as to ensure a wide range of opinion is canvassed and that radical solutions are investigated. It will be important to see how well the SCC proposals might fit in with the forthcoming retail developments in the centre of Guildford.

All the GVG public meeting material, including slides showing the various developers' ideas, and much more, can be found on GVG's website www.guildfordvisiongroup.com

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