

## ANGUS COUNCIL

ITEM No. 14

## POLICY &amp; RESOURCES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2001

## BRECHIN CITY CENTRE – COMMUNITY PLANNING

Report by the Chief Executive

**ABSTRACT**

This report highlights a potential new development opportunity in Brechin city centre, which has been developed as part of the local community planning process.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Policy & Resources Committee:-

- a) instruct officers to liaise with Mr Richard Carr and other interested parties in Brechin with a view to developing a brief for a piece of work to investigate the physical, social, economic, environmental and cultural viability of developing an initiative based on the Old Town House and associated buildings in Brechin city centre.
- b) Instruct officers to develop, in consultation with all interested parties in the Brechin area, a partnership agreement based on the revitalisation of Brechin city centre.

**2. BACKGROUND**

Angus Council along with its Community Planning Partners sponsored the Brechin Community Planning Conference.

At that conference it was agreed that Mr Richard Carr be asked to establish a group to identify potential building developments within Brechin city centre which would assist in the regeneration of the city centre and which might act as a complementary attraction or development to Pictavia and Brechin Castle centre initiatives.

A brief note outlining some of the thinking of Mr Carr's group is attached to this paper, but in essence what is being suggested is that there might be potential in undertaking feasibility work with regard to the following:

- a) The Old Jailhouse.
- b) The Old Bakehouse.
- c) Lar Daker's Store.
- d) The Old Town House.
- e) Small Debtors' Court, Warders' Quarters, Cells to the rear of the Old Town House.
- f) Common Bakehouse.
- g) Exchange Bar.

Although the emphasis of the work of Mr Carr's group has been on the historical/cultural perspectives, the buildings. As can be seen from the map attached, are all co-located in the heart of Brechin city centre, and might offer, if considered collectively, a package of heritage products to enhance the economic potential of the city centre.

This might offer in the longer term, a more economically viable proposal than the development of Brechin Town House on its own.

The revitalisation of these buildings might offer the opportunity for them to become the centre piece of a revitalisation initiative related to Brechin city centre, as well as acting as an added visitor attraction along with Pictavia and Brechin Castle Centre. It would

also potentially maintain the structural integrity of Brechin city centre.

One particular point to make at this stage is that the owners of these buildings have, as a matter of courtesy, been advised of the contents of this report

Officers have met with Richard Carr and other interested parties on a number of occasions, and believe that there would be significant merit in undertaking a feasibility study with regard to this matter.

Officers would also point out however, that a development of this scale could not be undertaken by the Council on its own, and indeed, will need to involve some innovative partnership arrangements, both in terms of the development of the initiative, and future sustainable delivery, should that become a reality.

### **The Old Town House**

Members will recall various discussions in the past with regard to the Old Town House, including the desirability of it becoming a museum and the question of short term lease arrangements.

Recently, the Director of Property Services has been approached by an independent company who has a desire to lease the premises. A report setting out the details of this subject is to be considered by the Policy & Resources Committee.

### **The Way Forward**

It is suggested that the future of the Old Town House should be considered in the wider context of the regeneration of the buildings identified above, and as part of a contribution to an overall city centre economic regeneration initiative. This clearly would require a detailed feasibility study to be undertaken. Work is being undertaken on the development of a brief, and Officers believe that there would be merit in finalising the content of the brief in liaison with all interested parties in the Brechin area.

The sheer scale of any city centre regeneration initiative such as that set out above, suggests that there might be a significant period of time between now and any initiative of this type becoming a reality. It may therefore be in the best interests of the Council, and the regeneration of Brechin city centre in a holistic way, for the Council to enter into a fixed term lease of the Old Town House. The lease arrangements would of course need to be such that the length of lease, and the future well being of the fabric and integrity of the building, were such as to enable the Council to make the building available, should a realistic proposal be forthcoming, with regard to the revitalisation initiative. This of course would become a revenue income to the Brechin Common Good Fund.

Members are advised that some of the buildings are in private ownership. As a matter of courtesy, officers have advised the owner of the other buildings of what is being proposed in this report.

There are many bodies who have an interest in the regeneration of Brechin city centre, both locally and across the public sector.

Experience elsewhere suggests that the collective expertise of interested parties can best be harnessed if those interested commit themselves to working in partnership.

Angus Council has stated, and demonstrated, its commitment to operating in this way across a range of activities across Angus. Partnerships do not however in themselves remove the financial, political and legal restrictions and difficulties that all the various partners need to deal with. It does however provide the focus whereby solutions to some of these problems can be addressed.

It is essential, therefore, that formal partnership agreements are developed, and that all partners sign on to that agreement. Officers are currently developing a draft partnership agreement for further discussion with all interested parties.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report, although members should be aware that if consultancy work is to be embarked upon then a further report(s) with financial implications will be brought forward.

### **4. HUMAN RIGHTS**

There are no Human Right implications arising from this report.

### **5. CONSULTATION**

The Directors of Law & Administration, Finance, Property, Cultural Services and the Director of Information Technology as the lead officer for decentralisation arrangements in the Brechin area have all been consulted during the preparation of this report.

