

LOUGHBOROUGH AREA COMMITTEE – 6TH JANUARY 2020

Report of the Strategic Director for Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services

Part A

ITEM 6 LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN 2018 – PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose of Report

To appraise the Loughborough Area Committee of progress made in the delivery of the Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Reason

To ensure that members of the Committee are kept fully informed of interventions to support the long-term vitality and viability of Loughborough Town Centre.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020 is committed to the creation of a strong and lasting economy in Charnwood. In support of that overarching commitment the plan aims to support initiatives which will support our towns and villages to thrive and specifically calls for the preparation of a new and revitalised town centre masterplan for Loughborough.

The masterplan was finalised in March 2018 and approved by Cabinet on 12 April 2018 (Cabinet Minute 120: 17/18 refers). The masterplan has been published on the Council's web site and may be viewed at:

https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/loughborough_town_centre_masterplan_2017

A progress report outlining the priorities set out in the Masterplan and progress made towards its implementation was previously received and noted by the Loughborough Area Committee on 18 September 2018 (Minute 13: 18/19 applies).

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The Masterplan incorporates a strategic action plan (Appendix B) setting out a recommended range of interventions categorised as early wins and short, medium- or long-term projects. The action plan also identifies potential costs as low, medium or high together with indications of potential delivery partners.

The implementation of the Masterplan will be guided by the strategic action plan although, such is the complexity of some interventions, delivery will be dependent upon the availability of funding and the engagement of relevant public and private sector partners.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

Background Papers: Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan March 2018

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Part B

Background

1. The primary aims of the Masterplan are defined as being to:
 - Build partnerships;
 - Provide direction and define limits (for policies);
 - Demonstrate confidence in the future of the town centre;
 - Raise awareness of development opportunities;
 - Deliver a coherent strategy to underpin bidding for partnership funding;
 - Engage and attract private sector investment;
 - Provide an evidence base to assist in the preparation of Local Plan policies; and
 - Assist in the assessment of planning applications.

2. The objectives and recommendations of the masterplan broadly fall into four overlapping categories:
 - **Public realm improvements** around and within the pedestrianised core providing safer and more attractive links to the principal town centre “gateways.”
 - **Changes to the movement network** including improved cycle and footpath connectivity, investigation of potential improvements to the road network and the enablement of additional parking funded through commercial development.
 - **Definition of character areas** to recognise the architectural and street scape features along with land use clusters lending differing characteristics to different localities and the **identification of opportunity sites for development.**
 - **Small (non-physical) interventions** to enhance the town centre experience for visitors through events, promotions and business support schemes.

3. To assist in the delivery of the Masterplan a refreshed stakeholder group, meeting under the banner of the “Loughborough Town Team,” has been formed comprising representatives of the Business Improvement District, town centre businesses, service providers, transport undertakings and leading Councillors. The team has met on five occasions since its inception in September 2018. It has adopted the strategic action plan, with amendments, as a framework to guide and prioritise its work.

Current Projects

4. A number of work streams and projects associated with the delivery of elements of the masterplan are currently in progress.

5. The masterplan has closely informed the policies and proposals set out in the **Draft Charnwood Local Plan 2019 – 36** which has been subject to a period of public consultation concluding on 16 December 2019. Specifically, the masterplan has provided the evidence base to justify the definition of the town centre boundary and the primary shopping area boundary together with the

town centre retail allocation at Baxter Gate / Pinfold Gate. In particular the primary aims of the masterplan find policy expression in:

- Policy LP 14: Regeneration of Loughborough; and
- Policy LP 17: Town Centre and Retail (Loughborough Town Centre).

