

Cabinet

18 April 2012

Crook Masterplan

Key Decision R&ED/04/12



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide information on a programme of proposed regeneration intervention for Crook, and timescales for the delivery of initial elements of the proposed programme.

Background

2. Crook is a designated Market Town in the South West of the County. The centre serves a population of circ. 9.000 at Crook and is a main service centre for rural hinterland communities.
3. Crook is located 10 miles from Durham City and 5 miles from Bishop Auckland and a couple of miles north of the River Wear. The main arterial routes are the A68, which is one of the main routes to the borders and Scotland and the A1 (M), the A690 which links to Durham and Sunderland and the A691 which links to the North Pennines (designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and Cumbria.
4. Previous regeneration intervention took place when monies were available from Government and European funding streams. Although this had a positive impact on areas such as the Market Place and North Terrace, the surrounding areas were left and need addressing in line with Council priorities.
5. An assessment by property consultants GVA (undertaken in November 2009) as part of a Retail and Town Centre Uses Study (which is also providing advice for the Local Development Framework) shows that the town centre retail offer focuses on the southern end of Hope Street and Church Street which is located off the Market Place. Commercial Street also falls within the designated town centre boundary, but the offer here is limited. The Market Place is also the centre's main car park and hub for public transport.

6. The centre comprises of a mix of traditional terraced properties along with more modern commercial units, including a large CO-OP food store on New Road. Crook has a high percentage of small independent retailers with only a few national or regional retailers or franchises. Convenience retail uses include one large retail food offer, the CO-OP together with smaller supermarkets, including a smaller CO-OP convenience store and a number of independent butchers, newsagents and greengrocers.
7. The town centre is dominated by service uses, which account for around half of the 91 units. These include a number of takeaways, cafes and restaurants, hair and beauty salons, travel agents, estate agents, solicitors and banks. Comparison goods retailing comprises a further 25% of units consisting of small scale independents selling clothing, pet supplies, fishing tackle, hardware goods and gifts. Other significant occupiers include PCT Health Facilities, the Library and other Durham County Council services and the Police Station.
8. Crook has a limited comparison retail offer which results in the retention of only 4.9% of the total comparison shopping arising within its catchment area (totalling £34.2 m). It is believed that the majority of local residents in the Crook catchment area look towards Bishop Auckland which has a greater comparison offer, including several national fashion and department stores. This outflow from Crook gives Bishop Auckland a 45.4% share (£14.8m) of the total comparison spend within the Crook catchment area. Other comparison outflows see Durham City and the Metro Centre securing a 22.2% (£7.2m) and 13.6% (£4.4m) share respectively.
9. New dwellings are required in Crook to meet the projected requirements of the town to 2030 as identified in the County Durham Plan Strategic Options Document. The "Policy Direction Paper" (May 2011) earmarks an additional 500 housing units for Crook. The preferred housing distribution will be confirmed when the "Preferred Options Paper" is released in September 2012.
10. Despite current market conditions, there are some major developments planned for Crook, and to ensure that we maximise opportunities from these developments, it is critical that any regeneration intervention activity is co-ordinated and targeted.
11. This regeneration Masterplan provides a structured programme of intervention that is identified for delivery by Durham County Council and the private sector.

The scope of the Implementation and Delivery plan

12. The Crook Delivery Plan, attached at appendix 3, sets out the main actions that will help to create a revitalised, accessible and attractive town centre to be delivered by Durham County Council and private

sector partners. The Plan will be a working document and periodically reviewed and updated with partners.

13. In the short term, the Delivery Plan provides information on current, realistic, deliverable interventions. Durham County Council will have a focussed programme to delivery that will help to stimulate and maximise opportunities from private investors. Further information is contained within the Delivery & implementation Plan, which is focused as follows:
 - Support the retail offer in the town to increase the catchment area through
 - Support the development of the food retail site on Queen Street
 - Promote an evening economy to capitalise on the growth of restaurants and cafes in the town
 - Encourage and promote specialist retail and franchise opportunities to improve the retail offer
 - Develop the offer of the market
 - Improve movement patterns in an around the town centre
 - Develop the role of the centre as an employment and enterprise hub
 - Develop a high quality, distinctive and attractive town centre environment
 - Implement a Targeted Business Improvement project – a conservation area character appraisal will assist in informing priorities
 - Improve and update signage in a co-ordinated and appropriate manner
 - Ensure improved route ways to the town centre from neighbouring areas
- 14 Short term intervention for public realm improvements will be focused on linking and improving pedestrian access routes to the proposed new retail area at Queen Street. Targeted Business Improvement support will be available within the town centre with a focus on Commercial Street.
- 15 Medium to longer term investments in the centre will be guided by the emerging Local Plan which will set out employment, housing and retail needs. Other identified intervention projects will need longer to develop

and consult on; these include supporting community facilities within Crook following the lack of market intervention for Elite Hall.

