



Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	17 November 2021
Title of report:	Bury Town Centre Masterplan – Progress and Emerging Headlines
Report by:	Eamonn O’Brien – Leader of the Council
Decision Type:	Non-Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

At its meeting on 2 September 2020 Cabinet approved the use of consultants to prepare a new masterplan for Bury town centre.

A draft of this masterplan will be submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on 15 December 2021. At that meeting Cabinet will be invited to comment on the draft masterplan and to approve it for the purposes of consultation. Cabinet will also be asked to approve the consultation process, details of which will set out in the report to the December meeting.

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the key concepts that have been developed from the work on the masterplan so far and to provide context for the report elsewhere on this agenda relating to the proposed acquisition of the Mill Gate Estate.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- 1) Cabinet notes the emerging outputs from on-going work on the Bury Town Centre Masterplan and provide any initial feedback at this stage; and

- 2) Cabinet notes that the draft of the Bury Town Centre masterplan will be brought to Cabinet in December for comment and approval for the purposes of consultation.

Reasons for the decision:

To ensure that Cabinet are kept fully informed of the emerging outputs from what will be a key document to guide the future role, function and physical development and regeneration of Bury town centre and its peripheral areas over the next 15 to 20 years.

Other options considered and rejected:

None. It is important that Cabinet is fully informed of the emerging outputs from this critical area of work for the future of Bury Town Centre and surrounding areas.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Bury is the principal town centre in the Borough and is the focal point for retail, leisure, administration, services, tourism and culture. The town centre has performed well in recent years with significant investment and regeneration and is one of the highest-ranking retail destinations in Greater Manchester.
- 1.2 The success of Bury town centre has been helped by the Council's previous 'Bury but Better' Town Centre Masterplan (2003 and 2009), which provided the framework to shape and manage the successful growth and development of the town centre.
- 1.3 However, whilst Bury has performed well as a retail-led centre, it is apparent that there are significant on-going changes occurring in the physical retailing world. Furthermore, whilst the scale of the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is yet to be fully understood, it is already clear that this will lead to some significant challenges for town centres, particularly in the retail sector. Predictions suggest that there will be between a 20-30% drop in retail sales within town centres as more people shop on-line – something that the pandemic has accelerated.
- 1.4 It is therefore important to have a plan that responds and adapts to the rapidly changing economic landscape facing high streets across the country. In addition to retaining a strong retail focus, the plan for Bury will need to exploit opportunities to improve its range of visitor and leisure attractions, modern workplaces, which are supported by good public transport accessibility.
- 1.5 If our town centres adapt appropriately, they can continue to be key economic drivers for the Borough and will play a key role in the delivery of economic aspirations set out in the 'Let's Do It!' Bury 2030 Strategy.
- 1.6 As the Borough's principal town centre and key location of much of the Borough's jobs, it is vital that Bury in particular, responds to both challenges

and opportunities to sustain its status as one of the strongest centres within Greater Manchester and the first Town of Culture in Greater Manchester.

- 1.7 To help this, Cabinet on 2 September 2020 approved the use of consultants to prepare a new masterplan for Bury Town Centre. Cabinet also noted that the draft masterplan would be presented to Cabinet for approval for consultation purposes and that, following consultation, a final version would be subject to further Cabinet approval. Consultants were subsequently appointed in March 2021.
- 1.8 Work has been on-going to prepare a comprehensive, aspirational and deliverable masterplan to guide the role, function and physical development and regeneration of Bury Town Centre and its peripheral areas over the next 15 to 20 years. In line with previous Cabinet approvals, a draft masterplan will be taken to Cabinet for consideration on 15 December 2021 and to seek approval to commence a period of consultation before being brought back for formal Cabinet approval.

