

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 09 March 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan	
<b>Report of</b>	Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth	

## Summary

This report details the results of the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan consultation and seeks approval for the final Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan to become a material planning consideration, which will be used as a tool to guide investment and development in Ramsbottom Town Centre.

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan sets out a series of high-level proposals and concepts to improve the future of the town for residents, businesses and visitors. As such, all the proposals will require further detailed work and surveys where necessary, which would be subject to further engagement and consultation with stakeholders before being implemented.

## Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- Notes the key themes raised in response to the consultation on the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan.
- Accepts the post consultation amendments to the document.
- Approves the revised Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan as the final version and Council's policy document for the future of the town – to become a material planning consideration and guide future investment opportunities.

## Reasons for recommendation(s)

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan provides a vision to guide the future investment of the town centre in the short, medium and long term.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

No other options were considered/were applicable.

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## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 In March 2021, the Council commissioned Layer Ltd to produce a town centre plan for Ramsbottom which would identify a series of potential proposals to improve the town for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 1.2 The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan (hereafter known as the 'plan') sets out a series of high-level proposals and concepts that look to enhance the town centre for local residents, the businesses community and visitors. This includes creating quality workspace in the heart of the town, as well as identifying opportunities for improvements to the built environment and public realm.
- 1.3 The plan also looks 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.
- 1.4 The plan is an informal, non-statutory document that will help to shape and direct future investment into the town centre. It will also be a material consideration to which regard may be had in development control decisions relevant to the future regeneration of the town centre.
- 1.5 The development of the draft plan included early engagement with a range of key stakeholders and on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Cabinet members approved a draft of the document for consultation purposes.
- 1.6 This report therefore includes:
  - The methods used to consult on the draft plan.
  - The key themes and consultation responses received in relation to these themes.
  - Recommended changes to the draft plan as a result of the consultation exercise.
  - Delivery and funding.
  - Governance.
- 1.7 The report then considers the next steps for the plan, particularly in terms of undertaking further development work and further consultation with stakeholders to aim towards taking forward specific, priority projects identified in the town centre plan and the resources and governance arrangements required to deliver them.

## **2.0 Consultation on the Draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan**

- 2.1 The plan was consulted on between 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022, with a further extension to the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022 to allow for further feedback

from several commercial businesses. This consultation exercise was designed to seek feedback on a high-level conceptual plan. There will be further consultation carried out with stakeholders as individual projects are designed and developed in more detail.

2.2 A number of different approaches were introduced to raise the profile of the consultation process and to maximise engagement with as many local stakeholders as possible.

2.3 The draft plan was available to view online, and feedback was encouraged via an online questionnaire. There was also the option to submit comments by post or email or through a dedicated phone line, both of which allowed people to request further information. The consultation process also included:

- A specific Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan consultation page on the Council's website which included full and summary versions of the draft plan, Frequently Asked Questions and a link to the survey which was hosted on the Bury One Community website;
- Promotional stands in key locations (Bury Town Hall, Ramsbottom, Library, and Morrisons in Ramsbottom) and posters were displayed on the town centre's two notice boards;
- Hard copies of the plan at Bury Town Hall and Ramsbottom Library, (which also offered hard copies of the questionnaire);
- Postcards placed in key locations including Ramsbottom Library, Nuttall Park Base, Ramsbottom Football Club and in a range of businesses;
- Council staff visible in the town centre over a number of days, talking to businesses and residents and handing out postcards;
- Press releases and press features;
- Social media;
- Distribution of weblinks to community and business contacts/stakeholders;
- Community Hub updates (which includes around 80 groups and organisations on the Bury North and via the Bury One Community website);
- Meetings included businesses, ward members and community group representatives; and;
- Further meeting with stakeholders.

### **3.0 Consultation Responses**

3.1 A summary of the consultation responses can be found at Appendix A. This includes the responses to the survey questions and also an overview of the additional comments submitted via the online survey and by email and post.