A B Watson  
Chief Executive

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this paper.

**Richard Carr Committee**  
**Meeting - Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2001**  
**Points for discussion with Norman Atkinson**

Small Debtors' Court - Warders' Quarters - Cells - Black Hole

This area is more or less as it was when it was built.

**Funding application required for -**

- Research
- Return the building to its original use and retain as a museum
- Use the building as part of the street theatre requirement where actors can, from time to time, integrate with the museum theme

The Old Town House

**Funding Application required for -**

Research

Complete improvements to the interior

Identify uses for the building eg

- Tourist and local information
- Central control for all of Brechins historical attractions
- Exhibitions of -

Old Brechin Photographs

Local arts and crafts

Dundee Artists' Lunch Club

Sir Robert Watson Watt memorabilia

Return of all Brechin artefacts for permanent display

Brechin Photographic Society

Storage of old title deeds

Old Plans dating back to the late 1800's - A B Roger & Young

- Genealogical research to include layout of graveyards in and around Brechin
- The promotion of Brechin within the North East, UK and beyond
- The promotion of Brechin for holiday weekends throughout the year
- Daily updates of [www.brechin-angus.co.uk](http://www.brechin-angus.co.uk)
- Part of the street theatre requirement
- Guided tours of Brechins attractions (see list)

Maintain the structural integrity of the City centre

**Funding application required for -**

- Survey to identify schedule of improvements for all of the buildings
- The implementation of the improvements
- Some time ago Norman Atkinson, Ruth Leslie Melville and John Ritchie examined the properties surrounding the Old Town House. In chronological order of build date
  1. The Old Jailhouse
  2. The Old Bakehouse (refurbished - formerly the home of the Earl of Airlie)
  3. Lar Daker's store (formerly the stables for the Earl of Airlie)
  4. The Old Town House (built on earlier site of Toll Booth). There is clear evidence of an earlier foundation
  5. Small Debtors' Court, Warders' Quarters, cells to the rear of Old Town House
  6. Common Bakehouse (refurbished and now a studio/art gallery)
  7. Exchange Bar - built on gap site between the south gable of the Old Jailhouse and the west gable of the small debtors' court. According to Paul Mitchell buildings 1 and 5 were connected by way of metal railings and this area would have been used for storing the horse drawn prison carts and pens for stolen cattle etc.

I maintain that this area (see plan) was the second residential area in Brechin after the Cathedral.

**Funding application required for -**

- Research into how the buildings inter related
- Research the history of buildings 1, 2, 3 and 6
- Feasibility study for the retention of (1) the Old Jailhouse which is one of the oldest buildings in Brechin. This building originally had a thatched roof and housed prisoners of both sexes on two floors and inmates were fed through the bars by friends and relatives from the elevation that is adjacent to the Church Street car park.

The north gable and east elevation walls were clad with brickwork to the external stone face. This would have been carried out some 40 years ago to preserve the stonework and make the building safe. Part of this brickwork has been removed to expose the stonework that is in a very poor condition. The internal wall surfaces were built over using concrete block.

It is my contention that the only satisfactory way to preserve this building would be to take extensive photographs, demolish the building, conduct an archaeological survey and rebuild.

The southmost and smallest part of the building is determined by a change in roof levels and there is a stone wall that separates the two portions. I maintain that the smaller section was used as warders' quarters.

The other alternative would be to demolish and use the area for coach parking for the Cathedral with surrounding soft landscaping.

- Demolition of (7) the Exchange Bar. Archaeological survey and recreate the connection between (1) the Old Jailhouse and (5) small debtors' court and cells that is of course if the Old Jailhouse can be retained.

It is suggested that a coalition of all the following groups should meet under the chairmanship of Richard Carr to apply for joint funding application.

Richard Carr Committee as noted

BDCT - for other issues within BRECHIN 2005\*

- Dedicated tourist parking
- Marketing survey and promotion of retail units in city centre
- Rotation of the farmers' market throughout the townships of Angus
- Photographic booklet of places of interest in Brechin
- Glencadam Distillery. Possibility of bottled water plant. At early stage of discussions with Strathmore Springs

