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## Post Office Site Redevelopment

Recognising the importance of the site and in the light of the discussions between the District Council, the Post Office and Royal Mail, the Society has been canvassing opinion among members and other local people of the possible use of the site; this process started in April 2005 and we have been asked by the Council for our conclusions by the end of July.

This is a summary of the comments received from approximately twenty per cent of our membership plus a number of detailed comments from non members; this is a most satisfactory response and demonstrates the importance our members attach to enhancing Malvern's town centre.

### 1 Demolish or Refurbish

The majority are in favour of demolishing the Sorting Office and retaining and renovating the Post Office building; a significant minority are in favour of demolishing the Sorting Office and the Post Office with a preference for renovating Cecilia Hall.

The view of more specialist opinion – historical and architectural – is that there is little of historical value in any of the buildings.

The area for development depends on the extent of the demolition but, in principle, the larger the site, the better the chance of making it attractive to a commercial purchaser; thought has been given to [a] using some of the road area in front of the existing buildings and [b] building out over the Churchyard.

### 2 Replacement

There is general agreement that any replacement building has to be of a high architectural standard and designed with a view to attracting people to central Malvern. The scale of any attraction would be in keeping with the size of the town – say, 300,000 visitors in the course of the year would be about right for a town the size of Malvern.

It is important that any development complements the views of and around the town centre, enhances the views of the Priory and has a transparency in design to minimise its visual impact.

### 3 Options

There is agreement that the site has to be used for retail purposes – shopping seems to be the most effective way of attracting people. There is interest in mixing shops with eg an art gallery or a water feature – the town needs some central feature to advertise and promote the water; there is considerable interest in covered walkways linking any new development with the existing shops.

Some discussion has taken place of the feasibility of a small John Lewis shop – in view of the fact that Waitrose now have a good knowledge of the shopping pattern in Malvern and people from surrounding towns already travel to Malvern to shop there.

A cable car on the route of the ninety-nine steps has been carefully considered. Although this would attract people in the right numbers to the town, it is felt that the Hills need to be protected from increased numbers rather than the reverse and also there might be statutory problems in building on the Hills.

### 4 Infrastructure Issues

The major problem in operating a retail outlet on the site is the way in which visitors are taken there – they will not walk up from existing car parks. It is not possible to consider providing enough car parking space at the top of the town as a minimum of six hundred spaces would be required.

A small number of places could be provided behind Belle Vue Terrace and there is spare capacity in the northerly of the two Waitrose car parks. Discussions are already being held to provide a second pedestrian walkway from Edith Walk to Church Street.

The eventual solution might be to build a small multi story car park on the second Waitrose car park giving a combined capacity of six hundred cars. However some form of Park and Ride would also be required to link the lower town car parks, Waitrose and the new shops.

An automated car park control system on the approach roads to the town would be required to avoid central town congestion.

This summary has been agreed as representative of the views received by the Malvern Civic Society's Planning Sub Committee and has been endorsed by the Executive Committee.

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