

Cabinet

10 July 2019

Chester-le-Street Masterplan



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

Electoral division(s) affected:

Chester-le-Street West Central, Chester-le-Street North, Chester-le-Street East.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise Cabinet on the comments received as part of the consultation on the Chester-le-Street Masterplan.
- 2 For Cabinet to adopt the Chester-le-Street Masterplan.

Executive summary

- 3 The Chester-le-Street Masterplan covers the period up to 2025 and provides a clear vision for the town centre. The Masterplan brings together activities undertaken from across council services and the private sector in order to provide a coordinated approach to delivery and reflects the importance of partnership delivery.
- 4 The Chester-le-Street Masterplan was subject to consultation from 26 June 2018 to 3 August 2018 with this consultation informing the Masterplan. Since the consultation, the Masterplan has also been updated to reflect ongoing project delivery, updated evidence and the outcome of a Health Impact Assessment.
- 5 In recognition of the size of the town, the Masterplan identifies a number of zones, which are the focus of actions. This approach provides a means to identify priority areas for investment and related opportunities,

key projects and linkages to other parts of the town. The Masterplan contains an action plan for each of the identified zones.

Recommendations

- 6 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Consider the comments made as part of consultations on the Chester-le-Street Masterplan; and
 - (b) Adopt the Chester-le-Street Masterplan.

Background

- 7 Over the years, the Council has prepared a series of masterplans for each of the 12 largest towns in the county¹. All of those in the first round of these documents are in place. In December 2016 and January 2017, Cabinet agreed shorter form 'masterplan update' documents for each of the 12 towns benefiting from a masterplan. These update documents provided an overview of past delivery and future confirmed actions. The Chester-le-Street Masterplan was commenced as the first of a subsequent round of 'full' masterplan documents.
- 8 The Masterplan covers the period up to 2025 and provides a clear vision for the town centre. The Masterplan brings together activities undertaken from across council services and the private sector in order to provide a coordinated approach to delivery. The Masterplan reflects the importance of partnership working both with the private sector, the Chester-le-Street and District Area Action Partnership (the AAP) and other stakeholders. In this context, as part of the development of the Masterplan, the Council has discussed and explored its evidence base and has scoped issues and opportunities for Chester-le-Street with the AAP and related Town Centre Task Group.
- 9 On 12 December 2018, Cabinet agreed a report considering an enhanced approach to towns and villages across the county. This report sought to confirm the continuation of town centre regeneration in line with the suite of established masterplans for the main centres, highlighted the opportunities for a renewed regeneration focus in towns and villages across the county and highlighted opportunities for concerted programmes of activity to make step change improvements in selected centres. The Chester-le-Street Masterplan reflects this approach, specifically noting opportunities for healthy towns and digital town centres.

Consultation

- 10 Following Cabinet approval the Chester-le-Street Masterplan was subject to consultation from 26 June 2018 to 3 August 2018. To publicise the consultation, properties located within the identified masterplan zones were notified in writing and the Council made use of press materials, social media and posters. Consultation materials were made available online with hard copies in the Chester-le-Street Customer Access Point and Library. To support the consultation, a public drop-in event was held, a presentation was provided to the AAP and officers attended the AAP 'Thriving Chester-le-Street' Town Centre Task Group to discuss the Masterplan.

¹ Some of these documents were referred to as Regeneration Frameworks

- 11 Following the consultation, the comments made have been carefully considered and where possible, the Masterplan has been updated to reflect these comments. A full schedule of the comments made with responses to these comments is set out in the Statement of Consultation at appendix 3. Key themes to emerge through the consultation related to:
- (a) parking, the road network and sustainable travel;
 - (b) retail uses in the town centre;
 - (c) the market place; and
 - (d) the appearance / condition of the town centre.
- 12 The Masterplan has also been subject to a Health Impact Assessment making use of the Place Standard. The purpose of the Place Standard is to maximize the potential of the physical and social environment to support health, wellbeing and a high quality of life. The Health Impact Assessment report is set out at Appendix 4.

