

## APPENDIX FIVE – Press Release

**The following wording was used as a press release to The Gazette**

### **What's in store for Devizes?**

A public debate is about to start in the market town of Devizes on the future pattern of shopping in the town centre. It is sure to lead to some lively conversations about future shopping needs and the amount and location of car parking to serve it.

Kennet District Council, with assistance from the South West of England Regional Development Agency, commissioned a study to consider the prospects for the future of Devizes town centre. The appointed consultants, *Gillespies* have now completed the study and made their final recommendations.

The study concluded that the town's ranking as a town centre based on floorspace and retailer representation is falling and that the public realm throughout the town is not consistent or of a high quality. It also states that if nothing is done to attract the right sort of retailers the pattern will continue, leading to more empty shops, a deteriorating mix of shops and an exodus of shoppers to other shopping destinations. According to the study, there are some excellent independent outlets but there is a gap in the range of shops compared with other centres. Many national retailers would be attracted to Devizes but suitable premises to meet their needs do not exist.

*Gillespies* considered a range of options for the town but suggested that the best solution would be to redevelop the Central Car Park (between Tesco and Somerfield) to provide two larger stores and six medium sized shops. The scheme also caters for the redevelopment of the present Tesco store, should they wish to participate in the redevelopment proposals. This development would lead to a loss of the 162 existing car parking spaces. The solution proposed by the study is that two floors of parking be constructed below ground to cater for 150 cars. It would also be possible to retain about 50 spaces at ground level, if the shopping area was reduced to a small extent.

However, underground parking is expensive to provide and would leave the shopping development economically unviable. *Gillespies*, therefore, propose that the majority of Station Road Car Park be developed for 'state of the art' sustainable homes. The receipts from this development could fund the underground car park and other needed improvements to public spaces and streets. Other alternatives are possible, such as only one level of parking below the new shopping development and adding an additional level of parking above the remaining parking at Station Road.

*Gillespies* report was considered by the Kennet District Council on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October and approved for the purposes of public consultation. A programme of events will take place up to mid December 2005. At the end of this period, the council will decide what action to take, based upon the views registered during the consultation. The agreed proposals will then feed into the Devizes Area Action Plan, part of the Kennet Local Development Framework.

Consultation will be in accordance with the council's recently adopted Statement of Community Involvement, commencing with a breakfast meeting with the Chamber of Trade on 25<sup>th</sup> October. Further meetings are planned with the Town Council, the Community Area Planning Partnership and other authorities and organisations. The Forward Planning Team will also be in attendance at a market stall in the Shambles on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November to get the views of the town's shoppers. They will also be conducting street surveys during the

consultation period which ends on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Displays containing pamphlets incorporating a questionnaire will be available at the town's library, Kennet's main offices, Devizes Sports Centre and the lobby of the Corn Exchange. Contents of the Gillespies report (four volumes) can be viewed on the Council's web-site, where a questionnaire may also be completed on-line. Copies may also be requested in printed or CD format.

For further information contact:-

Ed White, Forward Planning & Transportation Team Leader, Kennet District Council,  
Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes SN10 2AT. Phone 01380 734871. E-mail  
[ed.white@kennet.gov.uk](mailto:ed.white@kennet.gov.uk)