

Cabinet – 17 July 2019

Walsall Town Centre Masterplan

Portfolio: Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader & Regeneration Portfolio

Related portfolios: Councillor Oliver Butler, Portfolio Holder, Clean & Green
Councillor Marco Longhi, Portfolio Holder, Health & Wellbeing
Councillor Garry Perry, Portfolio Holder, Community, Leisure & Culture

Service: Economy and Environment – Regeneration and Development

Wards: St Matthew's, Birchills Leamore and Blakenall

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The aim of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan is to provide a visionary yet deliverable plan that will re-imagine Walsall Town Centre.
- 1.2 It will provide Walsall Council, our partners and future investors with a framework to guide the development of the town centre and will be the tool to deliver the ambitious vision:

*“Walsall will have the **healthiest town centre** in the country where people are **proud** to live and work within a healthy environment and balanced economy.*

Centred on its historic high street and role as a regional market town Walsall will attract visitors based on its leisure and culture offers; including its internationally significant art gallery. The town centre environment will be easily navigable with healthy streets, which encourage walking and cycling and maximise the value of significant public spaces through regular events and activities.

- 1.3 A healthy town centre is one with low vacancy rates; a diverse range of uses, including high quality town centre living, leisure attractions and an evening economy for all. It would provide positive experiences for visitors within a safe, clean and attractive environment.
- 1.4 A healthy Walsall Town Centre will encourage economic activity, job creation and investment across the district centres and wider borough.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the private report entitled 'the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan' to be presented at the same Cabinet Meeting on 17 July 2019. This supplementary report contains commercially sensitive information in relation to the delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan interventions and provides a more detailed technical version of the Town Centre Masterplan.
- 2.2 As the strategic centre for the borough, Walsall Town Centre is a priority for the Council, providing a sub-regional focus for the local economy and community. Like many town centres and high streets across the country, Walsall Town Centre is facing some well-publicised common challenges as a result of unprecedented changes in the retail industry as well as changing consumer behaviours and expectations. In response to the decline over recent years, a decision was made to take a proactive role to address the challenges. In September 2018, work commenced to prepare a comprehensive Masterplan for Walsall Town Centre.
- 2.3 This report outlines the progress made in relation to the development of the Masterplan. The Masterplan builds on the regeneration successes of the last 10 years and provides a framework for the next 20 years for the physical transformation of Walsall Town Centre.
- 2.4 The Masterplan's formulation has been in the context of the policies in the Statutory Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP), which was adopted in January 2019. Consequently, the Masterplan will have no status as a planning document nor will it form a part of the Development Plan. As such, Cabinet are not asked to adopt it but instead to support the Masterplan and the delivery of the strategy.
- 2.5 This report outlines and seeks support for the Masterplan's Vision and a series of catalytic interventions, the Masterplan will be used to stimulate investor interest and confidence to bring about transformational change in Walsall Town Centre over the next 20 years.
- 2.6 This report also provides details of a 'First 6 month action plan' for the Town Centre which is seen as a more immediate response to some of the challenges the centre is facing which were further highlighted in the results of a recent public survey in February 2019.
- 2.7 In terms of financial commitments, Cabinet are asked to approve an ongoing revenue budget of £0.010m, and one off revenue and capital budgets of £0.547m and £0.070m respectively for the delivery of the 'First 6 month action plan' as set-out within paragraph 4.18 - 4.23 of the report. This includes a 6-month trial reduction in parking charges, the provision of electric vehicle charging points, tackling issues such as cleanliness and safety and encouraging events and positive activity in the town centre.
- 2.8 A series of future work-streams, together with an indication of revenue and capital costs are also set-out within the report. The phased delivery of these work-streams will fully achieve the Vision and delivery of the catalytic interventions. Further to

the 'First 6 month action plan', Cabinet are not asked to approve any further financial commitment as part of this report but should note that the detail of the financial implications for each individual intervention will be subject to further reports.

3. Recommendations

Note: Following consideration of the confidential information in the private session of the agenda, the Cabinet will be recommended to:

- 3.1 Support the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan (Appendix 1) and the accompanying Technical Masterplan (Appendix 2 in private session), which will promote the delivery of transformational change in the town centre.
- 3.2 Note the emerging interventions and the suggested next steps for delivering these, medium and long-term projects as set out in the Catalytic Interventions Summary (Appendix 3 in private session) and paragraph 6 of the report, and support the delivery of further work that will test the deliverability of them including their alignment to the Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and other policies and strategies of the Council.
- 3.3 Note the potential financial implications of the emerging medium and long-term interventions, contained within the Masterplan and paragraphs 4.13 - 4.17 of this report, which will be subject to further Cabinet reports.
- 3.4 Note that aspects of the programme, which require executive decisions, will be reported to Cabinet as the development of the programme progresses.
- 3.5 Approve a 'First 6 month action plan'; a programme of short-term activity in Walsall Town Centre as set out in paragraphs 6.9 – 6.17 and delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment to finalise the programme in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.
- 3.6 Approves the following budgets;
 - (a) A perpetual mainstream budget of £0.010m
 - (b) A one-off revenue reserve of £0.547m
 - (c) A capital budget of £0.070m to be funded from Capital contingency to support delivery of the 'First 6 month action plan' for Walsall Town Centre as set out within paragraphs 4.18 – 4.23 and 6.13 – 6.19.
- 3.7 As part of the 'First 6 month action plan' approve the inclusion of the Saddlers Shopping Centre car park within the Walsall Metropolitan Borough (Civil Enforcement Off – Street Parking Places) Order.
- 3.8 As part of the 'First 6 month action plan', approve a 6 month reduction of all Council operated charged for car parking charges from the 1 August – 31 January 2020 as set out in 6.16 and agree to receive a further report at the 12 February 2020 Cabinet Meeting to review the impact of these car parking charges, as set in 6.17 and 6.18.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Walsall Town Centre is the strategic centre for the borough; providing a sub-regional focus for the local economy and community. As part of the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation Walsall has a retail catchment of over 3 million people. Its central location provides excellent connectivity by road and rail to Birmingham, London and the rest of the UK. The town centre's centrally located railway station and bus interchange generates 15 million passenger trips per year providing Walsall with an infrastructure network that can facilitate significant growth. Walsall's history as a thriving market town dates back to the 13th century. The 19th century saw international recognition for its leather trade and saddle manufacturing industry and many of the buildings and assets of that time still stand proud in the town centre.
- 4.2 Over the last 10 years Walsall Town Centre has seen significant development with over £425 million invested to deliver 85,000sqm of floorspace across a variety of uses (including retail, leisure, office, health and education). This has helped secure more than 2,500 new jobs, as well as providing 300+ new homes. Despite this, like many town centres and high streets across the country, Walsall Town Centre is facing some well-publicised common challenges as a result of unprecedented changes in the retail industry as well as changing consumer behaviours and expectations. Following a sustained period of decline in the retail sector, including the loss of high street anchors such as BHS, Mothercare and Marks & Spencer's, Walsall's vacancy rate is 28.4%, significantly higher than the national average of 11.5%.
- 4.3 In response to these challenges, the Council has taken a proactive approach to address the issues affecting the town centre. Work to date has included:
- The submission of an Expression of Interest to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Future High Street Fund for Walsall Town Centre with potential funding of up to £25million available. Councils were invited to submit expressions of interest setting out the need for funding, the nature of the challenge and the vision for the future of the town centre. Following an assessment of over 300 bids from across the country, Walsall Council is one of only 50 applications shortlisted to progress to Stage 2 of the process. The Council will now work on a full business case for a proposal with the help of a resource-funding grant from central government of up to £150K.
 - The adoption of the statutory Walsall Area Action Plan (AAP) in January 2019, providing a strong policy basis for future change and regeneration in the centre and part of the Development Plan, therefore a material consideration in planning decisions.
 - The electrification of the Chase line rail service providing more frequent services from Rugeley Trent Valley to Birmingham New Street via Walsall and an hourly train service from Walsall to London Euston via Birmingham New Street, which came into operation from May 2019.
 - Supporting the development of new railway stations at Willenhall and Darlaston, to provide direct services to Wolverhampton.
 - St Matthew's Quarter within the town centre has been selected as one of 5 pilot centres for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Town

Centre's Programme, which will deliver an investment package to facilitate physical transformation in this part of the town.

