



# ASSET

## THE BURY ST EDMUNDS CATTLE MARKET REDEVELOPMENT

### THE DEVELOPER'S STORY

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ACES Presidential Conference  
Bury St Edmunds, September 2006

ACES Paper No 06.9/3 by

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He has over thirty years' experience within the construction and development field. Projects have included Coppergate, York (mixed-use retail and residential), Little Britain in the City of London (500,000 sq ft of offices), Clayton Square retail redevelopment in Liverpool and St Peter's Way retail scheme in Northampton.

John was previously a director at Wimpey Property Holdings, where he worked for 18 years. At Centros Miller he has a personal involvement in managing schemes in Kidderminster, Maidstone, Pontypool and Wrexham, as well as overseeing the company's development programme since 1999. He was appointed Managing Director in 2004 and is also Chairman of BCSC's Town Centre Environment Award judges.

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# THE BURY ST EDMUNDS CATTLE MARKET REDEVELOPMENT

## THE DEVELOPER'S STORY

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### INTRODUCTION

This is the story of what the developer of the Cattle Market site had to do to get to where we are today. It is based on our Bury St Edmunds experience but will apply similar to most British towns and cities.

### THE DEVELOPER

The popular view of a developer is someone with lots of money who sits back, does very little, just coining in the revenue. Sadly that is not the case. In town centre regeneration schemes, the developer spends a lot of time poring over cash flows, scrutinising appraisals, worrying about legal documents and how it all takes such a long time. It is not a quick fix. The average scheme time spent on the ten major projects we have done to date has been between five and eight years. One or two have been quicker but these are exceptions. Town centre regeneration takes time.

### Selling a Dream?

St. Edmundsbury Borough Council appointed Centros Miller in 2001 and since then we have been planning the scheme to enable a start on site. This scheme is just about to happen but historically that has not always been so. Earlier projects on this site never came to fruition. Generally some projects come to a conclusion and some do not. One of the things developers and authorities have to be careful of is people selling a dream, being over-ambitious in terms of delivery, promoting schemes that are destroyed by the slightest hitch in the economic cycle. Always have a professional surveyor alongside you such as Donaldsons, CBRE, or Grimleys or whatever to advise.

### Initial Success Factors

Why did it work this time with St. Edmundsbury but not before? This time the Council used a different approach. They did not select the developer on the basis of a scheme. The developer was chosen on the basis of track record and proven ability to work in partnership alongside a quality architect. Centros Miller did no drawings for the selection process. We were selected on what we had done in the past, on our approach to working with local authorities and how we would make it work together. The only thing agreed at that time was a priority return on the development costs and thereafter there was to be a straightforward 50/50 side-by-side profit share of anything over return achieved.

## WHERE DO WE START?

### ECONOMIC VIABILITY

We are a commercial organisation. We have to make a profit. We start with an assessment of economic viability. Historically developers always did their appraisals on the back of "a fag packet" but that is no longer "P.C.". So we do what we call a "quick and dirty appraisal" on what we think might go on a site and how it might work in order to assess whether it is something we ought to go for.

### DEMAND AND CAPACITY FOR VARIOUS USES

#### Retail

The Cattle Market is a retail-led mixed use development. Usually councils have already commissioned a retail demand and capacity study for the site. This is also the first thing we look at in order to understand potential demand. We can test this by drawing on our own experience of ten years in this particular field. Centros Miller, to date, has done deals with over 150 different retailers, so we have a thorough understanding of what they want. To support this we always go to a retail research group such as Experian or CACI or the Javelin group. These can provide information on the capacity of the town, the demand from various retailers, the catchment population and the socioeconomic groups within it, e.g. white collar, blue collar, the empty nesters and the many other different phrases the experts use to define different socioeconomic groups. From those facts we can jointly work out those retailers that could be attracted, the likely demand for shop units, preferred unit sizes and the rent level retailers could pay. But of course this only gives a benchmark to work from; thereafter only market forces will govern what we might ultimately agree with retailers.

