

CABINET
13th May 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

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| Cabinet Member | Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration |
| Responsible Officer | Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration |

Reason for the Report: To approve the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan for Stage 2 Public Consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That Cabinet approves the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan for Stage 2 public consultation;**
- 2. That Cabinet approve the associated Strategic Environmental Screening Report and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for consultation; and**
- 3. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration to finalise the material and arrangements for consultation.**

Financial Implications: This report does not at this stage identify the funding sources or arrangements that will be needed to deliver the regeneration opportunities or for the redevelopment sites that are identified within the draft Masterplan. Funding is likely to involve a range of public and private sector investment and it is anticipated that the masterplan will also act to help support potential future funding bids. The Council made a successful bid for regeneration funding under the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) part of the Future High Street Fund.

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 be a material consideration for planning decision-making purposes.

Legal Implications: The process for preparing and adopting the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan will need to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Whilst the Adopted Masterplan will not form part of the Development Plan, it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications relating to the town centre.

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 takes into account this change in economic circumstances and the need to complete this work is now more vital than ever.

The masterplan will be accompanied by a delivery plan which will be the subject of regular review. This review process will form part of risk mitigation for the masterplan proposals.

Equality Impact Assessment: Equality issues have been considered during the drawing up of the draft masterplan and an equality impact assessment will be made available at time of consultation.

Impact on Climate Change: A core principle within the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan 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 draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan has regard throughout to climate change.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan 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 as a Supplementary Planning Document. Consultants have been commissioned 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 COVID-19 and into the 21st century. It will provide the umbrella framework within which the Cullompton Future High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) works will be delivered.

1.2 The Masterplan has been 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 new homes, new jobs, schools and local centre;
- A new relief road to the east of the town centre;
- The Heritage Action Zone scheme with investment in Cullompton's historic high street; and
- Proposed reopening of Cullompton rail station.

It has also been developed in the context the emerging Conservation Area Management Plan.

1.3 In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Masterplan will be subject to two stages of public consultation. Stage 1 has already taken place and scoped out the proposed contents of the masterplan and options that might be included. This report relates to Stage 2: to present the draft masterplan itself.

1.4 A report on the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan was considered at Cabinet on 16th January 2020. The themes set out below were approved as a basis for Stage 1 public consultation:

- 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

Stage 1 public consultation was held between 25 February and 15 April 2020 with 4 staffed events planned. A report was presented at Cabinet 9th July 2020 seeking approval to progress with the production of the draft Masterplan and Delivery Plan taking into account the comments received during the Stage 1 public consultation.

2.0 CONTENT OF DRAFT MASTERPLAN

2.1 The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan 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. The draft Masterplan is attached as **Appendix 1**.

2.2 It seeks to provide a comprehensive framework within which to guide the regeneration of the town centre in a coordinated manner. It builds on the Adopted Local Plan (2013-2033), providing realistic principles and overarching guidance to bring together the design and future delivery of development, public realm improvements and being mindful of transport projects in Cullompton.

2.3 The masterplan is structured around 6 themes or objectives, as have arisen through Stage 1 public consultation, and form the basis for the vision for the masterplan. They are as follows:

1. Enhancement and restoration of the historic buildings and landscape
Giving consideration to viable uses for historic buildings; the appearance and setting of historic buildings; protecting and enhancing views, spaces and waterways including their biodiversity and amenity roles; the use and enjoyment of the CCA fields and the overall attractiveness of Cullompton as a place to work, visit and enjoy.
2. Rediscover the historic role of the town centre as a place to work
Reflecting on vacant and under used sites and buildings that may enhance the employment offer and overall vitality of the town; the town's history to enhance Cullompton's identity and offer; digital connectivity; improved physical links between peripheral employment areas and the town centre; and enhanced dialogue between businesses and higher education.
3. Enhanced visitor experience
Giving consideration to the sense of arrival into the town and encouraging visitors to venture beyond the service station; raising the profile of historic buildings, courts, lanes and open spaces; strengthening Cullompton as a food and drink destination; enhancing retail, leisure, food and drink within an improved historic setting; and review town centre parking.
4. Reclaim and redesign spaces for community activities
Reflecting on means to alleviate traffic through the high street; establish the Bull Ring as the primary outdoor civic space; upgrade approaches to the town centre including Station Road and Exeter Road; review signage, lighting and surfacing opportunities within courts and along passageways; and link new developments to the town centre through an attractive network of spaces.
5. Sustainable growth
Facilitating the ability to shop locally; support life-long learning; support healthy living through outdoor space and leisure facilities; support street markets; new town centre homes to increase vitality, footfall and spend; and continued community and voluntary sector partnerships to support community services
6. Ease of movement by foot, cycle bus and train
Seeking to create high quality pedestrian and cycle links; giving more space and priority to those moving around on foot, cycle or by bus; encouraging uses requiring large delivery vehicles to relocate outside the historic core; improve links between Fore Street and the CCA fields; addressing points of conflict between road traffic, pedestrians and cyclists; establishing strategic cycle links between Willand and Cullompton; and improving signage around the town.