- Ownership of the lease on the Saddlers Centre from 2017, gives the Council some control in the heart of the town centre, linked to the opportunity to redevelop the railway station and improve the sense of arrival into Walsall Town Centre.
- In response to an initial period of public engagement, in February 2019, which sought views on the town centre, a number of teams across the council are working together to develop and deliver a 'First 6 month action plan'. The plan will launch late summer 2019 and provides details of a package of initiatives to respond to current issues and opportunities. The plan will see measures such as the recruitment of 5 Community Protection Enforcement Officers initially on fixed term contract to March 2020, focusing on environmental matters and anti-social behaviour in hotspot areas like the town centre, a 6 month trial reduction in parking charges, the provision of electric vehicle charging points, additional resource to tackle cleanliness in the centre, town centre greening, promotion and town centre events and activities, as referred to in recommendation 3.5 and paragraphs 6.9 – 6.17.

- 4.4 The Masterplan is a key piece of work, which considers, complements and adds value to the above. Multi-disciplinary consultants Arcadis were procured in autumn 2018, to work alongside the Council and its partners, and lead the development of the Masterplan. The plan provides an inspirational and deliverable vision for a sustainable and resilient town centre for the next 15-20 years, providing a bold and ambitious vision that is at the same time a clear, deliverable and investible strategy for the Council and stakeholders to follow.
- 4.5 The Masterplan will not form part of the Local Development Plan. However, it has been formulated in the context of the policies in the Local Development Plan and namely the statutory Walsall Town Centre AAP, which was adopted in January 2019. The Masterplan has no status as a planning document, is not a material planning consideration and will not go through a formal planning process to adopt it as a planning document.
- 4.6 Some of the immediate steps in the masterplan do accord with the Development Plan, including the AAP. Any subsequent longer-term projects and interventions in the Masterplan that may be beyond the scope of the currently adopted Development Plan but are set out as a vision, are intended to be realised sometime in the future when the Development Plan will have been reviewed.
- 4.7 The formulation of the Masterplan has involved extensive discussions across all directorates of the Council and with Elected Members. The Council's external partners have also been consulted at key project stages including; the Proud Partnership, the West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, the Town Centre Partnership and Canals and Rivers Trust. Initial engagement has commenced with landowners and the public. Engagement and consultation will continue as specific Masterplan interventions are developed and delivered.
- 4.7.1 The Masterplan has been developed via three key stages. The work undertaken at each stage is set out in detail below in paragraph 4.8 - Stage 1- Baselineing and Vision Setting, and sections 5 and 6 of this report.

4.8 Stage 1 (September – November 2018) – Baseline and Vision setting –

4.8.1 This first stage helped to provide a strong understanding of the spatial, technical and policy opportunities and constraints of the town centre as well as giving the consultants a good understanding of the local, regional and national property market and economy, which affect the town centre. This led to the identification of 6 key challenges that face Walsall Town Centre.

4.8.2 6 Key Challenges

- No clear physical or visual connections linking the key destinations of the town centre creating poor legibility.
- Unattractive and confusing arrival point at the train station and lack of connections between transport hubs.
- Insufficient quality public or green spaces to pause and a lack of suitable leisure offer to attract people to spend time in the town centre.
- High retail vacancy rate created by changing national retail habits and the absence of suitable attractions to bring visitors into the town.
- The town centre has the perception that it feels unsafe and uninviting.
- Public perception of the quality and cost of parking provision.

4.9 An understanding of the baseline position has driven the development of the objectives and vision, which the Masterplan is then built around. In this way, the Masterplan directly responds to the physical and environmental challenges facing Walsall, which have led to the poor perception of the town and lack of investment resulting in a 2018 Royal Society of Public Health report ranking Walsall as the 2nd unhealthiest high street in the UK. This report took into consideration measures such as the number of vacant retail units and the type of uses prevalent on the high street with uses such as hot food takeaways and betting shops being considered detrimental to a healthy high street. The vision, developed by the Council and key stakeholders, articulates the bold ambition for the future of Walsall Town Centre, allowing the Council to develop a people centric, healthy town centre which promotes a healthy economy, healthy streets, healthy living, healthy communities and responds directly to the negative ‘unhealthy’ view of the town. Delivering this vision will create a strong identity for Walsall, which establishes the town centre’s place within the borough and wider West Midlands region. Each element of the vision will be measured against a set of defined metrics to provide the council with a tool to demonstrate progress against targets and to see direct benefits resulting from interventions these metrics cover; housing, business, high-street, visitors, environment and walking and cycling. The Council will need to work with partners and stakeholders to clearly define the vision delivery metrics.

The Vision

*“Walsall will have the **healthiest town centre** in the country where people are **proud** to live and work within a healthy environment and balanced economy.*

Centred on its historic high street and role as a regional market town Walsall will attract visitors based on its leisure and culture offers; including its internationally significant art gallery. The town centre environment will be easily navigable with healthy streets, which encourage walking and cycling

and maximise the value of significant public spaces through regular events and activities.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.10 As set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-2021, the Council's stated purpose is 'to create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential' and will achieve this by focusing on five priorities. The Masterplan will help to meet the Council's priorities of ensuring "economic growth for all people, communities and businesses" and creating communities that are "prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion". This will in turn contribute to the people of Walsall having "increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities".
- 4.11 The Masterplan is also aligned to the work to refresh the Walsall Plan.

Risk management

- 4.12 Successful delivery of the Masterplan will be at risk from a number of internal, external and micro and macro factors, these are considered below. As the Masterplan has been developed across Council service areas and in collaboration with stakeholders it enables all partners to stand behind the 20-year Vision and work towards a series of common goals and projects, which will help to manage and apportion risk. Key risks identified are:
- Macro-economic impact of economic performance and other changing demographics
 - Potential inability to acquire sites
 - Lack of funding to deliver interventions
 - Lack of parking provision at a cost and quality suitable to support business and visitor needs and expectations
 - Lack of electric vehicle charging points to meet the needs of zero or low emission vehicles that contribute to improvements in town centre air quality.

Financial implications

Medium and long term

- 4.13 The Masterplan outlines a number of catalytic interventions with, an indication of the level of public sector revenue and capital costs needed to deliver each of them. Spread over a 20-year timeframe, the document indicates that a capital investment of circa **£116.7million** is needed to be made available to enable transformative change within the town centre. Arcadis have provided this figure but it should be noted that this is a high-level estimate. The individual projects will be subject to much more detailed costing assessments in the future to accurately understand the level of required investment and brought forward for the consideration of Cabinet in future reports.

