



<b>Classification</b> <b>Open</b>	<b>Item No.</b>
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<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Meeting date:</b>	15 December 2021
<b>Title of report:</b>	Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan - Consultation Draft
<b>Report by:</b>	Cllr Eamonn O'Brien – Leader of the Council
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Key Decision
<b>Ward(s) to which report relates</b>	Ramsbottom

### **Executive Summary:**

A Town Centre Plan for Ramsbottom has now been drafted that identifies a series of initiatives that seek to improve the town for residents, businesses, and visitors.

This includes the identification of a dedicated space that will provide the opportunity for the town to develop a regular programme of events throughout the calendar year, building on the success of the events that currently exist.

The draft Town Centre Plan identifies wider opportunities to improve the public realm and existing buildings in the town, helping existing businesses grow and thrive. This includes the creation of an enterprise centre in the vacant space within Market Chambers, providing flexible office accommodation.

Initiatives to make it easier and safer to move around the town, in an improved environment are important features within the Plan. This includes an opportunity to create a riverside walkway, with wider connections to Nuttall Park.

Importantly, the draft Town Centre Plan proposes the introduction of long stay car parking near the town's leisure centre, with improved pedestrian linkages to the town centre. This will support proposals to implement short stay car parking

in the core of the town, helping to provide regular turnover of spaces for visitors.

Cabinet is asked to consider the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan and to approve it for a six-week consultation period before being brought back to Cabinet in March for formal approval.

### **Recommendation(s)**

#### **That Cabinet:**

- Endorses the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Masterplan attached as Appendix 1 as the basis for a six-week public consultation commencing on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and
- Delegates approval to the Executive Director of Place and the Chief Executive to make minor modifications to the draft Ramsbottom 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 Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan and its vision for the centre and the series of physical proposals that have been identified to enhance the town centre.

#### **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 Town Plan is fit for purpose.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. Over the years, Ramsbottom has developed into an attractive visitor destination, supported by the East Lancashire Railway, a high-quality restaurant scene, a range of independent retailers, a popular annual events programme and a growing reputation as one of the best places to live in the region.
- 1.2. Whilst Ramsbottom has performed relatively well as both a town centre and a visitor destination, town centres across the country have, for a number of years, been facing significant challenges that have eroded high street retailing and its role in underpinning the vitality and economic strength of town centres.
- 1.3. The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant intensification and acceleration of these challenges, and this is likely to have

far-reaching consequences for the economies of town centres across the country.

- 1.4. Ramsbottom is not immune from the wider economic challenges facing high streets across the country and it is important that Ramsbottom has a planned response to these ongoing challenges - a response that will enable it to adapt and respond and continue to be an appealing place to visit and a great place to live.
- 1.5. A Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan has been drafted (Appendix 1), which identifies a series of improvements in the centre that can help to improve the attractiveness of the town centre to underpin an increase in footfall and economic stability for the town centre. These improvements include a dedicated events space, public realm improvements, car parking and transport interventions, along with a new enterprise centre through the re-use of vacant space in the Market Chambers buildings.

## **2. THE PURPOSE OF THE TOWN CENTRE PLAN**

- 2.1. The draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will play a key role in building upon the town's established assets and overcome some of its challenges.
- 2.2. The Plan proposes a range of interventions, both short and longer term, which together will deliver improvements to enhance Ramsbottom as a place to live, work and visit.
- 2.3. The plan links to a range of existing local strategies including the overarching 'Let's Do It!' Bury 2030 Strategy, the Climate Action Strategy and the 2040 Transport Strategy.
- 2.4. It is important to have a plan for the town centre that sets out a clear vision which identifies deliverable projects to secure funding.

## **3. THE DRAFT RAMSBOTTOM TOWN CENTRE PLAN**

- 3.1. The draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan has been developed through early engagement with a range of stakeholders including:
  - Elected local ward members;
  - Bury North MP;
  - Ramsbottom Town Centre Board;
  - Ramsbottom Businesses;
  - Community Stakeholders;

- East Lancashire Railway; and
- Council Officers

- 3.2. This engagement has helped to develop the vision and guide the proposed interventions for the town and further input is now sought through public engagement.
- 3.3. The draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan sets out a series of interventions that seek to enhance the town centre for local residents and the businesses community. This includes creating quality workspace in the heart of the town, as well as supporting existing independent retailers and quality food and beverage outlets.
- 3.4. The Plan also seeks to boost the visitor economy, by providing some of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the continuation and growth of the town's successful events programme. Likewise, the plan proposes to embrace the East Lancashire Railway as an important tourist asset, linking with the wider heritage and architectural character of the town.
- 3.5. Supporting these aspirations are the plan's proposals to improve connectivity across the town, providing improved linkages between the town's assets through active travel measures. This is underpinned by a car parking strategy.
- 3.6. In response to the above, a series of physical interventions have been identified which include:

- **New Public Square**

The addition of a new public square and events space in the core town centre to provide the infrastructure to enable the continuation and improvement of a successful events programme.

