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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment and Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>2 May 2019</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration and Resources</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>E&amp;R/19/05/04/SJ/AW</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Alan Williamson</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712491</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Underutilised Sites in Greenock Town Centre</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to identify and agree underutilised sites in Greenock town centre that should be prioritised for action.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has a number of strategies in place recognising the importance of Greenock town centre and making Greenock town centre a successful and attractive place is integral to the three Local Outcome Improvement Plan priorities of repopulation, reducing inequalities, and environment, culture and heritage.
- 2.2 The Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan identifies the importance of the Oak Mall within the Greenock Town Centre Retail Core, whilst recognising the need for flexibility in the eastern part of the mall by reducing restrictions for use by retail. Since the Plan was published the owners of the Oak Mall have sought planning consent for demolition of part of the Mall to the east of the A78. Whilst the application was not successful the Council does recognise the need for the owners of the Oak Mall to consolidate their offering to a sustainable footprint which is easily accessible.
- 2.3 The proposed plan also recognises a number of sites with Greenock Town Centre as network of centre opportunities which are as follows:
- C1 – 15 Nelson Street
  - C2 – 16 West Stewart Street – Babylon
  - C3 – 4 West Stewart Street - rear of Iceland
  - C4 - 25 West Stewart Street – multi-storey site
- 2.4 Whilst the Greenock Charette was not incorporated in the Proposed Plan, community consultation during the charette process identified sites C2 and C4 as priorities. Their proposal for Babylon was to demolish, clear the site and high quality urban infill development – tenemental flatted development over retail/ leisure functions. The disused multi storey site recommendation was full site clearance and redevelopment for retail over full extent with residential or office use above.
- 2.5 If the Committee is minded to support the recommendation that the sites identified above should be prioritised, then Officers should be remitted to engage with their owners to potentially advance re-development of the sites utilising the funds allocated to the Council for Town Centre Regeneration.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council uses its Scottish Government Town Centre Fund allocation to contribute towards bringing one or more of the underutilised sites in buildings referred to in Section 5 of this report back into productive use.

**Scott Allan**  
**Corporate Director**  
**Environment, Regeneration & Resources**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Greenock is Inverclyde's largest town centre and draws visitors from across Inverclyde and beyond. It is identified as a Strategic Centre in the Clydeplan Strategic development Plan. It offers Inverclyde's largest concentration and selection of shopping facilities. It also has a wide range of non-retail uses, such as leisure, cultural and entertainment. It is an important employment hub with a large number of offices.
- 4.2 The Council has a number of strategies in place recognising and safeguarding the importance of Greenock town centre. The Local Development Plan identifies it as the preferred location for large retail development and other town centre uses that have an Inverclyde-wide catchment. The 2016 Greenock town centre charrette report sets out masterplan for improving Greenock town centre.
- 4.3 Making Greenock town centre a successful and attractive place is integral to the three Local Outcome Improvement Plan priorities of repopulation, reducing inequalities, and environment, culture and heritage.

## **5.0 UNDERUTILISED SITES IN GREENOCK TOWN CENTRE**

- 5.1 Underutilised sites and buildings in Greenock town centre have a two-fold impact on its attractiveness and performance. Firstly, they have an adverse impact on the environment and the perception of the town centre being a successful place. Secondly, tied up within underutilised sites are opportunities to create new uses and jobs and ways to improve the accessibility of the town centre.
- 5.2 The Council is making a significant investment in improving the public realm of West Blackhall Street. It is considered that this investment would be complemented by identifying underutilised sites and buildings in and around the main thoroughfares of Greenock town centre, which the Council could enable, directly or with partners, to be brought into productive use. A review of the Local Development Plan and the Greenock town centre charrette has identified the following opportunities.
- 5.3 King Street car park – the charrette masterplan identifies the King Street car park as a high priority, medium impact project. It states that the car park should be reconfigured and improved and the pedestrian linkages to Clyde Square improved. As currently operated the car park is not well used, but retaining and improving this site as a car park would help to address concerns about lack of car parking in the town centre.
- 5.4 Oak Mall eastern wing – the Local Development Plan recognises the high level of vacancies in the eastern wing of the Oak Mall and seeks to address this through introducing increased flexibility for non-retail uses in this part of the mall. The charrette masterplan also recognises issues with this part of the mall and suggests that the mall's interface with Clyde Square should be improved to animate the square and improve connectivity within the town centre. Subsequent to the publication of these two documents the owners of the mall submitted a planning application for demolition of part of the eastern wing. This was refused over concerns about lack of certainty surrounding the future use of the gap site that would be created, impact on the historic environment and the design of the new mall façade that was to be created. The Council recognise the need for radical changes to the mall and are keen to work with the owners to find a mutually acceptable solution.
- 5.5 16 West Stewart Street (Babylon) – the former cinema/nightclub occupies a high profile location on a key link between West Stewart Street and West Blackhall Street. The building is in a poor condition and its 'dead' frontage detracts significantly from the environment and attractiveness of this part of the town centre. The site is identified in both the Local Development Plan and the charrette masterplan as a development opportunity, with the latter suggesting that following demolition it could be developed for upper story residential development over ground floor retail/leisure use.
- 5.6 25 West Stewart Street (multi-storey car park) – although partially occupied on the ground floor,

this site is significantly underutilised as the upper floors have not operated as a car park for a considerable time and do not meet current standards to be brought back into this use. The building offers a drab and imposing frontage onto West Stewart Street detracting from the streetscape and quality of place. The site is identified as a development opportunity in the Local Development Plan and Greenock town centre charrette masterplan, with the latter suggesting demolition of the building and redevelopment for retail on ground floor with residential/office uses above. Whilst this would involve the relocation of existing tenants, there could be benefit in consolidating retail offer in other parts of the town centre.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

- 6.1 Inverclyde Council has been awarded £660,000 from the Scottish Government Town Centre Fund. The acquisition of land and buildings as part of a strategic vision, as offered by the Local Development Plan and charrette masterplan, would be an acceptable use of this funding.

#### Financial Implications:

##### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement from	Other Comments
Greenock town centre fund		2019-20	£660k		

##### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement from (If Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

### Legal

- 6.2 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### Human Resources

- 6.3 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

### Equalities

- 6.4 There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

### Repopulation

- 6.5 Improving the environment and attractiveness of Greenock town centre will make it, and Inverclyde as a whole, a more attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

## 7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Council's Head of Legal and Property Services and Chief Financial Officer were consulted during the preparation of this report.

## 8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None