

LOUGHBOROUGH AREA COMMITTEE – 18TH SEPTEMBER 2018

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

Part A

ITEM 7 LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN 2018

Purpose of Report

To appraise members of progress made in the delivery of the refreshed Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan.

Recommendations

That the report be noted.

Reasons

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 help 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 reported to Cabinet on 12 April 2018 (Cabinet Minute 120: 17/18 refers). Cabinet resolved:

1. that the refreshed Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan, be approved;
2. that a stakeholder reference group be assembled comprising representatives of town centre businesses, transport undertakings, user groups, specialist interest groups and public sector partners;
3. that the report of the Overview Scrutiny Group be noted.

The Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan (2018) was subsequently published on the Council's website at:

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

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The masterplan incorporates a strategic action plan (Appendix B) cataloguing the 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 the most likely delivery partnership.

The implementation of the master plan will be guided by the timetable set out in the strategic action plan although such is the complexity of some interventions that delivery will be dependent upon the availability of funding and 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 – Final Report – March 2018

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Part B

Background

1. Consultants Urban Initiatives Studio Ltd, partnered by commercial property agents Montagu Evans, were commissioned to prepare the new masterplan for Loughborough Town Centre. The work of the consultancy team was supported by a stakeholder group representing local businesses, community interest groups, service providers and transport undertakings who were engaged through a series of workshops. A draft masterplan was subject to stakeholder and public consultation over a six week period to inform the preparation of the final draft which was approved by Cabinet in April 2018.
2. The refreshed masterplan presents a new vision for the town supported by three objectives:

Loughborough Town centre will be a successful and vibrant place with a strong identity that stems from its role as a market town and home to Loughborough University. It will be an attractive destination with a diverse retail offer, a mix of housing and a wide range of employment opportunities.

The town will be easy to access with a well-connected network of vehicular and pedestrian routes. Activity in the town will be supported by a range of events and innovative marketing, business and promotional strategies that will make Loughborough a great place to be.

Objective 1: Movement and Arrival:

To strengthen connections across the town centre to create a more legible network of streets and spaces linking key destinations and promoting active travel.

Objective 2: Character, Identity, Uses and Offer

To enhance the townscape by ensuring that new development responds to the distinctive pattern of uses and character across the town and to protect and enhance the town's offer.

Objective 3: Town Centre Experience, Events and Promotion

To support physical interventions with a series of short term interventions to promote the town's brand, attract visitors and enliven the town centre.

3. Based on this vision and objectives the recommendations of the masterplan may be seen as falling into four overlapping components:
 - **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 to destinations outside the town centre to encourage active travel, the exploration of potential improvements to the road network and the enablement of additional parking provision funded through commercial development;
- **Definition of Character Areas** to recognise the architectural and streetscape features along with the particular land use combinations which lend differing parts of the town centre differing characteristics and qualities suggesting distinctive solutions to accommodating new development with identified **opportunity sites for development** including:
 - Baxter Gate and Aumberry Gap,
 - Devonshire Square,
 - Sainsbury's site, and,
 - The former LUSAD building (The Generator)
- **Small [non-physical] interventions** to enhance the town centre experience for visitors embracing events, promotions and business support initiatives.

Reference Group (Refreshed Loughborough Town Team)

4. As evidenced by the 2007 exercise a masterplan can be a powerful tool for encouraging investment and driving change, but equally it cannot be inflexible or prescriptive. It is a presentation of the possible rather a blueprint for the probable. In times of austerity and constraint on public finances the challenges are even greater. The need for collaborative working in partnership with a wide range of public and private sector organisations and agencies together with an awareness of market conditions and trends will be critical to the success of potential interventions.
5. In that context it is informative to refer to the aims of the masterplan which are summarised in the executive summary. Those aims are defined as being to:
 - Build partnerships;
 - Provide direction and define limits [for policies];
 - Demonstrate confidence in the future of the centre;
 - Raise awareness of development opportunities;
 - Deliver a coherent strategy to underpin bidding for public 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.
6. Having regard to these aims and to the need to facilitate an active partnership of leading stakeholders with a strong focus on business success the Cabinet authority to assemble a stakeholder reference group was discharged under the procedure for the confirmation of delegated decisions on 20 July 2018 (DD123 18/19 refers). A copy of the approved terms of reference and schedule of membership is attached at Appendix A.
 7. The inaugural meeting of the stakeholder reference group, the refreshed Loughborough Town Team, is scheduled for 24th September 2018. That meeting will appoint a chair and afford an opportunity to acquaint members with the primary outcomes of the masterplan leading to a review of the strategic action plan to confirm priority work streams and interventions informed by resource availability and capacity among partner organisations.

