

Cabinet

18 April 2012

Bishop Auckland Masterplan

Key Decision R&ED/06/12



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 The masterplan provides the detailed programme of activity that is taking place or is planned in Bishop Auckland by the Council and our partners.
- 2 The masterplan provides the strategic context to delivery and seeks to establish key principles to co-ordinate and guide this activity. The document is one of a series of masterplans that is being established for the principal towns across the County.

Background

- 3 Bishop Auckland is a key, major centre within County Durham. The settlement is one of the largest towns in the County, is a major employment, commercial and residential centre in South West Durham with a population of 25,000 with a wider catchment area of over 150,000.
- 4 As would be expected from a settlement of this size, the town benefits from excellent transport links by both private vehicle and public transport; is home to a number of major employers; and performs relatively strongly for convenience, comparison and bulky goods retailing.
- 5 The core aims of the masterplan are to:
 - Focus and co-ordinate the regeneration activities of Durham County Council and its partners and assist the enabling of a delivery mechanism for the various regeneration projects;
 - To input into the delivery of the emerging Local Development Framework and Community Infrastructure Plan and draw together the strategic and policy drivers for development and regeneration within Bishop Auckland;
 - Assist in the consultation process with partners, stakeholders and the community;

- Assist in taking proposals forward with investors, developers and landowners; and,
- Raise the profile of Bishop Auckland.

6 This masterplan seeks to express the County Council's desire to stimulate regeneration activity and to guide investment and development in Bishop Auckland, with a focus on enhancing the town centre, and to build upon the town's potential as a tourist/visitor destination. It is designed to secure the creation of a modern and vibrant town centre. The work which underlies the regeneration masterplan has examined the specific needs of Bishop Auckland and has devised a delivery plan to make provision for a series of key, linked physical regeneration projects which have the potential to have a catalytic effect in raising Bishop Auckland's profile as a "destination" for visitors and raising the town's economic performance whilst respecting and enhancing its historic, cultural and environmental heritage. This work also involved an assessment of infrastructure needs associated with the town.

7 The key drivers which underlie the masterplan include:

- The provision of a sustainable and vibrant town centre with a focus on deliverability, creating key opportunities for change by securing definitive proposals for redevelopment, development or refurbishment of land and premises;
- Delivering improvements to the public transport infrastructure e.g. Bus and Rail Station;
- Securing the future of Auckland Palace as a tourism attraction of national significance;
- Identifying opportunities for high quality hotel/B&B accommodation;
- Consolidating and building the population and expenditure base and providing for additional and improved housing to include market for sale, intermediate tenure and rented, which would in turn help attract a more diverse range of retailers with further retail and support services;
- Optimising the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Bishop Auckland, through the design and phasing of the developments and the implementation process; and,
- Ensuring that key stakeholders, in particular those using the town centre, are positively engaged in the process and that the final outcome is one which local residents and businesses have confidence and pride in.

8 To create a competitive town centre will require the assembly of the necessary "building blocks", infrastructure and appropriate investment to attract shoppers, business and leisure visitors and their expenditure. In addition, the town centre is and will be home to numerous residents who live in and around the centre to take advantage of the services and facilities available to them. There is a range of opportunities to be exploited and promoted and, in summary, the necessary conditions for a

sustainable and competitive town centre, building upon existing resources, will be as follows:

