Executive Report
Report of Director of Development
Author: Mike Harris
Tel: 01483 444200
Email: mike.harris@guildford.gov.uk
Relevant Lead Councillor: Paul Spooner
Tel: 01252 341666
Email: paul.spooner@guildford.gov.uk
Date: 29 September 2015

Draft Town Centre Masterplan

Executive summary

At its meeting on 25 November 2014, the Executive approved expenditure of £290,000 for the development of a Town Centre Masterplan. Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners were awarded the contract with specialist support from ARUP in respect of transport and infrastructure advice and Bilfinger GVA providing property advice. WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff has been independently contracted by the Council to provide advice on the transport impacts of emerging proposals put forward by the masterplan team.

The Masterplan builds on the Town Centre Vision (2014) prepared by Allies and Morrison, and is a non-statutory document that will form part of the Local Plan evidence base. The evidence base will be used to inform the preparation of the next iteration of the Local Plan.

The draft Masterplan focuses on the key issues of opening up access to the River Wey, creating more pedestrian priority zones and reducing the adverse impacts of traffic in the town centre as well as creating development sites for housing, retail, leisure and business.

At its meeting held on 8 September 2015, the Customer and Community Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft Town Centre Masterplan and the committee’s comments are set out in this report. The draft Masterplan document has been further refined to reflect comments received – see Appendix 1.

The Executive is requested to endorse the revised draft Town Centre Masterplan, for public consultation.

Recommendation to Executive:

That the Executive endorses the draft Town Centre Masterplan, attached as Appendix 1, for public consultation.
Reason for Recommendation:
To set out for public consultation proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment of parts of the existing town centre and of a large number of sites that will make a significant contribution to meeting the Council’s housing, employment and retail needs in a sustainable and sympathetic manner.

1. Strategic Priorities

1.1 The masterplan of the town centre provides a framework for the development and growth of the town and will enable infrastructure to be provided in a coherent planned way, this will drive the economy forward promoting the town for business, providing jobs, new homes and public realm for the benefit of all.

1.2 The needs of all who use the town centre from local residents to businesses and visitors have changed and guidance is required for the planned development of the town. Many surrounding towns have undergone redevelopment and are providing a greater challenge to the ongoing economic prosperity of the town.

1.3 To address these key issues and provide evidence to inform the Local Plan process consultants, Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners were appointed to prepare a draft Town Centre Masterplan for consultation. This draft masterplan has built on the Guildford Town Centre Vision (2014), and incorporated informal engagement with major landowners and key stakeholders. The key development principles are:

- Open up access to the River Wey,
- Create more pedestrian only zones and public areas,
- Reducing the adverse impacts of traffic in the town centre,
- Provide development sites in the Town for housing, business, leisure and retail.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting on 26 June 2014, the Executive recognised the importance of a masterplan for the town centre and set aside £350,000 from the 2013-14 under spend in a reserve to finance the development of a masterplan subject to a further report to Executive.

2.2 The forecast cost of the town centre master planning exercise is £290,000 made up as follows:-

- Master planning consultants £120,000
- Transport studies £100,000
- Property advice £25,000
- Environmental reports £25,000
- Project management £20,000

2.3 The master planning commission has been tendered in accordance with Council procurement procedures as approved by the Executive at its 25 November 2014 meeting with a minimum of four tender bidders. Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners supported by ARUP and Bilfinger GVA have been appointed to
prepare the masterplan. Bilfinger GVA is responsible for commercial property advice and ARUP for providing inputs in relation to movement, highways engineering and flood risk management.

2.4 WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff has been contracted independently by the Council to provide advice on the transport impacts of emerging proposals put forward by the masterplan team.

2.5 The draft masterplan builds on the findings of the Guildford Town Centre Vision, which was published by the Council for consultation alongside the draft Local Plan. The draft masterplan adopts a wider study boundary and will form part of the draft Local Plan evidence base. In this context, the masterplan incorporates a thorough assessment of the existing baseline situation and is therefore likely to build upon and move beyond the 2014 Vision report.