- 4.14 Capital investment by the public sector will be needed for a number of different elements including public realm delivery, investment in public transport infrastructure and strategic property acquisitions. The Council will seek to maximise external funding sources where available to aid in delivery.
- 4.15 There will also be a need for additional revenue funding from the public sector estimated by Arcadis to be **£2.3million** over a 20-year period to enable pre development work and to inform delivery of the catalytic interventions. In 2018/19, a revenue reserve of £0.250m was made available for pre development activity in support of the delivery of regeneration programmes including the Walsall to Wolverhampton Growth Corridor (supporting the delivery of the West Midlands Combined Authority's Housing Deal). £0.149m was spent in 2018/19, and the balance of £0.101m will contribute in part to the pre development activity envisaged by the Town Centre Masterplan however; it is likely to be insufficient for the regeneration activity planned across the borough as a whole.
- 4.16 It should be noted that included in the 2019/20 Capital Programme (approved by Cabinet on 13 February 2019) was a £0.250m capital budget for delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan. This budget will be utilised to fund pre development work, such as such as feasibility studies, a public realm strategy and potential traffic modelling work. Therefore, the budget is committed for 2019/2020.
- 4.17 It is anticipated that the Council will primarily fund the public sector investment needed to deliver the Town Centre Masterplan. However there are a number of external sources that the Council is currently pursuing including;
- The Council has been successful with an Expression of Interest for the MHCLG's Future High Street Fund for Walsall Town Centre with potential funding of up to £25million available. A business case will need to be prepared and potential funding ask will need to be defined.
 - Furthermore, the Council is also working closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), which selected Walsall Town Centre as one of the 5 pilot centres in November 2018. The initial tranche approved by WMCA Investment Board is £20million to be utilised across the five pilot centres, which can help them to achieve their objectives.
 - Black Country LEP (BCLEP) Land and Property Investment Fund - which will support the re-use of brownfield land and buildings for housing, commercial and industrial uses and also enable delivery of any supporting infrastructure;
 - WMCA Walsall to Wolverhampton Growth Corridor - will contribute to the delivery of housing in and near the town centre, with a potential Land Fund deal of £100m across the Corridor.
 - Match funding of £0.075m is in the process of being secured from the European Structural & Investment Funds Supporting the Shift Towards a Low Carbon Economy, to deliver the 7 electric vehicle charging points (reference 6.15)

First 6-month action plan

- 4.18 Linked to the development of the Masterplan is the objective to deliver the 'First 6 month action plan' that can respond to issues raised in the recent round of public engagement (February 2019), to tackle the day to day matters but also quickly stimulate more positive interactions within the town centre (see paragraph 6.9 –

6.19 below for further details of proposed short-term interventions). The Plan will mainly be delivered from August 2019. A number of service areas and directorates are collaborating to develop the Action Plan including:

- Clean and Green;
- Public Health, community protection and regulatory services
- Highways, Engineering and Planning;
- Communities and Localities; and
- Leisure, Culture and Operations.

- 4.19 Each team has contributed short-term priorities that form part of the 'First 6 month action plan'. Paragraphs 4.15 and 4.16 explain that any current budgets identified for the Town Centre Masterplan are already committed and will be spent in full and therefore, there will be a need for additional resources totalling £0.627m in the current financial year to deliver the cross-directorate plan as set-out in 6.9. This is summarised as follows:

6 month Action plan area	Paragraph reference	Ongoing revenue budget £m	One-off revenue budget £m	Capital Contingency £m
Reduced car parking charges	4.20		0.169	
Electric car parking points	4.21	0.010		0.070
Street Cleaning Pledges	4.22		0.090	
Town Centre Masterplan Pledges	4.23		0.288	
Total		0.010	0.547	0.070

- 4.20 A reduction in all Council operated charged for car parking charges has been estimated as requiring additional revenue support of £0.169m, for a six- month period, following which Cabinet will be asked to take a view on future charging regime.
- 4.21 The introduction of 7 electric vehicle-charging points would require an estimated capital budget of £0.140m. Match funding of £0.070m is in the process of being secured from the European Structural & Investment Funds Supporting the Shift Towards a Low Carbon Economy. In addition, and an ongoing revenue budget of £0.010m per annum is required for running costs.
- 4.22 There are a number of pledges from the Clean and Green Team that relate to cleanliness, and appearance of the town centre. This would require a one off revenue budget of £0.090m. This package includes a focussed deep street cleansing, removal of graffiti and addressing the issues of pigeon fouling throughout the Town Centre core.
- 4.23 In addition there a selection of further pledges covering a number of different themes under the Town Centre Masterplan pledges. This will also require a one off revenue budget of £0.288m. This package includes the provision of officer support to deliver short-term events in the town centre; officer support to work with Arts Council/ Black Country Creative Arts to deliver Town Centre events further

ahead; and working with Shopappy to develop an online platform to for independent retailers in the Town Centre; and town centre greening. A further explanation of all the short-term priorities contained with the 'First 6 month action plan' can be found in paragraphs 6.9 - 6.13.

- 4.24 It is acknowledged within the Masterplan that the Council will need to take a lead role in the transformation of the Town Centre and this will result in the public sector needing to provide a significant proportion of the early funding, especially for the catalytic interventions. However, this commitment will increase the potential for leveraging in much greater private sector investment across the town.
- 4.25 The Council's Regeneration and Development Team will be proactive in sourcing other potential external funding opportunities to supplement the substantial investment required by the Council.
- 4.26 As confidence in the Walsall property market grows – due to an improved environment, increased housing demand and better town centre offer – opportunities will arise for Walsall Council to engage in joint venture partnerships to deliver a range of uses. These joint ventures can attract private investment in return for the Council's land or ability to assemble land.

Legal implications

- 4.27 The Masterplan is not a development plan document for the purposes of the Local Development Plan and nor has it been prepared for the purpose of the exercise by the Council, as the local planning authority, of its powers. The Masterplan is a vision statement setting out the Council's aspirations for Walsall Town Centre. Cabinet is asked to support the projects and proposals it contains, whether in full or in part.
- 4.28 In order to fully deliver the vision for the town centre, land assembly will be required. If and when opportunities for acquisition are identified then appropriate approvals will be obtained prior to entering into a process of negotiation with landowners. Voluntary acquisition must be utilised to assemble the land. Only where all reasonable efforts to reach a satisfactory outcome in the available timescale through negotiation with individual landowners have been exhausted, and by way of last resort, may the Council consider whether to make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Appropriate legal advice and approvals will be sought as individual projects move to the delivery phase.
- 4.29 In order to deliver the 'First six month action plan', legal powers and agreements may be required to enable the Council to undertake work on private land. Further legal advice will be needed to determine what powers the Council has available to support the delivery of this activity, and it may be determined that the Council does not have the necessary powers to support this, thus the success will be reliant on the good will of property and land owners to engage.
- 4.30 Cabinet are asked to approve an amendment to the Walsall Metropolitan Borough (Civil Enforcement Off-street Parking Places) Order 2019. Cabinet will be aware that the Local Authority acquired the Saddlers Shopping Centre in 2017 and therefore as a Council owned car park, the Saddlers Shopping Centre must be included in the Walsall Metropolitan Borough (Civil Enforcement Off – Street

Parking Places) Order 2019. The amendment sought is to add the Saddlers Shopping Centre car park to the Order and agree the level of charges to be applied.

- 4.31 Any changes to the list of Council operated car parking facilities and associated parking charges must be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of The Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.32 Arcadis were procured in line with the Council's Finance Rules and Public Procurement Regulations through a mini-competition under the Crown Commercial Services RM3816 Estates Professional Services Framework. The Council undertook a detailed evaluation of the tenders submitted including a clarification interview with all bidders, which included a panel of senior officers and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.
- 4.33 Any future pre-development activity will also need to be procured in accordance with the Council's Finance Rules and Public Procurement Regulations and the use of frameworks to obtain any external advice.

