

**CABINET**  
**9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

**CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN AND DELIVERY PLAN**

**Cabinet Member**                      **Cllr Graeme Barnell**  
**Responsible Officer**                **Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and**  
**Regeneration**

**Reason for the Report:** To consider the key themes detailed in this report and to seek approval to progress with the production of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan taking into account the comments received during the Stage 1 public consultation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. To note the responses to the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Public Consultation at Stage 1; and**
- 2. To progress to the production of a draft masterplan SPD for Cullompton Town Centre taking into account the comments received through Stage 1 public consultation.**

**Financial Implications:** The consultant contract for the Cullompton town Centre masterplan was awarded at the meeting of Cabinet in July 2019 following a procurement process. Prior to that a budget of £60,000 had been been approved, funding for which was identified in the 18/19 service budget.

This report does not identify the funding sources or arrangements that will be needed to deliver the regeneration opportunities and site for redevelopment that are likely to be identified as part of the masterplanning process. Funding is likely to involve a range of public and private sector investment. The Council has made a bid for regeneration funding under the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) part of the Future High Street Fund.

*Approved by Finance: [yes/no – include name/post title, eg Group Manager for Financial Services]*

**Budget and Policy Framework:** The budget for the production of the masterplan was agreed at a previous meeting of Cabinet. The Policy Framework consists of both statutory documents that have to be adopted or approved by the Council as well as locally determined policies and strategies that form an integral part of the decision making process. Once adopted, the masterplan would have Supplementary Planning Document status and be a material consideration for planning decision maing purposes.

*Approved by Finance: [yes/no – include name/post title, eg Group Manager for Financial Services]*

**Legal Implications:** In order for the masterplan to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, public consultation needs to take place in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Whilst not forming part of the Development Plan, the SPD once adopted will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications relating to the town centre.

*Approved by Legal: [yes/no – include name/post title, eg Group Manager for Legal Services]*

**Risk Assessment:** As projects arising from the masterplan are developed an assessment of risk will be undertaken as part of project development. Failure to support regeneration of the Cullompton Town Centre would in itself lead to deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, less coordinated development and uncertainty over essential infrastructure. Since the initiation of this project COVID-19 has introduced a significant risk to economic prosperity. The masterplan will need to take into account this change in economic circumstances and the need to complete this work is now more vital than ever.

*Approved by Performance/Governance: [yes/no – include name/post title, eg Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security]*

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No equality issues are identified for this report.

**Impact on Climate Change:** A core principle within the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan is to support the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 through design and timely delivery of infrastructure, dwellings and employment. The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan has regard throughout to climate change.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan SPD will provide guidance on the planning and delivery of development within Cullompton. It will ensure the delivery of the 4 key priorities as relating directly to the Corporate Plan 2020-24 including:

Homes: to promote the regeneration of the town centre by working with landlords and property developers to improve and increase the supply of quality housing;

Environment: to encourage new housing and commercial developers to be 'exemplar' in terms of increasing biodiversity and decreasing carbon use;

Economy: to identify strategic and tactical interventions to create economic and community confidence and pride in the places we live; and

Community: to promote new and more integrated approaches to better health and living.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Council has resolved to develop a masterplan for Cullompton Town Centre and has commissioned consultants in its production. It will form a key document for the regeneration of the town; enhancing the town's economic prospects and providing a clear strategy to ensure the town meets its full

potential as an attractive and thriving town post Covid19 and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will provide the umbrella framework within which the Cullompton Future High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) works could be delivered.