- The Destination Development Plan for Bishop Auckland was prepared in 2009, at a time when Auckland Palace was still the home of the Bishop of Durham and offered limited public access. This position has changed with the announcement by the Church Commissioners that the new Bishop will reside elsewhere in Bishop Auckland and with the sale of the Zurbaran paintings to a philanthropist who wishes to increase public access. The tourism potential of Auckland Palace was underplayed in the existing Destination Development Plan and there will be a need to update the document to take account of this potential and the tourism infrastructure that would be required to support this potential. Therefore, there is the need to **secure the future of Auckland Palace as a tourism attraction of national significance and develop the tourism infrastructure of the town;**
- The impact of the recent retail consents at Tindale Crescent on the town centre will not be known for some time. The town centre needs to ensure it can compete successfully with these areas in attracting new national as well as independent retailers whilst continuing to retain and support existing. **The Council will work with private sector partners to deliver modern floorplates for retailers and leisure providers within the primary retail area of the Town Centre;**
- In future, there will be a need to provide enhanced **consistency in approach to public realm across the town when existing public realm is updated.** It will be important that there is consistency in the palette of materials and style;
- There are potentially a number of sites that could provide residential development in and around the Town Centre for sale, intermediate tenure and rent. **Additional housing close to the Centre will help the vitality and viability of the Centre;**
- There is a need to support the private sector and **identify land for hotel development and improve the existing hotel and B&B accommodation in the Town;** and,
- Whilst the works to Bishop Auckland Railway Station are important to its current & future patronage, there are ongoing issues to be addressed with regard to the accessibility and legibility between the bus station and the rail station. Should Auckland Palace become a tourist destination, these constraints need to be considered in future decisions regarding the infrastructure necessary to support growth in tourism. **The Council will endeavour to improvements to the public transport infrastructure e.g. Rail Station & Bus Station and linkages between them;**

9 The Council is currently actively engaged with a range of private sector developers and public sector partners in order to influence the pace and scale of development in Bishop Auckland and to lever in maximum private

sector investment, design quality and opportunity for residents. Examples of such developments and projects include:

- Working with Newgate Shopping Centre owners Ravenhill to facilitate the expansion of their Centre;
- Working with the private sector to deliver high quality and affordable new homes to support the resident population;
- Supporting private property owners to improve premises in Fore Bondgate through a building improvement scheme;
- Working with Gentoo to identify a development partner and deliverable development solution for North Bondgate;
- Working with Visit County Durham to improve Bishop Auckland's tourism/visitor potential; and,
- Supporting and encouraging inward investment and local entrepreneurial activity via County Durham Development Company.

10 In terms of leading regeneration opportunities in Bishop Auckland, the Council is actively pursuing the following:

- Providing opportunities for new retail floorplates for national retailers at North Bondgate and the Newgate Centre;
- Providing a new Customer Access Point in the Town Centre;
- Securing the future of Auckland Palace as a tourist attraction;
- Developing Binchester Roman Fort; and,
- Securing the future of the former Boys Grammar School, South Church Road.

11 In terms of the Customer Access Point, options for locating this facility are currently being examined within the Newgate Street and Newgate Centre area of the town centre. This will be the first time that there has been a Council presence in the heart of the town centre.

12 The Council is also helping to support regeneration projects across the Town. These are:

- To provide support existing retailers where feasible;
- To work with the private sector to identify and develop new Hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodation;
- Seek to work with the private sector to help recreate a coherent streetscape along Kingsway.

13 The masterplan is supported by a detailed delivery plan and project plans for each development site/proposal. These will be kept up-to-date.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 14 The masterplan is the cornerstone document that will help plan, co-ordinate and deliver regeneration activity in Bishop Auckland over the coming years.
- 15 That Cabinet approve the Bishop Auckland Masterplan, subject to endorsement by the AAP.
- 16 Authority to agree the Masterplan is delegated to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development and the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Economic Development

Background Papers

Bishop Auckland Development Framework 2012

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

The document contains a detailed delivery plan, with identified costs across Council services.

Staffing

Some staff resources will be required in the implementation of the finalised Masterplan.

Risk

We will regularly undertake a detailed risk assessment for each development project

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Impact Assessment for the Masterplan has been carried out. There are a number of recommendations that need to be taken forward following Cabinet's approval of the Masterplan. A copy of the assessment is available if required.

Accommodation

The document refers to the need to identify a site for the new Customer Access Point.

Crime and Disorder

None

Sustainability

Sustainability Appraisal has been incorporated into the Masterplan.

Human Rights

None

Consultation

Consultation with a variety of groups with interests within Bishop Auckland has been undertaken within the last 12 months. A presentation and discussion recently took place at the Town Council and further dialogue will take place in the near future with the AAP.

There will be the need for further consultation with specific groups to meet the recommendations of the Equality Impact Assessment when we deliver the projects contained in the Masterplan.

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

None

Legal Implications

The document will provide evidence to support the County Durham Plan but it will not have any statutory weight in the planning process. Should approval be granted to prepare further detailed report on the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order, the powers to be used and procedure to be followed are set out in Section 226(1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and in the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.