Property implications

- 4.34 The delivery of several of the interventions result in potentially significant future implications for both privately and publicly owned property in a number of locations across the town centre. Any privately owned interest will be subject to agreements to acquire. Interventions that might require the Council to commence negotiations to assemble third party land will be subject to future decision making in accordance with the Constitution (being undertaken with the benefit of a more detailed rationale and property advice from either Asset Management or external advisors and legal advisors). If there is a need for property acquisition to deliver interventions then it should be noted that there might be a need for ongoing holding costs in the interim prior to project delivery.
- 4.35 Intervention 2, comprises a re-configuration of the Saddlers Centre to deliver improvements to Walsall Railway Station. Further work will be required to understand and test the options available to the Council through pre development work and working closely with the recently appointed managing agents Avison Young.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.36 As detailed in paragraph 4.9 above, the vision for the Masterplan is for Walsall to have the healthiest town centre in the country.
- 4.37 The ambition to become the healthiest town centre in the UK considers and addresses all the elements which make a "Healthy Town" from environment to economy, culture to leisure, heritage to community and addressing these will improve the lives of the people of Walsall (further information is provided in paragraphs 4.9). This approach aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for

Walsall (2017-20) that outlines key aims to improve the outcomes of Walsall residents with three overarching priorities:

- including increasing economic prosperity through increased growth;
- maximising people's health, wellbeing and safety; and,
- Creating healthy sustainable places and communities.

- 4.38 The introduction of electric vehicle charging points would be a positive contribution that supports improvements in town centre air quality.

Staffing implications

- 4.39 To date the Regeneration Development team has led the formulation of the Town Centre Masterplan, with detailed input from numerous disciplines across various directorates including Economy and Environment, Resources and Transformation and Legal and Democratic services. The delivery of interventions will continue to draw on staff resources from a number of parts of the Council.
- 4.40 Successful implementation will require a whole Council approach as well as working with external partners.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.41 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed within the appended Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).
- 4.42 As each work package or intervention develops, under any feasibility stage, a review will be undertaken to ascertain whether a further EqIA is required.

Consultation

- 4.43 Throughout the formulation of the Masterplan, the consultants with support from the Regeneration Development team have engaged across the Council and with Elected Members and the Proud Board through a number of workshops and briefings.
- 4.44 Engagement has taken place with a number of key external partners including TFWM, WMCA, the Town Centre Partnership and the Canals and Rivers Trust. This will continue as the plan develops.
- 4.45 An initial round of public engagement via a 'snap survey' took place in February 2019 mainly through a social media campaign to gather views on the town centre and to understand peoples shopping and leisure habits and the barriers preventing them from interacting with the town centre. Response rates were very high with almost 2,500 respondents from across the borough and further afield. Following the close of the month long survey, initial masterplan images were released with the Council's response to the engagement exercise.
- 4.46 As specific Masterplan projects develop, the Council will lead on a continuing dialogue with the public also promoting progress, in an attempt to engender more positive perceptions of Walsall Town Centre.

- 4.47 An important next step towards the delivery of masterplan interventions will be to engage with key landowners and businesses on the aspirations and interventions of the masterplan to understand their future-plans and opportunities to work together.

5. Decide

- 5.1 As detailed in paragraph 4.6, the second and third stages of the Masterplan were undertaken to develop ideas, draw from best practice and consider the options for the land uses and interventions that could be considered, leading to a preferred option for the Masterplan.

- 5.2 Stage 2 – December 2018 – March 2019** - began to explore various options for the Masterplan, bringing market and deliverability insight into the testing of options, underpinned by stakeholder engagement and an initial period of public engagement via social media.

- 5.3 This stage was progressed using collaborative methods to engage with key stakeholders, both internal and external partners, including members of the Proud Partnership and was primarily facilitated through a Developing Options workshop in January 2019. There were also a series of themed workshops involving smaller groups to develop options around the leisure, education and transport for the Town Centre.

- 5.4 Three overarching Masterplan scenarios were tested with an assessment of the relative deliverability, viability and alignment with the council's and partner's plans and strategies including the Local Development Plan. Recommendations were made which helped to shape the final preferred option masterplan.

- 5.5 Some of the options considered and discounted included the provision of a new Bus and Rail Interchange, to replace Bradford Place Bus Interchange, which would have resulted in the need for a comprehensive redevelopment of the Saddler's Shopping Centre. This option was discounted based on the significant costs involved to the public sector, work also concluded that the transport hubs were already well located and rather it was the connectivity between them, which needed to be enhanced.

- 5.6 An alternative option to concentrate new leisure uses adjacent to the New Art Gallery was discounted in favour of these uses being preferred in the St Matthew's Quarter. This was on the basis that the eastern side of the Town Centre was considered in need of a destination type use to encourage and increase a more equal spread of footfall across the town centre.

- 5.7 The options were shared with a variety of forums including CMT and Members briefings, and went on to inform the preferred option for the masterplan.

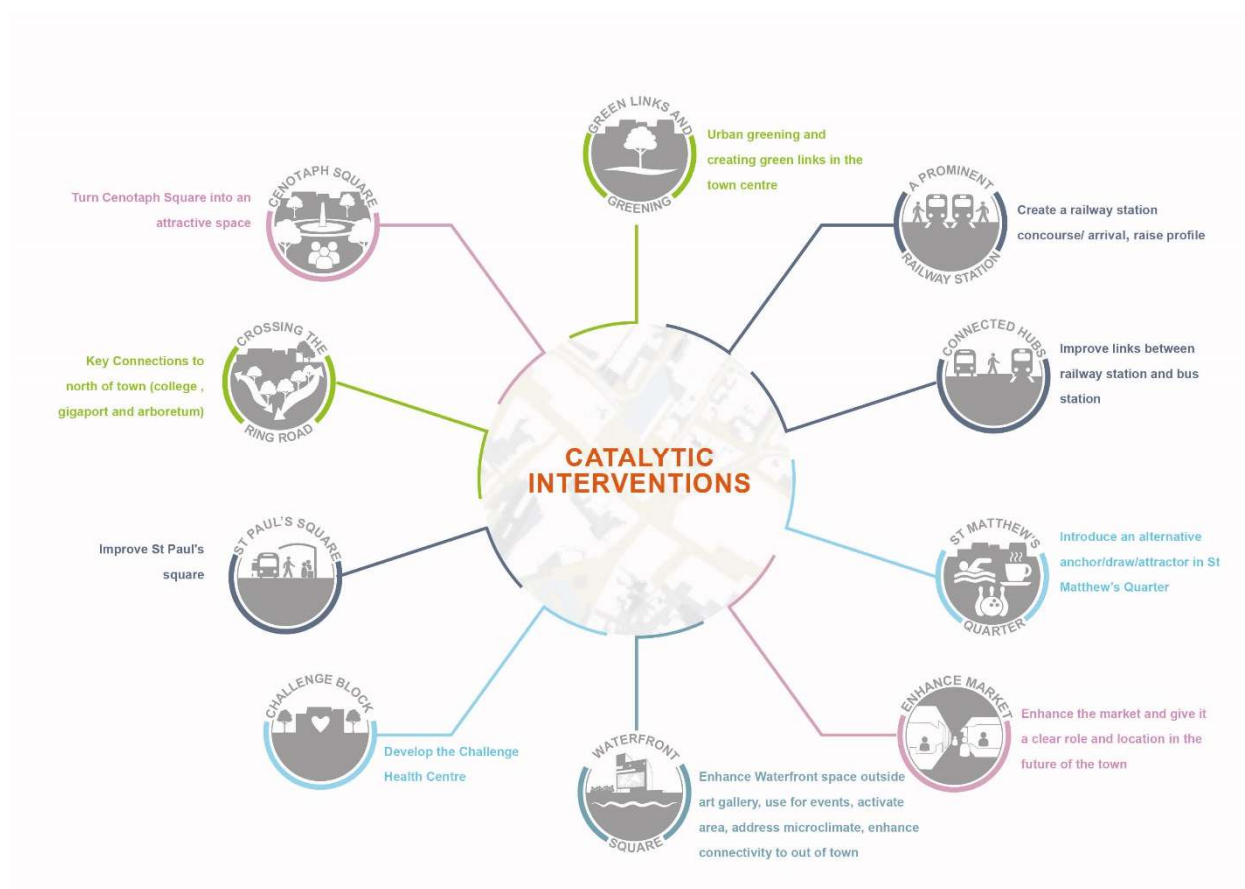
6. Respond

- 6.1 Stage 3 (March – June 2019) – An Investable Masterplan – Preferred Option** – The final stage results in the final Masterplan, providing a deliverable plan, maximising the opportunity and value, whilst meeting aspirations. The final plan

