

Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: Friary & St Nicolas and Holy Trinity.

Report of Managing Director of Guildford Borough Council.

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Town Centre Masterplan

Executive Summary

This report is in response to the Council's resolution in Minute No. C029 made 23 July 2019:

C029 NOTICE OF MOTION - TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLANNING

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, Councillor John Rigg proposed, and Councillor Tom Hunt seconded, the adoption of the following motion:

"The Council has acknowledged that town centre master planning was not part of the process of preparing the Local Plan - including putting in place a full, detailed land availability assessment of brownfield sites in the town centre - because that could have compromised the Local Plan itself and its objectives. The majority of Councillors were elected based on an explicit pledge to master plan the town. At the informal Placemaking EAB on Monday 1st July, there was a common call for a master plan for the town centre.

The Council therefore

RESOLVES: That the process for bringing forward, within the term of this Council, a sustainable Town Centre Master Plan Development Plan Document be commenced immediately, and the Director of Planning and Regeneration be authorised to engage external master-planning consultancy advice to assist in this process".

Following the debate on the motion, it was put to the vote and was carried.

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of progress to date and to seek endorsement of the process for progressing the production of a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy for Guildford's town centre that fulfils the resolution. The first phase of the work our consultants may identify certain strategies that can then be agreed by the Council and implemented at an early stage. At the completion of the process, we will have a portfolio of additional projects to take forward the Council's corporate priorities as well as a Development Plan Document (DPD) or Supplementary Planning Document (SDP) that will be a formal planning document that will carry considerable weight when deciding planning

applications.

All of the above is designed to provide a desirable future Guildford for the community and businesses in the area.

Recommendation to Executive

The Executive is asked to endorse the process set out below by:

- (1) Setting up a Town Centre Masterplan Programme Board to be chaired by Councillor John Rigg.
- (2) Appointing a procurement specialist for a delivery led town centre project who will advise the Council on the recruitment of a team of specialists, including planners, to lead on the delivery of a portfolio of projects that will together contribute to the comprehensive regeneration of Guildford town centre, and be responsible for delivering the projects that are identified as supporting the future of the Town Centre as well as the evidence base that will inform an aspirational document to explore the development potential of the Town Centre.

Reason for Recommendation:

To support the implementation of the resolution in Council minute C029.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 It has been agreed that a new Town Centre Masterplan will be prepared. It is proposed that there will be a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy under the "Masterplan" heading that will include specific programmes of work identified and implemented by the multi-disciplinary team. They will take the lead on,
 - Flooding
 - Transportation (improving resilience and adding capacity).
 - Housing.
 - Environment
 - Social/Arts
- 1.2 To inform the Council of progress to date and to seek endorsement of the process for progressing the production of a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy for Guildford's town centre that fulfils the resolution.

2. Background and Key Issues

- 2.1 Following the adoption of the motion at full Council, Corporate Programmes made a bid in the 2020-21 budget for funding to undertake and procure a delivery led masterplan for the town centre. This was approved in the Council budget of 5 February for the sum of £500,000. Whilst we envisage the production of a masterplan including evidence base will be in excess of £2.0m we consider no more than £500,000 will be spent in the first year.

- 2.2 In line with the constraints of funding until budget approval for the new financial year we commissioned David Lock Associates to carry out a review of previous town centre studies and People and Places to talk to key Guildford stakeholders.
- 2.3 Subject to the advice that we receive from our project managers the process might be dealt with as a three-stage process:
1. The preparation of a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy, a detailed evidence base and an aspirational document. Previous Masterplans were only visionary in their content and did not address deliverability or developability of sites/proposals and therefore was not prepared in such a way that it could be used as the basis for preparing a DPD or SPD. Whilst giving some guidance to the future of the town centre they had no status as a planning document and therefore could not be a material consideration in determining town centre planning applications.
 2. Stage two will be a period of review and consideration of the advice that has been received to agree the next stages of the process. It may be in the Council's best interest to take a different approach, other than producing a DPD. Certainly, the advice will look at bringing forward various strategies for the town centre that can be implemented at this point and provide early wins.
 3. Stage 3 is production of the Town Centre Plan and a Delivery Programme and possibly the production of a DPD. If a DPD is required its production will be divided into three main sections, namely:
 - Regulation 18, Issue and Options. together with its procedure through consultation and committee stages.
 - Regulation 19, Document Production together with its procedure through consultation and committee stages.
 - Submission to Secretary of State for Examination including hearing sessions. Inspector's report is provided followed by formal adoption by the Council.
- 2.4 Addressing the regeneration and future development of the Town Centre is a complex matter. Results can be achieved by concerted and coordinated actions over time. There is a role for delivery/implementation, aspiration and long-term vision.

3. Work to date

- 3.1 Some initial evaluation has already been undertaken by David Lock Associates to evaluate the previous masterplanning in relation to the town centre.
- 3.2 People and Places have consulted 9 key Guildford stakeholder groups through an interview and feedback process to help establish that we are clear in relation to the vision for the town centre.

- 3.3 The Council is awaiting the Environment Agency (EA) in relation to a Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS). The EA have prepared a preliminary Flood Alleviation Scheme that is currently being tested by the EA's new consultants. However, GBC's have relied upon the EA to advise and bring forward the FAS and little has been achieved in over three years. It is vitally important that as part of the process outlined that GBC and its consultants take control of this situation as the scale and implications of the alleviation work is likely to be significant and have major impact upon the masterplan.

4. Proposed Actions.

- 4.1 Set up a Town Centre Masterplan Programme Board. The board will agree upon and appoint an expert to prepare a brief for the appointment of a Project Management Consultancy.
- 4.2 Procure and appoint a Project Management Consultancy. The Board and PM will agree the terms of reference for the project to include the comprehensive planning and regeneration of Guildford town centre. Additional Consultancies will be appointed to deliver these specialist projects under the programmes of works as listed in but not limited to 2. above.
- 4.3 This process together with the evidence base will inform an aspirational document to explore the development potential of the Town Centre as well as enabling a number of projects to move towards the implementation stage.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Councillor John Rigg who has portfolio responsibility for Corporate Programmes (that is leading on this project) recommends approval.
- 5.2 Councillor Jan Harwood, the Councillor responsible for Planning has been consulted and recommends approval.
- 5.3 No public consultations have taken place. Public consultation will be undertaken later as part of the masterplanning process.

6. Key Risks

- 6.1 Failure to prepare and implement a strategy for Guildford Town Centre is likely to lead to a decline in its attractiveness to residents, business and visitors/shoppers.
- 6.2 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency. An implementable strategy is required that will address the causes of this emergency and be part of a raft of actions that will be identified to start to reverse this situation.
- 6.3 Congestion in Guildford is a key issue to residents, businesses and visitors as well as contributing to the Climate Emergency. A plan needs to be prepared and implemented to deal with these issues.

- 6.4 Flooding is a major risk to residents and businesses. A clear strategy and implementable plan will be addressed through this process to alleviate this risk.
- 6.5 The Council has housing targets to meet. The risk of failing to meet targets will be reduced by having a clear strategy and implementable housing plan for the town centre that will be provided by this process.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 At its meeting on 5 February 2020 the Council agreed to fund a growth bid of £500,000 for the work described in this report as part of the Masterplan DPD process. Further annual budget allocation of £125,000 for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was also provisionally agreed but subject to final approval at the relevant budget meetings in February 2021 and 2022 to progress the DPD through to regulation 18 consultation. Any further progression of the masterplan beyond regulation 18 will need additional funding bids to be approved by Council for the relevant financial year.
- 7.2 Subject to the initial output of the masterplan process, a number of capital projects may be developed as part of an overall programme of development for the town centre. As these capital projects come forward, a capital bid for funding will be required to be submitted for approval by Council as part of its provisional capital programme. Where available, funding bids to external parties and government agencies may need to also be submitted for grant funding to aid the development of the projects.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 This report recommends that authority be given for the procurement and appointment of a consultancy to “lead on the delivery of a portfolio of projects that will together contribute to the comprehensive planning and regeneration of Guildford town centre, and to be responsible for delivering the projects that are identified as supporting the future of the Town Centre as well as the evidence base that will inform an aspirational document to explore the development potential of the Town Centre”.
- 8.2 A consultancy, therefore, is to be appointed to not only deliver the Masterplan, which may progress to the preparation of a town centre Development Planning Document, but also to take the lead as a master developer – assisting the Council in regeneration, land acquisition, and development delivery of works: the scope of this activity will need to be carefully assessed to ensure that the correct procurement approach is taken.
- 8.3 It is proposed that the consultancy will undertake work entailed in the preparation and production of a Development Planning Document that will contain policies that will form part of the Development Plan and inform the proper planning of Guildford Town Centre. The report outlines the procedures that are entailed in the preparation, consultation, examination and adoption of a Development Planning Document.

- 8.4 The terms of appointment of the consultancy should ensure that the consultants' work is informed by a full Equalities Impact Assessment so that the policies and or proposals in the proposed DPD are development in compliance with the Council's public sector equality duty enshrined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the terms of appointment should require that the consultants ensure that the proposed DPD is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended).
- 8.5 When procuring services and / or works in excess of the applicable thresholds for the procurement of services and / or works, the Council should adhere to the provisions of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules.

9. Human Resource Implications

- 9.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 See legal implications above.

11. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 11.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 23 July 2019. Environmental impact will be taken into account throughout the process outlined above including:

- carbon emissions
- energy use
- waste / recycling
- air quality
- water supply/conservation
- flood / climate resilience
- procurement (economic, social and environmental, community well-being)
- biodiversity
- public health of communities
- collaboration with statutory partners, agencies and/or businesses to tackling climate change

12. Summary of Options

- 12.1 To endorse the recommendations in this report which will enable the commencement of the production of a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy for Guildford's town centre and help in achieving the objectives of Guildford's corporate plan.
- 12.2 To not agree the recommendation of this report thereby delaying the delivery of a strategy for the improvement of Guildford Town Centre.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Endorsing the proposed process for progressing the production on a constraint led pro-active delivery strategy will enable the start of the process to fulfil the Council's resolution C029. The early phases of the work may identify certain strategies that can be agreed by the council and implemented at an early stage. At the completion of the process, we will have a portfolio of additional projects to take forward GBC's corporate priorities as well a DPD or SPD that will be a formal planning document that will carry considerable weight when deciding planning applications.
- 13.2 All of the above is designed to provide a desirable future for the community and businesses in the area.

14. Background Papers

None

15. Appendices

Appendix 1: Town Centre Masterplan Area.
Appendix 2: Timeline.