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# Resolution Asset Management

Representations to the Swindon Central Area Action  
Plan Preferred Options Paper 2007

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Version 1	18 June 2007		First draft issued

The logo for Drivers Jonas, featuring the company name in a white serif font inside a dark red square with a white border.

DRIVERS  
JONAS

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## Representations to the Swindon Central Area Action Plan Preferred Options Paper 2007

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Resolution Asset Management (RAM) owns The Parade Shopping Centre, Swindon.
- 1.2 The Parade Centre is located between Fleming Way and Regent Street. The Parade is one of the biggest retail ownership in the town centre and comprises some of the largest retail units, including Debenhams and BHS. The existing centre totals 24,029 sqm net and comprises 29 units. It was last refurbished in 1995.
- 1.3 A resolution to grant outline planning permission for an extension to the centre was achieved by Royal & Sun Alliance in 2001. The proposal included the relocation of Bhs and 7 new retail units, totalling 1,605 sq m, to be built. A 455 space multi-storey car park was to replace the existing parking space. This resolution is dormant as the s106 Agreement continues to be negotiated.
- 1.4 There are also 5 major car parks within 2 minutes walking distance of the shopping centre.
- 1.5 RAM is proposing to enhance the existing retail provision in the shopping centre through its extension and reconfiguration to provide modern retail units. The exact details of this proposal is still being explored. As a result, RAM is keen to protect its interest through the planning policy framework.

## 2. RAM Response

### Planning

- 2.1 RAM supports the Council's overall vision and objective of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan (AAP) to create in central Swindon an area with life 24 hours a day that provides a safe environment for a mix of uses for people to live and work in, to help drive the region's economy.
- 2.2 The Parade shopping centre lies within the area identified in the AAP as The Hub, one of 7 major projects within the Regeneration Framework around the town.
- 2.3 RAM is also concerned about the current disjointed nature of the retail offer in Swindon town centre. RAM supports the aim of the AAP of improving the linkages between the retail areas. It is vital that a critical mass of retailing is built in the retail core. There is a suggestion in the AAP that the approach to this will be radical, but it is not clearly stated in the document how this will be achieved.
- 2.4 The Swindon retail & leisure study (2007) identifies capacity for 70,000 sqm up to 2026. The retail offer is divided between provision in the Old Town, the Town Centre Retail Core and Great Western Designer Outlet Centre. We would wish to highlight that any redevelopment or extension of The Parade shopping centre will absorb some of this.
- 2.5 RAM supports the approach to zoning of the town centre in order to protect some of the existing uses and also direct uses to particular areas to create the necessary critical mass. This is however, a very long term planning strategy for the town centre. It is important the AAP also recognises there are opportunities for improving the retail provision now, such as at The Parade, which should not be discounted.
- 2.6 The map and text on Page 60 identify the town centre's existing and future primary and secondary loops, reflecting the aspiration on page 59 for the

- creation of strong retail circuits. We consider this level of detail will drive a very prescribed form of planning framework, removing the opportunity for flexibility of space as needs and also ownerships may change over time. The AAP identifies The Parade as partially within the secondary retail frontage and, therefore, part of a wider secondary retail loop. Whilst it is accepted that Fleet Street may be secondary, the rear of The Parade should not be downgraded when it plays an important part in the town centre's existing retail provision.
- 2.7 Any extension or reconfiguration of The Parade in the future, which could contribute in the short to medium term to provide modern retail units and thus new retailers, means that the loop should not be part of the secondary retail circuit.
- 2.8 We recognise the area around The Parade is dominated by bars, particularly on Fleet Street, but the enhancement of The Parade could also have a catalytic positive effect on this wider area in the short to medium term. However, the policy position needs to be flexible in order to allow this to happen.
- 2.9 We agree that the secondary loop down towards Commercial Road is correctly identified as secondary frontage.
- 2.10 The Parade is identified as part of Site C in the plans on page 61. Site C is linked to the opening up of the canal in this location and is identified in page 69 as a priority for the next 10 years rather than immediately.
- 2.11 RAM supports the aspiration for canal/waterside led renewal but as funding for the canal is unclear, the development of The Parade centre should not be linked directly to it. By linking the canal with future development, the wording in the AAP precludes expansion of The Parade centre deliverable in the short to medium term, which could benefit the town centre in providing further modern units.
- 2.12 Furthermore, there is a possibility that routing the canal along Fleet Street area would jeopardise the existing servicing to both The Parade and other retailers and any future expansion or servicing of The Parade shopping centre in the future. On this basis, RAM cannot support the section of the canal which is proposed to follow the route along Fleet Street.
- 2.13 Preferred Option 9 - Development Requirements for the Retail Core sets out a loosely worded list of criteria for delivering retail development. REM supports the general aspirations of the criteria but would comment on couple of points.
- Ø *"Make appropriate use of floorspace above shops"* – the wording **"where appropriate"** should also be included.
  - Ø *"major development schemes should deliver a comprehensive mixed use scheme"*. – this wording prevents the provision of other retail floorspace opportunities being facilitated in the short to medium term. The Parade proposals can be delivered in the short to medium term and will assist the Council in meeting the retail need identified in the latest retail study.
  - Ø *"deliver the full integration of the development with the wider retail core"*. This is linked to the criteria above and the requirement for comprehensive development. Again, wording in the AAP should not preclude RAM from developing its existing asset and providing further modern retail units in the short to medium term to assist in the success of the town centre.

