

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

CREDITON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN COMMISSIONING

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

Responsible Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place

Reason for Report:

1. To seek members approval for commissioning consultants to assist in the preparation of a Crediton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Delivery Plan; and
2. To seek Members endorsement of the geographic scope for the Crediton Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, to engage consultants to assist with the preparation of a Crediton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan; and**
2. **That the geographic scope in Appendix 1 be approved.**

Financial Implications: £60,000 has been identified within the 22/23 service budget for the Masterplan project.

This report does not at this stage identify the additional funding sources or arrangements that will be needed to deliver the regeneration opportunities that will be 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 help support potential future funding bids.

Budget and Policy Framework: As referred to above, this masterplanning work would be funded from within the 22/23 service budget, previously identified through the budget setting process.

Both the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan Review and the Corporate Plan set the Policy Framework for the Crediton Town Centre Masterplan. More detailed policy context is set out later in this report. Once adopted, the masterplan would have Supplementary Planning Document status and be a material consideration for planning decision making purposes. This project allows the opportunity to identify measures in support of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) liaising across District Council departments to realise core corporate objectives.

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, it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Risk Assessment: Crediton town centre has problems in relation to air quality, the physical condition of town centre properties (above the shop and behind the main streets) and public realm. There is a risk that without a masterplan focussing on regenerating the existing town and co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities, Crediton could become less sustainable and the town centre could deteriorate.

Equality Impact Assessment: Equality issues will be an integral element of the masterplanning work and an equality impact assessment will be made available at the consultation stage.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Crediton Masterplan provides an opportunity to contribute towards all four corporate priorities of economy, homes, community and environment and assist in the delivery of many of aims identified within the Corporate Plan.

Impact on Climate Change: A key component of the Town Centre Masterplanning work will be to support the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The proposed brief in Appendix 2 sets out the importance of sustainable and active travel, along with seeking measures to improve the local environment and contribute towards tackling climate change through greening of the town centre, increasing biodiversity and encouraging low carbon/energy efficiency.

1 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of the 7th March 2019, Cabinet agreed the scope and geographical area of the Crediton Town Centre Masterplan and resolved that “delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to engage consultants to assist with the preparation of a Crediton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan in the budget year 20/21”. This work has been delayed as a result of staff resource being prioritised to respond to economic covid recovery work through the provision of urgent business assistance and the administration of grant support. Over the last few months work has again resumed on this project in liaison with Crediton Town Council. The delay has provided officers with the opportunity to reflect on the additional challenges that High Streets have experienced since the start of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the growing importance of tackling climate change. It has also provided an opportunity to look afresh at the geographic scope of the project.

2 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The intention is that the Masterplan will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as such it will need to accord with the direction set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance. It specifically adds detail, guidance and clarification to policies within the Mid Devon Local Plan Review (Adopted July 2020). The Masterplan document should be used as a reference point when developing proposals for the Town Centre. The Masterplan SPD will be a material consideration for the determination of planning applications. It provides a framework to guide development, facilitate positive change and ensure that high quality place making is embedded into future development projects within the centre. Mid Devon District Council'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.
- 2.2 The Crediton Neighbourhood Plan will also be an important policy consideration. The Crediton Neighbourhood Plan is at an advanced stage. Following the independent examination of the Crediton Neighbourhood Plan, Mid Devon District Council has determined that the plan, as modified to incorporate the Examiner's recommendations, should proceed to a Referendum. The referendum is scheduled to take place on the 22nd September 2022.
- 2.3 The key policies within the Adopted Local Plan, along with other policy documents, relating to Crediton Town Centre are set out in Appendix 2 as part of a proposed brief.

3 THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF A MASTERPLAN

- 3.1 Key to the delivery of town centre enhancements is the development of a masterplan to guide the process. A masterplan is a comprehensive plan that sets out principles for the way in which improvements can be realised, coordinating policy and planning requirements. It is considered important that the town centre is the subject of a masterplanning process to ensure that the development, regeneration and enhancement of the town centre develops in tandem with planned growth elsewhere in and around the town.
- 3.2 The SPD will guide town centre enhancements in a way that:
 - supports the economic development of the town centre;
 - encourages safe walking, cycling and inclusive access throughout the area;
 - respects and enhances the heritage of this historic market town; and
 - strengthens local communities and tackles climate change.
 - Accords with other key policy documents – including the soon to be adopted Crediton Neighbourhood Plan
- 3.3 Once the masterplan is finalised it will set out the firm direction for investment and enhancement of the town and provide the basis for detailed consultation with all interested parties. As referred to above the masterplan would require two stages of public consultation.
- 3.4 It is proposed that the masterplan would include a delivery plan to ensure that the masterplan outcomes are deliverable. This would include details of potential incentives and funding opportunities.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that the work on this SPD would be completed by the Autumn 2023.

4 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

- 4.1 The Masterplan should provide a clear strategy to enable Crediton Town Centre to meet its full potential as an attractive, thriving vibrant place with a strong economic function, now and into the future. It will seek to address issues, make recommendations for the enhancement of the town centre, as well as enhanced walking and cycling provision and set out delivery and funding options.
- 4.2 The masterplan should seek to strengthen the economy by creating new opportunities for businesses, jobs, shops, leisure, heritage and culture, and public spaces to make the town a healthier, more attractive place to shop, relax and stay, strengthening the town's role as a growing market town. It should also consider sustainable transport options, movement and links which are supportive of the AQAP priorities.
- 4.3 Importantly consideration of longer term major infrastructure interventions (i.e. new roads) are not included within the scope of this Masterplan project. Any such longer term major infrastructure assessment would need to be addressed as part of the review of the current local plan to inform development considerations post 2033 in conjunction with the County Council. Given Devon County Council's strategic role as Highways Authority findings/recommendations from the masterplan work will be shared with the County Council to enable joint discussions regarding implications for future plans and associated infrastructure developments such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure programme.
- 4.4 The key objectives of the masterplan are considered to be:
- Improving the quality of the town centre in terms of heritage, public realm, air quality and general amenity.
 - Improving sustainable transport, walking and cycling within the town.
 - Reviewing car parking and identification of how these may deliver public realm benefits.
 - Maintaining a prosperous town centre.
 - Improving the identity, character and visitor experience.
 - Identifying enhancement opportunities within / adjacent to the town centre.
 - Contributing towards tackling climate change and encouraging biodiversity.
 - Ensuring that all interventions are deliverable – with clear actions and reasonable timescales, accounting for resources and funding.
- 4.5 A map of the centre of Crediton showing the suggested geographical area of the masterplan is attached as **Appendix 1**. There is a change proposed to the map previously considered by Cabinet on the 7th March 2019. The change proposed is that St Saviour's Way Car Park be included within the study area to allow for improvements to be identified at this important arrival point in the town and also to enable a review of car parking to be undertaken as part of the study.
- 4.6 For more information regarding the proposed scope of the masterplan a brief is included in Appendix 2 which has been developed in liaison with Crediton Town Council.

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List of Background Papers:

7 March 2019 Cabinet Report

[Cabinet Report. Crediton TC Masterplan final.pdf \(middevon.gov.uk\)](#)