- 1.2 The Masterplan is being developed in the context of the strategic projects planned in and around Cullompton, including:
  - North West Cullompton urban extension;
  - The proposed Culm Garden Village with up to 5,000 new homes, new jobs, schools and local centre;
  - A new relief road to the east of the town centre;
  - A Heritage Action Zone bid submission which would see investment in Cullompton's historic high street; and
  - Potential for the reopening of Cullompton rail station.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Masterplan SPD needs to be subject to two stages of public consultation; Stage 1 to scope out the proposed contents of the masterplan and present the options that might be included in the masterplan and Stage 2 to present the draft masterplan itself. The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan once adopted will not in itself form part of the Development Plan for planning purposes, but will nevertheless be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.4 A report on the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan was considered at Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020. It was resolved to approve the themes set out below and for them to form a basis for Stage 1 public consultation with particular emphasis on:
  - Road / traffic
  - Living in the town centre
  - The use of key assets e.g St Andrew's Church, The Walronds, The Manor Hotel, The Town Hall
  - Delivery of public / private partnerships
  - The Third (Community) sector
- 1.5 Stage 1 public consultation was held between 25 February and 15 April 2020 with 4 staffed events planned. The consultation included a letter drop to approximately 1800 homes and businesses in addition to emails, a press release and social media announcements and public notices posted in and around the town centre. Permanent exhibitions were made available at Cullompton Town Hall and the Hayridge Centre (with a comments box to receive any returned questionnaires/observations). All the associated documentation (including a copy of the draft masterplan, exhibition boards, baseline report and online questionnaire) were also placed on the Council's website for viewing and downloading.
- 1.6 Members will be aware of the timing of the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and that this arose part way through the consultation period. During

the consultation period it became clear that in the interests of public and staff safety the one remaining public exhibition events had to be cancelled. By that time three out of the planned four staffed events had already taken place and had given an opportunity for approx 150 members of the public to attend. In order to ensure that there was opportunity for the public to engage with members of the project team in lieu of the cancelled public consultation event, the public were offered the ability to raise queries and gain responses via email.

## **2.0 Summary of Public Consultation Feedback**

2.1 The Stage 1 public consultation asked for feedback on exhibition boards that were made available through different channels. Feedback was invited on six town wide initiatives including:

- The enhancement and restoration of Cullompton's distinctive historic buildings and landscape
- Rediscovery of Cullompton's historic role as a place to work and to make
- Creating an enticing experience for visitors to draw them into the town centre
- A reclaiming and redesign of Cullompton's spaces to support a vibrant community life
- Ensuring a sustainable town for its growing community: with homes, education, community and recreational facilities
- Ability to move around on foot, on bicycle, by bus and by train easily.

2.2 In total, 40 survey replies and 15 email responses were received. In addition, through engagement with two primary schools, the opinion of approx. 50 school children were also received. An analysis of the consultation responses is provided at **Appendix 1**.

## **3.0 Analysis of the consultation responses**

3.1 A demographic breakdown of the responses indicates an even split between those received from males and females, of which 88% were white British / Irish. Respondents tended to be over the age of 26 with 43% aged 46-65. 5% were aged under 25 years old; 23% aged 26-45 and 37% aged 66+. A greater proportion were using the town centre for shopping, eating and drinking and socialising.

3.2 Respondents were asked what they considered Cullompton's best characteristic to be. A word cloud has been provided in Appendix 1. (The greater the size of the font the greater number of replies relating to this element). The historic nature of the town figures highly with reference to

buildings, the old town, the Bull Ring and St Andrew's Church. Cullompton is recognised as being a friendly town.

- 3.3 Respondents were asked 'what one thing they would like to change?'
- 39% related to traffic restrictions on the High Street and the relief road
  - 16% improving the towns offer in terms of shops and activities
  - 12% new railway station and sustainable transport
  - 10% improve the historic buildings and streetscape
  - 10% upgrade the existing or create a new motorway junction
  - 6% parking restrictions and enforcement
  - 4% decrease scale of new development

It is clear that the responses were dominated by transport issues.