The Scope of the Masterplan

- 13 The Masterplan focuses on Chester-le-Street town centre. It is recognised that nationally, town centres face increasing economic challenges, including a change in consumer behaviour and the rise of e-commerce. However, although town centres are not now always the main focus for people's shopping they are still key drivers of the economy and play an important social role at the heart of our communities. Whilst the focus of the Masterplan is the town centre area, it is recognised that the town centre can be supported by developing linkages to other localised destinations and the development of key sites in the town and this is reflected in the document.
- 14 The Masterplan contains a clear vision for Chester-le-Street town centre focussed on developing a unique and distinct centre, with independent stores and traders at the heart of the retail offer and a complementary leisure offer. The vision is supported by five objectives which help to frame the actions in the document. These objectives are as follows:
- (a) Improving the economic viability of the town through increased footfall and ensuring more linked trips through widening the range of existing services and facilities;
 - (b) Maximising the potential economic benefits from the de-culvert project in the market place area;

- (c) Improving links between the town centre and the surrounding local residential areas, visitor attractions, heritage sites and wider countryside;
 - (d) Encouraging viable development opportunities and new uses for development sites to support a more vibrant centre; and
 - (e) Ensuring initiatives promote ease of access around the town, including promoting sustainable travel and routes of travel throughout the town.
- 15 In recognition of the size of the town centre, the Masterplan also identifies a number of zones, which are the focus of actions. These zones are as follows:
- (a) Zone 1: Former Civic Centre Site;
 - (b) Zone 2: De-culvert Project and Market Place Area;
 - (c) Zone 3: Area around the St Cuthbert's Walk Shopping Centre;
 - (d) Zone 4: Southern End of Front Street;
 - (e) Zone 5: North of the Market Place (including Lucy Street car park);
 - (f) Zone 6: Area around the train station; and
 - (g) Sustainable Transport Zones 1 and 2.
- 16 This approach provides a means to identify priority areas for investment and related opportunities, key projects and linkages to other parts of the town. The Masterplan contains an action plan for each of the zones. The action plan identifies a range of projects and serves to ensure a coordinated approach to delivery. The actions include strategic projects, such as the de-culverting of the Cong Burn and associated regeneration of the market place, current and ongoing programmes such as targeted business support and shop front improvement schemes and future potential projects such as the installation of free Wi-Fi in the town centre. The action plans also quantify delivery timescales in terms of short, medium and long term, set out expected outcomes at a project level, identify the project lead and partners and note the current budget status of each action. As a strategic level action plan, more detailed milestones would be defined at project development stage.
- 17 As part of the development of the Masterplan, the document has been updated to reflect the most recent evidence, including the Town Centre Survey undertaken in Autumn 2018. In addition, the Masterplan has

been updated to reflect ongoing project delivery. In this context, the Masterplan reflects the delivery of some of the actions identified in the consultation version, such as the upgrading of pay and display machines to enable contactless payments and the ongoing de-culverting project. The Masterplan also responds, where possible, to issues raised as part of the consultation. This includes the promotion and improvement of opportunities for sustainable travel and identification of proposed improvements to the transport network in response to congestion. Finally, the Masterplan has been updated to identify further opportunities for Chester-le-Street, including linked to heritage and the Conservation Area.

- 18 The Masterplan has been informed by a Place Standard Assessment. This process has served to embed health and wellbeing considerations into the Masterplan and provides a framework to support future opportunities to improve the health of residents linked to town centre improvements.

Conclusion

- 19 The Chester-le-Street Masterplan provides a clear vision for the town centre. The Masterplan brings together activities undertaken from across Council services and the private sector in order to provide a coordinated approach to delivery.

Background papers

- Chester-le-Street Masterplan
- Statement of Consultation

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

The Masterplan is not associated with a specific budget. The Masterplan does however identify a series of projects within the action plan. Each project will be associated with its own funding bid once the scope of the project is determined. The Masterplan does not guarantee funding for projects listed.

Consultation

The Masterplan has been informed by public consultation undertaken between 22 June 2018 and 3 August 2018.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

Resource required to progress the delivery of the Masterplan.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken at the individual project level.

Procurement

None.