Current Projects

8. A number of work streams and projects associated with the delivery of elements of the masterplan are currently in progress:
 - The **Generator project** has been supported in principle with meetings involving the strategic director and leader of the Council offering advice and guidance to assist in the furtherance of the scheme.
 - The promoters of development on the **Aumberry Gap site** (part of the Baxter Gate development opportunity site), following the refusal of a student housing led scheme for reasons of massing and design, continue to be engaged in an effort to secure a more acceptable development solution more in keeping with the guidance for the preferred option set out in the masterplan.
 - The new owners of the **Devonshire Square** property and representatives of **Sainsbury's** have been engaged to explore their ambitions and expectations for the future operation of their holdings.
 - Stakeholders have been consulted on potential improvements to the **Bedford Square Gateway** and the Council has allocated £390,000 within the Capital Plan 2018/21, with the expectation of securing match funding through the Leicester and Leicester Enterprise Partnership (LEPP). Discussions with potential funding and delivery partners are in progress.
 - The co-ordination and promotion of **major events** is managed through an inter-departmental group drawing upon representatives from the Cultural and Leisure Services (including Markets and Fairs) and the Planning and Regeneration Teams.
 - Governance structures for the Council's engagement in the **Love Loughborough BID** are already established and joint

action in the management of events and promotions is delivered through an operational working group involving external partners including the County Council.

- Loughborough BID levy payers are eligible to access **business support** through a specially tailored package delivered with financial aid provided through the Council's Growth Support Fund. That fund has also supported a programme to assist businesses in the use of social media channels as a means of encouraging business placement and on line sales together with the Enterprise inCharnwood business skills programme, delivered in partnership with Co-operative and Social Enterprise (CASE).
- Preparation of a new **local plan** is progressing and the emerging policies concerning the definition of the town centre envelope, primary retail frontages and identified development opportunities will be informed by the evidence and recommendations set out in the masterplan.

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Loughborough Master Plan (2018) Reference Group: Terms of Reference

Title: Loughborough Town Team

Membership See Schedule 1

Purpose

1. To act as a representative consultative forum on matters of relevance to the regeneration, development and management of Loughborough Town Centre (as defined by the eight character areas identified in the Master Plan).
2. To act as a reference group to consider and comment on the delivery of the Loughborough Town Centre Master Plan and related relevant delivery documents.
3. To work with the Council and its partners to assist in implementing the Town Centre Master Plan, development briefs and other relevant documents or reports.
4. To act as a 'Critical Friend' by delivering constructive criticism and praise.

Objectives

1. To foster strong community and business leadership in partnership with the Borough Council,
2. To sustain and enhance Loughborough Town Centre as a vital and viable centre with the capacity to attract investment and increase footfall.
3. To ensure that the Town Centre remains accessible by all modes and provides a safe, comfortable and attractive place to live, work and visit,
4. To encourage the development and growth of businesses, supporting services and amenities for the benefit of the community and visitors
5. To identify and promote investment opportunities and encourage economic development

Remit:

1. The team will act as a reference group to comment and advise upon the implementation of the Town Centre Master Plan.
2. The team will be consulted on all major planning applications that affect the town centre area.
3. The team will be kept informed of current developments, plans and proposals bearing upon the Town Centre and will consider these in the light of the aspirations and vision as laid out in the Master Plan
4. Members of the team will be required to register declarations of interest where matters under consideration give rise to personal or financial interests which could prejudice that member's ability to act in an entirely impartial and non-prejudicial manner. In such circumstances the

member will be expected to withdraw from the meeting and remove themselves from the room for the duration of the debate.

5. The team is not a decision making body but will proceed by way of discussion and consensus where possible.
6. The team will be a consultative body where individual members can bring matters on which they would like to inform the team or seek views from the team. This will include matters relating to policy or proposals of any of the team members of relevance to the Town Centre on which the other members may be expected to have an interest or a view.
7. The team will provide a forum for information and advice to be shared and exchanged.
8. The team will offer advice to parent bodies of team members of which account may be taken as appropriate by those bodies in discharging their own functions and responsibilities.

Administration

1. Meetings will be held at least quarterly, but also when the need arises in relation to pressing matters of interest which need discussion by the Team.
2. The Team shall comprise nominated representatives of each organisation, with a nominated substitute to attend in the absence of the main representative.
3. Meetings will be held at accessible venues in Loughborough.
4. A secretary will be appointed by the Town Team who will be responsible for the production and distribution of minutes and agendas.
5. The team may call upon the Head of Planning & Regeneration to assist with agendas and to ensure that members are fully informed in good time before meetings.
6. Meetings of the team will be chaired by a member elected from within the team.
7. Officers of the Borough Council will attend the meetings in a support and advisory role as required.
8. Other organisations/representatives will be invited to attend for specific matters as necessary.
9. A sub-committee of up to 7 members (5 as a quorum) will meet as required to consider specific planning applications or proposals in relation to their impact on the town centre and compliance with the Master Plan. The advice or consensus from this sub-committee will be reported to the following full meeting. The opinions will be passed with comments to the relevant body.

July 2018

Schedule 1 – Town Team Membership

- Charnwood Borough Council – Cabinet Lead Member for Planning and Inward Investment & Tourism Strategy
- Charnwood Borough Council – Cabinet Lead Member for Loughborough
- Leicestershire County Council – (Highway Authority)
- Leicestershire County Council – (Economic Growth)
- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP)
- Leicestershire Police Authority
- Love Loughborough BID (Chair)
- Love Loughborough BID (Manager)
- Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Market Traders Federation
- Arriva Midlands
- Kinchbus

Plus 6 BID Levy payers (to be nominated)

Additional partners may be co-opted into membership with the approval of the chair where there is a need to refresh the team or access particular expertise or experience.

Officers of Charnwood Borough Council will attend as required in an advisory capacity.