- 3.4 Respondents were asked what their priorities were for:
- a) Improving pedestrian and cycle movement in and around Cullompton. 44% made reference to the implementation of the relief road and traffic restrictions on to the High Street. 33% made reference to investment in to the wider cycling and walking network
  - b) Improving the vehicular network. 42% made reference to the implementation of the relief road / traffic restrictions on to High Street.
  - c) Making the most of Cullompton's heritage. 42% made reference to the restoration of the historic buildings
  - d) Improving public and open spaces. 31% wanted to protect and improve the Cullompton Community Association (CCA) fields
  - e) Supporting the town centre's role as a focus for homes, shops, work and community life. 26% made reference to removing traffic from the town centre and 21% to enhanced shops / events / amenities to draw people into the town centre.

- 3.5 A resounding 90.5% of respondents considered that a form of traffic restriction in the High Street was a good idea. The greatest proportion indicating a one-way system, followed by access for homeowners and businesses only, followed by restricted commercial deliveries.

- 3.6 Respondents were also asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the emerging masterplan principles. People most strongly agreed with the principle to protect green space, closely followed by the principle to alleviate traffic and improve walking and finding viable uses for empty historic buildings.

- 3.7 The principle with the highest percentage of people who disagreed or strongly disagreed related to the provision of new town centre homes. A third of all 'strongly disagree' responses relate to this one principle. This issue will therefore need to be reviewed and considered carefully in light of this response. Additional town centre homes can deliver a benefit for town centre footfall and vitality. However there is a need to consider whether any negative consequences could result. This will be a key and important issue at the next stage of the public consultation.

3.8 Two workshops were held with students from two local primary schools. **Appendix 1** provides a detailed summary including art work produced. However, main points that came out of the sessions:

- The Mill area should be promoted as an area where people can learn about the history of the Mills whilst providing family attractions such as a museum, café and play park with improved seating and lighting.
- Enhance the Station Road area with improved green spaces (including frontage on to the River Culm), enhanced sense of arrival (including introduction of trees / spaces for nature), reduction in car noise, pollution and littering, with new and better connected cycling and walking opportunities. The Station Road area to include a small number of shops to support those travelling and an events space.
- The Bull Ring would benefit from additional planting and new links into the space. As an improved public space it could better facilitate community events – markets, fun fair etc. Enhancement of the old buildings would contribute to the setting of the space as would an increased variety of shops / community uses in the buildings.
- Students would like to see a sustainable future for Cullompton and made reference to water and solar energy as well as public transport.

#### 4.0 Key themes

4.1 Analysis of the feedback on the main principles indicates that there are a number of key themes that are emerging:

|                                       |                           |                         |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Alleviate Traffic                     | Parking / Deliveries      | Litter / Signage        |
| River / Leat                          | Train station             | Events / Attractions    |
| Care of Historic Buildings            | Green Spaces              | Better Connected Spaces |
| Town Centre Homes                     | WiFi                      | Shopping Locally        |
| Improved Walking / Cycling CCA Fields | Use of historic buildings | Event/performance space |
| Courts and Passages                   | 'Gateways' into the town  |                         |

4.2 The themes that have emerged are welcomed and relevant. All are suitable for inclusion within the masterplan. The full extent of their inclusion will emerge as officers progress the draft Masterplan SPD. However, an initial review would suggest the following themes will be an important part of the masterplan:

- a) Enhanced public realm. This is regarded as an important element that can provide significant benefits in improving the visual appearance of the town. A particular focus can be the Bull Ring and main gateways into the town at Station Road and Exeter Road. The Cullompton High Street HAZ bid (which sits beneath the umbrella of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan) seeks to allocate funds towards the Bull Ring. The High Street HAZ scheme in combination with the masterplan could deliver an early success that will re-establish heritage features, enhance the heritage setting of the town centre,

reduce the dominance of traffic and provide an extended community space for community events and cultural activities while providing a focus for civic pride.