2.4 The structure of the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan Plan and a brief description of each part is provided below:

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| Introduction: | Setting the role of the Masterplan, project process and engagement |
| Context: | Setting the context of the town with a summary of issues and opportunities |
| Vision and Objectives: | Setting out emerging themes and objectives within a spatial framework |
| Masterplan: | Providing an overview with a review of specific topic areas |
| Heritage Strategy: | Setting out Cullompton's historic significance with a review of public realm improvements, governance and delivery |
| Delivery, Monitoring and Review: | A Delivery Action Plan will form an addendum to the masterplan setting out timescales, delivery mechanisms and monitoring. The Delivery Action Plan is currently under development |

2.5 Chapter 4 Masterplan, introduces a number of key opportunity sites for development and enhancement. The potential for each site is identified. Each site should be read in the context of broader strategic proposals for the area and will be subject to further discussion with landowners and partners. The key opportunity sites are as follows:

1. Alexandria Industrial Estate
2. Railway Station
3. Tannery Site
4. Higher Bull Ring
5. Improvements to cycling between proposed new rail station and the town centre.
6. Fore Street enhancement
7. Leat footbridge
8. The Old Cinema Site.

2.6 The Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan (if adopted) addresses different planning aims. This Masterplan if adopted is not considered to conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan if that were also adopted, but rather they would be complementary.

3.0 Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening / Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.1 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 which sets the framework for future development consent of certain

projects. An HRA and SEA formed part of the Stage 1 public consultation material. A limited number of comments were received.

- 3.2 The draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan has been screened to establish whether it is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the integrity of habitat sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The HRA screening report is attached as **Appendix 2**. It indicates that the masterplan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment. Further assessment will be undertaken following Stage 2 public consultation. Further assessment on a project scale will be required.
- 3.3 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening has also been undertaken. The SEA Screening Report (attached as **Appendix 3**) has identified that the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment. The SEA screening has identified that there is / is no requirement for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan to be subject to a full SEA. It is worth noting that the masterplan relates to Local Plan policies which have already been subject to a SEA assessment.

4.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

- 4.1 The draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan was presented to Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) on the 21st April 2021. PPAG Members made the following comments:

- Areas identified for shared surfacing need careful design to take into account the needs of those mobility and visually impaired. (The tender documents for the design of these works make specific reference to these requirements)
- All travel modes (bikes, scooters, car hire) and infrastructure needs (electric charging) need to be integrated into the railway station and Alexandria Industrial Estate projects (Amendments have been made to accommodate these comments).
- Funding for delivery needs full consideration. (Funding opportunities will be scoped and investigated with bids made as appropriate).
- A cohesive approach to the delivery of projects is needed in the context of other strategic activities in and around Cullompton. (Amendments have been incorporated increasing cross referencing of projects and proposals)
- It was requested that the former cinema building be included as a key opportunity site. (Amendment made as requested).
- There is a need to enhance the bridge at Lower Mill Lane. (This will be investigated as part of an opportunity in that area).
- A balanced approach to parking is required within Fore Street and the Higher Bull Ring. (Parking requirements will be considered during the design stage of the project).

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, a six week public consultation will be undertaken, commencing in March 2021. Once the consultation has ended and officers have considered the responses, the final version of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and a statement of public participation will be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.
- 5.2 A provisional timetable for the next stages in the production of the masterplan are set out as follows:

| Action | Date |
|--|------------------|
| Finalise presentation material for Stage 2 public consultation | April / May 2021 |
| Stage 2 Public Consultation | May / June 2021 |
| Adoption | August 2021 |

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan will provide a comprehensive framework to guide development in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Once adopted it will be a material planning consideration. The first phase of public consultation has been undertaken. Consultants have produced a draft Masterplan for Stage 2 public consultation. This report seeks authority to commence this public consultation.

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Background Papers: The Adopted Local Plan (2013-2033):
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan-and-policies-maps/>

Examination 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 16 January 2020
Cabinet 9th July 2020

Circulation of the Report: Members of Cabinet