

Executive Summary

The Executive of the Council committed to prepare the Town Centre Masterplan at its meeting on 15 July 2021. In doing so, it placed public engagement at centre stage in the Masterplan preparation process. The Residents' Panel and key stakeholders were invited to give their views on what they envisage the Town Centre to be in 10 years' time. The following is the vision that residents and key stakeholders wish for the Town Centre:

Woking Town Centre will be:

- the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub and a location for inward investment with a flourishing diverse, innovative, and digitally enabled economy,
- a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services and facilities;
- undergoing a significant change to be shaped by the Town Centre Masterplan, this change includes the provision of a range of shops, homes, jobs, cultural, health and leisure facilities to meet the needs of residents and modern businesses whilst enhancing the heritage and environmental assets of the area;
- a place where it is expected that development will be of exemplary design within the framework of the Townscape Strategy for the Town Centre and with green infrastructure embedded as essential and integral part of the design;
- a place where development is accessible to the disabled and all other users; and
- a place where development will be informed by appropriate public engagement.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide an overarching framework to help guide development and investment decisions in the Town Centre to achieve the above vision.

The Masterplan covers a range of topics that residents and key stakeholders want the Masterplan to address. The Masterplan covers them in detail. Below is a summary of the headlines under each topic. However, all are encouraged to read the Masterplan in full to understand its detailed requirements and how they will apply to day to day planning and investment decisions.

Townscape strategy

What it is about

The design quality of new development in Woking town centre has a direct bearing on its success. In supporting relevant Local Plan policy, the masterplan promotes high quality design in new development. In doing so, it is important that a proper account is taken of the existing character of Woking town centre. The Town Centre Masterplan defines new character areas across the centre which will help developers to do just this.

The town centre has seen some new very tall buildings. Tall buildings in the right locations can bring significant benefits to Woking. High density developments in central locations takes pressure off releasing more sensitive land in less central locations. But the town centre has until now lacked a strategic approach to where new tall buildings should be located. The Woking

Town Centre masterplan presents an evidence-based building heights framework for the whole town centre, identifying areas that might be better or less-well suited to new tall buildings.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- Update and establish a new Woking town centre character framework to help ensure new development takes proper account of its local context.
- Establish a high-level public realm and movement framework which identifies where improvements can be made to the town centre in the context of major identified development sites.
- Establish a building heights and tall buildings strategy for Woking town centre, to help ensure the form and scale of new development is appropriate and tall buildings are located only in the most appropriate locations.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- New development will be assessed against the character area, public realm and movement framework, and building heights guidance outlined in the Townscape Strategy of this Masterplan.
- To help guide development and ensure the right balance is made between making the best and most efficient use of town centre land and respecting local context, a series of studies have been undertaken on each of the Local Plan site allocations and HIF sites. These studies, whilst not representing a blueprint for development, provide the Council and potential applicants with guidance on how developments could respond to their local context whilst delivering high density and high-quality developments. Please see Appendix 1.

Sustainable construction

What it is about

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency, pledging to accelerate its efforts to become carbon neutral across its own estate and operations by 2030, and by 2050 across the wider Borough. The Masterplan sets out clear policy requirements that development must achieve to be acceptable, to help ensure these targets are met. It highlights opportunities that exist to help achieve the requirements and provides good practice examples as guidance.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- A well-designed town centre and buildings that conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials.
- Design should respond to the impacts of climate change by maximising energy efficiency and minimising carbon emissions to contribute towards net zero targets
- by 2050.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will be required to follow the energy hierarchy by reducing demand for energy through integrated approach to solar gain, securing efficient supply of heat and power, considering feasibility of on-site renewable energy generation.
- Large scale non-residential or mixed-use proposals will be required to conduct a BREAM assessment and achieve at least a Very Good rating;



- New development should incorporate measures to reduce water demand and for residential development, this should not exceed 110 litres per person per day;
- Development should incorporate electric vehicle charging points.
- Unless otherwise justified to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, development will be required to connect to the existing network of CHP.