2. PURPOSE OF THE BURY TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

- 2.1 Once complete, the masterplan will play a key role in promoting a positive vision for Bury town centre, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic, employment and housing growth. It is intended that the masterplan will provide a commercial, market-facing and deliverable masterplan to guide the future development of Bury town centre in the short, medium and longer term.
- 2.2 The masterplan will have strong links to a range of existing and emerging local strategies including the overarching 'Let's Do It!' Bury 2030 Strategy, the Climate Action Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy and the Transport Plan. Likewise, it will reflect wider Greater Manchester strategies, such as the 2040 Transport Strategy and the Greater Manchester Strategy.
- 2.3 Importantly, it will identify development opportunities within the centre, which will provide the confidence to the development industry that Bury town centre is a highly investable proposition, thereby maintaining its status as one of the strongest centres in Greater Manchester.
- 2.4 The coverage of the masterplan is limited to the town centre in scope in terms of specific development opportunities. However, the masterplan will lay the foundations for how the identified investment opportunities will act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of existing communities in the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 2.5 To further this, the December Cabinet will include proposals for a Strategic Framework that will shape how the physical growth of Bury town centre will lead to better outcomes for the people and communities in these surrounding neighbourhoods. This Strategic Framework will involve the people who live in

the neighbourhoods and focus on what matters to them most – including education, skills, health and employment.

- 2.6 The intention is to adopt the masterplan as a material planning consideration, which will provide a clear direction to deliver positive change, improve business confidence and encourage quality investment from private and public sectors. It will therefore inform future decision making and co-ordinate town centre activities to achieve complementary improvements.
- 2.7 It is also intended that the masterplan will be accompanied by a Development Prospectus, which will assist with town centre promotion and marketing to attract investment in all sectors including, culture, leisure and tourism.
- 2.8 Crucially, as the Government indicates that it is looking to invest in northern towns through its Levelling Up agenda, it is vital that we have a document in place that sets out a clear vision with investable projects that we can use to underpin bids for funding - particularly those which are geared to support town centre transformation. Indeed, having a clear plan in place proved to be particularly instrumental in our recent success in securing substantial Levelling-Up funding for Bury Market and Radcliffe town centre and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement monies. This is particularly important as we emerge and attempt to recover from the economic impacts arising from the on-going pandemic situation.
- 2.9 Once the masterplan is formally approved, it will play a pivotal role in underpinning the way the Council deploys its own resources and discharges its regulatory functions, including the determination of planning applications.

3. EMERGING OUTPUTS FROM THE MASTERPLAN

- 3.1 Early engagement with key stakeholders has been a main feature of the initial work on the masterplan and this has helped to shape the broad direction of the work to date. A number of meetings and workshops with a range of stakeholders have taken place, including:
 - Elected local ward Members;
 - Bury North MP;
 - Bury Town Centre Management Board;
 - Statutory Partners; and
 - Key Council Officers.

Opportunity Areas

- 3.2 A key purpose of the masterplan is to identify a number of zones within the centre that have particular characteristics and/or particular opportunities for development. The masterplan will specify the role of each zone and set out

how these will collectively function and integrate to create a vibrant and successful town centre.

3.3 Some of these zones will retain and improve existing assets, whilst others will seek to bring about transformational change to respond to changing economic circumstances and opportunities.

3.4 Key opportunities currently emerging from the work include:

- The consolidation and diversification of the traditional retail core of the town centre through the comprehensive redesign of the Mill Gate and the introduction of new uses. The Mill Gate occupies a strategic position within the very heart of the town centre and its central position is critical to how the town functions. Presently, the inward-facing design of the Mill Gate means that it doesn't connect well with other key areas of the town centre, such as the Rock, the Market and the Cultural Quarter. Its enclosed nature currently acts as an impediment to the legibility of the wider town centre – particularly during the evening when the Mill Gate closes. The Mill Gate offers enormous potential for re-imagining the core of the town centre, restoring some of the original street network to improve linkages to and between the Rock, the Interchange, Flexi Hall and Market and to other areas of the town centre. It also has potential to introduce a significant amount of new homes, leisure facilities, employment and other uses that will help to generate greater footfall in the heart of the town and sustain existing and new businesses.
- The redevelopment of the existing Interchange and wider improvements to the surrounding public transport and active travel networks to create a modern and sustainable transport node right in the heart of the town;
- Improvements to Bury's world famous market, including the development of a flexi hall that will enhance the experience of visitors and provide additional facilities for businesses and events;
- Development of high-quality residential developments in other key locations around the town, which will provide affordable living and sustainable communities, as well as generating additional footfall within the centre;
- The enhancement of the area around and linkages to the town's cultural quarter and visitor attractions, including the East Lanc's Railway;
- A new hotel on the former Fire Station site with a high-quality design to mirror the adjoining Rock development;
- Further opportunities to grow the town's education campus, supported by the proposed Health Innovation and STEM Centre which will help to consolidate this area of the town centre as a key area for higher and further education;

- The strengthening and promotion of the existing culture and visitor offer together with comprehensive improvements to the public realm, including Kay Gardens.
- Improved connectivity and movement throughout the town centre and better linkages to surrounding areas; and
- Further high-quality employment development at Chamberhall.

