

Lichfield City Centre Masterplan

Report of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Economic Growth & Tourism
Councillor I. Eadie

Date: 11th March 2020

Contact Officer: Helen Bielby

Tel Number: 01543 308252

Email: Helen.bielby@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Local Ward Members
All Members



**Economic Growth,
Environment and
Development (Overview
and Scrutiny)
Committee**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following the agreement of the District Council to publish the draft Lichfield City Centre Masterplan, a public consultation took place over four weeks in January/February 2020 to establish the views and opinions of key stakeholders and the wider public to the proposals contained within the document. This report summarises the representations received, gives some detail to the changes to the document as a result of this and outlines the proposed actions going forward.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the consultation responses to the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan and recommends that, subject to changes to the document resulting from the consultation, Cabinet approve the document as a basis for the Council's ambitions for development within Lichfield City Centre.

3. Background

- 3.1 David Lock Associates were commissioned in July 2019 to undertake work to formulate a Masterplan for Lichfield City Centre. Following an Analysis, Issues and Options exercise, a draft Masterplan was duly prepared.
- 3.2 Public consultation on the draft Lichfield City Centre Masterplan took place from the 6th January 2020 to 3rd February 2020. A 'drop in' event took place on the 17th and 18th January at St. Marys and approx. 1100 people attended and spoke to both the consultants and District Council representatives. The exhibition boards available at the drop-in events summarised the content of the Masterplan document. The consultation was also advertised in the Lichfield Mercury on 2nd and 16th January 2020, with copies of the draft Masterplan available to view at the District Council House. Flyers summarising the content of the draft Masterplan were made available at Lichfield library, Lichfield City Council offices and via distribution to tenants by Three Spires Shopping Centre management.
- 3.3 A total of 141 responses were received from local residents and local interest groups and organisations via either online or via a paper questionnaire. In addition a number of organisations and individuals responded via letter or email.

- 3.4 A **draft** report on the consultation has been produced by DLA (attached at Appendix A including a breakdown of representations at Appendix 1 to that document) which explains the process that has been undertaken for the public consultation, an analysis of the responses received and a breakdown of who responded. It is noted that whilst 30% of respondents did not state their age (including organisations), of those that did, under 18's formed the largest group to respond (24%). This is encouraging as it is not typical for this age group to respond well to this type of consultation. 85% of respondents identified as residents while 32% work in Lichfield. 94% of respondents said that they shop in Lichfield. A list of organisations that responded is included in DLA's Consultation Report.
- 3.5 Overall the feedback received was positive with 77% of respondents answering 'Yes' to the question *"Do you think that the overall strategy is correct"*. One issue regarding this from a number of respondents was whether there should be more focus on sustainability and carbon neutral initiatives within the plan. Furthermore concerns were raised that the cumulative scale of future development proposals seems out of character with the realistic capacity of the historic environment.
- 3.6 In terms of the Birmingham Road Gateway, 78% of respondents answered yes to *"Do you think the 'Birmingham Road Gateway' development opportunity will help improve the city centre?"* Further feedback included the need for more affordable housing, car parking need/issues and consideration of public open space to be incorporated into the proposals.
- 3.7 72% of respondents agreed that the District Council House development opportunity would help to improve the city centre. Concerns were raised about the type of uses proposed, separation of building ownership and also car parking.
- 3.8 One key issue is the Bird Street Courtyard proposals. This garnered more individual responses than the other proposed development opportunities. 75% of respondents answered 'Yes' to the question *"Do you think the 'Bird Street Courtyard' development opportunity will help improve the city centre?"*. Additional comments included that the B&M store and adjacent Staffordshire County Council land should be incorporated into the proposals, that the NCN Cycle Route currently sited in the car park should be mentioned and historic landforms should be reflected. Concerns have been raised regarding loss of car parking, building heights, layout and design and views into/out of the site need to be carefully considered.
- 3.9 In response to the issue of development on the University West car park, 67% of respondents agreed that this would help improve the city centre. Concerns were again raised regarding permanent loss of open space that was previously on the site, loss of car parking and design/layout and use of potential buildings. The use of the land for educational space was also raised.
- 3.10 In terms of other development sites, respondents raised the development at the former Angel Croft (Beacon Street), the land at Quonians Lane and land at Stowe Road. Land at Sandford Street car parks and Swan Road/Friary Car parks was also put forward as development sites. A suggestion for a multi-purpose outside space for market traders was also made.
- 3.11 The ideas contained within the plan to help pedestrian accessibility to the city centre from Lichfield City train station by way of the 'Birmingham Road Corridor' interventions was supported by 88% of

respondents. Many responses had specific ideas for how this could be implemented including overpass/underpass from the railway station, synchronisation of traffic light junctions and changes to the highway in general. In addition 83% of respondents agreed that the proposed 'Lichfield Transport Hub' would enhance the arrival experience to the city by bus, coach, train and taxi but raised concerns that the bus station must be of a size to allow for future expansion and that there should be an enclosed waiting area. .

