

CABINET REPORT

7th February 2023

CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN SPD AND DELIVERY PLAN

Cabinet Member **Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration.**

Responsible Officer **Mr R Marsh, Director of Place.**

Reason for the Report: To approve the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That Members note the comments received at the Stage 2 public consultation (Appendix 1 and 2) and the proposed changes as set out in Appendix 2;**
- 2. That the Cabinet recommend to Council that:**
 - i) Subject to the updates, detailed in Appendix 2, that the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 3) and Delivery Plan (Appendices 4 & 5) be adopted; and**
 - ii) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration prior to publication to make any typographical, grammatical, imagery and formatting changes to the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD; &**
 - iii) That Cabinet note the Strategic Environmental Screening Report (Appendix 6) and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report (Appendix 7).**

Financial Implications: The consultant contract for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan was awarded 10th July 2019 under delegated authority following a procurement process. Prior to that a budget of £60,000 had been approved, funding for which was identified in the 18/19 service budget.

The financial implications in the delivery of the projects and strategies identified within the Draft Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan will need further consideration in light of service budget, whether they can be managed and delivered in house or will require further work through external commissions. As each particular project is 'worked up', each will be subject to financial costings and to Cabinet consideration and approval (where applicable). Funding for these projects is likely to involve a range of public and private sector investment.

No other financial implications are anticipated at this time. The Council made a successful bid for regeneration funding under the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) as part of the Future High Street Fund.

Budget and Policy Framework: The budget for the production of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan was agreed at a previous meeting of Cabinet. The Draft Masterplan SPD identifies strategies and projects for implementation. With the support of a Delivery Plan that will sit alongside the Masterplan and, in time, a business case for each of the strategies and projects, this will ensure each scheme will be in a state of readiness should future external funding opportunities arise. No other budgetary implications are anticipated at this time.

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 Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan would have Supplementary Planning Document status and be a material consideration for planning decision making purposes. No direct impacts on the policy framework are anticipated at this time.

Legal Implications: The process for preparing and adopting the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD 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 SPD 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.

The Delivery Plan will include a set of indicative key milestones. These will be kept under review and will be reported back to Members at key milestones or as individual projects progress which require their own decisions.

There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

Risk Assessment: Failure to support the regeneration of Cullompton town centre would in itself lead to deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, less coordinated development and uncertainty over essential infrastructure; this being recognised by the bid to the levelling Up Fund and the successful HAZ bid. The Draft Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan will be focused on mitigating risk to aid regeneration.

As strategies and projects from the Draft Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan are 'worked up' an assessment of risk will be undertaken as part of project development.

Equality Impact Assessment: No equality issues are identified for this report. Nonetheless, an Equality Impact Assessment is attached as **Appendix 8**.

Impact on Climate Change: A core principle within the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan is the achievement of net zero carbon emissions by 2030 through design and timely delivery of infrastructure, dwellings and employment. Revitalising Cullompton town centre and encouraging local residents to

'buy local' and undertake trips by more sustainable means including walking and cycling will assist in reducing the area's carbon emissions.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD will provide guidance on the planning and delivery of development within Cullompton. A Delivery Plan is produced separately, as an addendum to the Masterplan, allowing for re-appraisal and updating as projects progress and develop. Together they will contribute to the delivery of the 4 key priorities as relating directly to the Corporate Plan 2020-24 including housing delivery, caring for the environment, supporting a thriving economy and local communities.

1.0 BACKGROUND.

- 1.1 The Council resolved to produce a Masterplan and Delivery Plan for Cullompton Town Centre as a Supplementary Planning Document. Work on the document commenced in 2019. The Draft Masterplan and Delivery Plan seek to enhance the economic prospects of the town centre including its look and the user experience. Its scope is broader than a purely spatial plan and includes wider spatial strategies such as the role and function of the town centre, Cullompton's identity and its unique selling points.
- 1.2 The Masterplan and Delivery Plan 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. It provides the umbrella framework within which the HAZ works will be delivered and is likely to also support progression and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund workstreams.
- 1.3 The Draft Masterplan was developed in the context of the strategic projects planned in and around Cullompton, including the North West Cullompton urban extension, the proposed Culm Garden Village, the proposed new Cullompton Relief Road, the re-opening of Cullompton railway Station and the successful HAZ submission. It was also developed within the context of the Cullompton Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan now adopted (Feb 2022).
- 1.4 In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Draft Masterplan SPD has been 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 and Stage 2 to present the draft masterplan itself. Following a Stage 1 public consultation that was held during 2020 a Stage 2 public consultation was held between 28th June and 13th August 2021 including two staffed events, a letter drop to approximately 1600 homes and businesses in addition to emails, press releases and social media announcements and the posting of public notices in and around the town centre. Permanent exhibitions were made available at the Cullompton Community Centre and the Hayridge Centre (with the ability to submit

questionnaires / observations). All the associated documentation (including a copy of the draft masterplan, exhibition boards, baseline report, online questionnaire and interactive map) were made available on the Council's website for viewing, downloading or for submitting comments. The public were also able to make direct contact (email and telephone) with the lead Officer.