- **Improved Public Realm**

Establish a network of better-connected streets and spaces by improving existing infrastructure and creating new focal spaces and pedestrianised areas.

- **Active Travel**

Encourage active travel by improving strategic pedestrian and cycle links, connecting valuable green assets and amenities to the town centre such as Nuttall Park and new links to the river frontage.

- **Enterprise Centre**

A new enterprise centre is proposed for Market Chambers and the vacant upper floors of the Civic Hall. This will provide accommodation for a range of self-employed, freelance businesses and business start-ups, along with those residents seeking flexible and agile business space.

- **Car Parking Strategy**

The car parking strategy will aim to find a better balance for all users, including existing businesses and residents, and regular and occasional visitors. The plan proposes to introduce short stay car parking in the heart of the town, along with a residents' permit scheme and an edge of centre long stay provision which can accommodate longer stay and event parking.

#### **4. FUNDING**

- 4.1. GM has secured £1.07 billion of funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund for transport and active travel proposals and work is currently ongoing to identify where this money will be targeted. The Council will seek to ensure that some of this funding is spent within Ramsbottom helping to deliver the active travel and connectivity elements outlined within this document.
- 4.2. In addition, the Council has successfully secured £50,000 Evergreen monies, which will be used to help bring forward the proposed Enterprise Centre in the town.
- 4.3. Once formally approved, the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will provide a clear vision and identify a series of deliverable projects on which future funding bids can be developed. This will include future transport monies and emerging funding programmes such as the Shared Prosperity Fund.

#### **5. GOVERNANCE**

- 5.1. It is important that there are clear roles and responsibilities for oversight and delivery of the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan. It is proposed that a governance structure is presented to Cabinet in March 2022, when the Town Centre Plan is brought back for formal approval.

#### **6. RAMSBOTTOM TOWN CENTRE PLAN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

- 6.1. As indicated, there has already been comprehensive early engagement with a range of key stakeholders during the preparation stage of the Town Centre Plan. This has been crucial in gaining valuable information and insight into the different concerns of groups and understanding key challenges.
- 6.2. Now that the Town Centre Plan 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

plan reflects the aspirations of all stakeholders. It is proposed that the Town Centre Plan undergoes a six-week consultation period, with:

- The Council's website being used as the main point of contact for the formal consultation;
- The Town Centre Plan consultation being promoted via social media to direct residents to the consultation website;
- Targeted social media adverts raising awareness for local residents;
- Printed copies of the Town Centre Plan being available in key public buildings;
- Publicity materials including posters and exhibition stands being located at key locations to signpost residents to the online information or to view proposals in person; and
- Proposals for meetings, drop-in sessions and workshops being held in accordance with Covid guidance.

6.3. The consultation process will be kept under review in the event that additional stakeholder engagement is required and any other changes required due to Covid 19 restrictions.

## **7. TIMESCALES**

7.1. It is proposed that the consultation on the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan takes place over a six-week period commencing on the 4 January.

7.2. It is proposed that following the consideration of comments the final version of the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan would be brought back to Cabinet in March 2022 for formal approval.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The recommendations are contained at the front of this report.

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### **Community impact/links with Community Strategy**

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will deliver a range of short and longer terms interventions that will enhance Ramsbottom town centre for the benefit of all communities.

The preparation of the town plan is consistent with the 2030 'Let's Do It' Strategy, particularly in terms of driving economic growth and inclusion.

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## 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.*

<b>Equality Analysis</b>	<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.*

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## 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.

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### **Consultation:**

Details of the consultation methodology is set out in the body of the report

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### **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 Town Centre Plan 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.

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### **Financial Implications:**

Following consultation further reports will be brought to Cabinet. The funding for the respective individual developments within the masterplan will be the subject of individual Cabinet reports. Wherever, possible external funding will be sought to fully or partially fund each of the projects which form part of the redevelopment and regeneration proposals. Funding sources are likely to include, City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, New Prosperity fund and Evergreen monies.

External Consultants have been commissioned to support with the development of the masterplan and this is funded from the Council's capital programme

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**Report Author and Contact Details:**

**Crispian Logue** - Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regulation)

Email - c.logue@bury.gov.uk

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**Background papers:**

Appendix 1 - Draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan

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

Term	Meaning