- b) Care of Historic Buildings. Another important element that can provide significant benefits to the town centre. The Cullompton High Street HAZ bid identifies an improvement scheme for high priority buildings. It seeks to unlock retail and residential potential of properties through a focused grant scheme. Three groupings of high priority buildings are identified at **Appendix 2**. The renovation of the three groups of buildings, separated along Fore Street, would benefit the overall appearance of the town – encouraging adjacent property owners to similarly enhance their buildings.
- c) Traffic Management. A planning application for the Cullompton Relief Road has been received. Should it be approved it will provide the first step towards alleviating traffic flows through the town centre. Surveys and studies need to be undertaken to inform traffic management and environmental enhancement works within Fore Street/ High Street. The next stage of the masterplan will assist in providing a context for this work.
- d) Green Spaces. Enhancement of existing and delivery of new green spaces through public realm works and scheme development. To provide improved foot and/or cycle links to enhance circulation around the centre of the town, with links to the CCA fields and improved riverside frontage.
- e) Vision. A clear understanding of the vision and the unique selling point of the town is required. It needs to ensure there is a clear distinction of what is an ‘aspiration’ and what is ‘deliverable’.

## **5.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group**

5.1 Planning Policy Advisory Group considered the contents of this report and the outcomes of the stage 1 public consultation at their meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020. PPAG members welcomed the report and were supportive of its contents. Specific issues raised were as follows:

- The apparent low level of written response to the Stage 1 public consultation. A request was made for feedback on the number of website and social media hits received during the consultation period.
- The need to carefully consider traffic management in the town centre and whether a one way system could be implemented. There is a need for close liaison with Devon County Council.
- That in conjunction with benefits, town centre homes can also have negative consequences as a result of the higher density including arrangements for storage and collection of domestic waste

- There was a strong desire to comprehensively consider improvements to walking and cycling routes/ connections.
- PPAG were keen to ensure that the contents of the masterplan are deliverable.

## **6.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening**

- 6.1 A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required in accordance with Regulations and Directives on any plan or programme prepared for town and country planning or land use purposes and which sets the framework for future development consent of certain projects. As such, an HRA and SEA formed part of the Stage 1 public consultation material. A limited number of comments were received.
- 6.2 A screening of the emerging themes for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan identified that they were unlikely to have significant adverse effects on the integrity of Habitat sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and further ‘appropriate assessment’ was not required. A single response has been received through the consultation process enquiring about the environmental impact when specific sites have not yet been promoted through the masterplan. In response, it is very rare for SPD’s to require SEA’s given that they fall out of and supplement Local Plans. The screening report indicates that the masterplan is ‘unlikely to have significant effects on the environment’. As the masterplan emerges further screening will be undertaken.

## **7.0 Next Steps**

- 7.1 The next stage in the process is to prepare a draft Masterplan for stage 2 consultation. A provisional timetable for the next stages in the production of the masterplan is set out as follows:

| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Date</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|
| Seek Cabinet approval (for consultation): draft masterplan and consultation materials | September 2020           |
| Stage 2 public consultation   | September / October 2020 |
| Adoption  | December 2020            |

## **8.0 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan will seek to provide a comprehensive framework to guide development in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Once adopted it will achieve full weight in decision making as a material planning consideration. Subject to approval, the next stage would be to develop a draft masterplan for second stage public consultation.



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**Background Papers:**

The adopted policies relating to Cullompton may be viewed in the Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document:

<https://new.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/mid-devon-local-plan/part-2-aidpd/>

The Adopted Local Plan:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan/>

Examinaiton submission version Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/348271/cnp-final-submission-version-aug19.pdf>

Public consultation material:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/masterplanning/public-consultation-cullompton-town-centre-masterplan-and-delivery-plan/>