Flood risk and surface water drainage

What it is about

Water is a natural part of our environment. However, the Town Centre is highly urbanised, with little natural or permeable space to absorb rainwater. Development has the potential to adversely affect surface water runoff and flood risk, and measures should be taken at the earliest stage of development to avoid or minimise flood risk. The Masterplan sets out the sources of flooding and provides examples of practical measures that can be used to ensure that surface water flood risk is not increased. It sets out clear requirements for development to meet or consider to be acceptable.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- The inclusion of SuDS within all development in the TCMP area will help to reduce flood risk to the multiple catchments the area drains to as well as helping to improve water quality to our rivers as required by the Environment Act 2021. Our Plan to achieve the objectives
- Development will be required to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. This should be considered and incorporated from the start of the development process.

- Development creates green/ blue streets, meaning that highways are designed to drain via rain gardens and surface water tree pits, where appropriate. An example of this has begun at Chertsey Road.

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

What it is about

Green infrastructure makes a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the community. There are significant opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and biodiversity in the Town Centre. The Masterplan provides an overview of the current green infrastructure provision, good examples of what can be achieved and requirements that development will be expected to achieve to be policy compliant.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To take proactive steps to support 'bigger, better and joined up' habitats, green ways and spaces.
- To be tenacious in the long-term effort to reduce our impacts on the environment and to plan for sustainable growth.
- To increase people's access to enjoy greenspaces, recognising the well-being lift this gives, whilst protecting and enhancing our habitats.
- To ensure that planned development is supported by infrastructure including new natural and recreational assets.
- To increase the area of the overall tree, shrub and canopy cover of the Town Centre and ensure successful establishment and long-term growth potential as well as a diversity of suitable tree species.

- To work collaboratively with partners in all sectors to achieve the objectives.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will be required to provide on-site measures for new natural and formal spaces, greenways and habitats on-site. Where on-site provision is not feasible, developer contributions will be sought to meet the requirements off-site;
- Providing pocket parks to help enliven streets and public spaces. Informal and inclusive play should be part of this to create child-friendly space for all.
- Development should help create clear links between the urban core of Woking and its surrounding natural open spaces. One such link is the Basingstoke Canal, where integration with the town centre would be improved.
- Early consideration of green infrastructure and biodiversity requirements in the design of development and street-scene improvements, continuing throughout development, including during construction and future maintenance is encouraged.
- Development will be expected to meet national and/or local policy requirements for biodiversity net gain, for example through new trees, shrubs and hedges, increasing canopy cover over the town centre; green and eco-roofs and walls; bird nesting and bat/ bird roosting features to increase habitat provision.

General Infrastructure

What it is about

It is important for development to be supported by adequate and appropriate infrastructure in a timely manner. The Council has undertaken an Infrastructure Needs Assessment, which has informed the Masterplan. The Masterplan sets out infrastructure requirements that development should contribute to provide.

Objectives of what it seeks to achieve:

- To work in partnership with providers to ensure that development in the Town Centre is supported by the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure in a timely manner.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- Work in partnership to deliver Woking integrated transport project.
- Replacement of Victoria Arch and improvement to the road network in its vicinity.
- Work in partnership with Network Rail to deliver significant improvement to rail infrastructure, including the Woking Flyover.
- Deliver Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Heritage Assets

What it is about

Woking has a rich heritage that needs to be conserved as a distinct part of the town's development. Heritage assets include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The Masterplan makes sure that development takes full account of the heritage assets of the area and their settings, with the aim of enhancing them.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To conserve heritage assets, and retain them as a valuable part of Woking's evolving built environment;
- Prevent inappropriate development and loss or damage to heritage assets.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development should conserve heritage assets as a valuable part of a dynamic town centre. Development will be required to assess its impacts on heritage assets and their



setting, including the Conservation Area and incorporate appropriate measures to enhance the assets.

- Preventing development that involves loss or damage to heritage assets and take steps to enhance and restore them where beneficial to the asset and its setting.
- Relocate Town Gate to enhance public realm in the area.