3. Masterplan boundary

3.1 The boundary for the masterplan study area is included in the Introduction to the Masterplan report attached as Appendix 1. As noted above, this incorporates a wider hinterland area, enabling a more thorough and comprehensive assessment of the role and function of central Guildford, beyond the core town centre area, but central to the station.

4. Masterplan objectives

4.1 The masterplan brief has identified the following project requirements:

- Identify property and transport/movement development opportunities taking account of fluvial flood risk and recommending mitigation.
- Promote active use of the riverside and the River Wey.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links to and along the River Wey and to key destinations including Guildford Cathedral, the University of Surrey’s Stag Hill and Manor Park campuses, the Royal Surrey County Hospital, the Surrey Research Park, and the wider town and area.
- Improve the pedestrian experience in the town centre.
- Promote high quality and environmentally sustainable new architecture and public realm including the palette of materials, including frontages and other urban design opportunities for sites and/or areas.
- Promote a balance of residential, retail and commercial uses.
- Improve the evening economy.
- Raise the profile of, and better integrate, the town centre’s many heritage assets.
- Demonstrate appropriate densities for sites, showing scale, massing and capacity.
- Facilitate access by sustainable modes, tackle traffic congestion in and on the approaches to Guildford town centre, and make appropriate arrangements for servicing, resulting from an informative dialogue with the GOTCHA (Guildford Town Centre Highway Assessment) project team.
- Propose the mechanisms by which a local delivery body could be created and set out its role and terms of reference.
• Propose a delivery strategy including a viability assessment. The delivery strategy will demonstrate proposed phases, including a temporary uses strategy, which identifies which sites might effectively accommodate pop-up uses. It will also identify delivery partners, funding sources, links to other projects, and risks.
• Demonstrate how the views of stakeholders and the community have been considered and addressed.

5. **Work undertaken to date**

5.1 The consultant team led by Allies and Morrison have prepared the draft Town Centre Masterplan for public consultation subject to the Executive’s approval.

6. **Key master planning principles**

6.1 The emerging masterplan identifies a series of major targets, which are summarised as follows:

   a) To establish a flexible, deliverable masterplan which responds to key physical constraints in the study area including flood risk.
   b) To repair and revive Guildford by achieving a step change in place-making through the design of exemplary streets and spaces for people.
   c) To focus on the Wey corridor as a beautiful linear park and location for new evening economy and leisure uses.
   d) To achieve a sustainable shift in movement patterns and behaviour through a balanced approach to car parking including park and ride and strategy of interceptor parking at the edge of the core town centre.
   e) To reinforce and enliven the experience of visiting Guildford through a diverse town centre offer of shops, food and drink venues, offices and leisure activities.
   f) To animate the core town centre waterfront area as a hub for leisure, restaurants, cafés and the evening economy.
   g) To define new opportunities for town centre living in sustainable, well-connected neighbourhoods.
   h) To explore opportunities to downgrade the gyratory system with a view to creating better connections to the River Wey from the town centre and valuable new spaces.
   i) To ensure proposals in the masterplan respond to the existing character and assets of central Guildford including the management of key views and sensitive historic environments, and maximises opportunities in areas of change.
   j) To define a heritage quarter which enhances Guildford’s historic fabric and assets.

7. **Draft illustrative masterplan**

7.1 The emerging draft illustrative masterplan identifies an indicative approach to the design of key sites - see Appendix 4. Although the masterplan layout is still undergoing refinement, the current version provides a broad direction of travel for review and endorsement.
Key points to highlight:

- The draft masterplan layout currently illustrates an approximate residential capacity of 2,551 homes. This represents an appropriate estimate of the area’s development capacity over the next 15 years and beyond.
- The initial review of viability indicates that the majority of proposals perform positively from a viability perspective. Work is ongoing in relation to the cost and delivery of the linear park.
- Technical work to consider the transport impacts of the masterplan team’s proposals for the town centre highway network, including the gyratory area, is ongoing.
- The Environment Agency’s formal response to the draft masterplan during the consultation will be critical to site development and to ensure that the proposed redevelopments are compliant in relation to flood zone management issues.
- The Council will undertake a process of confidential engagement with leaseholders who might be affected by the plans.
- The deliverability of the individual sites will be fully evaluated as part of the masterplanning exercise.

