Newbury town centre faces a problem. Many local residents prefer the range of shops in nearby towns and are consequently travelling out of Newbury to shop. Newbury struggles to compete because it lacks sufficient large shop units. If it is to fight back and keep local shoppers in the town new, larger retail units must be provided in the town centre. Blue proposes to provide these in a brand new development on Park Way.

This leaflet explains our proposal.
Newbury needs to fight back

Newbury is an attractive, historic market town offering a variety of shops and services but it cannot compete with the shopping facilities available in towns nearby. Consequently Newbury loses a significant amount of trade to other areas as local residents choose to travel out of Newbury to fulfil their shopping needs.

It is widely accepted that competing shopping centres have had a detrimental impact on the centre of Newbury.

In 1998 it was ranked 141st in the UK national retail rankings, but by 2002 had slipped to 183rd. Following the opening of Festival Place in Basingstoke, which has increased its ranking from 140th to 31st, Newbury will undoubtedly have fallen still further.

West Berkshire Council has long accepted the need to regenerate the centre of Newbury, a fact borne out by their own consultants whose study last year concluded that there is a clear need for additional retail units in Newbury town centre and that it is:

"not a viable option for the local authority to "do nothing" in Newbury town centre, as the continued decline in Newbury's market share due to a lack of new investment will (even in the short term) have an adverse impact on the town's overall vitality and viability."

Newbury residents shop in other towns as they are attracted by the range and quality of shops on offer, particularly in the fashion sector. Newbury’s difficulty is that whilst it has plenty of small shops, it lacks the large, modern shop units that national retailers require. If Newbury's decline is to be stopped the town needs to provide the shops and facilities its residents require. The proposed site on Park Way presents the perfect opportunity.

Redeveloping Park Way – A lifeline for Newbury town centre

Car parks and service areas presently dominate the proposed Park Way development site. The haphazard layout and poor quality of the buildings give this prominent site in the heart of the town centre and conservation area an unkempt and untidy appearance and does little to create an inviting impression of Newbury.

Our proposal involves the redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed-use scheme amounting to an additional 130,000 sq ft of retail space in the centre of Newbury, with larger units suitable for shops and restaurants together with a pay on exit car park.
What's in store?

Both Park Way and a widened Marsh Lane will be fronted with new shop units, significantly enhancing the area with active retail façades whilst at the same time providing better integration with Victoria Park. The improved Marsh Lane will also serve as the main pedestrian link to Northbrook Street, increasing pedestrian routes between here and Park Way.

Two levels of replacement and additional pay on exit parking with over 330 spaces will sit above the retail area in a development that carefully and sympathetically blends into its setting among the traditional buildings along Northbrook Street.

The height of the development is limited to ensure a natural fit with the surrounding area, while the sensitive design will screen the parking from public view and hide the service areas behind the retail units.

Additionally, it is proposed to rebuild the former Newbury Weekly News building on Northbrook Street. The front section of the existing building will be retained and refurbished with an extension added to the rear providing two new retail shops with rear servicing.

Overall, the scheme will give the heart of Newbury town centre a new and vibrant retail edge, setting the scene for future developments on adjacent sites.

The proposed scheme, which has the unanimous support of Newbury Town Council, is just the starting point to unlock the much-needed wider regeneration of the town centre providing the catalyst to future development stages and the implementation of the Vision for Newbury.
A Vision for Newbury

West Berkshire Council has produced and adopted a strategy known as "Newbury 2025 - A Vision for Newbury Town Centre", which sets out a long-term vision for Newbury together with a framework to take the town forward over the next two decades. With regard to retail provision in the town, the Vision acknowledges that:

"Immediate action needs to take place to stop the long-term decline of Newbury Town Centre as a shopping, leisure, employment and visitor destination. This will necessarily involve the improvement and extension of its current retail and leisure offer."

We have been involved in the process of bringing about the Vision for Newbury, cooperating with the Council over many months as we prepared our scheme. Our resulting planning application fully satisfies the Vision's requirement to provide the large format shop units that will attract new retailers, so clearly required if Newbury is to satisfy the needs of its residents, encouraging them to stop travelling out of town to shop. This is the only way to strengthen the town and reduce the amount of trade currently being lost to competing centres.

Since we submitted our planning application in December 2003, the Council has additionally issued a draft planning brief for the Park Way area, on which we are being consulted as landowners.

While the development of the Park Way site has been considered by a number of development companies over the last two decades, all proposals have failed as they have proved to be too ambitious. With the exception of the two Council owned car parks, Blue has now acquired the properties necessary to deliver this scheme. With the full cooperation of the Council, other retailers / owners of neighbouring properties, this development could begin trading in 2005 without the need to instigate lengthy and expensive compulsory purchase procedures.

The Council's consultants have identified that Newbury will eventually need even more retail accommodation than this proposed scheme will initially provide. Further developments to cater for this need can easily follow on, but there is a need to begin the rejuvenation process as quickly as possible to prevent any further decline. The alternative is for Newbury town centre to slump further while an even bigger scheme is devised.

Therefore we have clearly shown in our application how subsequent mixed-use development schemes could be incorporated in the future. Our proposal does not jeopardise future expansion, quite the opposite in fact as it is the catalyst that will kick-start the whole regeneration process.
Easy access for all

The Park Way site is in a highly accessible location for public transport, bicycles and cars. Pedestrians will benefit considerably from the full pedestrianisation of Marsh Lane, which will also be widened, lit and fronted by shops to provide an attractive, lively and welcoming pedestrian route between Park Way, Northbrook Street and Victoria Park.

Cycling will be encouraged by taking advantage of cycle links in the area and providing secure cycle parking.

Our design could incorporate future bus interchange facilities on Park Way, if required, together with a drop off / collection zone for taxis.

Traffic flows have been examined in detail and minor improvements at the Park Way/London Road roundabout, and the installation of traffic signals on the A4 Western Avenue approach to the Robin Hood Roundabout are proposed. These measures will ensure that traffic flows smoothly.

What would the new development mean for you?

- An unattractive brown-field site in the heart of the town centre and conservation area will be put to productive economic use.
- An additional 130,000 sq ft of town centre retail space will be provided.
- The development will significantly enhance the perception and attractiveness of Newbury.
- It will kick-start the much needed wider regeneration process in Newbury.
- Local shopping choice and facilities will be greatly improved, encouraging local people to stay in the town to shop and reducing the need to travel.
- New restaurants and bars will improve the nightlife of the town.
- A significant landmark building in this prominent location will serve as a gateway to Newbury town centre.
- Victoria Park will be better integrated with the town centre.
- Pedestrian links between Northbrook Street, Park Way and Victoria Park will be far more inviting.
- Over 330 town centre pay on exit parking spaces will be provided, including conveniently located special needs spaces.
- Cyclists will benefit from the provision of secure cycle parking.
- Many local retail jobs will be created together with construction work opportunities for local tradesmen.

What do you think?

We value the opinion of the local community and would welcome your comments views and suggestions.

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