



Classification Open	Item No.
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Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	15 December 2021
Title of report:	Bury Town Centre Masterplan – Consultation Draft
Report by:	Eamonn O’Brien – Leader of the Council
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

Cabinet considered the progress and the emerging headlines of the Bury Town Centre Masterplan at the November Cabinet 2021.

A comprehensive Masterplan for Bury Town Centre has now been drafted and Cabinet are asked to consider this document.

The Masterplan, which accompanies this report, sets out the long term vision for Bury Town Centre for next 15-20 years. This includes a transformational revamp of the heart of the centre, setting out proposals for re-purposing the Mill Gate estate with new leisure, residential and business opportunities.

Alongside this, the Masterplan sets out significant development opportunities right across the town centre that will complement the Mill Gate proposals and help to sustain Bury as one of the top town centres within Greater Manchester and beyond. This includes proposals for a new Flexi Hall, an improved market and a new reconfigured modern transport interchange. Sites have also been identified for new residential town centre living as well as wider innovation, education and employment opportunities.

The developments will be supported and linked by an improved public realm, providing a quality, safe environment that will allow ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists.

If endorsed by Cabinet, a final version of the Masterplan will be brought back to Cabinet in March after a six-week consultation period, for formal approval. It would then become a material planning consideration and will help to shape comprehensive development programmes in the town centre.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- Endorses the draft Bury Town Centre Masterplan attached as Appendix 1 as the basis for a six-week public consultation commencing on 4th January 2022 and
- Delegates approval to the Executive Director of Place and the Chief Executive to make minor modifications to the draft Bury Town Centre Masterplan before consultation commences.

Reasons for the decision:

To ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to have their say on the draft Bury Town Centre Masterplan and its proposals 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.

Other options considered and rejected:

None. It is important that stakeholder engagement continues in order to seek the views and inputs from the wider public, key businesses and other key partners to ensure that the final Masterplan is fit for purpose.

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 fared comparatively well in recent years. It has seen 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 longstanding commitment to having a clear vision and robust strategy in place. In particular, the 'Bury but Better' Town Centre Vision and Development Strategies (2003 and 2009) have previously provided a Masterplan to shape and manage the successful growth and development of the town centre and surrounding areas.
- 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 short-term challenges for town centres, particularly in the retail sector. Predictions suggest that there will be a 20-30% drop in retail

sales within town centres as more people shop on-line – something which the pandemic has accelerated.

- 1.4 These issues reinforce the fact that Bury cannot afford to stand still and take its past successes for granted and now a critical time for the town centre to have a planned response to these challenges - a response that will enable it to fully prepare for, and adapt to, the rapidly changing economic landscape facing high streets across the country.
- 1.5 The centres that survive the fall-out from these challenges will be those that are able to adapt in a way that provides a diverse range of visitor and leisure attractions, modern workplaces and a reconfigured and varied retail experience that is supported by good public transport accessibility and a high-quality pedestrian experience.
- 1.6 If our town centres adapt appropriately, they can continue to be key economic drivers for the Borough and can play a key role in the delivery of economic aspirations set out in the Bury 2030 Let's Do It Strategy.
- 1.7 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.

2. DRAFT BURY TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

- 2.1 The Bury Town Centre Masterplan will play a key role in promoting a positive vision for Bury town centre over the next 15 to 20 years, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic, employment and housing growth.
- 2.2 The coverage of the Masterplan is limited to the town centre in scope in terms of specific development opportunities. However, the plan 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. In particular, it proposes to improve the physical linkages between the town centre and the surrounding communities. This will better integrate local communities and provide them with improved access to the range of socio-economic assets that the town centre provides, including employment opportunities, skills, leisure, cultural and health facilities.
- 2.3 A Strategic Framework will be developed to shape how the physical growth and connections to local communities will lead to better outcomes for people and local communities. In addition to existing strategies reflected in the Bury Masterplan (e.g. 'Let's Do It' and the Climate Action Strategy), the Strategic Framework will also reflect emerging local strategies including the Economic Development Strategy and the Transport Strategy.
- 2.4 Crucially as the national Government indicated that it is looking to invest in northern towns, it is vital that we have a document in place that sets out a

clear vision with investable projects that we can use to secure funding - particularly those which are geared to support town centre transformation. This is particularly important as we emerge and attempt to recover from the economic impacts arising from the current pandemic situation.