16 Funding Opportunity to improve community facilities

Prior to the County Council becoming a unitary authority in April 2009, Wear Valley District Council earmarked £568,000 with a view to the resource being used to bring the building back into use as an Arts Centre. At the time of making that decision, the building, which was owned by the District Council, had been closed for a number of years and further work was needed to develop a robust business plan for the proposed centre.

17. Since that time the County Council, who now own the building, have not received a feasible business plan for the centre and investigations into the condition of the building have established that it would require an estimated £1.2 million of refurbishment work to bring it back into use.

18. Given these facts, a decision was made by Cabinet on the 29 February 2012 that the resource should no longer be ringfenced for Elite Hall but instead should be made available to improve community facilities across the town. Proposals for how this should be managed are outlined in the remainder of this section.

19. When developing these proposals, a key driver has been to ensure:

- The process is open and transparent
- The fund is focused on local voluntary and community organisations
- The decision on the allocation of the resource is made by the local community
- The resource is used to make a lasting benefit for Crook

20. Taking these principles into consideration, it is proposed that the majority of the resource (£500,000) is allocated by a Participatory Budget Event where members of the local community will be given the opportunity to vote on a number of proposals for improvements to community facilities. These proposals will need to meet a number of criteria; key among them will be a requirement that the proposals are:

- Submitted by a voluntary or community sector group, or a not for profit organisation. Statutory public sector organisations, including the Council, will not be eligible to apply.
- For capital works requiring a minimum of £50,000 from the resource and are within a 1.5 mile radius of Crook town centre (see attached map in Appendix 2)
- Able to demonstrate that they are sustainable and any matched money required to complete the works is either secured or there is a reasonable expectation that it will be generated.

21. A number of successful Participatory Budgeting events have been held over the last year, with large numbers attending events in Consett, Stanley, Crook, Willington and Tow Law. This event, which is planned to be held in November 2012, will build on that experience and hopefully engage with large numbers of the community. In order to achieve this date, it is envisaged that initial expressions of interest for groups to submit proposals would commence in May 2012. Until the participatory budget process has concluded, it is proposed that no action is taken to redevelop the Elite Hall itself and it remains in its current secured state.
22. In order to accommodate smaller scale projects, it is proposed that £68,000 from the resource is used to fund a Small Grants Fund, that would be applied to the same geographic area and with the same broad requirements, but rather than a Participatory Budget event, this is administered by the 3 Towns Area Action Partnership.
23. If, in the event that there are insufficient proposals for either the Participatory Budget or Small Grants Fund from the designated geographic area, it is recommended that the area be extended to cover the wider 3 Towns AAP.
24. Section four of the Delivery Plan is a comprehensive table of projects, below are some key, short term major interventions in addition to the Participatory Budget proposals above:

Table 1: Confirmed Council short term interventions

Theme	Interventions	Proposed DCC Allocation
Economy	Relocation of DCC services from Queen Street to Roddymoor Farm	£1.3 million
Town Centre	Co-location of DCC services at Civic Centre, including, Library and Customer Access Point.	£600,000
Town Centre	Relocation of the Coroner's service	£100,000

Table 2: Confirmed Private Sector short term interventions

Theme	Intervention	Proposed Investment
Economy	Redevelopment of Queen Street Depot	£14 million

25. The series of financial commitments by the Council and partners identified within the Delivery Plan are done so with the expectation that this investment will be used to maintain progress with the regeneration programme. Options to take forward the longer term aspirations for Crook, and beyond the approved contributions derived from the Councils capital programme, will form the basis of subsequent detailed reports.

Consultation

- 26 The process for developing the document included extensive consultation on current and proposed activity across Crook and its surrounding area. This has been supplemented by individual consultations with key service delivery partners, local businesses and property owners and their agents.
- 27 The masterplan throughout its development has reflected input from the Three Towns Area Action Partnership with the final masterplan and delivery framework having been presented to the Three Towns AAP Board at its meeting on 22 March 2012.
- 28 In conjunction with the Three Towns AAP it has been agreed that project interventions noted in the masterplan and general progress against masterplan objectives will be presented to future AAP meetings as part of the ongoing community engagement exercise.

Deliverability

- 29 One of the key focuses in developing the Delivery Plan has been to ensure that the proposals contained within the plan are deliverable and in line with Council priorities.

Recommendation and Reasons

30. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Crook Masterplan.

Background Documents

N/A

Graham Wood, Economic Development Manager, 03000 262002

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

There is no direct financial implication for the report to be noted. The Delivery Plan includes proposals that already have identified budget allocation through various DCC services.

Staffing

The delivery of the Plan is to be resourced through existing staffing structures, therefore no implications.

Risk

Any risk assessments will be undertaken against individual projects, there is no risk associated directly with this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Any Equality and Diversity recommendations will be undertaken by the appropriate services, there is no direct implication associated with this report.

Accommodation

Accommodation implications will be undertaken and considered against individual projects, there is no risk associated directly with this report.

Crime and Disorder

The report informs Members of areas of intervention relating to Crime and disorder, but there is no direct implication associated with this report.