8. Consultation

8.1 Presentations have been given to:
- Executive councillors: 19 May 2015 and 26 August 2015
- Ward Councillors: 22 June 2015
- Experience Guildford: 7 July 2015
- Business community: 10 July 2015
- All Councillors: 28 July 2015
- Customer and Community Scrutiny Committee 8 September 2015

8.2 All major landowners in the masterplan area have been contacted and the key aspects of the masterplan have been discussed.

9. Next Steps

9.1 We are now seeking approval to consult on the draft masterplan. Public consultation will not commence until approved by the Executive at the meeting of the 29 September. The consultation will run for 6 weeks from the 2 October to the 16 November. There will be a permanent display at the Swan Lane exhibition shop which will be manned on 10 days. The consultation period, exhibition dates and how feedback can be provided will be publicised in advance. Business seminars will be arranged. Communication will be through the Web, Press, radio and Social Media as advised by our PR and Marketing Team.

10. Customer and Community Scrutiny Committee – 8 September 2015

10.1 At its meeting on 8 September 2015, the Customer and Community Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Town Centre Masterplan and made the following comments:
• The design of the buildings in the plan was indicative as was the projected number of houses. Once the number of houses was known, the infrastructure to support those residents could be designed, for example schools and medical facilities.
• It was suggested the Friary Court area be opened up as a part of the plan.
• The telephone exchange building was a complex structure and at the present time there was no agreement between the Council and British Telecom for the future of the site.
• Cycle paths and sustainable transport were a key feature of the plan and it was suggested York Road and Walnut Tree Close be linked with cycle paths.
• There was no agreement between the Council and Network Rail to widen the south Farnham Road bridge to increase bus use to the west of Guildford.
• The future of the bus station as a transport hub was under discussion as a part of the infrastructure needs of the town and the borough.
• It was noted that Walnut Tree Close was a key part of the plan but was already subject to much recent and current development.

10.2 The Lead Councillor for Infrastructure and Environment informed the Committee that the Masterplan was not a tool to solve congestion or traffic issues in the town, although it was noted that most traffic using the gyratory was travelling an average journey of 3 kilometres from one side of the town to the other. This was the reason the Masterplan supported modal shift and not a major infrastructure project. The Masterplan was a vision of redevelopment that we may wish to see. The purpose of the consultation was to engage the residents of Guildford on this matter. It was noted that an integrated infrastructure plan for the borough would be delivered in spring 2016.

10.3 The Committee endorsed the draft Town Centre Masterplan for public consultation.

11. Financial Implications

11.1 The preparation of the draft masterplan and related traffic studies are within the approved expenditure.

12. Legal Implications

12.1 The masterplanning process, whilst providing overall vision and links with the Corporate Plan, is a non-statutory document. This means it cannot be relied upon in decision-making. It will, however, form part of the Local Plan evidence base.

13. Human Resource Implications

13.1 There are no human resource implications.
14. **Conclusion**

14.1 The draft Town Centre Masterplan contains proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment of parts of the existing town centre. It proposes redevelopment of a large number of sites that will make a significant contribution to meeting the council's housing, employment and retail needs in a sustainable and sympathetic manner. Those proposals that are taken through into the Local Plan will help secure the future health and vitality of the town centre.

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 Allies and Morrison Town Centre Vision, available:

   [Guildford Town Centre Vision 2014](#)

16. **Appendices**

    Appendix 1: Draft Guildford Town Centre and Hinterland Masterplan Report
    Appendix 2: Draft Masterplan proposed Development Blocks and Flood Zones preferred scenario 1
    Appendix 3: Draft Masterplan proposed Development Blocks and Flood Zones preferred scenario 2
    Appendix 4: Draft Masterplan Viability Report