#### Residential

We looked at other uses, office for example, but quickly came to the view that there was no viable demand in

Bury St Edmunds. Residential, on the other hand, was a different story. You will have noticed that there has been a sea change in living in towns over the last ten years. For example seven or eight years ago there were 400 people living in Manchester city centre; now there are more than 5,000. People are coming back to live in city centres and this trend is spreading to the smaller towns. More and more people want to get back into town. For a developer this creates a much better mix and extends the active life of the development from mornings into the evenings. There will be 70 one and two bedroom residential apartments above the shops in the Cattle Market redevelopment.

### Leisure

And there is leisure. The first thing to consider is a cinema but as a site nearby had already been identified for a cinema we were asked not to pursue that. In fact opposite our site that cinema is already built and open and trading.

### Food

As people are moving back into town centres to live then the same people are eating out a lot more and spending more money in restaurants, consequently a lot of good restaurants are now springing up in town centres. For a developer it is important to be able to detect, and work with, a fundamental change in demand. Along with town centre eating out we had an expert in to talk to us at the office a week or so ago and using Bluewater as an example we were told that now on Sundays more money is spent in the food outlets in Bluewater than the retail outlets. We all eat out far more than we ever used to. Hence restaurants are an important part of the mix.

### Culture

The Borough Council also wanted a multi-purpose public venue in the scheme. This is right in the heart of the redevelopment opening out on to the public square. For us it is a fantastic addition further extending the daily life of the scheme. The venue can seat 500 or take 1000 standing.

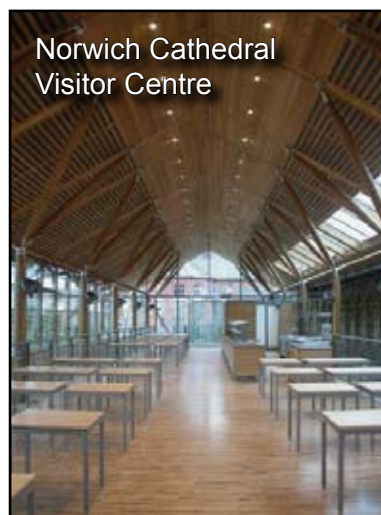
### FIND A GOOD ARCHITECT

Having established the mix of uses a good architect is needed to put it all together. Centros Miller chose Michael Hopkins, a world-renowned architect, well known for such buildings as the Norwich Cathedral Visitor Centre and also Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex. We took part in the initial selection process with Michael Hopkins already on board as part of the team. The architect has to make

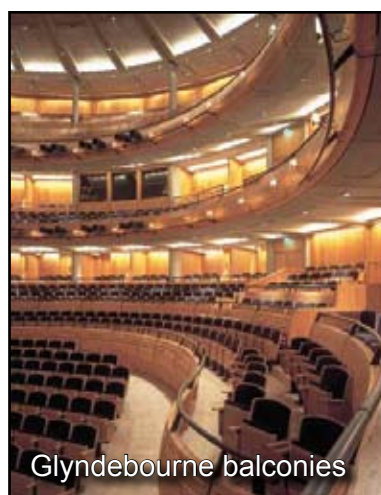
sure that the redeveloped site fits seamlessly into the rest of the town.

### CREATING THE RIGHT FIT

The plan overleaf shows the town centre of Bury St Edmunds. The historic town centre core is shown by yellow colour and the Cattle Market site is in pink. Our objective is to ensure that the new buildings fit with their surroundings by linking to both the existing town centre core and other parts of the town thus making it just another part of the town centre. If in ten years people come into the town and do not see “the Cattle Market” as a shopping centre but as another few streets in Bury St Edmunds then we will have achieved our objective.



Norwich Cathedral  
Visitor Centre



Glyndebourne balconies

## ISSUES TO BE FACED

### Commercial demand

Commercial demand has already been discussed. We need to make sure that is sound and sustainable.