Cabinet 5 April 2018  
Scrutiny 30 September 2019  
Cabinet 6 January 2020

**Circulation of the Report:**

Cllr Graeme Barnell

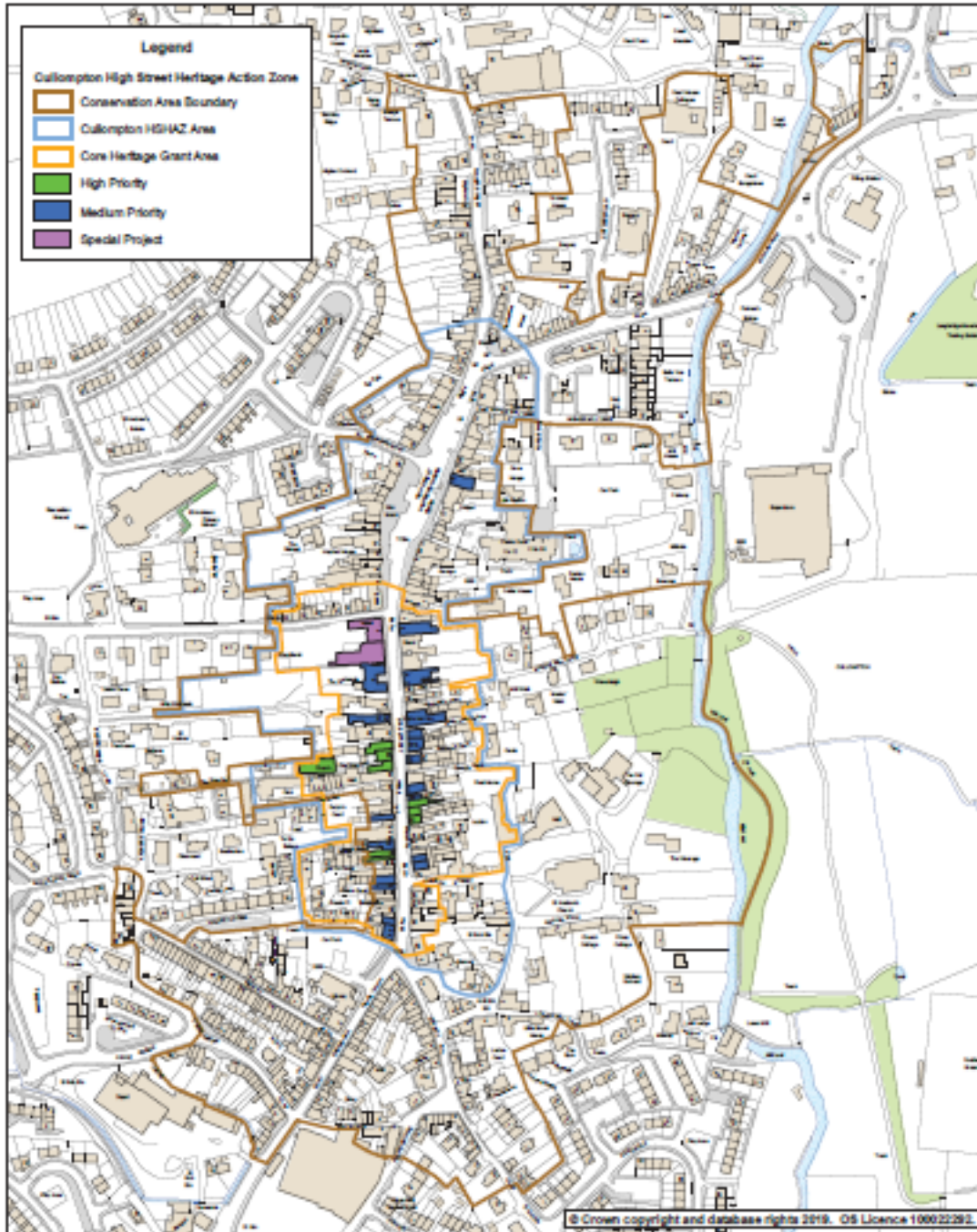
## Appendix 2



### Community Development & Regeneration

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|                              |                            |   |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Scale<br>1:2,500 @ A3        | Date<br>11 December 2019   | Title<br><b>Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone</b> |
| Dwg. No.<br>Cullompton HSHAZ | Produced by<br>AH for JB-S |   |