

**CABINET**  
**11 May 2017**

**Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan and Investment Programme**

**Cabinet Member**                      **Cllr Richard Chesterton**  
**Responsible Officer**                **Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning & Regeneration**

**Reason for the Report:** To consider the presentation of options for inclusion in the masterplan for Stage 1 public consultation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The options identified in the presentation are approved for stage 1 public consultation on the Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to finalise consultation material.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Delivery of key priorities for Mid Devon, including a thriving economy, empowering local communities and caring for the environment.

**Financial Implications:** The consultants' fees for the preparation of the masterplan SPD, including two stages of public consultation, is in the region of £52,000.

**Legal Implications:** Legal implications will arise from various property transactions but are anticipated to be managed with existing resource.

**Risk Assessment:** A full risk assessment will be undertaken as the projects in the scheme are developed. Failure to support a regeneration of Tiverton Town Centre could lead to individual projects being undertaken without a comprehensive view of 'the whole story', deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, with impacts to the Council as an asset owner as well as one of strategic leadership of place.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. After some years in decline Tiverton's revival began with the construction of the North Devon Link Road, in the late 1980s. During the early 1990s, retailing in the town struggled after the opening of the Great Western Way, which led to the closure of Fore Street in the town centre to all but pedestrians. The decline was reversed to a degree by various regeneration projects, and Tiverton's trade improved in the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially on the main market days, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday and following significant housing development. However, the major recession of 2008–9 hit Tiverton reasonably hard; several chain stores closed their branches and a number of empty shops appeared. The current presence of Marks and Spencer, Tesco and Argos has assisted in keeping the town relatively active, and the town has a current shop

vacancy rate of around 7%. Tiverton won one of the 15 positions in the Round 2 pilot scheme as a Portas Town.

- 1.2. Tiverton has become a popular dormitory town for commuters to Exeter and Taunton, and this growth has been supported by large housing projects to the north of the town. The resulting influx of population has led to further development of the town's services and shops, Tesco and Marks and Spencer, being examples. Significant further housing growth is planned, in particular the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension.
- 1.3. The Pannier Market was redeveloped in 2005/6 at a cost of more than £3 million, increasing the market's capacity and allowing markets to be held more frequently.
- 1.4. Despite its size and retail decline in recent years, the Tiverton area has many positive draws, such as Knightshayes registered park and garden, the Grand Western Canal, and award-winning museum. Recently, planning permission has been granted for a new Premier Inn.
- 1.5. The policy framework for the town centre regeneration is set out in policy COR13 of the Core Strategy 2007 and policy AL/TIV/19 of the Allocations and Infrastructure DPD January 2011.
- 1.6. Policy S10 of the Local Plan Review 2013-2033 sets out Mid Devon's aims for the future of Tiverton and its town centre. Policy TIV12 relates specifically to the redevelopment of the Phoenix Lane area, at the centre of the proposed masterplan area. The Local Plan Review has been submitted for adoption but is not yet adopted and could be subject to minor change.

### **Policy S10**

Tiverton will continue to develop in a balanced way as a medium sized market town serving a rural hinterland in the central part of Mid Devon. The strategy will maintain its status as the largest urban area in Mid Devon and increase the self-sufficiency of the town and its area by improving access to housing, employment and services for its population and that of the surrounding rural areas. Proposals will provide for approximately 2,160 dwellings, of which 540 will be affordable, and 30,800 gross square metres of commercial floor space over the plan period.

The Council will guide high quality development and other investment to:

- a) Manage the town centre so that economic success and heritage reinforce each other, promoting new homes, shops, leisure, offices and key town centre uses which contribute to vitality and viability including an additional 7,000 square metres of gross commercial floorspace in accordance with the sequential approach in Policy DM15;
- b) Enhance walking and cycling opportunities and bus services around the town, particularly improving access via these more sustainable

modes to the town centre, Tiverton Parkway Station, Exeter and Taunton, and their interchange in the town centre.

- c) Enhance the tourism and visitor role of the town and surrounding area.

### **Policy TIV12 – Phoenix Lane**

A site of 1.4 hectares at Phoenix Lane is allocated for redevelopment as a high quality shopping, leisure and residential area with accessible public space.

Redevelopment is subject to the following:

- a) 60 dwellings with 28% affordable housing;
- b) 7,000 square metres of mixed commercial floorspace including retail, office and leisure uses;
- c) Redesign and enhancement of the bus station to include an improved, safe and attractive passenger waiting area with adequate provision for buses and taxi ranks;
- d) Improved pedestrian access between Phoenix Lane and the Pannier market, and between Phoenix Lane and the multi-storey car park;
- e) Retention or relocation of the war memorial within the Town Centre;
- f) Outstanding design that announces the southern entrance to Tiverton's primary shopping area while respecting and enhancing the character, appearance and setting of heritage assets and steep open hillsides;
- g) Retention of the listed building, Gotham House, and measures to protect its character, appearance and setting including the protection of the Town Leat;
- h) Adequate parking and service areas to serve the needs of existing and proposed uses;
- i) Archaeological investigation and appropriate mitigation;

1.7. Some initial investigation work was carried out to look at regeneration in Tiverton Town Centre. We commissioned a Tiverton Town Centre retail analysis in December 2013 and a Tiverton Town Centre feasibility study completed in 2014. A number of previous schemes to regenerate the town centre have not come to fruition and there is a need for a more proactive approach to improve the overall operation of the town centre.