- 3.2 The consultation programme generated the following overall responses:
- 421 people completed the online survey, which also included the option for respondents to make comments on all areas of the draft plan; and;
  - 57 responses were received by email and 2 responses were received by post.
- 3.3 74% of responses received definitely agreed or somewhat agreed with the vision for Ramsbottom Town Centre. Stakeholders fed back that the key priorities for Ramsbottom Town Centre were:
- Retaining the independent retail offer;
  - Retaining the food and drink offer;
  - Measures to help address car parking issues; and;
  - Improving the quality of the streets and public spaces.
- 3.4 The themes that received the most support were:
- Supporting businesses;
  - New and improved public spaces; and;
  - Improved/new car parking arrangements.
- 3.5 Appendix A contains more detailed information on stakeholders' views on each of the specific draft proposals that were consulted on.
- 3.6 As part of the consultation process, respondents were also invited to submit detailed comments on the draft plan, including any additional ideas they had and omissions from it. The following areas of concerns were fed back:
- Plan lacks emphasis on the protection of heritage assets;
  - Lack of public toilets;
  - Local transport difficulties, including a poor local bus service;
  - Traffic congestion and movement through the town centre is difficult;
  - Concern about the existing lack of parking in the centre;
  - Distance of proposed long stay parking from the centre;
  - Access to and from the public square;
  - Reduce speed limits in the centre to possibly 20mph to help reduce the impact of traffic;
  - Concerns about access to businesses due to proposed changes to street layouts, including the new public square;
  - Lack of cycle storage; and;
  - Current condition of highways and footways.

- 3.7 All additional stakeholder comments will be taken into future consideration and addressed as part of any future consultations and next phase of the development of individual aspects of the plan.
- 3.8 During the consultation process, several local businesses requested a meeting to discuss the details in the draft plan in relation to HGV movement within the town. There was a view that the plan proposed to restrict HGV movements within the town centre by closing roads or putting restrictions on certain roads and that this would significantly harm their businesses. The Council was able to clarify that the plan did not contain any proposals to restrict HGV movement or any vehicle movements within the town. The wording in the plan has been amended to provide further clarity on this issue.

#### **4.0 Post Consultation Amendments to the Plan**

- 4.1 Following detailed analysis and full consideration of all the responses received as part of the consultation exercise, it is proposed that a number of minor amendments are made to the draft plan. Appendix B details the original text and recommended amendments where required. Some of the key changes are set out below:

- **Changes to the Plan** – the plan clearly confirms that it is a high-level document setting out draft proposals for the town centre and that all proposals included in the final document will require detailed design, detailed surveys where needed, and be subject to consultation before being progressed.
- **Bridge Street/Bolton Street** – these longer-term proposals consider ways in which these two routes could be enhanced for pedestrians, as well as other users and the draft plan identifies that the alternative routes for movement of traffic (including HGVs) are limited, and feasibility work would be required. Consultation responses identified that options are needed to better address the level of traffic in the town centre. As it is recognised that existing and new business owners are vitally important to Ramsbottom's local economy, any proposals need to accommodate the needs of all users. Therefore, the wording in the plan has been amended to provide further clarity on this and these proposals are now referred to as longer-term concepts.
- **Public Space Proposal: Eastern Gateway** – this draft proposal considers the possible introduction of a 'right turn only when exiting Railway Street' for HGVs. The draft plan states that should this form part of this proposal then 'feasibility associated with HGV logistics to understand how changes to the junction may impact on the wider highway network' would be required. Consultation feedback has been considered in relation to the wider impact on the road network. This part of the proposal will only be considered as any wider improvements/changes to the road network. The 'right turn only when exiting Railway Street' has therefore been removed from this proposal.

- **Bridge Street Gardens** – Consultation feedback highlighted that existing town centre green spaces be included in the draft proposals. Bridge Street Gardens has now been included as part of the Eastern Gateway proposals.

4.2 A copy of the revised plan can be found at Appendix C. This document will be used to further shape the future of any proposed initiatives and be the basis for further community consultation on individual proposals, as well as being a material planning consideration to aid future development.

## **5.0 Funding, Delivery and Next Steps**

5.1 The plan will help to guide the development of Ramsbottom over the short, medium and long term, with proposals brought forward as funding is identified and secured. Detailed designs will be required for each proposal, and these will be subject to further and more detailed consultation with stakeholders.

