

CREDITON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN BRIEF

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT

Crediton Background

Crediton is the smallest of the three towns in Mid Devon but serves a large rural population. Crediton is located on the A377, Exeter to Barnstaple Road. The town centre currently suffers from negative impacts of through traffic which compromises the town's general amenity and also brings associated air quality problems. Crediton was designated as an Air Quality Management Area in 2004.

Crediton has a host of challenges such as the difficulties being experienced in the high street retail and hospitality sectors, a lack of investment (particularly with regard to its heritage buildings), through traffic and poor air quality, along with a number of other problems experienced by market towns in these disconcerting economic times.

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 the suite of documents comprising 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.

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 tackle climate change
- Accords with other key policy documents – including the soon to be adopted Crediton Neighbourhood Plan

The Adopted Local Plan

The Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013-2033 (adopted July 2020) identifies Crediton as a small and vibrant market town. Policy S12 states that:

"Policy S12 - Crediton

Crediton will continue to develop in its role as a small and vibrant market town, serving a rural hinterland in the western part of the district. The strategy aims to improve access to housing within the town, expand employment opportunities and improve the quantity and quality of the existing retail provision. Proposals will provide for approximately 786 dwellings, of which 220 will be affordable, and 14,700 gross square metres of commercial floorspace over the plan period.

The following development will be supported over the plan period:

- a) Proposals which support the economic regeneration of the town centre, including the provision of new homes, commercial development, cultural facilities and other key town centre uses which support the town centre's viability and vitality. Particular support will be given for proposals which improve the quantity and quality of existing retail provision within the town centre. All proposals within the town centre will need to play a positive role in sustaining and enhancing the significance of the area's heritage;*
- b) Proposals which respect the setting provided by the open areas of hillside and the adjoining historic parklands of Creedy Park, Shobrooke Park and Downes;*

- c) Continuation of measures to support the implementation of the Crediton Air Quality Action Plan, including enhanced walking and cycling opportunities around the town;*
- d) Enhance the tourism facilities and visitor role of the town and surrounding area; and*
- e) Community and education facilities and other infrastructure to support the development proposed, including green infrastructure.”*

Policies CRE1-CRE10 of the Adopted Local Plan allocates land to support Policy S12; providing 768 dwellings and 9,820sqm of commercial development within the settlement limit of Crediton.

In addition, Policy CRE11 identifies that funds secured through development proposals along with other external sources of funding will support the delivery of the physical regeneration and enhancement of the town:

“Crediton Infrastructure

The Council will use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and planning obligations where appropriate, seek external sources of funding and work with partners to deliver the following infrastructure for Crediton:

- a) Enhanced pedestrian and cycle facilities to serve development;*
- b) Bus service enhancements;*
- c) Air quality improvements;*
- d) Expansion and improvement of primary and secondary education facilities;*
- e) Public open space and green infrastructure;*
- f) Expansion of emergency fire and rescue services;*
- g) Library reconfiguration to provide Devon Centre;*
- h) Extra care housing;*
- i) Community facilities including provision for children / youth;*
- j) Potential highway improvements; and*
- k) Provision of works to reduce flood risk.”*

Since the plan was adopted the District Council has decided not to pursue a CIL charge; however, funds will be secured via S106.

Furthermore, those conducting the work must also consider policy DM14 “Town Centre Development” in the Adopted Local Plan:

“The Council will promote the sustainable growth and regeneration of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. Within defined town centres, development proposals for main town centre uses, community and residential development will be supported where they:

- a) Retain or enhance the town centre’s historic character and appearance, vitality and viability;*
- b) Sustain or enhance diverse town centre uses and customer choice, incorporating residential accommodation above ground floor level where possible; and*
- c) Are readily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.*

Within defined primary shopping areas, the shopping function will be safeguarded and enhanced. Development and change of use of ground floor premises to alternative uses will not be permitted where:

- i) The primary retail role and character is undermined, causing unacceptable fragmentation and isolation of the remaining shops;*
- ii) The proposed use would harm the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area; and*
- iii) There would be a detrimental effect on the visual character and amenities of the surrounding area.*
- iv) Within primary shopping frontages, at ground floor level the proportion of A1, A2 and A3 uses will not be permitted to fall below 85% of all units.”*

The successful candidates need to be mindful of the national changes to the use classes order (2021), with the addition of class E and permitted development rights.

For more info: [Adopted Local Plan and Policies Maps - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/adopted-local-plan-and-policies-maps)

Crediton Neighbourhood Plan

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 22 September 2022. The Crediton Neighbourhood Plan will be an important policy consideration.

For more info: [Crediton Neighbourhood Plan - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/crediton-neighbourhood-plan)

The Crediton Conservation Area Appraisal

The Conservation Area was designated in 1981 and extended in 1990. Further amendments have been made in March 2003. It encompasses the central commercial core of the town, together with several predominantly residential areas, Queen Elizabeth College to the west, Holy Cross Church to the east, Peoples Park to the north and development associated with the railway to the south.