tackles the 6 key challenges that were identified through the baselining work, bringing together a number of long-term aspirations for the town centre, and also seeks to maximise investment that the council and our partners (including Walsall Proud Partnership, TfWM, the WMCA and BCLEP) have made over the last 10 years and aligning with future priorities and the Local Development Plan.

- 6.2 The final version of the Masterplan is appended in Appendix 1. The final plan sets out a series of key components, which influence the Masterplan design and provide a framework within which the Council may develop more detailed physical interventions. The components provide the high-level principles, which act as a guide to ensure the current issues are addressed and the town centre vision and objectives are delivered.
- 6.3 The components explore what are considered to be the key drivers to the success of Walsall Town Centre and include:
- The Walsall Experience
 - Planning Context Property Market
 - Land Use
 - Heritage
 - Movement
 - Public Realm
- 6.4 A series of 10 catalytic interventions have been developed from the key components and these are set out in Figure 1 below. These are the projects that the Council and its partners (including Walsall Proud Partnership, TfWM, the WMCA and BCLEP) should prioritise to enable a process of physical transformation in Walsall Town Centre in accordance with the Local Plan. The delivery of these catalytic interventions will stimulate investor confidence in the town centre and enable the overall Masterplan vision to be achieved. The Masterplan sets out these interventions at a high level. Further work will be required including more detailed feasibility and design work as well as securing funding, planning permission and other necessary permissions before interventions are delivered.

Figure 1



- 6.5 The Masterplan recommends a phasing programme for delivery of the interventions, which are set out in the short (0-5 years), medium (3-10) and long-term (8years plus), also determining what work is required as the Council moves towards the implementation stages of the document.
- 6.6 A work programme that sets out the key activities to progress the interventions further will require a substantial amount of revenue funding which is considered in the Financial Implications section of this report.
- 6.7 The recommended interventions will need to be developed in more detail and in a collaborative way with internal and external stakeholders to test their feasibility further and to amend them if appropriate. It will also require the Council to look at sourcing external funding options and to prepare funding applications for them.
- 6.8 As part of the early work programme, the Council has commenced work on the following work-streams; these will support the delivery of the Masterplan.

- The Council was successful with a submission of an Expression of Interest to the Government's £675million Future High Streets Fund in July 2019. The council will be invited to work up a full business case and submit a further full application, which will look to develop early masterplan interventions including public realm enhancements, and potential improvements to Walsall Railway Station.
- The WMCA Town Centre Programme has selected Walsall Town Centre as one of the 5 pilot centres in November 2018. The initial tranche approved by WMCA Investment Board is £20million between the five pilot centres, which can help them to achieve their objectives.
- Multi-Storey Car Park feasibility study is being prepared to understand the potential for delivery of a new town centre facility.
- The Council are looking at ways to make businesses more competitive in the town centre. In this context, digital platforms such as Shopappy are being explored.

- 6.9 A 'First 6 month action plan' has been produced in response to the recent round of public engagement (February 2019), to tackle the day-to-day issues, but also quickly stimulate positive interactions within the town centre.
- 6.10 The plan is the result of joint working across directorates and a review of the baseline position for service delivery in the town centre. This has provided a good understanding of the current work delivered within existing budgets / resources such as town centre cleaning, enforcement and planned events. Joint working has also established the gaps in service delivery, which, in the short-term, can partly be fulfilled by re-prioritising existing resources. However, joint working has identified that in order to fully respond to the public's concerns and make the level of short-term improvements required in the town centre there is a need for Cabinet to commit to additional resource, as set-out within 4.18 – 4.23.
- 6.11 In developing the Masterplan, including understanding best practice from other comparable town centres that have successfully undergone a process of transformational change, the importance of positive and proactive communications and events to change perceptions and increase footfall in town centres is apparent.
- 6.12 With this in mind, the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan has been formulated around developing and defining the Walsall Town Centre Experience with the aim to create an improved and more positive feel and an experience, which will make people want to return. An essential part of the 'First 6 month action plan' will be to begin the process of changing people's perceptions of the town by creating positive experiences. The delivery of positive and proactive communications and events is therefore an essential element of the Plan, also helping to create the right conditions and buy-in for future longer-term Masterplan delivery.
- 6.13 The delivery of the 'First 6 month action plan' will also link to and align with the Walsall Plan pledges and will need to be carried out in partnership with our Proud Partners and the Town Centre Partnership. The Plan will include;

- Additional focussed town centre resource for the council's Clean and Green team to tackle cleanliness, litter, graffiti, general washing and grounds maintenance.
- The recruitment of 5 Community Protection Enforcement Officers initially on fixed term contract to March 2020 primarily focusing on environmental matters and anti-social behaviour in hotspot areas like the town centre.
- A further resource to tackle the problems associated with pigeon fouling in the town centre.
- A deep clean of the town centre.
- Targeted enforcement days in the town centre.
- A budget for town centre activity and events including special market events.
- Greening in the town centre.
- Funding for a town centre co-ordinator.
- Shopappy – a high profile online platform for independent businesses.
- A 25% reduction to car parking charges over a 6 month period.
- 7 Electric vehicle charge points.

6.14 **Car Parking** - During stage 3 and linked to the preparation of the Masterplan and as a response to public views from the initial round of public engagement it was considered necessary to review Council operated car parking facilities, their charges and impact on businesses and visitors to the town centre. This was required to understand the impact on these factors on the health of the town centre.

6.15 In considering the transformation of the town centre over the 20 year masterplan period, it is also recognised that electric vehicles are likely to become more prevalent. A review of opportunities to provide charging facilities for electric vehicles was also considered relevant in the context of how this might link to future development.