- 2.5 Early and extensive engagement has been a main feature in the preparation of the draft masterplan. 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 (TfGM & EA);
 - Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
 - Bury College;
 - East Lancashire Railway; and
 - Key Council Officers.
- 2.6 This engagement has helped to shape the content of the Draft Masterplan but, as set out below, there will continue to be dialogue right through the consultation period to help finalise the approach taken in the final version of the plan.
- 2.7 The Masterplan provides a commercial, market-facing and deliverable vision to guide the development of Bury town centre over the next 15-20 years.
- 2.8 The Masterplan identifies a number of key zones which share particular characteristics and/or particular opportunities for development:
- **Retail Heart** – The Masterplan proposes the consolidation and diversification of this critical area of the town centre through comprehensive redesign and the introduction of new uses to reflect the on-going challenges facing the retail sector. A key component of this is the proposal to re-imagine the Mill Gate, by restoring some of the original street network whilst retaining some of the core functions and support of the market. This site could potentially accommodate a new leisure facility from the current location at Castle Leisure centre, as well as serviced office space and new food and beverage businesses. In addition, there is significant potential for additional residential development. This transformational proposal can help to drive greater footfall in the heart of the town centre, helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the towns key assets;
 - **Vibrant Bury** – The proposals in this zone include a new modern transport interchange, a new flexi-hall and an improved market. These will be designed to complement one another as well as the Mill Gate, whilst ensuring permeability and wayfinding across the town.

- **Cultural Quarter** – Building on Bury’s existing cultural and visitor attractions, the Cultural Quarter will focus on diversifying, strengthening and promoting the current offer. A comprehensive public realm strategy including the creation of a new ‘Station Square’ will enhance Bury’s historic character, encourage dwell time in this location;
- **Knowledge Zone** – Incorporating the proposed Health Innovation and STEM Centre, Woodbury College and the Millenium Centre there is the opportunity to build on an already strong educational base, which has the potential to draw more students into the town centre and act as a focus point for research and innovation. The zone identifies the potential for further expansion on the frontage of Trinity Street Car Park;
- **Mobility Hub** - The adjacencies of the town centre and market, provides this area within an opportunity to provide an improved sustainable transport and car parking offer. Subject to details, the area that is currently a large car park, has the potential for additional development, including an alternative option for a replaced leisure facility;
- **Eastern Gateway** – An important gateway into the town, this area has the potential to mirror the quality of the nearby Rock development. A new high-quality hotel will provide the cornerstone to the gateway, fronting strongly onto the ring road, whilst new residential development would lead visitors into the Rock development. There is also potential to revitalise underused retail space through the introduction of new commercial opportunities including a new innovation hub for SME’s & start-ups;
- **Western Gateway** – Development of a sustainable & high quality family focussed community within the town centre. Providing strong frontage onto Bolton Street and Jubilee Way, the Western Gateway will help announce the arrival into the town centre. In addition to providing new homes, the development will also increase vibrancy, activity and footfall within the town centre;
- **Southern Gateway** – This area provides an opportunity to bring forward a series of sites that can deliver new town centre homes linking to the heart of Bury, the proposed interchange and nearby education facilities. With excellent public transport link, and incorporating innovative parking and open space solutions there is potential to provide an exciting new sustainable housing solution for Bury;
- **Sports Campus** – Located on the southern edge of the town centre, there is an opportunity to build on the existing leisure facilities that exist, including the athletic track. This could be a third option for a new purpose building leisure facility or the provision of a multi-functional sports hall as part of a wider ‘Sports Campus’; and

- **Chamberhall** – Providing a high-quality location for businesses and light industrial opportunities within close proximity of the town centre. The zone also provides important connections to the Irwell Sculpture Trail, Burr’s Country Park and beyond.