- 1.5 The Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD was presented to PPAG on the 29th November 2021. PPAG Members requested:
- Clarity between Appendix 1 (on line survey findings) and the number of responses submitted through the interactive map (detailed within the report below);
 - A further review of the Draft Masterplan SPD for typographical errors; &
 - That the report be brought back to a future PPAG ahead of Cabinet resolution.

2.0 Summary of Public Consultation

2.1 The Stage 2 public consultation invited feedback on 5 distinct themes:

1. The proposed vision for the town centre including the enhancement of historic buildings and public spaces, opportunities for work and visitor destinations and the provision of homes, community and recreational facilities;
2. Enhanced walking, cycling and public transport opportunities in combination with improved public spaces, a greater variety of town centre uses, employment opportunities and digital connectivity.
3. Using the historic character of Cullompton as a foundation to shape a distinctive identity for the town.
4. Identification of key opportunity sites (8 in total) – including
 - i) reinstatement of the railway station,
 - ii) enhancement of Fore Street,
 - iii) the Tannery site
 - iv) improved cycle links along Station Road,
 - v) enhancement of the Higher Bull Ring,
 - vi) enhancement of Alexandria Industrial Estate,
 - vii) bringing the Old Cinema back into use, and
 - viii) reinstating the former Iron Bridge leat crossing.
5. Responding to climate change including enhanced biodiversity, sustainable modes of transport and carbon neutral ways of construction.

2.2 In total, 73 on-line survey responses and 15 paper copy responses were received. The on-line interactive map proved particularly successful. The interactive map invited comments on the 8 key opportunity sites. The number of responses added to the interactive map totalled 449. Whilst this is not individual responses (a single individual may have commented on a number of the individual opportunity sites) it nonetheless indicates a good level of response. An analysis of the consultation responses to the on-line survey including demographic breakdown is provided at Appendix 1. An analysis of statutory and other consultee responses received by email is provided at Appendix 2.

3.0 Summary of Findings

3.1 Appendix 1 and 2 provide a detailed analysis of the feedback received to the on-line survey and email responses. The key findings that have emerged through either the email responses or to the on-line survey are as follows:

a) Enhanced and restored historic town centre

The on-line survey (Q3) invited comments on the historic character of Cullompton being used as a foundation to shape a distinct identity for the town. Q1(1) of the on-line survey asked if Cullompton's historic buildings and landscape should be enhanced and restored.

91% of on-line survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Cullompton's historic buildings and landscape should be enhanced and restored (Appendix 1). Specific comments made reference to:

1. A need to encourage and support owners to keep the buildings in good condition and use.
2. A need to embrace new buildings and construction techniques with a view to climate change.
3. Cullompton's history lends itself to arts and crafts.
4. Greater emphasis of St Andrew's Hill Roman Fort and its inclusion within the themes and objectives for new green space, enhanced pedestrian access and visitor attractions.

The specific comments above are generally accepted with the masterplan seeking to support the town's economic prospects and regeneration within a recognition of its historic past. The HAZ project supports the use and maintenance of historic buildings. Comments associated with the Roman Fort are detailed more fully in Appendix 2 with recommendations for change to the masterplan.

b) Enhanced pedestrian and cycle links.

The on-line survey (Q2(2)) asked if there was support for enhanced cycle and pedestrian provision throughout the town. 81% of respondents indicated support for its enhancement with 81% of respondents indicating support for pedestrian and cycle improvements specific to Station Road (Q2(3)) and 73% for improved pedestrian and cycle links between the town centre and the CCA fields (Q2(7)).

The response indicates an over-whelming level of support. As such, the proposals outlined in Chapters 4.2 Routes and Movement will be retained.

c) Town centre uses, services and facilities.

Q2(9) of the on-line survey asked if respondents would like to see a greater variety of town centre uses including leisure, food and drink, retail, residential and employment. 83% of respondents indicated a level of support. 55% of respondents indicated support for more flexible work space in the town centre where workers could access office space, equipment and training while 17% disagreed and 28% were of no opinion. 78% of respondents were in support of initiatives to encourage visitors into the town centre, while 60% of respondents recognised the value of enhanced town centre digital connectivity to promote local business and visitor experience.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there were a number of respondents who did not value or had no opinion with regard to enhanced employment space in the town centre a greater number of respondents were able to support this as a means to enhance town centre activity and footfall. For this reason, the initiatives outlined in Chapter 4.4 Activity and Land Use will be retained.

d) Historic Environment

Care of the historic environment and buildings is considered an essential element to the re-imagining of the town centre. The significant benefits it can bring to the perception of the town centre are recognised throughout the comments received on the on-line survey.

e) Re-opening of the railway station.