6.16 As a component of the action plan, this will include the introduction of 6 month trial reduction in Town Centre Car Parking charges as detailed below:

	Short Stay	Long Stay	On Street	Saddlers Centre	All free on Sunday
Blue Badge Holders	Free	Free	Free	Free	
Up to 30 Minutes (existing)	n/a	n/a	£0.60	n/a	
Up to 30 minutes (proposed)	n/a	n/a	£0.50	n/a	
Up to 1 Hr (existing)	n/a	n/a	£1.20	£1.00	
Up to 1 Hr (proposed)	n/a	n/a	£1.00	£0.75	

Up to 2 hrs (existing)	£1.50	£1.50	£2.40	£2.00	
Up to 2 hrs (proposed)	£1.10	£1.10	£2.00	£1.50	
Up to 4 hrs (existing)	£2.90	£2.90	n/a	n/a	
Up to 4 hrs (proposed)	£2.20	£2.20	n/a	n/a	
All day (existing)	n/a	£3.10	n/a	£4.00	
All day proposed	n/a	£2.50	n/a	£3.00	
Revenue reduction	£36k	£27k	£10k	£61K	£35k
Total revenue reduction					£169K

- 6.17 The impact of the trial reduction of pay and display parking charges will be reviewed at the end of the trial period and a report will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 12 February 2020 to assess impact and inform any future decisions.
- 6.18 Although the trial is in place until 31 January 2020, the new charging regime will need to continue until Cabinet have taken a view on future car parking charges. If any further changes to the regime is proposed then a 21-day statutory period would apply following the Cabinet process. Therefore, there would be a further revenue reduction of up to £0.030m to allow for any extended time period.
- 6.19 The main indication of success will be a significant increase in the occupancy rates of our car parks particularly our short stay car parks. In addition, we could consider things like any change in public perception of visiting Walsall and vacancy rates.
- 6.20 Further work to take forward the Masterplan interventions will be required including (also see the final implications section paragraph 4.15 - 4.17);
- Public realm study – fundamental to most of the interventions that are proposed.
 - Further transport studies, which could involve traffic modelling.
 - Initial acquisition advice relating to specific opportunities on Park Street which will be subject to a separate Cabinet decision should this intervention be taken forward.
 - Continued landowner and stakeholder engagement.
 - Continuing to explore external funding opportunities.
 - Obtaining necessary planning consents.
 - Obtaining necessary highway closures and or traffic regulations.

7. Review

- 7.1 Each element of the vision will be regularly measured against defined metrics to provide the Council with a tool to demonstrate progress against

targets and see the direct benefits resulting from interventions and investment.

- 7.2 The Masterplan suggests a series of vision metrics (for further information see paragraph 4.9). However, further work will need to be undertaken by the Council to fully agree the baseline position and the targets to be set.

Background papers

Not applicable

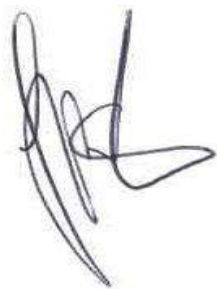
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Simon Neilson
Executive Director
Economy and Environment

10 July 2019



Councillor Andrew
Deputy Leader and
Portfolio holder Regeneration

10 July 2019

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Walsall Town Centre Masterplan		
Directorate	Economy & Environment		
Service	Regeneration & Development		
Responsible Officer	Simon Tranter / Hannah Willetts / Valdheer Rajania		
Proposal planning start	September 2018 – Date when consultants Arcadis were appointed and work commenced to develop the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	Commence further development of initial intervention Autumn / Winter 2019 / 2020

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Policy	No	N/A
	Procedure	No	N/A
	Guidance	No	N/A
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	No	N/A
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	N/A	N/A
	Other – The purpose of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan is to provide a visionary yet deliverable plan that will re-imagine Walsall town centre. It will provide Walsall Council, our partners and future investors with a framework to guide the development of the town centre and will be the tool to deliver the ambitious vision to transform Walsall Town Centre.		New
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?		
	<p>The overall aim of the proposal is to deliver regeneration and development in Walsall Town Centre. The purpose, intended outcomes and the reason for change are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason for Change - Walsall Town Centre is facing some well publicised universal challenges as a result of unprecedented changes in the retail industry and changing consumer behaviours. Following a sustained period of decline in the retail sector, including the loss of high street anchors such as BHS, Mothercare and Marks & Spencers, vacancy rates are at 28.4%, significantly higher than the national average (11.5%). • Purpose – A decision was made by the Council to proactively respond to the challenges faced by Walsall Town Centre. The Regeneration team procured consultants to develop a Masterplan which identifies the impacts, influences, consequences and opportunities, in relation to the changing and challenging economic environment for strategic centres and high streets nationally, building upon the Statutory Walsall Area Action Plan (AAP). • Outcomes – The Masterplan will present deliverable transformational place-making projects / opportunities for the Council to take forward with its partners over the next 20 years. A phasing plan has been developed and projects will be delivered over the short (0-5), medium (3-8) and long-term period (8 plus years). 		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Masterplan will drive forward the Council's investment, delivery and resourcing commitments and priorities moving forward. The plan will provide confidence to private sector developers, investors and businesses to commit long-term to the town centre. 		
	Who is the proposal likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
	All	Yes	Walsall town centre is the strategic centre for Walsall borough; providing a sub-regional focus for the local economy and community.
	Specific group/s	Yes	
	Council employees	Yes	
	Other (identify)	N/A	<p>It is a hub for people across the borough and wider</p> <p>It is well connected to Birmingham, London and the rest of the UK.</p> <p>As such, the proposal will have an effect on everyone in Walsall.</p>
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.		
	<p>The town centre is made-up of three wards including St Matthew's, Birchhills Leamore and Blakenall, as such customers within these wards will be directly impacted and some specific characteristics relating to these wards have been identified.</p> <p>However, as the town centre is the social and economic hub for all communities across the borough, the masterplan proposals will affect customers borough wide and therefore, initial baselining work has also been undertaken to understand the protected characteristics of the entire Walsall borough. As the masterplan project develops over the 20 year plan period and further consultation / engagement is planned, a more detailed understanding of service data relating to customers protected characteristics will be undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall borough has a population of approximately 281,300 (2017 ONS Population Estimate). Age - Compared to the England benchmark, Walsall has a higher proportion of children and young adults aged 18 years old and under, a lower proportion of working age adults, a higher proportion of people in their late seventies and early eighties, and a lower proportion of people aged 90 years old and over (NHS Walsall, CCG 2018). Age - The age profile of residents is expected to increase over the next few decades, with a 44% increase in the proportion of older people aged over 85 (2017 ONS Population Estimate). Disability - Within both the England benchmark Walsall borough, a higher proportions of people whose day-to-day activities were limited a little or limited a lot were present at older age bands, especially amongst those over 50 years of age (NHS Walsall, CCG 2018). Ethnicity - Compared to the England benchmark, Walsall borough has a higher proportions of Asian British people and Mixed-race people, and lower proportions of White people, Black British people, and people of other ethnicities (NHS Walsall CCG, 2018). Religion / belief - Compared to the England benchmark, Walsall borough has a lower proportions of Buddhists, Christians, and Jews, and higher proportions Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people of other religions (NHS Walsall, CCG 2018). Language - Compared to the England benchmark, the Walsall area has a higher proportions of speakers of English, Slovak, Shona, Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya), Gujarati, Pakistani Pahari (with Mirpuri and Potwari), Punjabi, and Urdu, as well as a higher proportion of people who used sign language (NHS Walsall, CCG 2018) Marital Status - Compared to the England benchmark, Walsall borough has a higher proportions of married people and widowers, and had lower proportions of single people, divorced people and people in a registered same-sex civil partnership (NHS Walsall, 		

	<p>CCG 2018).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Identity - Compared to the England benchmark, the West Midlands Region had similar proportions of heterosexual and LGBT people (NHS Walsall, CCG 2018). • Deprivation - Walsall was ranked 33rd most deprived Local Authority out of 326 Local Authorities on the latest 2015 index of multiple deprivation. • Deprivation - However, deprivation levels are higher in the town centre and the wards surrounding the town centre - Using the Indices of Deprivation 2015, ONS carried out analysis that ranked Walsall town as the 4th most deprived town or city in England. This focused on what they defined as the 'core' town centre area (rather than the whole borough), which has a workday population of 67,600. Over half of the neighbourhoods surrounding the town centre are amongst the most deprived 20% in England and some of those making up the town centre itself are among the 5% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. • Working age population - The Borough has a relatively low proportion of working age residents to support the town centre, but its high proportion of under 16's provides an opportunity to develop a vibrant centre for young people and to drive future economic growth. • Working Age Population - The working age population is more likely than the national average to be economically inactive or out of work and claiming benefits. • Qualifications - Adults in Walsall have lower levels of qualification than the national average, with over 1 in 10 (12%) having no formal qualifications and only 27% of adults with degree level qualifications compared with 38% across England. • Productivity - in the Borough (measured by GVA per filled job, 2017) is 20% below the national average and falls short of the West Midlands Combined Authority area. <p>For the purposes of the development of the Masterplan document, no further detail has been sought in relation to the protected characteristics. However, from existing population profiles of the wider area/ward, it is assumed that the proposal will impact across the spectrum of protected characteristics; as the proposal is geographically-based the impact is not specific to a certain protected characteristic. Data relating to those directly impacted, will be identified as each individual intervention comes forward to help plan for and manage the implementation and delivery stages. Census information will help to support each proposal as they develop.</p>
5	<p>Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).</p> <p>The Masterplan is a 20 year vision for Walsall Town Centre, over this period the plan will deliver a number of physical interventions in the town centre. As each intervention progresses, consultation / engagement will take place with the community which will inform, help to develop and agree detailed proposals prior to their delivery.</p> <p>During the development of the masterplan document, some initial engagement has taken place with partners, members, senior staff and the public, details for each engagement are outlined below:</p>

**Consultation Activity:
Initial Consultation**

Type of engagement/consultation	Potential drop in events, surveys and online engagement	Date
Who attended/participated? Partners / Officers	<p><u>Workshops with Council officers and partner organisations</u></p> <p>Extensive discussions have taken place across all directorates within the Council and with the Council's external partners including; the Proud Partnership, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) including Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and the Canals and Rivers Trust.</p> <p>During the preparation of the Masterplan a series of workshops were held with officers and partners. The purpose of these was to ensure that partners / other council team's priorities were fully considered within the masterplan and that emerging proposals were supported by all. At key milestones, presentations have also been made to the Economy and Environment Directorate Management Team and Corporate Management Team.</p> <p>Separate presentations were made to TfWM, the WMCA, the Canals and Rivers Trust, the Proud Partnership and cultural organisations.</p>	<p>October 2018, January 2019 and April 2019</p>

Feedback

Feedback provided details of partners future plans and strategies to ensure that the Masterplan considered and aligned with all. Partners also reviewed and informed the masterplan as proposals developed. Feedback from partners has generally been positive and partners will continue to work with the council as each of the masterplan interventions develop at the next stage.

Who attended/participated? Elected Members	<p><u>Elected Member workshops</u></p> <p>During the development of the masterplan, engagement took place with all elected members. This engagement sought member's views on the emerging masterplan proposals. Engagement included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One pre economy and environment scrutiny workshop • One all member workshop • Briefing meetings with leads of all political parties
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<p>Feedback</p> <p>Members reviewed and scrutinised proposals as they developed to ensure that they were fully considered and met with aspirations for the development of the town centre. Feedback from members has generally been positive and officers will continue to brief and engage with members as each of the masterplan interventions develop at the next stage to ensure their constituencies views are fully considered.</p>	
<p>Who attended/participated?</p> <p>General public</p>	<p><u>Initial Masterplan engagement with general public including an electronic ‘snap survey’</u></p> <p>The public engagement to date has been the release of an electronic ‘snap survey’ which took place in February 2019 mainly through a social media campaign to gather views on the town centre and to understand the communities shopping and leisure trends and barriers preventing them from interacting with the town centre. Respond rates were high with almost 2,500 respondents from across the borough and further afield.</p> <p>Masterplan information and a link to the snap survey was also sent out to local organisations social media pages / email addresses via officer and partners contacts including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall College (via Walsall College Comms team) • One Walsall (via One Walsall Comms team) • Local schools via head-teachers news letter • Business (via the Business news letter, the jobs bulletin, Walsall Works, the Town Centre Partnership and Economic Partnership) • Creative organisations such as the New Art Gallery and Urban Hax. • Information shared on the Council’s Library Page (Love Libraries) • Sarah Oakley (Voluntary & Community Sector Lead) shared with the boroughs community organisations • Walsall for ALL shared information with their contacts • The Locality and Partnerships team at the Council will share any Facebook posts or re-tweet. Their posts are often picked up and shared again by a vast number of different community groups including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brownhills Bob ○ Common People – Pelsall ○ Rushall – Shelfield In Touch ○ Aldridge Village Partnership ○ Aldridge Now and Then ○ Streetly Neighbourhood Alerts ○ Streetly Parents
<p>Feedback</p>	<p>Feedback from the public engagement has given officers a good insight into the public’s views of Walsall town centre and barriers to use of the centre which in turn has helped to shape and inform council team’s priorities and a programme of future work.</p>

A summary of the feedback from the survey is listed below:

2369 respondents

Survey period: 25 February – 29 March 2019

Do you visit Walsall TC

- Yes 90%
- No 10%

How people access Walsall TC when they visit

- The majority were by car (73%), bus (34%) or walk (22%).

Which of the following TC activities do you enjoy in your spare time?

- The most enjoyed activities were; eat out / restaurants (88%), cinema (70%) and visit the theatre (42%)

Where do you typically go to access leisure facilities?

- Most visited destinations are, Birmingham CC (70%), Wolverhampton CC (33%), Lichfield (28%)

5 top things that would motivate to people to visit Walsall more often include:

- A cleaner and safer town centre (91%), more shops or better quality (79%), improved parking provision (48%)

If you don't visit Walsall town centre, what are the reasons why?

- Appearance / cleanliness (88%), fear of crime / antisocial behaviour (80%), lack of retail / better elsewhere (73%)

Which of the following leisure activities do you enjoy in your spare time?

- Eating out / restaurants (84%), visiting the cinema (64%), visiting the theatre (51%)

Where are you most likely to pursue the above mentioned leisure activities?

- Birmingham City Centre (55%), Lichfield (53%), other (33%)

What would motivate you to visit Walsall Town Centre more often in the future

- Cleaner safer town centre (94%), more and better quality shops (77%), improved parking provision (55%)

Respondents of the TC survey

- Female – 1455
- Male – 863

Ages

- 35-44 – 21%
- 45-54 – 20%
- 25-34 – 19%
- 55-64 – 16%
- 16-24 – 13%
- 65-74 – 10%
- 75-85 – 1%

Ethnic Origin

- White – 88%

- Asian – 6%
- Mixed – 1%
- Black – 1%
- Other – 1%
- Prefer not to say – 3%

Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work that can do (including problems which are due to old age)?

- No – 82%
- Yes – 13%

Prefer not to say – 5%

Who attended/participated?

General public

Local Media

Press releases containing details of the masterplan and masterplan images, illustrating future town centre interventions, were released to local media organisations to publicise the masterplan project.

Feedback

No feedback received, local media shared information and details of the survey so any feedback would have been shared through completion of the survey.

Town Centre Partnership

Attendance at Forums

During the development of the Masterplan document, Officers attended and made an initial presentation to the Town Centre Partnership on the emerging proposals.

Feedback

The Town Centre Partnership supported the development of the masterplan and were keen to be involved further as they plan developed.

Walsall Society for the Blind

Initial Meeting

An initial meeting with a representative of the Walsall Society for the Blind, Walsall for ALL and the Equalities team was held and discussions took place about suitable future methods to engage with this group and other organisations representing disability groups in Walsall town centre. Over coming weeks, further work will take place to develop suitable methods of communication and engagement, working with the Council's Equalities team.