- 2.9 These key interventions will help to generate new public and private investment into the town centre, helping to drive footfall into the town during the day and evening. Improving key routes and linkages into the town will also help to attract and encourage people to use the town and its new facilities.
- 2.10 In addition to the Masterplan itself, the commission also requires the production of a Delivery Plan that sets out the key proposals identified in the masterplan and proposes a route to the delivery of each. It also includes the preparation of a commercial investment prospectus containing high quality promotional material that can be used by the Council as well as private owners of assets, land and property to promote Bury as a commercially investable location. These documents will be presented to Cabinet for approval in March 2022 alongside the final Masterplan.
- 2.11 Following consultation and once it is fully approved, the Masterplan 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. FUNDING

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The success in these funding bids was underpinned by substantial evidence and a clear delivery strategy. 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.
- 3.3 Bury town centre business 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.
- 3.4 New development and investment will generate an improved confidence in Bury Town Centre which should, in turn, encourage additional private sector investment. In particular, the Council is seeking to enter into a Joint Venture to develop some of the key components of the Masterplan proposals.

3.5 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.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1 It is important that there are clear roles and responsibilities for oversight and delivery of the Bury Masterplan. To achieve this, it is proposed that a governance structure is presented to Cabinet in March 2022. Each tier of governance will have clear terms of reference and division of responsibility to enable delivery of the plan and other regeneration initiatives that may emerge over time.

5. MASTERPLAN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

5.1 As indicated, there has already been comprehensive early engagement with a range of key stakeholders during the preparation stage of the Masterplan. This has been crucial in gaining valuable information and insight into the different concerns of groups and understanding key challenges.

5.2 Now that the Masterplan is in a draft format, this stakeholder engagement needs to continue in order to seek the views and inputs from the wider public, key businesses and other key partners to ensure that the final Masterplan reflects the aspirations of all stakeholders.

5.3 The Council's website will be used as the main point of contact for the formal consultation. The Masterplan online consultation will be promoted via social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to raise awareness of the proposals and to issue reminders of the consultation closing date. These should direct residents to the formal consultation website. Targeted social media is also being considered to increase the awareness of the consultation across the local area

5.4 Printed copies of the Masterplan will also be placed in key public buildings (Town Hall and libraries) to allow members of the public to participate in the consultation process.

5.5 Publicity materials including posters and exhibition stands will be located at key locations to signpost residents to the on-line information or to view proposals in person.

5.6 The consultation process will be kept under review in the event that additional stakeholder engagement is required and this may include webinars, virtual meetings and/or a pop-up shop

5.7 It is proposed that the final version of the Masterplan is brought back to Cabinet in March 2022 for formal approval, highlighting the responses received during consultation and any amendments made as a result.

TIMESCALES

It is proposed that consultation on the draft Bury Town Centre Masterplan takes place over a six-week period commencing 4th January 2022.

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 Development 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 'Let's 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>
An initial screening has been undertaken (available on request) 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
Potential risk to the public and council staff in holding public consultation during the pandemic.	Whilst issues around Covid remain, the Council will not arrange forms of engagement that involve public gatherings and/or face-to-face contact. As a result, the Council website will be used as the main focal point for the formal consultation with social media being used to advertise the period of consultation.

Consultation:

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

Legal Implications:

All consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at their formative stages. The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposals being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be clear, concise, accurate and must not be misleading. The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposals and to respond. The Council must give genuine and conscientious consideration to the responses received from the consultees during the consultation before making its final decision. The report summarises the consultation methodology and sets out that this matter will be considered at a later cabinet meeting. 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:

Appendix 1 - Bury Town Centre Draft Masterplan

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

Term	Meaning