The on-line survey (Q2.5) asked if a new railway station would be beneficial. 88% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the railway station would be beneficial while 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked (Q4(1) of the on-line survey) respondents indicated a 91% level of support for reinstating the railway station. This was reflected in the responses received to the interactive map with 62.5% of respondents supporting the opening of the railway station. When invited through the on-line survey and interactive map to comment the following broad themes emerged:

1. The station would be a great opportunity for residents to travel not only within Devon but the greater South West and beyond, without the need to use the car and the associated carbon emissions produced.
2. Improved rail connections apply to those visiting the town as much as those living in and around Cullompton; improving economic activity.
3. Improved rail connections allows a fast and efficient service for students who use the College and University campuses in Exeter, Taunton and beyond.
4. Ensure the service is affordable, convenient with adequate and affordable parking.

5. Improved pedestrian and cycle links, and town service bus are essential to its success.
6. Improve the existing station of Tiverton Parkway so monies can be better invested into social infrastructure such as doctor, dental and educational facilities.
7. People will not walk / cycle to the station. It will cause traffic chaos along Station Road and J28.

Whilst the concerns of respondents relating to investment into the existing (Tiverton Parkway) railway station are acknowledged, the masterplan confirms that a limited amount of car parking will be made available at the new proposed station and the establishment of an 'interchange hub' facilitating transfer between rail, bus, car, walk and cycle will be provided (Chapter 4.2). More specifically, the masterplan promotes pedestrian and cycle links along Station Road (Chapter 4.2), within the key opportunity sites and between the new rail station and CCA fields (Chapter 4.6). Overall, the response to the re-opening of the railway station indicates an over-whelming level of support. As such, the proposals outlined in Chapters 4.2 Routes and Movement and within key opportunity sites 1, 2, and 5 will be retained. Clearly, this project is progressing well with the station forecast to open by May 2025, but the further policy support provided by this masterplan to the station re-opening project will further support the Council and its partners in demonstrating its continued firm commitment to accelerating and delivering this strategically important project for Cullompton.

f) Enhancement of Fore Street.

The on-line survey wanted to understand respondents' views on the enhancement of the High Street.

Responses to the on-line survey, Q2(1), indicated a 95% level of support for the enhancement of the High Street with 85% of respondents seeking an improved pedestrian environment in the following order of importance:

1. Wider pavements;
2. Pedestrianisation;
3. No or less parking and a one-way system;
4. Time restricted deliveries, restricted access, improved public realm in the form of resurfacing, café seating or benches and 'greening of the high street in the form of trees and planting.

The interactive map also invited comments on the enhancement of Fore Street. 72% of those responding supported the enhancement of the high street with comments following a broad theme of:

- Climate change: installation of solar panels; planting / shading.
- Enhanced pedestrian environment: wider pavements; pedestrianisation or one-way system; restricted and enforced parking and deliveries, de-cluttering, shared surfacing (removal of high kerbs).

- Historic high street: shop front enhancement; surface materials to reflect historic setting whilst improving footfall, business activity and general safety.
- Social spaces: public art, seating, water features, planting, multiple pedestrian crossing places, a cleaner and greener (trees, planting, hanging baskets) high street with weekend road closures.

A number of respondents both through the on-line survey and interactive map, felt able to support the enhancement of Fore Street but only following the construction of the relief road &/or an additional motorway junction. Others were concerned that the loss of road space and/or widened pavements would limit access to or rely on the private ownership of land.

The level of support for the enhancement of Fore Street nonetheless remained high. As such, the proposals outlined in Chapters 4.2 Routes and Movement, including the pedestrian / cycle and vehicle network, 4.3 Public Realm and Open Space including improving the High Street / Courts and Lanes / Pocket Parks and 4.6 Fore Street will be retained.

g) Re-design of the Higher Bull Ring.

The on-line survey (Q2.6) asked if respondents would like the Higher Bullring as an enhanced community space. 86% expressed a level of support, whilst 8% disagreed and the remaining 6% had no opinion. Respondents expressed a preference towards its use in the following order of importance:

- Improvements in and the frequency of markets.
- Outdoor dining and seating
- Events including music, performance and busking
- No or less traffic and / or parking, planting, pop up kiosks, art installations and social spaces.

More specific comments on the Higher Bullring related to:

- The orientation of the sun and relocation of the vehicular route to the shaded side of the Bull Ring.
- The importance and celebration of the historical importance of the Higher Bull Ring.
- Redevelopment of the Harlequins site as a thoroughfare and community space.
- A family friendly, cosmopolitan central space that encourages day and early evening use.