Leisure and Culture

What it is about

Woking has diverse and rich leisure and culture facilities, but there are also significant opportunities for enhancement, partnership working between the public sector and the development industry. The Masterplan sets out how this can be achieved.

Objective of what it seeks to achieve

- To ensure the town centre is a leisure and culture destination that provides for the needs of its residents, workers and visitors.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- To make better use of existing cultural and leisure spaces through co-location.
- To work with community groups and businesses to expand and maximise the benefits of performing arts
- To maximise the connection between culture and heritage.

Economy

What it is about

The Town Centre is the primary focus for economic growth in the Borough to maintain its status as an economic hub. The period of the pandemic has had an impact on the economy

of the town centre, particularly on retail and hospitality. For example, the way people shop and working patterns are changing, and measure should be put in place to respond to these changes. The Masterplan responds to these challenges by setting out measures to facilitate sustainable economic growth and how developers can work in partnership to deliver that.

Objectives that it seeks to achieve

- To deliver a balance mix of uses including residential, commercial, leisure, culture, green spaces, as well as health and other public services.
- To have a vibrant and dynamic town centre where people want to live, work and visit.
- To have a town centre that is agile to respond and adapt to changing economic circumstances.
- To create a Town Centre environment that is conducive for inward investment.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- To make sure the Town Centre continue to be the primary focus for sustainable growth. In particular, to accommodate new development on previously developed land
- To promote and market a positive vision for the Town Centre
- To provide housing at the Town Centre as key part of the mix of Town Centre uses to ensure it continue to be dynamic and vibrant

Housing

What it is about

The Council has a policy obligation and a statutory duty to meet several housing requirements, including planning to meet locally identified housing needs. The Masterplan

ensures that housing development that comes forward is sustainable, including appropriate green infrastructure, and design-led within the framework of a well-considered Townscape Strategy. It also sets out a Townscape Strategy that will help determine anticipated capacities for the HIF sites taking a design-led approach.

Objectives for housing include:

- Ensuring the comprehensive delivery of the housing requirement in the Core Strategy earmarked for the Town Centre.
- To use all endeavours to facilitate the delivery of the HIF housing ask.
- To provide housing at the Town Centre as key part of the mix of Town Centre uses
- Improving the delivery of affordable housing
- Ensuring that the design and location of new housing contributes to the Town Centre's vitality and viability
- Providing a mixture of housing tenures and sizes in every part of the Town Centre
- To make sure the Town Centre continue to be the focus of new development

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- To work in partnership to seek the redevelopment of the Day's Aggregates Yard to unlock the site for development of town centre uses, including housing.
- To improve the delivery of Affordable Housing
- To make sure that all policy and statutory housing requirements are met
- To seek the provision of private outdoor amenity spaces in housing developments.
- To require development with access core serving four or more dwellings to provide an access control system with entry phone.
- Requiring dwellings entered at the seventh floor (eighth storey) and above should be served by at least two lifts.

Transport

What it is about

Congestion is a key concern of residents and key stakeholders that needs to be addressed. Development should be accessible to all transport modes, and given the location of the Town Centre, by walking, cycling and public transport in that order before car-based travel. The Masterplan has specific proposal to help achieve this goal.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To substantially improve movement within the town centre
- To reduced town centre highway congestion
- To improve cycling and walking facilities linking the town centre under the Victoria Arch to the southern part of Woking town and around the railway station
- To replace Victoria Arch. The project will support Network Rail objectives such as Woking Station redevelopment, and future Flyover.
- The Council will work with Surrey County Council to explore the feasibility of introducing Liveable Neighbourhoods where feasible.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will contribute to the delivery of the Woking Integrated Transport Project and the sustainable transport package;
- The Council will deliver the replacement of Victoria Arch as part of the HIF project
- Development will be required to contribute to recover part of the cost of Victoria Arch Widening Scheme;
- Development should facilitate the delivery of the Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.