

## REPORT 2

### HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

### REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 7 JUNE 2022

PUBLIC REPORT: Y

EXEMPT REPORT: N

<b>Report Title</b>	Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	Yes – In order to be able to start implementing the delivery of the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan.
<b>Report Author</b>	David Wright, Economy & Business Service Manager
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To seek the views of Cabinet on the proposed Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan to enable it to progress through to Council for formal approval.
<b>Reason for Decision</b>	To enable the Masterplan progress through to Council for formal approval and eventual implementation and delivery.
<b>Portfolio (holder)</b>	Cllr Phil King, Economy
<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	CO 1 Keeping the District a great place to live, work and visit. KA.01.04 Develop in partnership the local visitor economy particularly in respect of the District's two market towns.  CO4: Improving Tourism for the District KA.04.01 Develop in partnership the local visitor economy.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	The Masterplan will include indicative costs for some of larger projects. However, given that it is a masterplan for the next 10 – 15 years, further detailed work will be required to firm up costs as and when funding opportunities become available.  It is also hoped and anticipated that the Masterplan will form the basis for a range of future grant applications aimed at town centre improvements and regeneration, as well as future Section 106 funding
<b>Risk Management Implications</b>	The Risk Register is attached as Appendix B to this report and was reviewed in January 2022, to take account of the unavoidable delays resulting from the Covid pandemic.
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	The Masterplan seeks to improve the environment of Market Harborough Town Centre to make it a more attractive place to live, work and visit.
<b>Legal Implications</b>	In order to be able to implement the provisions of the Masterplan, it will be necessary for the District Council to engage with third party property owners as the implementation of the plan proceeds.  Whilst the District Council will clearly lead the implementation of the Masterplan, specific aspects of the work may be subject to collaboration and liaison with partners including

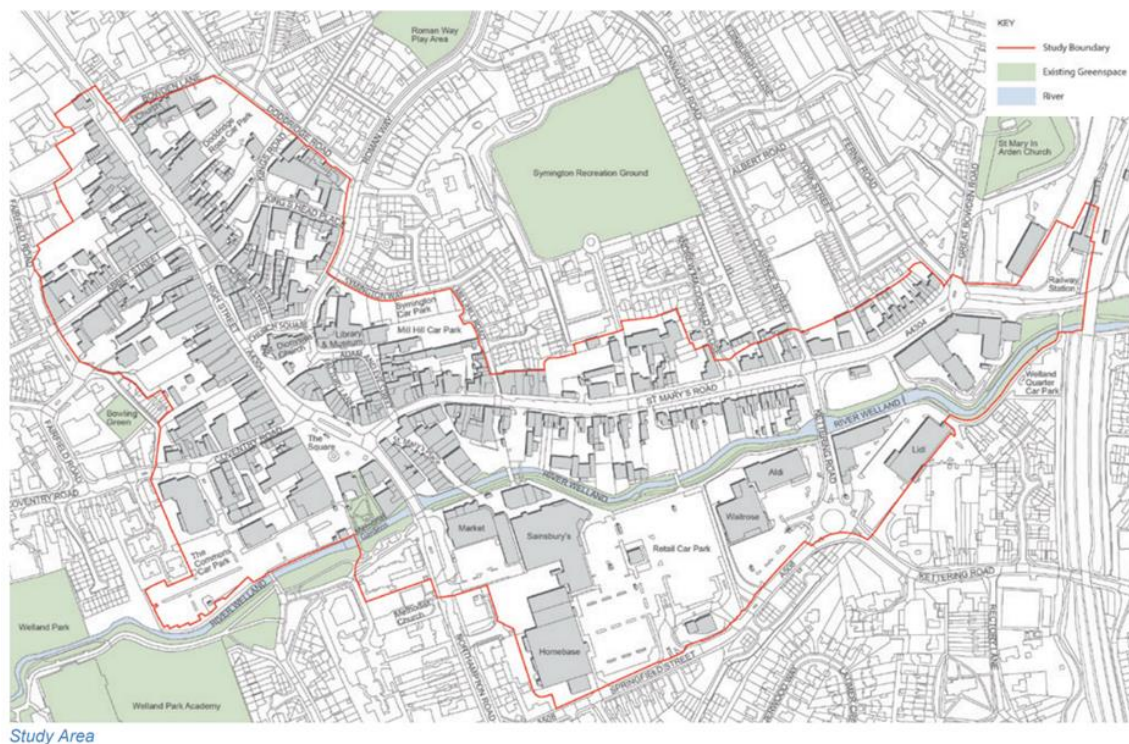
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	Leicestershire County Council, as well as formal approvals from the County Highway Authority, the District Local Planning Authority and Conservation Authorities.
<b>Equality Implications</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared to support and consider the equality impacts of the final Masterplan.
<b>Data Protection Implications</b>	None
<b>Consultation</b>	The development of the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan has involved a considerable amount of public consultation and engagement with key local stakeholders.
<b>Options</b>	
<b>Background Papers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harborough Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023 (revised 2019)</li> <li>• Tourism Strategy for Leicester &amp; Leicestershire</li> <li>• Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031</li> <li>• Market Harborough Market Report</li> <li>• Masterplan Roadshow consultation</li> <li>• Report to and minutes of Communities Scrutiny Panel on 24 March 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Appendices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendix A – Draft Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan</li> <li>• Appendix B –Town Centre Masterplans Risk Log</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That Cabinet agrees that the proposals contained within the proposed Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan are appropriate, realistic and feasible for the Market Harborough Town Centre.</li> <li>• That Cabinet agrees that there is nothing missing, or which should have been given greater emphasis, within the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan.</li> <li>• That Cabinet refers the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan to Council and recommends that it be adopted as Council policy.</li> </ul>

### 1. Background

- 1.1 Harborough District Council has committed to producing Masterplans for its two Market Towns as part of adopting the Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023. This is to ensure that the viability and vitality of the town centres and secure their roles as a local destination for retail, leisure and hosting community events.
- 1.2 The Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan process has been undertaken through gathering policy, access, place and market intelligence whilst gaining a range of stakeholder views to inform the preparation of the document.
- 1.3 The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd, Mott MacDonald and BE Group were commissioned by Harborough District Council to prepare a Vision and Masterplan for Market Harborough Town Centre during summer 2019.

- 1.4 The Masterplan will also form part of the evidence base that will inform the implementation of relevant policies for the Harborough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted April 2019) and future versions of the Local Plan.
- 1.5 The Masterplan aims to provide a 10 to 15-year framework strategy, which has been developed for the town centre through consultative process. This aims to enable greater access to the town centre and redress the balance between people and cars. The Masterplan aims to provide an overall framework to make the town centre more attractive, by strengthening its market town character.
- 1.6 The framework will include high quality design, public realm initiatives using a mix of street furniture; signage; soft and hard landscaping and possibly public art in ways that integrate with the historic conservation area. Linking the town centre to its surrounding areas is vital to make this a place that local people will choose to visit.
- 1.7 The Masterplan aims to ensure that Market Harborough Town Centre is an active and vibrant destination. It will consider the means of getting to the town centre, living in the town centre and ensuring accessibility for all ages and abilities. Moreover, in alignment with the recently Economic Development Strategy (2018 – 2023, revised in 2019), the Masterplan aims to ensure that the town centre is open and accessible for business.
- 1.8 The study area follows the Town Centre boundary as defined in the Harborough Local Plan (2019) and then extends east to include the Railway Station.



## 2 Progress

- 2.1 Detailed work and engagement on the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan, including stakeholder interviews; roadshow consultation; visioning workshops and further roadshow consultation events took place between September - November 2019.

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- 2.2 The process was initially undertaken through gathering policy, access, place and market intelligence whilst gaining a range of stakeholder views to inform the preparation of the document.
- 2.3 Unfortunately, due to the focus on Covid response and recovery and the change over from an interim to a permanent Service Manager, work on the Masterplan had to be paused between March 2020 and Autumn 2021.
- 2.4 Having completed the Lutterworth Town Centre Masterplan in Summer 2021, work on the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan recommenced in Autumn 2021. There was a need to review the work previously carried out, in the light of the experience from the Covid pandemic and the significant financial pressures that the Council faces and turn fairly general objectives and themes into more robust proposals and actions.
- 2.5 Further public and stakeholder engagement took place in Spring 2022 in order to share and gain feedback on the five themes and the specific actions and projects.
- 2.6 The focus has been to ensure that the final plan encourages increased visitor footfall, enhances the visual amenity of the town centre and has clear and deliverable outcomes.
- 2.7 **The Vision** – as part of the public engagement in 2019, local people put forward several vision statements that try to capture the spirit of the Town Centre today and what type of place Market Harborough should aim to be in the future.
- 2.8 **Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town** was selected as the preferred vision statement and is underpinned by five themes informed by stakeholder consultation, the Council's Corporate Plan, planning policy, evidence base, and summary analysis.
- 2.9 The five themes seek to address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges identified, as well as setting out proposed actions and projects over the coming 10 - 15 years. The themes are:
  - 2.9.1 **Welcoming Market Harborough** - Creating a more pedestrian friendly Town Centre that provides a strong sense of arrival and opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the many spaces and activities available.
  - 2.9.2 **Healthy Market Harborough** - Prioritising walking and cycling across the Town Centre with the promotion of active travel to reduce car journeys and the impact of vehicle emissions and their effects on people's health and climate change.
  - 2.9.3 **Vibrant Market Harborough** - Diversifying the mix of uses, activities and events in the Town Centre to maximise vibrancy that extends into the evening and over the weekend.
  - 2.9.4 **Enterprising Market Harborough** - Encouraging the tradition of enterprise in the Town with more support and space for independents and co-workspace facilities for smaller businesses.
  - 2.9.5 **Sustainable Market Harborough** - Planning sustainably for future growth, meeting the need for additional retail, food and drink, leisure and residential in the town centre and the long-term management of the River Welland river corridor
- 2.10 In order to bring the Masterplan to life, and demonstrate how the Vision can be delivered, a detailed pipeline of projects and actions has been developed. These projects vary in