- 2.14 Page 70 identifies that s106 contributions delivering “off-site” improvements will arise from the schemes in the town centre. It is important that the AAP provides some indication of what this might be.
- 2.15 The Council will need to be careful to ensure The Exchange (retail provision 25,000 sqm) does not come forward quicker than The Hub and dilute the retail offer in the town centre. The opening of the retail space in The Exchange in advance of The Hub will create a loop rather than linear retail experience, contradicting the aspirations of the AAP.
- 2.16 In relation to The Exchange, the success of both this site and The Hub will rely on the quality and extent of links between them over Fleming Way.

#### Sustainability

- 2.17 Page 26 of the AAP reiterates guidance set out in the draft SPD on Sustainable Building Design and Construction that schemes must incorporate on-site renewable energy and/or an efficient supply of heating and cooling and power to provide a substantial proportion of a developments energy requirements. However, it is important that the Council encourages development to be energy efficient first and foremost, rather than relying on on-site renewable energy provision.
- 2.18 The AAP also refers to achieving an Excellent BREAM standard for commercial uses. We consider that it is very difficult to achieve an Excellent standard in retail development when you have individual tenant demands to cater for. The target should be downgraded to a Very Good rating.

#### Transport

- 2.19 RAM support the broad aims of the Town Centre Transport Strategy, in particular, the aim to achieve an accessible Town Centre with good pedestrian access and a road network that is fit for purpose.
- 2.20 RAM support the principle of Park and Ride as set out in the AAP, i.e. “to intercept long-stay visitors and commuters”. This approach is consistent with providing convenient short-stay shopper parking in the town centre. This is an essential element of a successful and vibrant retail area.
- 2.21 *Preferred Option 3 – The Transport Strategy* – RAM accept the principle of developer contributions to transport schemes provided these meet the tests of reasonableness set out in Circular 05/2005 in that they are:
- n relevant to planning;
  - n necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
  - n directly related to the proposed development;
  - n fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and
  - n reasonable in all other respects.
- 2.22 *Preferred Option 4 – Traffic Management* – RAM support the provision of variable message signs to improve traffic flow in the Town Centre.
- 2.23 *Preferred Option 5 – Public Transport* – RAM support the principle of the new Bus Exchange in the Fleming Way area of the town and two mini bus interchanges (including taxi provision).
- 2.24 *Preferred Option 7 – Parking Strategy* – Whilst the details of the parking strategy have yet to be determined, RAM are supportive of the principles

set out in the APP, e.g. the refurbishment of car parks and the provision of new car parks. However, it will be essential to strike the correct balance between providing sufficient shopper car parking whilst encouraging the use of other modes. RAM would welcome the opportunity to contribute to this decision.

### 3. Conclusions

- 3.1 RAM would welcome the ability to input to the LDF in the longer term and trust that the Council will ensure there is flexibility in the evolution of the policies in the AAP not to preclude other retail opportunities which may come forward in the short to medium term.