### Land ownership

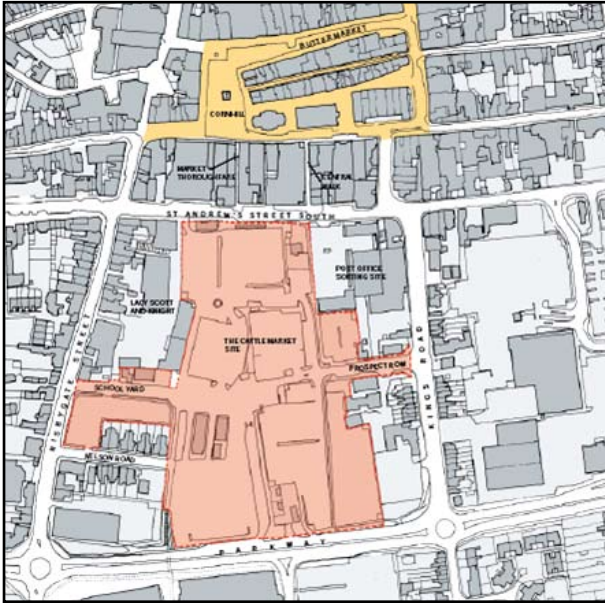
Land ownerships are always a thorny subject. It is a huge bonus to become involved in a site wholly in local authority ownership. Unfortunately it seldom happens that way. In a Maidstone development there were over 100 interests. In Bury St Edmunds we were lucky; there were 7 or 8 to buy in. (More of that later.)

### Site topography

What is the shape of the site? Is it square? Is it round? Are there arms sticking out of it all over the place? Is it on the side of a hill? How do you deal with all the levels? Any of these features could be a problem or more likely an opportunity to make it a more attractive place to visit.

### Stakeholders' views

The issue of stakeholders' views will be dealt with further in the paper.



## RISKS TO BE AVOIDED

Many obstacles can arise during the lifespan of a development scheme. The best course is to try to avoid them as far as possible. But you will never avoid all of them and I guarantee that in every single scheme we have done, something has come along and we have said, "Well, we never thought that would happen". But you just have to keep plugging away at it and make sure that a successful outcome is achieved. These are some of the key risks.

### The Economy

The development timescale will extend over at least one economic cycle. Make sure the scheme is sustainable through that cycle. One of the reasons development timescales become extended is that the market is not there for you for a year or two. But keep working away and it will come good. Perseverance is a key message. Perseverance makes things happen. There is no quick fix; things will not happen overnight, you must stick with it.

### Occupier confidence

Retailers in particular are a funny old bunch. They look back six weeks and if it has been a warm September and overcoats have not sold, it is a disaster. Or if it is a late spring and summer dresses have not sold it is doom and gloom. The press hype it up too. One day the economy is fantastic with the best sales figures for twenty years; and the next day retail demand has suddenly dropped. These factors have to be taken into account. At the same time retailers have to drive their market share and so over time need to take on bigger and more modern space. A glance at any historic town Goad Plan shows some strange shaped shops so you can understand why retailers have difficulty sometimes. Inefficient retail space has to be addressed over time.

### Other landowners

In Bury St Edmunds we bought out seven landowners without the use of a compulsory purchase order. It is always helpful if an authority is prepared to make a compulsory purchase order but we, and most developers, try to do things by private treaty if possible.

### Building costs

Building costs only ever go up so over an eight-year period this is significant. The feature is compounded where rents are stable and is much worse where, as in certain towns, it is said that rents are starting to go down. This is another major challenge, so it is essential to have a sound and sustainable appraisal from the start.