The interactive map also invited comments on the enhancement of the Higher Bull Ring. 66% of those responding supported the enhancement of it commenting that it should act as a centre piece to draw people into the town centre. Others commented that it can only be sustainable once the relief road is constructed.

Acknowledging the level of support, the proposals detailed in the masterplan at Chapters 4.2 Routes and Movement, 4.3 Public realm and open space, 4.5 Environment and Sustainability and 4.6 The Higher Bull Ring are retained.

h) Climate Change.

The means and ways for the town centre to support and respond to climate change is interwoven throughout the masterplan with opportunities for sustainable modes of transport, carbon neutral ways of construction and enhanced biodiversity, and a re-imagined town centre with enhanced uses, activities and public spaces considered in some detail. Chapter 4.6 of the masterplan introduces 8 sites that currently have varying levels of active use. Enhancement of them may bring a variety of benefits including benefits for the climate. The interactive map dealt specifically with these sites and received the following responses:

Alexandria Industrial Estate.

62.5% of respondents to the interactive map expressed support for the identification of Alexandria Industrial estate as a Regeneration and Enhancement Area; 37.5% disagreed. The masterplan outlines opportunities for it to create an enhanced arrival point into the town for the new rail station with enhanced pedestrian and cycle links possibly through the estate, enhanced River Culm frontage with regeneration of uses operating from the estate. Comments made specifically through the interactive map generally supported the proposal on the understanding that it does not result in the loss of existing businesses and is not financed by the public purse.

Railway Station.

As detailed above 91% of respondents (via the online survey) supported the opening of the railway station. With 62.5% of those commenting via the interactive map supporting re-opening.

Improvements to cycling between the new rail station and the town centre. 78% of respondents to the interactive map expressed support for improved cycle links to the new rail station with many seeing the benefits of it for short journeys. A hazardous cycle and pedestrian environment along near roads was expressed as the need to segregate cycles from pedestrians.

Tannery Site.

66% of respondents to the interactive map expressed support for the identification of the former Tannery site for redevelopment. A wide range of comments were received through the interactive map and made reference to opportunities for housing, employment and community functions including artisan teaching spaces and workshops, a site for a public park and /or swimming pool.

Fore Street enhancement.

72% of respondents to the interactive map expressed support for the enhancement of Fore Street. With further details provided at Paragraph 3.1(f) (above).

Leat Footbridge.

68% of respondents expressed support for the reinstatement of the former iron bridge over the leat through the interactive map. Comments specifically

received on the reinstatement of the former bridge are mixed; many concerned about its expense and the level of use it will receive whilst others saw benefits for enhanced connections between the CCA fields and town centre. Construction should not increase flood risk.

The Old Cinema site.

54% of respondents to the interactive map expressed support for the re-development and/or enhancement of the former cinema site. Comments received site saw value in its use as a multi functional events and activity space to enhance footfall and activity. Financial cost and viability were seen as a concern.

In summary, the key opportunity sites generally received a high level of support through the interactive map ranging from 78% to 54%. This too was reflected in the on-line survey (Appendix 1) with support ranging from 91% to 61%. Whilst the concerns of respondents are acknowledged, officers recommend the retention of the opportunity sites identified in Chapter 4.6 of the masterplan.

3.2 The 8 key findings (a-h detailed above) and the comments received on the 8 key opportunity sites are acknowledged. All will be retained within the Masterplan SPD. Changes proposed within the Masterplan SPD are detailed within Appendix 2 and offer text changes.

3.3 In support of the Draft Masterplan SPD (Appendix 3) is a Draft Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan will sit as an addendum to the Masterplan SPD and identifies the priority projects, as identified through the Masterplan SPD, that the Council is keen to see progressed. Underpinning the Delivery Plan is a set of cross-year targets outlining what could take place, when and how (Appendix 5).

4.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening

4.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (Appendix 6) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) (Appendix 7) is required in accordance with regulations and Directives on any plan or programme prepared for town and country planning or land use purposes or which sets the framework for future development consent for certain projects. An HRA and SEA formed part of the Stage 2 public consultation material. No specific comments relating to them were received.

5.0 Planning Policy and Advisory Group (PPAG)

5.1 PPAG considered this report at the meeting on 17th January 2023. Members of PPAG had no specific comments to make. The Ward Member expressed support for the enlarged process of public consultation; including on-line interactive maps. PPAG supported the recommendations as set out in this report.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 A thorough analysis of the consultation responses has been undertaken and amendments accordingly proposed to the Draft Masterplan SPD as detailed in Appendix 2. The draft Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan once adopted will 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.

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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
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Circulation of the Report: Members of Cabinet