6. Design guidance set out in the masterplan ensured that new development on the **Aumbery Gap / Leicester Road “opportunity site”** respected the local town scape in terms of the height and massing of buildings. That guidance attracted the weight of a robust material consideration in the negotiation of an acceptable student housing development delivering 440 rooms within a range of elements comprising 3 – 7 storeys in height. Site preparation works are now in progress.
7. Elsewhere within and around the margins of the town centre significant private investment is being channelled into the delivery of 250 apartments in two schemes off **Nottingham Road** and the conversion of **Pennine House** by Study Inn to deliver 182 student rooms.
8. Prospective developers are actively engaging through the confidential **pre-application planning advice** service in respect of four other town centre and edge of centre sites with the combined potential to deliver an estimated 250 apartments.
9. Proposals advanced by a Community Interest Company to repurpose the former LUSAD building at the corner of Frederick Street with Packe Street as a centre for creative business and a permanent home for Charnwood Arts (**The Generator**) continue to be supported in principle following earlier financial assistance from the Council in the commissioning of viability studies and the business case. Progress towards the delivery of the facility is being made through the co-operation of the University, which owns the property, the prospect of grant aid and steps to engage a private sector partner through the formation of a Special Purpose Vehicle.
10. Following earlier rounds of public consultation, the **Bedford Square Gateway** public realm improvement project, including Wards End and Devonshire Square, has been re-energised with the appointment of a new consultancy team which is working with the Loughborough Town Team towards the review of the original concept plans. That will inform the preparation of detailed design drawings and initial costing schedules which are expected to feature in a two-day public exhibition towards the end of February. Further details of that project appear elsewhere on this agenda.
11. Preliminary work has started on the preparation of the **Lanes Strategy** with steps to commission an overall lighting strategy for the town centre while the Town Team has received from the “Ladybird Collective” proposals to work with property owners and the Council in identifying suitable locations for appropriate and agreed street art in the form of murals.
12. The Business Improvement District and the Council’s Cultural and Leisure Services continue to collaborate in the delivery of a **Place Making Action Plan**,

to make Loughborough a popular destination forging stronger links with the University, town centre businesses and communities through the promotion of the town's unique heritage, its market and university. This initiative accords with the Tourism Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire.

13. The work includes the delivery of the development of the Market Place and the promotion of a mixed **programme of events and activities** including those that are delivered by the Council, and a wide range of charities, community organisations; Loughborough Town Hall, the Museum Service and major attractions e.g. the Great Central Railway. The programme is regularly presented to the Town Team for information and discussion.
14. The publicity jointly generated by the BID and the Council is divided into **three marketing campaigns** across a twelve-month programme, this allows cross promotion and is linked to the town's street dressing to maximise impact and use of resources.
 - The current **“Magical Christmas” campaign** is promoted through poster sites across Loughborough Town Centre, on all floors of the Bee Hive Car Park, and all printed publicity including the BID's annual event brochure. The web link on the promotional material connects to the BID's event and to each organiser's website.
 - The **“Love Loughborough” campaign** will include the extension of the popular heart lights in the Market Place to the entrances of the Market Place, Market Street, Cattle Market and the High Street. It will focus on the promotion of Loughborough's historic markets. The printed material and on street promotions will include images of people enjoying themselves at town centre venues to support the day and night time economy.
 - The **“Celebrate Loughborough” campaign** will be undertaken over summer / autumn and will include colourful banners, bunting and hanging baskets for BLOOM. Printed material and street dressing will include a diverse range of festivals and events from Picnic in the Park to Diwali.
15. Christmas 2019 saw the deployment of the Council's new **festive lighting scheme** that occupies the sites of the previous scheme and culminates with large bespoke bell structures (unique to Loughborough) in the Market Place. The Council has also supported the installation of new catenaries in the High Street in order that the BID could extend its lighting scheme that covers the wider BID area while complementing the existing colour scheme.
16. The **market review** started with a successful branding exercise that, in turn, has improved the level and quality of publicity including its digital platform. Work continues with changes to the market's infrastructure, including town electrics. Further work is anticipated to future proof the market making it more sustainable in difficult weather conditions.

Appendices

None