### Planning process

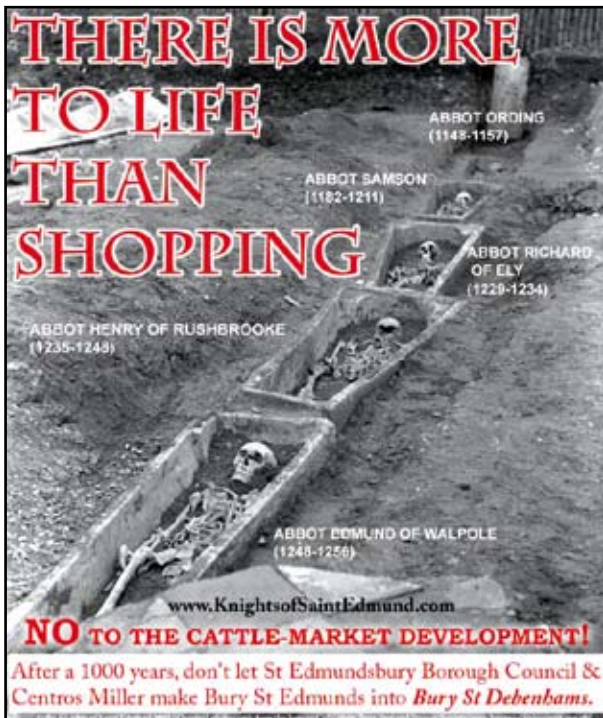
The planning process is not getting any easier. Over the last four or five years it has become much more complicated, particularly with the need for environmental impact and sustainability studies. This is not a complaint: it is just a fact of life. But it is much more complicated now to go through the planning process than it was before.

### Site conditions - particularly archaeology

Talk to the archaeologists early and get them involved early. Work with them on a scheme. Try to get their test studies in hand early and you will find it much easier to go through the process as and when the need for investigations on site arise. I was involved in Coppergate, York where the archaeologists were on site five years before building started. Even then two months into the process when we were digging out the basement we came across an old well the archaeologists did not know was there and in it was the best preserved Viking helmet ever found in western Europe. This is now in the Castle Museum in York and insured for £1million. Due to our track record of working closely with the York Archaeological Trust this only held the site up for two days. They were happy that there was nothing else around and were on site monitoring with us right the way through. The key is partnership and is all about including people in the process and working with them.

### The Knights of St Edmund

The Knights of St Edmund are probably unique. I have never been cursed before but here there is a bunch of people calling themselves the Knights of St Edmund. It is, apparently, an ancient order and the current participants have resurrected it in order to curse Centros Miller, the Borough Council, all its associates and Debenhams because they do not want the scheme to happen in the town. Town residents can become a Knight for £20 and non-residents can become a Sergeant to the Knights for £8. That is the only plug I am ever going to give them. Fortunately you can see that although I have been cursed, I am here today standing up, even if my back is giving me terrible trouble and I have a dodgy knee and piercing headaches but apart from that I am absolutely fine.



## INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

One of the things I am trying to say is that town centre regeneration development is not a walk in the park. It is not kids' stuff. Developers have to be dedicated, pragmatic and flexible to make sure things happen. It is more a balancing act, more walking the tightrope, balancing cost and value right through the process. The same applies to the council. We have to work together. We will both have issues. They will be different issues and from time to time they will be difficult to overcome. It is important to keep talking, as eventually a solution will emerge.

## KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

### VISION/COMMON GOAL

The partners have to share a common vision and a common goal. It is so important that everybody joins together and agrees a common aim early in the process. That is exactly what has happened in Bury St Edmunds. We have been through the process together.

### A CHAMPION

An authority needs a champion. Not necessarily a heavyweight boxing champion, but a champion empowered to work closely with the developer to make sure that when issues arise there is a single point of contact to go to sort that out. Again with St Edmundsbury it has been a fantastic

relationship. There have been plenty of issues along the way but we have always managed to sort them out. The champion is that first point of contact that will know where to go in the council for help, as we do not necessarily understand the council processes.

## TEAMWORK

Everyone needs to pull together. In a rowing eight if one person pulls out of kilter you go round in circles. The whole team, the design team, the developer, the council and other stakeholders must pull together. The teamwork ethic must pervade the whole process.

## THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

### CONSULTATION

Consultation is the starting point of the whole process. These days it is a very important part of the planning process. Centros Miller spent a long time consulting in Bury St Edmunds. We talked to or met and consulted over fifty different interest groups. I have never come across a town with so many different interest groups before! They range from the Suffolk Preservation Society and the Bury St Edmunds Society, through to the Chamber of Commerce. We went to local schools and housing estates and met residents and some of our best conversations were held in that forum. But you have to talk to people AND LISTEN to people, that is vital.