3.5 The heart of the town centre provides the greatest potential for transformational change, including the interchange and the new Flexi Hall. However, the Mill Gate is the key area that could deliver genuine transformational change and it's redesign is identified as being critical to the longer-term success of the town centre. Not only does the area have significant development potential, it is also key to providing the permeability and linkages to many of the town's key attractions, making them more accessible and viable.

3.6 Its importance to the future success of the town centre cannot be underestimated and this is why the Council is proposing to acquire the Mill Gate estate a separate cabinet Report will be considered by Members on this matter. The acquisition would give the Council control over the delivery of redevelopment proposals for this area and help to ensure that this aligns with the wider vision for the centre.

4. FUNDING

4.1 The Council's recent success in bidding for substantial funds through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and the Levelling Up Fund will enable the delivery of the new Interchange and the Flexi Hall which will help act as the catalyst for further public and private investment into the town centre.

4.2 The success in these funding bids was underpinned by substantial evidence and a clear delivery strategy. Once completed, the Bury Town Centre masterplan will establish a clear and planned approach towards the future of the town centre that will be used to underpin further funding bids from other sources such as Active Travel monies; Evergreen; the Brownfield Land Fund; Homes England; and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

4.3 Bury town centre businesses are also seeking to establish a Business Improvement District where businesses contribute towards and decide what improvements they want to make in the town centre. If this status is established, this will be a further source of funding that could be invested into the town centre's business community and enhancements to the town centre trading environment.

4.4 New development and investment will generate an improved confidence in Bury Town Centre which should, in turn, encourage additional private sector investment.

4.5 In addition, the new masterplan will assist with town centre promotion and marketing, encouraging investment and the development of partnerships which will be essential if the strategy is to be successfully delivered.

5. TIMESCALES

5.1 It is proposed that the draft Bury Town Centre masterplan will be brought to Cabinet in December seeking approval for consultation with residents and key stakeholders.

5.2 It is anticipated that consultation will take place over a six-week period commencing in early January 2022.

5.3 This would allow for consideration of comments received and for any amendments to the masterplan to be made before the final version is taken back for formal Cabinet approval in March 2022.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The recommendations are contained at the front of this report.

Community impact/links with Community Strategy

The Bury Town Centre Masterplan will guide and inform the future direction of activity within Bury's principal town centre with the aim of creating a vibrant place that will benefit all of Bury's communities.

The preparation of the masterplan is consistent with the Key Priorities of the Bury 2030 'Lets Do It' Strategy, particularly in terms of driving economic growth and inclusion through a new masterplan for Bury Town Centre.

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	<i>Please provide a written explanation of the outcome(s) of either conducting an initial or full EA.</i>
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An initial screening has been undertaken (see attached assessment) and as there were no negative impacts identified for affected groups, there is no requirement to proceed to a Full Impact Assessment.

**Please note: Approval of a cabinet report is paused when the 'Equality/Diversity implications' section is left blank and approval will only be considered when this section is completed.*

Assessment of Risk:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation

Consultation:

See section on consultation within the main body of the report.

Legal Implications:

This report updates members on the progress in developing a master plan for Bury town centre. There will be a further report to Cabinet in December which will seek authority to publicly consult on the masterplan, the consultation will seek the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders.

The masterplan will not form part of the Council's development plan but would be a material consideration in the Council's decision making as the Local Planning Authority.

Financial Implications:

Cabinet approved back in September 2020 the use of consultants to produce the Bury town centre masterplan and costs of up to £100k. The funding for the respective individual developments within the masterplan will be the subject of individual Cabinet reports and these include the Bury Flexi Hall as part of the Levelling up Fund bid and the proposed acquisition of the Millgate Estate. Wherever, possible external funding will be sought to fully or partially fund each of the projects which form part of the Bury redevelopment and regeneration proposals. Funding

sources may include levelling up funds, City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, New Prosperity fund and the Councils capital programme

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Background papers:

None

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning