# **Review of previous reports for KDC**

In the course of the past seven years, Kennet District Council have commissioned three reports about retail regeneration, namely Chartwell Land , Healey and Baker and Donaldsons. Each of these reports have their merits and will now be discussed in turn.

## Chartwell Land

The Chartwell Land report concentrates on proposals for the Market Place and Station Road car park. The proposals for the Market Place are sensitive to environmental considerations :

‘As a matter of principle, we suggest that any alterations should be directed towards making the Market place a more friendly environment for pedestrians.’

‘Replacing the diversity of street lights with cast iron columns and sympathetic fittings.’

‘Adding a few trees, particularly in the vicinity of the monuments.’

The proposals include the provision for 77 car park spaces in the Market Place and the widening of pavements in front of the shops fronting the market place for the convenience of pedestrians.

The report also discusses the provision of car park spaces at Station Road and interestingly mentions a decking system for 100 cars. The report contains detailed costings and several line drawings.

Whilst giving useful background information, the report does not show any evidence of primary research, nor does it relate the retail needs of Devizes to car parking provision.

## Healey and Baker

The Healey and Baker report was commissioned in May,1989 to give advice on the redevelopment of Devizes town centre. Two sites were under consideration, namely, Central and West Central car park areas. Chartwell Land were the preferred developer for these schemes.

The report highlighted that Devizes could ‘successfully support a further 70/75,000 sq. ft. gross of durable floor space…’

and advised that there was

‘…a need to upgrade the town’s retail facilities in order for Devizes to retain its current shopping status.’

Healey and Baker recommended to the Council that Chartwell Land should be issued with a Development Brief and be given the opportunity to present a design and financial brief to Members.

The report then gave detailed proposals which in essence focused on the redevelopment of the West Central car park with Woolworths being relocated from the The Brittox to be the anchor tenant. The space vacated by Woolworths was to be turned into an archway and a natural entrance to the new development and a bridge between the existing retail provision and the new outlets.

The report also includes financial data and sets out a timetable for development and the conclusion states :

‘We believe that although Devizes is an attractive and historic market town, it could substantially benefit from another major store, a greater choice of shops and the provision of a quality shopping environment’.

## Donaldsons

The Donaldsons report was commissioned by Kennet District Council and was published in April,1995. The research focused on a ‘health check’ of Devizes and gave advice on a

‘strategy for the future development, management and promotion of the town centre, including an action plan.’

The report goes on to consider Devizes as a retail centre and points out that retailing in the town is ‘…..based on convenience rather than comparison or leisure shopping..’

There is also mention made of the potential for the development of tourism in the town.

A further important section of the report focuses on an assessment of the retail offer in Devizes. Salient points made are as follows:

* Consumer surveys indicate that 83% of shoppers undertake their main food shopping in Devizes
* 85% of the sample visit Devizes at least weekly
* The survey demonstrates the importance of the Devizes market.Some 64% regularly visit markets in the town
* Swindon features as the principal comparison shopping location for the Devizes’ catchment area (based on clothing and footwear)
* Bath, Swindon and Chippenham are the main centres identified for secondary comparison shopping
* Reasons given for not regularly shopping in Devizes are lack of major retailers (21%),perceived parking difficulty(20%), poor choice of types of retailer(19%),poor choice and quality of goods in shops (15%), and distance from home (13%)
* Retailers surveyed said that they would like to see a wider range of shops (70%), more car parking (50%), improved signage (39%), and improved public transport (35%)
* National retailers surveyed were not complimentary about Devizes and felt that it was uneconomic to establish a store in the town at that time.
* Research shows that Devizes could support an additional 70,000 sq ft of floorspace by 2006
* The town would benefit from a shopping centre development at the West Central site
* Signage needs to be more coherent
* The creation of outdoor eating and drinking areas linked to the pubs and cafes in the square
* The town centre is demonstrably weak in retail terms
* Despite recent difficulties town centre businesses remain optimistic about future prospects
* A shopping centre scheme ‘ .. should incorporate a number of standard units which can accommodate national multiples’
* ‘Additional retail development in the town centre would improve vitality and viability..’
* A town centre manager … could assist greatly in co-ordinating efforts and managing the centre to its overall benefit

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