
Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	12 th December 2023
Subject:	CREDITON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Andy Robbins, Senior Project Officer Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager Growth, Economy & Delivery
Exempt:	None which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards Affected:	Crediton Boniface, Crediton Lawrence
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 - Draft Masterplan Appendix 2 - Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report Appendix 3 - Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

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

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That the Masterplan be approved for public consultation for a period of six weeks to commence in early January 2024;**

2. That Cabinet approve the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for consultation; and
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to finalise the material and arrangements for consultation.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has resolved to develop a Masterplan for Crediton Town Centre as a Supplementary Planning Document. Consultants have been commissioned for its production following agreement by Cabinet on 1st November 2022. It will form a framework for key regeneration projects underpinned by four main themes *viz* Community Infrastructure, Circulation and Movement, Wayfinding and Legibility, and Green and Blue Infrastructure. The focus is on pragmatic and deliverable projects including specific proposals to address air quality issues, improve the pedestrian environment and encourage the use of sustainable transport.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 An initial stakeholder group was undertaken Thursday 25th May 2023 with feedback and results being captured to inform initial master plan themes.
- 1.4 The subsequent community consultation hosted by the Council's website and online engagement hub "Let's Talk Mid Devon" ran from 21st July 2023 – 4th September 2023. The consultation sought responses to two questions;
 - What are the main issues that Crediton town centre currently faces?
 - What opportunities do you think there are to enhance Crediton town centre?
- 1.5 The feedback collated from 79 respondents can broadly be divided into four main areas each of which is listed below with a summary of the key issues raised.
- 1.6 Transport
 - High traffic volumes through the town centre.
 - Traffic speeds – 20mph zone.

- Lack of crossing points on the High Street.
- Creation of safer cycle routes.
- Improved connectivity to the railway station.
- Electric Car charging infrastructure.

1.7 Environment

- Address air pollution
- Pedestrianise/improve pavements within High Street.
- Introduce more trees and wildflower planting.

1.8 Community

- Support market activities.
- Desire for modern and flexible community centre.
- Improved CCTV to address anti-social behaviour.
- Provide improved public toilets.

1.9 Economy

- Redecoration of shop fronts
- Maintain free parking in High Street.
- Support shops and business in the town centre.

2.0 The consultants have also engaged with key stakeholders including Devon County Council, Network Rail and Great Western Railway (who manage the railway station) to ensure that the proposals included within the plan are deliverable and align with the objectives of these key stakeholders.

3.0 Content of Draft Masterplan

3.1 The Crediton 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.

3.2 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) and the Crediton Neighbourhood Plan. It has been informed by a number of local policy and evidence documents

including the District Council's Air Quality Plan, Devon County Council Local Transport Plan and the Crediton Traffic and Urban Realm Feasibility Study as well as Central Government advice specific to improving walking and cycling opportunities and decarbonising transport.

3.3 The masterplan contains five key projects, each of which is briefly described below;

1. High Street Urban Realm Enhancements

There are a number of individual elements to this project which are aimed at improving the experience of pedestrians in the High Street, reducing traffic speeds to improve safety and proposals to improve air quality. It is intended that the main High Street could benefit from selective footpath widening, upgraded crossing points and street tree planting. Further eastwards along Union Road there could usefully be an additional crossing to enable safe access to a new community hub. Public realm improvements are also proposed at both the western end of the town close to Queen Elizabeth's School and at East Street to emphasise the gateways into the town and enhance the sense of arrival.

2. New Community Hub at Union Road

This project will seek to remodel the public conveniences close to the War Memorial as community hub. The refurbished and potentially extended building could include a café with outside seating and would take advantage of the elevated views over Newcombes Meadow. It would act as a new gateway to the park and the project would include the re-opening and improvement of the toilets.

3. Newcombes Meadow Enhancements

Opportunities for improved facilities at Newcombes Meadow include terraced gardens including adventure play close to the new hub, a potential pump track and an improved bandstand. Other initiatives include improved entrances and signage and the introduction of wildflower meadow planting to aid biodiversity.

4. A More Welcoming and Connected Railway Station

This project includes improvements to the public realm around the station, enhanced dropping off facilities, a new mobility hub and an improved park and ride facility.