Feedback

The group were keen for further work to be undertaken to ensure that this group and other disability groups are fully engaged and consulted as the Masterplan interventions develop.

Protected characteristics of participants

This unknown through the current engagement that has taken place. However, as each of the Masterplan interventions develop, further consultation will take place and this will ensure that all customers with protected characteristics are fully consulted /

		engaged to understand their needs as plans develop and move towards the delivery stage.		
6	Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation			
	<p>This EqIA has been prepared in advance of the masterplan being supported by Cabinet. As outlined above, some consultation / engagement activity has been undertaken to date and subject to Cabinet supporting the Masterplan, further engagement / consultation will take place as individual projects / interventions progress.</p> <p>In terms of an overview of the engagement that has taken place to date, the general consensus indicates that there is broad support around the direction of the masterplan from officers and partners.</p> <p>The public engagement has highlighted a number of town centre issues, reaffirming the need for the masterplan and has also helped to shape the initial focus of the delivery of the plan.</p> <p>Helpfully, initial engagement has also highlighted a need to engage further with specific groups who use Walsall town centre, and this will happen at the next stage, as each of the interventions progress.</p>			
7	How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.			
	<p>The following has been completed in regards to the 10 interventions within the Walsall town centre masterplan. Further updates will be made to this table as work progresses on each of the interventions and the protected characteristics of those directly affected become known.</p>			
	Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
	Age	Unknown at this stage	Yet to engage We propose further engagement / consultation will take place as each intervention is developed. However, it is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on this	Yes Search out appropriate consultation

			<p>characteristic as delivery of the masterplan interventions will result in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced public realm and better legibility will result in improved accessibility and places for elderly to rest and meet, also improving wellbeing. - A new health centre at Challenge will improve care / medical facilities for elderly. - New homes in the town centre will provide better living accommodation for all ages. <p>Further engagement and consultation will ensure that the masterplan will have the desired positive impact.</p>	
	Disability	Unknown at this stage	<p>Yet to engage</p> <p>We propose further engagement / consultation will take place as each intervention is developed. However, it is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on this characteristic as delivery of the masterplan interventions will result in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced public realm and better legibility will result in improved accessibility for disabled. - A new health centre at Challenge will improve care / medical facilities for disabled. - New homes in the 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Search out appropriate consultation</p>

			town centre will provide better living accommodation for all. Further engagement and consultation will ensure that the masterplan will have the desired positive impact.	
	Gender reassignment	Unknown at this stage	Yet to engage There has been an increase in transgender hate crimes nationally so prior to any future engagement it will be important to understand whether there has been any increase in Walsall town centre and if this is the case, are there aspects of the physical environment that could be changed to 'design out' crime.	?
	Marriage and civil partnership	Unknown at this stage	Yet to engage	?
	Pregnancy and maternity	Unknown at this stage	Yet to engage We propose further engagement / consultation will take place as each intervention is developed. However, it is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on this characteristic as delivery of the masterplan	Yes Search out appropriate consultation

		<p>interventions will result in the following:</p> <p>A new health centre at Challenge will improve access to care / medical facilities for this group.</p> <p>Further engagement and consultation will ensure that it will have the desired positive impact.</p>	
Race	Unknown at this stage	<p>Yet to engage</p> <p>We propose further engagement / consultation will take place as each intervention is developed. However, it is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on this characteristic as delivery of the masterplan interventions will result in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New improved areas of public realm in the town centre and the indoor market will create areas for events and the provision of a range of food to celebrate the diversity of the borough, helping to promote inclusivity in the town centre <p>Further engagement and consultation will ensure that it will have the positive impact we want.</p>	Yes
Religion or belief	Unknown at this stage	<p>Yet to engage</p> <p>We propose further engagement / consultation will take place as each intervention is developed. However, it is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on this characteristic as delivery of the masterplan interventions will result in the</p>	Yes

			<p>following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New improved areas of public realm, spaces in the town centre and the indoor market will create areas for events and a range of food to celebrate the diversity of the borough and help to promote inclusivity in the town centre <p>Further engagement and consultation will ensure that it will have the desired positive impact.</p>	
	Sex	Unknown at this stage	<p>Yet to engage</p> <p>Prior to future engagement it will be important to identify and understand gender breakdown in terms of visiting the town centre and whether the physical environment results in one gender visiting the town centre more than another.</p>	Yes
	Sexual orientation	<p>Unknown at this stage</p> <p>Not known</p>	<p>Yet to engage</p> <p>There has been an increase in LGBT hate crimes nationally so prior to any future engagement it will be important to understand whether there has been any increase in Walsall town centre and if this is the case, are there aspects of the physical environment that could be changed to 'design out' crime.</p>	Y e s
	Other (give detail)	N/A		
	Further information	N/A		
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.			No
	The proposal links with other town centre proposals which are being delivered in Walsall Town Centre by partner organisations such as Transport for West Midlands, the West Midlands			

	Combined Authority and health partners.			
	<p>Transport – Mid-life improvements to St Paul's bus station (2019), SPRINT (2021), reinstated Passenger services to Wolverhampton, as well Darlaston and Willenhall (2022) and Aldridge (2024), and rail passenger services from Walsall to Birmingham Airport and London (2019).</p> <p>Commonwealth Games (2022) – taking place along the A34 corridor with direct links to Walsall via the SPRINT service, linking to the athlete's village and Alexander Stadium (5 miles).</p> <p>Health – the Council are currently working with the health sector to develop a new, multi-million pound centrally located medical facility at the Challenge site.</p> <p>The Mayor's Town Centre Programme (WMCA) – Walsall Town Centre is a priority for WMCA and was selected as one of five pilot centres in their Town Centres Programme. It was selected following an assessment of a number of centres across the region. Walsall was chosen on the basis of the challenge facing the centre as well as the real opportunities to deliver transformational change within an inclusive growth corridor. The initial tranche approved by WMCA Investment Board allocates £20million between the five pilot centres which can help achieve their objectives.</p> <p>Wolverhampton to Walsall Housing growth corridor – this joint initiative between the Council, WMCA, City of Wolverhampton and Homes England aims to bring forward an ambitious programme of housing growth with the potential to deliver 8000 residential units across the Corridor. The Corridor is anchored at either end by Walsall Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre.</p> <p>This cumulative impact should be acknowledged whilst the impact on particular equality groups will be very similar to that above in table 7.</p>			
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?			
	The impact and effect on protected characteristics will be known when all consultation and engagement has been undertaken. Further consultation and engagement will be undertaken as the proposal moves into the next phase.			
	A	No major change required		
	B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality		
	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact		
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal		

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
Note: To be completed post assessment to identify how potential negative impacts (referenced above) will be reduced or mitigated. During the implementation stage, arrangements will also be made for reviewing the actual impact of the proposal e.g. 6 and/or 12 months.				
July 2019 onwards (following Cabinet support of the Masterplan)	Further work with the Equalities team to identify future consultation	Project Manager – Regeneration Development team	Unknown	Ensure a comprehensive engagement / consultation strategy is devised for the Masterplan delivery phase.
Autumn 2019	Engage with the disabilities forum	Project Manager – Regeneration Development team / Equalities team	Unknown	Agree suitable methods to engage / consult with this group as the plan moves towards the delivery phase and provide regular updates

				to group.
July 2019 onwards	Public engagement	Project Manager – Regeneration Development team and Corporate Comms	Unknown	Provide regular updates on the masterplan's development to the public – potentially through a newsletter / social media updates

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail
Anticipated Jan 2020	To be updated as initial masterplan interventions are developed and at key milestones thereafter.

Contact us

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