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scale and impact, but have all been identified to bring benefits to the immediate surroundings, as well as to the overall impression and identity of Market Harborough. Each of the projects contribute to one of the five above themes, and these are set out in in pages 39 – 56, (TBC), of the draft Masterplan, which is Appendix A to this report.

- 2.11 It is however worth recognising that, given that the Masterplan aims to provide a framework for action over the next 10 – 15 years, the list of projects cannot be exhaustive, as new challenges and opportunities will undoubtedly emerge over this period. The Masterplan therefore needs to remain flexible to respond to these, within the overall framework of the vision and keys themes.
- 2.12 Similarly, because the Masterplan is made up of a range of projects and interventions, many of which rely on attracting external funding, they have not been prioritised or programmed into a defined implementation plan. Timescales and delivery plans will therefore be determined by when funding sources become available and the specific criteria and objectives of these funding opportunities, although clearly these will be presented to Cabinet as and when they occur.
- 2.13 Officers from the Economy and Business Service will be in attendance at the meeting to guide and assist Cabinet through the report and the draft Masterplan themes and proposals.

### **3**      Conclusion and Next Steps

- 3.1 Officers now feel that the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan represents a high-level framework for the development of Market Harborough, which is realistic and aspirational and should help improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of the town over the next 10 – 15 years.
- 3.2 The next steps are to seek formal adoption of the Masterplan by Council, after which implementation can commence, including taking forward an application for the government's Levelling Up Funding in July 2022, as well as using the Masterplan to tap into other funding opportunities as and when they emerge.

### **4**      Impact on Communities

- 4.1 A key aim of the Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan to ensure that the town centre is inclusive and accessible as a local destination for retail, leisure and hosting community events.

### **5**      Legal Issues

- 5.1 In order to be able to implement the provisions of the Masterplan, it will be necessary for the District Council to engage with third party property owners as the implementation of the plan proceeds.
- 5.2 Whilst the District Council will clearly lead the implementation of the Masterplan, specific aspects of the work may be subject to collaboration and liaison with partners including Leicestershire County Council, landowners, businesses and potential funders, as well as needing to obtain formal approvals from the County Highway Authority, the District Local Planning Authority and Conservation Authorities.

### 6 Resource Issues

- 6.1 The preparation and development of both the Market Harborough and Lutterworth Town Centre Masterplans, including the appointment of consultants, was funded from within the 2019/20 budget for Economic Development, with significant additional support from the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).
- 6.2 The final document will include preliminary costs for certain key projects that could be undertaken to deliver the Masterplan. Further work will be required to consider firm costs, priorities and funding opportunities to ensure that the projects are deliverable and achievable.
- 6.3 Whilst resources to implement the Masterplan have not yet been identified, the intention is that it will form the basis for a range of future funding applications aimed at town centre improvements and regeneration, including potentially schemes such as the Government's Levelling Up and UK Shared Prosperity Funds, as well as future Section 106 funding and the Council's own Capital Programme.
- 6.4 Once firm proposals are developed, detailed reports will be provided to Cabinet and Council for approval to proceed.

### 7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared to support and consider the equality impacts of the final Masterplan.

### 8 Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 An updated Risk Log for the Town Centre Masterplans project is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 8.2 In particular, this updated Risk Log refers to the time delays resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, which no-one anticipated when the project started in 2019. However, considerable work has taken place over the last few months to get the project back on track.

#### **Background papers:**

- Harborough Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023 (revised 2019)
- Tourism Strategy for Leicester & Leicestershire
- Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031

#### **Appendices:**

- Appendix A – Draft Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan
- Appendix B – Town Centre Masterplans Risk Log (updated in January 2022)