Caledonian Railway

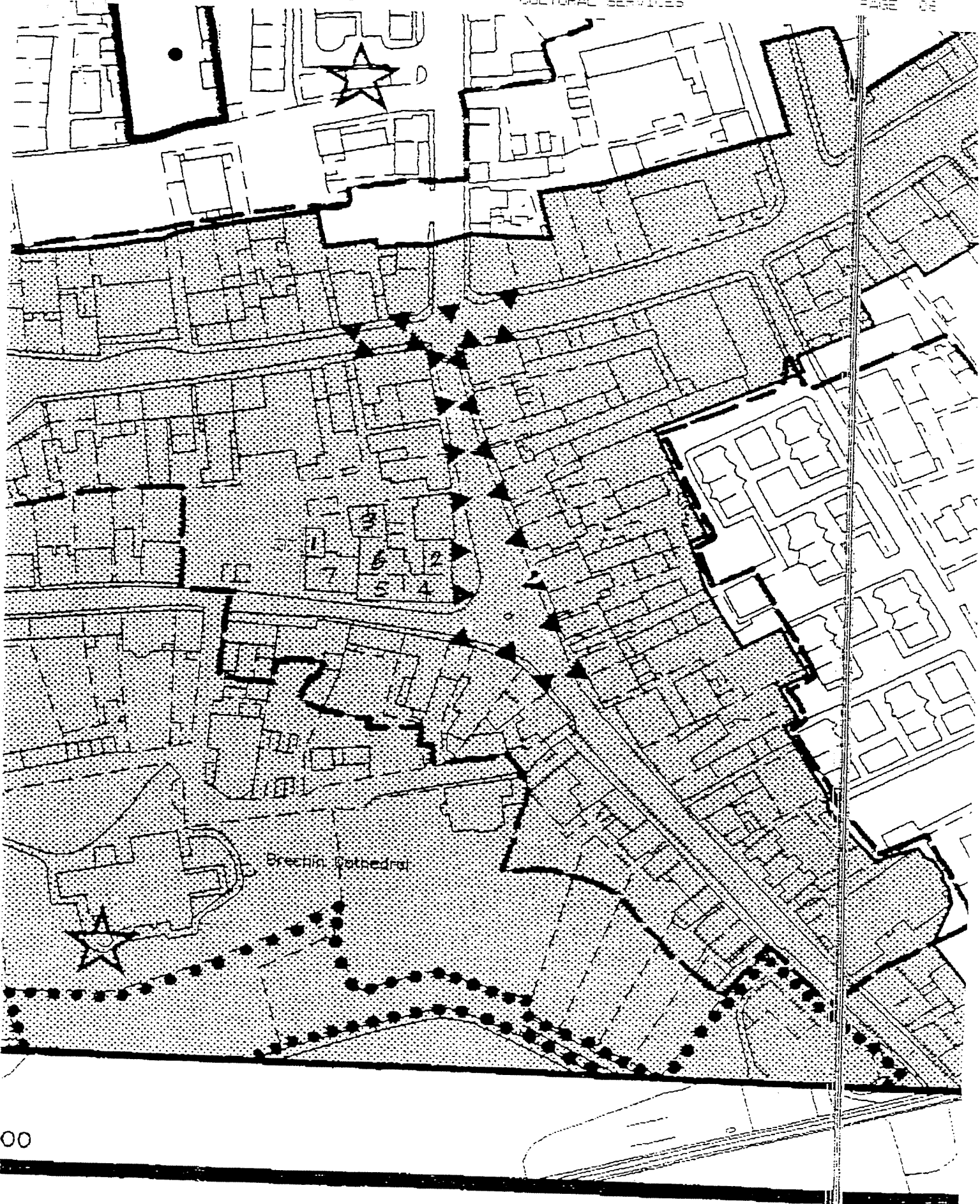
Merchant House

Cathedral for improvements to the Stable Block in Bishops Close

Civic Trust - Chairman Stuart Hill has agreed to be part of the coalition committee

Brian Mitchell for the old Andover School and Ian McFatridge for Maisondieu Church have indicated a willingness to attend the first meeting of the coalition committee. Richard Carr to contact on his return from holiday.

Prepared by John Ritchie  
In the absence of Richard Carr  
11<sup>th</sup> August 2001



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**ANGUS COUNCIL  
BRIEFING NOTE**

**Community Planning – Brechin  
Lease of the Old Town House**

**BACKGROUND**

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Officers have met with *Richard Carr* on a number of occasions, and believe that there might be significant merit in undertaking a feasibility study with regard to this matter. Officers would also point out however, that a development of this scale could not be undertaken by the Council on its own, and indeed, may need to involve some innovative partnership arrangements both in terms of the development of the initiative, and the future delivery should that become a reality.

### **The Old Town House**

Members will recall various discussions in the past with regard to the Old Town House, including the desirability of it becoming a museum and indeed the question of short terms lease arrangements. Discussions continue to take place within Brechin with regard to the Old Town House and the need for a partnership to be developed in order to facilitate the attraction of funding to enable the Town House to be redeveloped.

Recently, the Director of Property Services has been approached by an independent company who have a desire to lease the premises. A copy of a report setting out the details of this subject is also attached.

### **The Way Forward**

It is suggested that there may be significant merit in considering the future of the Old Town House in the wider context of the regeneration of the buildings identified above, and as part of a contribution to an overall city centre regeneration initiative. This clearly would require a detailed feasibility study to be undertaken and although no work has been undertaken on the development of a brief to date, Officers believe that there would be merit in undertaking such a piece of work.

The sheer scale of any city centre regeneration initiative such as that suggested above would suggest that there might be a number of years lapse between now and any potential initiative of this type becoming a reality. It may therefore be in the best interests of the Council, and the regeneration of Brechin city centre in a holistic way, for the Council to enter into a fixed terms lease such as that set out in the Director of

Property report regarding the Old Town House. This of course would become a revenue income to the Brechin Common Good Fund.

WDS/JR Misc2001

Briefing Note, Brechin City Centre, mtg held on 23 Aug