Consultation

The masterplan has been developed following extensive rounds of consultation with external service providers, local businesses, property owners and their agents and community groups. Local Members have been briefed on the content of the masterplan including the identified programme of activity.

The Three Towns Area Action Partnership has been appraised of the masterplan through its development and the draft masterplan presented to the AAP Board on March 22nd 2012. Further progress will be reported to the AAP on a regular basis.

Procurement

Implementation of individual projects will be delivered in line with Council procurement procedures.

Disability Issues

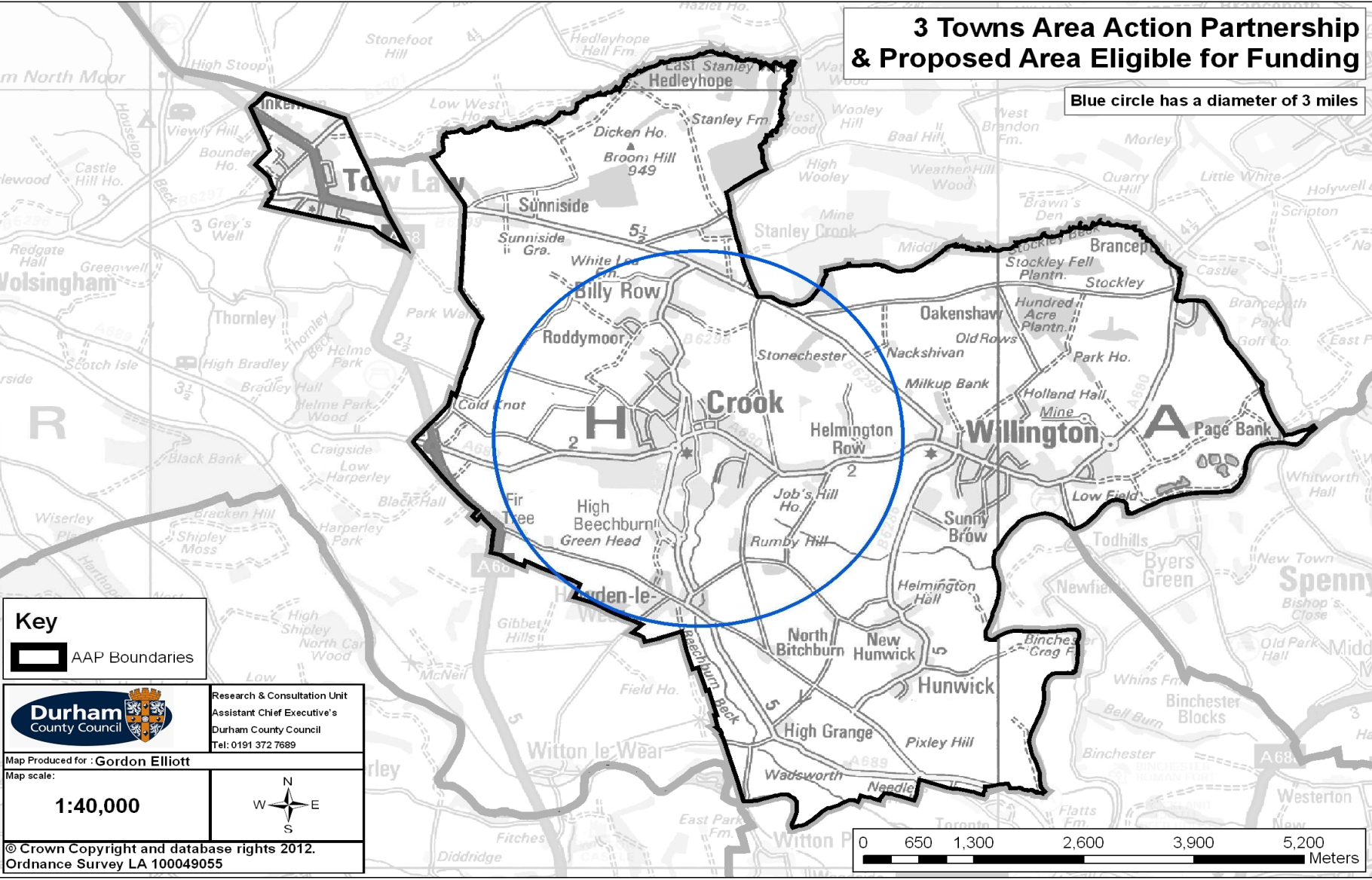
Covered as per Equality and Diversity.

Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications in relation to this document.

3 Towns Area Action Partnership & Proposed Area Eligible for Funding

Blue circle has a diameter of 3 miles



Key
 AAP Boundaries

Durham County Council
 Research & Consultation Unit
 Assistant Chief Executive's
 Durham County Council
 Tel: 0191 372 7689

Map Produced for : Gordon Elliott
 Map scale:
1:40,000



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 Ordnance Survey LA 100049055