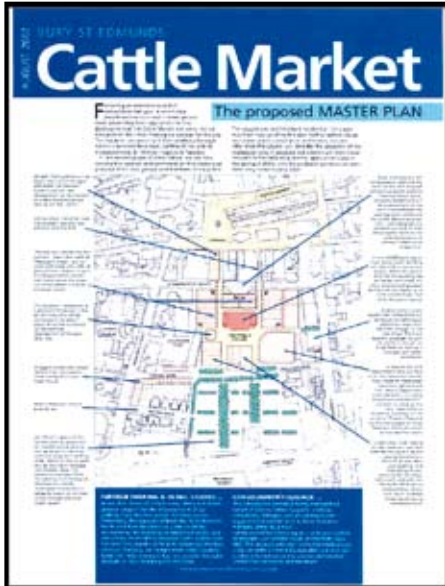
You will not please all of the people all of the time but if you listen at least people understand the process. We also distributed to residents a four-page leaflet telling them about Centros Miller and the proposed scheme with a tear-off strip at the back for their comments and to let us know what they thought. We had plenty, good and bad.



We also had, and still have, a website that people could visit. There was a telephone number for those without computer access that people could ring and leave us their views. There was a three-week public exhibition for people to come in person and give us their views. Throughout we did listen and, where we could, did change certain parts of the scheme.

## THE MASTER PLAN

Usually following consultation you can prepare the master plan. But in Bury St



Edmunds the initial master plan formed part of the consultation process. To create the future our architects looked at the original street grid developed in the 11th century and based their Cattle Market layout on the same pattern. It works very well creating that total permeability and integration with the rest of the town.

## CREATING THE DIFFERENCE

The developer's main task is to identify and include that point of difference that will entice people to come to visit the new development. One of my hobby-horses these days is the local retailer. Currently there is a lot of misleading and uninformed discussion about "clone towns". Centros Miller promotes in all its schemes an allocation for local retailers because they create the difference. And it is important to



remember that everyone of today's national retailer started off as a local retailer.

Developers need more retailers in our schemes and more different retailers. It is incumbent upon developers to make a difference so that people are unable to walk down any high street and say all the shops are the same. Similarly an authority looking to appoint a developer should write it into the brief that say 1 or 2 per cent of the total area should be allocated for the local retailer. Here we will produce 265,000 sq ft and 2% of that, 5,000 sq ft, is available for four or five local shops. This makes little difference to the overall appraisal but it does create that point of difference and it does give local retailers a chance to become regional retailers or national retailers.

The photographs around the edge of this page show some examples of the type of local retailers that do create a difference.

## FORMALISING A PARTNERSHIP

This is the next part of the process and it is usual for the developer and the local authority to agree and complete a development agreement. This is dealt with in a separate paper.

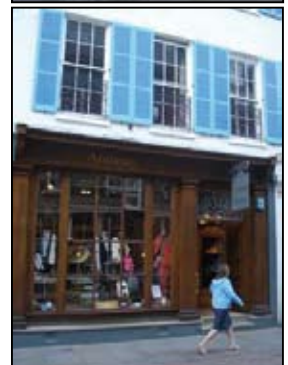
## PREPARING THE DRAWINGS

We are now in the process of preparing the drawings.

Overleaf there are two perspectives of what the scheme will look like when completed. There will be lots of timber – sustainable.

## SIGNING THE ANCHORS

Signing the anchors is best done as early as possible. The Cattle Market anchor is a Debenhams department store of 85,000 sq





ft. We also signed up about 7 or 8 other retailers before starting on site.

### ACQUIRING THE LAND

The plan to the right shows what land is to be acquired. The Council owned about 80%. Our biggest challenge, apart from agreeing with Bury Free Press their change of building, was the Royal Mail. This was a sorting office. Centros Miller had to find an alternative site for Royal Mail on the edge of town and build them a new building so that they could move and we could take their old building and start on site. This is another element that adds to the length of the process. We started building on their new site 9 months ago and Royal Mail has now moved.