5. Improved Wayfinding

This project is aimed at improving the legibility of the town, especially for pedestrians and cyclists through better signage. It also represents an

opportunity for creating an identity for the town and could incorporate public art.

- 3.4 The projects described within the masterplan are not intended to be definitive. All of them will need to be worked up in much more detail and will be subject to detailed consultation with all relevant stakeholders as part of a series of future engagement after the adoption of the masterplan.

4.0 Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening / Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.1 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.

- 1.2 The draft Crediton 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 Crediton 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 Crediton 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 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan was presented to Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) on the 20th November 2023. PPAG Members made the following comments:

- There could be more emphasis on initiatives to support tourism, particularly given the growth in visitors from the continent in connection with Saint Boniface. A particular need was identified for dedicated coach parking for visitors to the Parish Church, formally the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross and the Mother of Him who Hung Thereon, the St Boniface Roman Catholic Church and the St Boniface Well. (*Officers agree with these comments and will discuss the provision of coach parking in the environs of the station with key stakeholders. Officers will also continue to promote tourism in Crediton through initiatives such as the Visit Mid Devon*

website (www.visitmiddevon.co.uk), ‘Credton In and Around’, the Boniface Trail etc. Officers are also currently assessing footfall data and general information in the town to gain a better understanding of visitor numbers and characteristics with a view to exploring opportunities through the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the visitor economy).

- Members were sensitive to the loss of any car parking provision in the town centre arising from potential public realm enhancements. Members raised the County Council’s proposed future on-street charging regime and some concerns were expressed. Members considered that these proposals should be referred to explicitly in the document. *(Officers recognise the potential trade-off between car parking and environmental improvements and a balance needs to be struck. Reference will be made within the masterplan consultation document to the County Council’s on-street charging proposal).*
- A question was raised regarding the direction of the one-way current use of Church Street and whether this could be reversed to flow away from the High Street. *(This has been passed to the County Council as Highway Authority for further consideration).*
- Delivery, including some visible short term projects is critical to secure public confidence in the plan. *(The masterplan specifically includes a delivery strategy and funding options including the use of section 106 receipts have been identified. Work on other initiatives outside of the masterplan including new play infrastructure at the Leisure Centre and a project to provide EV charging points is ongoing and will deliver tangible benefits for residents and visitors alike).*

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 Credton 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	December 2023 / January 2024
Stage 2 Public Consultation	January / February 2024
Adoption	March / April 2024

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Credton 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.

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 (including s106) and it is anticipated that the masterplan will also act to help support potential future funding bids.

Legal Implications

The process for preparing and adopting the Crediton 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 Crediton Town Centre would in itself lead to deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, less coordinated development and uncertainty over essential infrastructure. Proactive urban regeneration is particularly critical at present given the economic challenges small businesses and their customers are facing. 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.

Impact on Climate Change

The core projects within the masterplan all contribute to addressing climate change. These include tackling air pollution through traffic management and tree planting as well as improving opportunities for sustainable transport. The draft Crediton Town Centre Masterplan has regard throughout to climate change.

Equalities 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

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The draft Crediton Town Centre Masterplan will provide guidance on the planning and delivery of development within Crediton. It will contribute directly to three of the four corporate priorities *viz* environment, community and economy. In respect of **environment**, the plan will encourage tree planting to tackle air quality issues, improve key greenspaces and encourage biodiversity. **Community** objectives which are addressed through the plan include the development of improved pedestrian and cycle routes in the town. Improvements to Newcombes Meadow in particular will contribute to improved health and well-being. In terms of **economy**, the plan identifies strategic and tactical interventions to create economic and community confidence and pride in the places we live and reflects the corporate focus on Town Centre Regeneration.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 28/11/2023

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date:

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 28/11/2023

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 23/11/2023

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Andy Robbins or Adrian Welsh

Email: arobbins@middevon.gov.uk awelsh@middevon.gov.uk

Background papers:

Cabinet Report 1 November 2023 [221101 Crediton Masterplan V4.pdf \(middevon.gov.uk\)](#)

Let's Talk Mid Devon [Let's Talk Mid Devon](#)