For more info: [Crediton Conservation Area Appraisal - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/crediton-conservation-area-appraisal)

Crediton Air Quality Action Plan

Crediton was formally designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2004 encompassing the majority of the built-up area of the town. This AQMA remains the place as a result of exceedances of the annual mean National Air Quality Objective for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), largely as a result of road traffic emissions. In November 2021, Mid Devon District Council adopted an updated Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The AQAP priorities are to protect residents from the harmful impacts of poor air quality by reducing concentrations of NO₂ to within legal limits and beyond, in all areas where there they are at risk due to exposure, in particular town-centre locations. Alongside this objective, the Council are also committing to reducing levels of all pollutants in ambient air, with a focus on harmful ultra-fine particulate matter (called PM_{2.5}).

There are a number of strategic policies within the current MDDC Local Plan which relate to air quality, four of which are relevant to Crediton. They are the S1 Sustainable Development Priorities, S2 Amount and Distribution of Development, S7 Town centres, S8 Infrastructure and S12 Crediton. In addition to policy CRE11 (Crediton Infrastructure), one of the key messages from this set of policies is to prevent and improve air quality issues within the area, specifically at Crediton. The AQAP was developed in this context and sets out town-centre traffic management measures, improved infrastructure for new developments and a range of other measures. The aim is to offer co-benefits for air quality and other planning objectives working in conjunction an updated Air Quality SPD (due for adoption later in 2022) with monitoring to assess if pollutants have been reduced to a level where AQMAs can be withdrawn.

The Council is aiming to commission additional resource in 2022 to develop an AQAP delivery plan and provide expert guidance on implementation utilising existing and new s106 monies and other potential grant funding. Work on the town centre Masterplan will need to be developed in synergy with this and within the overall context provided by the AQAP.

SCOPE OF THE CREDITON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

The aim of the masterplan is to provide a clear strategy to ensure that Crediton town centre meets its full potential as an attractive, thriving vibrant place with a strong economic function, now and into the future.

Crediton town centre should be a place of choice and quality, with a good range of shops, services, cultural and leisure opportunities, offering something different to nearby centres, set within an attractive and pleasant environment reflecting the history and character of the place. It will provide a comprehensive masterplan for the town centre which addresses the key issues, makes recommendations for regeneration and enhancement of the town centre, as well as a wider focus on transport infrastructure and set out delivery and funding options.

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.

Importantly consideration of longer term major infrastructure interventions are not included within the scope of this Masterplan project. Any such longer term major infrastructure assessment would need to be addressed by the Highway Authority, as part of the review of the current local plan to inform development considerations post 2033; however findings from masterplan work can be passed onto the County Council to inform them with this, and any other, future work.

Overall Project Aims

Key Objectives

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 the all interventions are deliverable – with clear actions and reasonable timescales, accounting for resources and funding. This links to the delivery plan requirement.

The Masterplan would need to explore specifically:

- **Identification of important town centre features which would benefit from enhancement such as key buildings, High Street frontages and key town centre gateway locations;**
- **Potential for active and sustainable travel improvements e.g. cycle/pedestrian route enhancements, mobility hubs, cycle parking etc, drawing on analysis undertaken within the Traffic and Urban Realm Study 2018 Phil Jones Associates (Crediton Town Council);**
- **The geographical scope of the project includes Crediton Railway Station. Improved cycle/pedestrian access between the station and the town needs to be considered which can include routings outside of the geographical scope if this provides a more attractive or safer option;**
- **The development of proposals for the Union Road Toilet Block area in order to improve the appearance of the area and enhance views towards the Newcombes Meadow Park (potentially progressing this to an SOBC stage);**
- **A review of car parking arrangements for the town;**
- **Consideration of air quality measures for the town;**
- **Potential 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;**
- **Identification of potential funding opportunities; and**
- **Identify opportunities for enhanced flexible working to reflect changing patterns in people’s working habits.**

The Masterplan will need to be accompanied by a Delivery Plan setting out the role of key partners in delivering identified projects.

Project Timing and Programme

Key deadlines associated with this commission for a Crediton Town Centre masterplan are set out in Table 1 below. It is expected that the successful applicant(s) will produce the masterplan commission within the timescale set out.

Procurement Stage	Dates
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Documents issued to Applicants (ITT)	October/November 2022
Clarification questions to be submitted by	November 2022
Clarification responses to be issued by	November 2022
Applicants presentation	November/December 2022
Award of Contract	January 2023
Inception stage meeting	January/February 2023
Phase One Consultation material prepared (Scoping)	February/March 2023
Election Period – PURDAH (6 weeks)	March-May 2023
6 week consultation	May/June 2023
Draft Masterplan	June/July 2023
6 week public consultation	July/August 2023
Adoption at Council	September/October 2023

Mid Devon District Council reserves the right to change the above timetable and applicants will be notified accordingly if there is any change.

Project lead:

Mid Devon District Council's project lead will be:

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And

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