5.2 Early funding opportunities have been identified which, subject to further community consultation will help to support the delivery of the following:

### **Active Travel**

Greater Manchester has secured £1.07 billion of funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement for transport and active travel proposals and work is currently ongoing to identify where this funding 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 as recommended within the plan. It is estimated that around £2m to £3m could be secured via this fund to deliver short term initiatives that will help to facilitate new and/or improved cycling and walking facilities.

### **Enterprise Centre**

The Council has successfully secured £50,000 Evergreen funding which could be used to help bring forward the proposed Enterprise Centre in the town.

### **Parking Strategy**

An early piece of work that the Council is looking to develop is a parking strategy, as this is a priority for the town centre as clearly demonstrated by many of the consultation responses. There are resources in place for this to be carried out. Further consultation will be carried out with stakeholders.

5.3 The Council will continue to explore funding opportunities to help take forward the key proposals within the plan, as well as continue to explore further proposals that will help to benefit local residents, businesses and visitors to Ramsbottom.

## **6.0 Governance**

6.1 In order to deliver any proposals, there will need to be good robust governance and leadership in place to ensure a successful transition from the concepts through to detailed design and implementation. The Council will be looking to

involve the local community and local businesses as part of any governance arrangements.

- 6.2 It is the intention to create a dedicated Ramsbottom Programme Management Office (PMO), which will provide the oversight of the proposed projects, including the detailed design and implementation of specific projects. This will sit within the Economic Development and Project Service area, which will work across the range of public and private sectors to help provide a co-ordinated approach to the project implementation. The PMO will feed into the Council's Regeneration Board.
- 6.3 It is the intention to utilise and develop the existing Ramsbottom Town Centre Board and the community hubs to help drive forward the proposed projects within the town.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The recommendations contained at the beginning of this report will enable the Council to work towards more detailed design and implementation of the key proposals of the plan, in the short, medium and long term.

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### **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will deliver a range of short, medium and longer terms interventions that will enhance the town centre for the benefit of all its residents, local businesses and visitors.

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:**

*Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA.*

Please refer to the attached EIA. There are no negative impacts on equality and there is a positive impact recorded.

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### **Environmental Impact and Considerations:**

*Please provide an explanation of the carbon impact of this decision.*

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan includes proposals for enhanced and new active travel links into and across the town centre, that will provide help provide an alternative to the use of vehicles on the town centre.

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### **Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:**

<b>Risk / opportunity</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
The post consultation amendments are not accepted.	The amendments are as a result of community consultation and having carefully listened to their views.
The final Ramsbottom Town Plan is not approved.	A previous Cabinet report approved the draft plan. The final plan has been amended to reflect the consultation.
Adequate funding is not available and/or secured to deliver the town centre plan.	Early funding opportunities have already been identified. The Council is committed to sourcing and securing additional sources of funding.

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### **Legal Implications:**

The masterplan is an informal, non-statutory document. If approved, it will not form part of the statutory development plan, and the force of s38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will not apply to it: it will be a material consideration to which regard may be had but it will not be a document with which development control decisions must accord unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

It will carry less weight than a supplementary planning document. In addition, the details within the report regarding the governance arrangements will need further consideration alongside a review and if necessary revision and agreement of a terms for the Ramsbottom Town Centre Board specific to this plan together with details as to the proposed Project Management Office.

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### **Financial Implications:**

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 fund fully or partially each of the projects which form part of the Ramsbottom redevelopment and regeneration proposals. Funding sources may include City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, New Prosperity Fund, capital receipts and the Council's capital programme. There is circa £259k of funding included within the capital programme for Ramsbottom for the 2022/23 financial year in order to further scope potential schemes.

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### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Consultation responses.

Appendix B – Table of changes to the Draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan

Appendix C – Final Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan.



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

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle.
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	A funding source that will help to transform local and strategic connectivity, making it easier to travel sustainably, affordably and quickly, improving access to employment and enhancing quality of life.
Evergreen funding	A funding source that will support development projects that contribute towards the local economy.
PMO	Programme Management Office.