1.8. MDDC has a number of land holdings in Tiverton ranging from centralised offices, to car parks and the Pannier Market and has invested in additional property acquisition in the town centre.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE MASTERPLAN AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**

2.1. MDDC has appointed consultants WYG to prepare the Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan and Investment Programme. The masterplan is fundamentally concerned with enhancing the economic prospects of the town together with improving the look and environment of the town centre. Its scope is broader than a purely spatial plan, focusing on wider issues such as the role

and function of the town centre, Tiverton's identity, unique selling points, and its relationship with competing retail and leisure offerings within the area.

- 2.2. To achieve greater vitality and viability it is important to create a more attractive town centre where the environment is of a high quality. Improved streets and spaces can attract and support greater footfall which can potentially translate into greater dwell-time and spend within the town centre. There is a strong relationship between a quality town centre environment and the future economic success of the town. In addition to the spatial masterplan, an investment and delivery framework will be produced to ensure that development envisioned by the masterplan is viable and can be delivered.
- 2.3. The aim of the masterplan and investment programme is to provide a clear strategy to ensure that Tiverton makes the most of its attractive location, wealth of heritage assets, and ease of access to the M5 and A361. It is important that the town meets its full potential as a thriving vibrant place now and into the future, and promotes its many attractive local venues and activities.
- 2.4. Tiverton town centre should be a place of choice and quality, with a good range of shops and services, offering something unique and different to nearby centres, set within an attractive and pleasant environment reflecting the history and character of the place. The town should provide a good range of places to shop, eat, drink and stay and develop a positive image as a traditional English market town.
- 2.5. The masterplan aims to strengthen the economy by creating new opportunities for businesses, jobs, shops and leisure, improving linkages and transforming public spaces to make the town a more attractive place to shop, relax and stay, strengthening the town's role as a retail, leisure and service hub.
- 2.6. The Council can influence land use and building in Tiverton. It owns land that could be made available to help kick-start improvements by working in partnership with other land owners and investors. The Council is keen for the local community to have a key role in the development of the masterplan and the future of the town centre and has set up a steering group comprising Mid Devon officers and members and representatives from the Town Council, local businesses and local residents to help shape the plan as it develops.
- 2.7. The principal aims of the regeneration and investment project as a whole are to:
  - Identify the role and function of the town centre and build on its unique selling points.
  - Improve the range and quality of both the retailers and food and beverage operators within the town centre of Tiverton, and identify gaps in provision locally and the potential to increase vitality and, ultimately, resident and visitor expenditure and satisfaction.
  - Facilitate an improved cinema offer for the town by working in partnership with Merlin Cinemas.

- Improve the car parking facilities for visitors to the town through access improvements, signage and physical links to the town centre.
- Support the emerging Pannier Market business plan to provide a sustainable and thriving market contributing to the local economy.
- Build on the town's historic areas and heritage assets to contribute to this project, including relocating the war memorial to Angel Hill, and applying for grant funding where opportunities arise.
- Develop a business plan to maximise the Council's property portfolio.
- Bring forward new commercial development on land identified in the masterplan, and identify redevelopment opportunities of vacant and underused land and property.
- Work with Premier Inn to ensure delivery of a planned hotel in the town centre.
- Encourage additional choice of quality supermarket shopping within the town centre.
- Promote the formation of a business-led incentive.
- Make Tiverton an attractive place for independent business.
- Provide a pleasant environment to spend time in, including connections to open spaces and the river Exe.
- Create attractive experiences around the town centre and provide improved linkages to other attractions outside the town centre.

2.8. It is proposed to adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This is a document that sets out more a detailed framework or policies in support of those contained in the Local Plan. Whilst it does not itself form part of the Development Plan, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### **3. MASTERPLAN OPTIONS FOR STAGE 1 PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

3.1. MDDC's Statement of Community Consultation requires two stages of public consultation on SPDs, firstly at the options stage and secondly on the draft document itself. This report relates to material in relation to the first stage of public consultation.

3.2. Following a series of initial stakeholder workshops, the steering group has been working with WYG on preparing a set of options for public consultation. Initial draft options were presented to the steering group on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and the options were amended following feedback from the steering group members.