### PLANNING APPROVAL

Eventually after months or possibly years of careful negotiation planning approval is granted and provided the land in place and our anchors are signed up we are ready to really make a start.

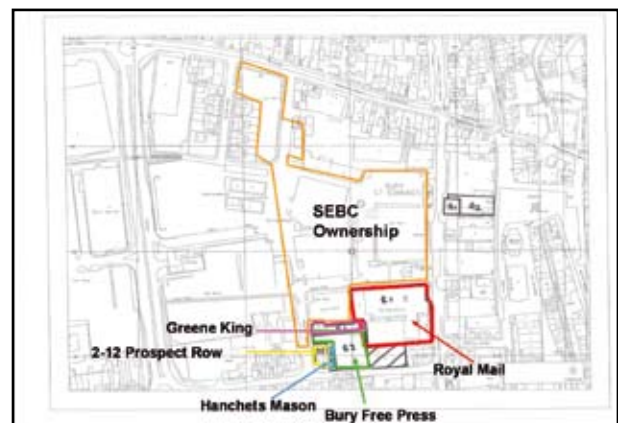
### FINDING A BUILDER

We appointed Taylor Woodrow. They intend to start on site in October 2007. It is a two-year building programme and hopefully the scheme will open for business in two years time.

### KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED

It is essential to continue to keep people informed throughout the process of building. Keep people in touch with what is happening. The Council issues an information leaflet (see next page) about once a month.

Its purpose is to tell the people of the town what is happening and what is going to happen and when. It is easier to get people on side if they know when things will happen and what it is going to be like. Of course there will be disruption in the town for a couple of years. This is unavoidable with a town centre building site. But if people know what is going to happen and what the traffic rearrangements are they can prepare for it. And the site has to have hoardings but we do not put them up and leave them. They can be used to continue the process of keeping people informed and we put viewing panels in –high level for adults and low for children to let them see what is going on behind there. Otherwise that might be up there for nine months or a year and people will say there is nothing happening and will realise there is a huge basement being dug out underneath. And we will to arrange school visits so we can take school children round the site to show them what is happening.





Great Shopping   Attractions   Take a Break   Getting Here   Parking  
Cattle Market Development   Markets   Events   Information   News

## Bury St Edmunds

*More heart*


Welcome to this online guide to Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk.

This picturesque market town has the perfect combination of great shopping, weekly markets, a breathtaking cathedral, fascinating Abbey ruins, interesting monuments, galleries and museums, plus a huge range of places to eat and entertainment to enjoy.

This website will help you plan your visit. It also features the latest town centre news, including the new Cattle Market development that will provide a new Debenhams department store, 35 new shops, 62 residential apartments and a multi-purpose public venue opening in 2008.

### Town Centre Map

One of the main features of this website is its unique map of Bury St Edmunds town centre – which shows the location of every attraction, shop, café, bar and restaurant in the town centre. Click on **OPEN MAP** to download this in PDF format.



Market development   Impact management strategy working for Cattle Market development   Fashion trio makes C:

Website managed by Halogen on behalf of Centros Miller and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. We welcome feedback - contact us

## SCHEME OPENING

Hopefully two years on and about £85 million later we will have a scheme opening.

## MANAGING INTO THE FUTURE

Having got building under way there should be time to focus on the management of the scheme into the future. Think about servicing arrangements. There are shops with people living above them who will not want service lorries turning up at unsocial times. Create a management structure that fits everything, servicing, access, deliveries, cleanliness, security and all the rest.

3. Work in partnership. No “them and us” attitude. If you work that way it will never happen. Both sides have to be pragmatic. Both sides will have to give and take from time to time. It is the only way it will work.
4. Encourage thinking differently.
5. Local retailers; an essential element. We should all encourage local retailers to thrive.
6. Most important - appoint a champion. But make sure the appointed champion has the power and influence within the council to make things happen.

## SUMMARY

1. There is no quick fix.
2. You need stamina and perseverance. Stick with it through good times and bad times; keep talking, keep thinking and eventually it will come good.

John Laker  
Centros Miller