3.3. The consultant's presentation (attached) was given to PPAG on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Members of the Economy PDG and all Tiverton Ward Members were invited to attend the PPAG meeting. The presentation covers:

- Tiverton today
- Analysis overview
- Engagement summary
- The vision
- Themes and priorities

- Key sites: options and aspirations
  - Town wide initiatives
  - Phasing and delivery
  - Summary and next steps
- 3.4. Stakeholder engagement carried out so far highlighted Tiverton as having some very good aspects including the historic environment, attractions such as the river, the museum, Knightshayes and the Grand Western Canal, and a number of good independent shops and successful events such as Electric Nights. There is ample parking and the town meets some of the day to day needs of local people.
- 3.5. However, most of the gateways to the town centre give a poor first impression. The town feels tired, the public realm is poor and there is a lack of greenery. The pannier market is under-utilised and there are limited places to eat and drink. There is a lack of a buzz/identity in the town centre and it was perceived that there is a lack of co-ordination of efforts.
- 3.6. A number of ideas were consistently put forward during the stakeholder engagement, including improving the gateways into the town and the key linkages, for example from the car parks to the town centre, including improving signage to the centre itself and to attractions such as the canal. There was a desire for public realm improvements, including taking traffic out of Fore Street, and incentives to improve shopfronts, as well as recognising opportunities such as redeveloping Phoenix Lane (including cinema expansion) and improving the pannier market. The town centre should be more attractive for families and include cultural offerings and places to attractive eat to develop an evening economy. Links from J27 could boost footfall to the town.
- 3.7. The vision is seen as securing the future of Tiverton as a market town for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century based on the following key objectives:
- A vibrant town centre – a thriving, historic and expanded town centre, a hub for arts and culture, food and entertainment, shopping and public services with the pannier market at its heart.
  - Excellent connectivity – Good road connections to the surrounding towns and cities, train stations airports, pedestrianised and function villages, and areas and a one-way system to control traffic in and around the town centre, a walkable town with high quality public realm and cycle routes.
  - Successful local businesses – Leading businesses and tourism and leisure based business opportunities. Continue to grow the market and food and craft offer of the town. Encourage and support independents.
  - A family environment – Creating a safe and user friendly environment with safe streets and outdoor spaces, offering family attractions and events.
  - Respect for the landscape – Physical and visual connections with the landscape to retain rural and urban character and a range of quality open spaces.

- Determination to succeed – Proactive and coordinated local partners, Town Council and town centre management team and function active engaged workers and residents that take pride in their town.

### 3.8. The options highlight a number of key themes and priorities:

- **Accessibility:** improving footfall by creating a “pedestrian loop” around the town, traffic calming, improving the route from the car park/Premier Inn into the town and rationalising parking options.
- **Gateways:** making the entrances to the town more inviting, identifying key connections and improved public spaces.
- **Public realm:** identifying key areas for public realm improvement and greening.
- **Attractions:** identifying what makes the town centre attractive to visitors and what can be done to improve poor quality areas (such as screening backs of shops and commercial bins/parking).

### 3.9. A number of key development options/opportunities have been highlighted, including a number of key town centre sites in Mid Devon’s control.

- **West Exe car park:** potential for increasing the parking by decking the area and including river frontage uses such as restaurants and outdoor seating with access to the water.
- **Rear of Town Hall site:** opportunity for riverside frontage and public access within the housing scheme.
- **Town Hall:** opportunity to use as cultural hub/flexible space for community activities to complement the Town Council’s use (subject to discussions with the Town Council).
- **Beck Square:** potential to redevelop for residential/retail/leisure
- **Phoenix Lane area:** Premier Inn, cinema redevelopment, restaurants and residential potential, potential to improve bus station appearance.
- **Pannier market area:** opportunity to restrict traffic, improve environment, open up access to the market from Fore Street, screen low quality areas (bins, commercial parking), bring upmarket as food hall/craft centre, redevelopment opportunities, e.g. Market Walk, increase car parking by decking, provide for taxi, cycle and community transport parking.

### 3.10. In addition to development sites, a number of town-wide initiatives have been identified:

- Support for existing traders
- Incentives for existing and new businesses
- Shop front enhancement grants
- Car parking strategy and price review
- Public realm strategy/ Way-finding strategy
- Green corridors and spaces
- Improved public facilities – public toilets, public transport and services
- Virtual networks – IT, home working, high speed internet, start up enterprise units

- Visitor strategy

3.11. The initiatives and options have been grouped into short, medium and long term priorities (see presentation).

3.12. In response to the presentation of options, PPAG highlighted a number of issues that needed to be more clearly articulated in the options document that goes out to public consultation:

- More explicit reference to TCAT (High School Community Arts Theatre) required – town centre offering should complement rather than compete with TCAT.
- Tiverton Town Clerk should be contacted to discuss inclusion of the Town Hall. The group saw it as a useful inclusion to think about money generating ideas for the Town Council that would complement their use of the building.
- A management plan would be needed for management of the green space, planters, etc.
- Reference was made to the ambition of the wider vision which should be clearer on what destination Tiverton could be and what we should aspire to.
- Emphasis should be on Tiverton as a market town – food, produce, cultural offering and crafts.
- More should be made of the river to tie in with the hydropower project with river improvements and water-based activity.

#### **4. CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

4.1. Stage 1 public consultation is proposed to take place over a 6 week period with provisional dates from 12<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

4.2. Means of consultation will include:

- Public exhibition, potentially to be held in the pannier market – date to be agreed.
- Presentation to Tiverton Town Council with invitations to other Town and Parish Councils.
- Exhibition boards will be erected in Phoenix House, together with dedicated website pages.
- Publicity arrangements are to include press release, Facebook, Twitter and press advert.

#### **APPENDIX: Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration: presentation on options for consultation**

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