- 3.12 Although 81% of respondents agreed that a Circular Minster Pool Walk would encourage more people to use the Minster Pool area there was some opposition to this proposal due to concerns about impact on the biodiversity, trees and tranquillity of the area. In addition 80% of respondents agreed that the 'Bird Street Walk' proposals would make the route safer and more welcoming, although having looked at this proposal again DLA have concluded that the existing width of the passageway is considered too restrictive to permit the potential for any real improvements.
- 3.13 There was good support (77%) for the ideas of pedestrian priority streets and improvements to pedestrian walkways and linkages. However there was mixed views to the reopening of lower Bore Street. It was also raised that pedestrian priority streets need better enforcement, that they should not exclude cyclists and that the whole of the city centre could be pedestrianised. Moreover that noise and light pollution must be considered. In addition 93% of respondents supported the strategy to improve pedestrian walkways and linkages, with ideas including large city centre maps to be displayed in the city. Respondents also encouraged a review of street furniture and that heritage improvements could be referenced such as shop front improvements, tourism signage and a revival of heritage features within the public realm. Other public realm suggestions included more opportunities for cycling (including cycle paths and cycle stands) and further referencing of heritage assets within the public realm.
- 3.14 82% of respondents answered 'Yes' to the question "Do you think the Delivery Strategy provides a sensible way forward for implementing the masterplan", it is noted that a number of respondents consider that the Birmingham Road gateway site should be a delivery priority but that the commercial elements to be delivered should take place in parallel with public realm improvements. Questions were also raised regarding funding of developments and public realm projects.
- 3.15 Other comments have been raised and these are summarised within the DLA report. These include the connectivity issues between Lichfield City and Lichfield Trent Valley, more support to attractions such as the Cathedral and the tourism economy and the use of VMS car parking signs and the installation of more EV charging points. Moreover a number of organisations have requested to be further consulted in regards to future development proposals.
- 3.16 All comments received have been noted and analysed. Changes to the document have been proposed by DLA as result of these comments. These include wording/sentence changes as well as other changes including changing some of the detail of the proposed development opportunities, the finer detail of which would be considered further via site development briefs or similar. For example, DLA have responded to the representations regarding Bird Street car park redevelopment with proposed changes to the brief comprising an emphasis on (a) environmental enhancements in the short-term; with (b) a longer-term opportunity for comprehensive development. It is noted that the Masterplan Objectives, Masterplan Quarters, Transition Areas and Design Principles would remain broadly the same.

- 3.17 Chapter 5 of the Masterplan details how the strategies and proposals contained within the document could be delivered. High level viability testing has been used to ensure that the proposals are feasible and deliverable, subject to costs that cannot be quantified until the process is further advanced, including site abnormalities', CPO and legal costs, off-site costs etc. The document envisages a 20 year implementation process and considers the Council's role in implementing and funding the key projects.
- 3.18 It is proposed that the final version of the Masterplan, once approved by the Council, will be used as a base document, from which further plans/strategies for the finer detail regarding the development of the city centre will emerge. This documents could include; a Car Parking Strategy, a Public Realm Strategy and further consideration of Connectivity into an out of the city centre to local towns and villages as well as key transport nodes such as Lichfield Trent Valley. These plans and strategies will include implementation project proposals, giving key consideration to viability and delivery of said projects.

| | |
|--|--|
| Alternative Options | 1. Members could request fundamental changes to the draft Masterplan prior to its adoption by the Council. This would require a further commission to the consultants to review and significantly amend the work that has been produced to date. |
| Consultation | 1. The draft Masterplan has been subject to public consultation as outlined in the main body of this report. |
| Financial Implications | 1. Although there are no financial implications arising out of this report it must be noted that the implementation of the projects included in this document may require significant capital funding from the District Council. |
| Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan | 1. The master planning process will help support and deliver the Council's strategic objective of promoting a vibrant and prosperous economy. 2. It will also support the priorities of achieving healthy and safe communities and clean, green and welcoming places to live. |
| Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications | 1. None |
| Crime & Safety Issues | 1. None |
| Environmental Impact | 1. None directly from this decision, although some of the plans and strategies will be able to contribute to the Council's ambitions regarding sustainable development |
| GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment | 1. Not applicable |

| Risk Description | How We Manage It | Severity of Risk (RYG) |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--------|
| A | The draft masterplan is not recommended by the Committee to be adopted by the Council | Members have played an active part in the formulation of the document and have had the opportunity to provide consultation responses to the draft plan. | Yellow |
| B | Some of the proposals contained within the masterplan may not be welcomed by all stakeholders | The public consultation has demonstrated considerable support for the proposals included in the masterplan. Further public consultation may take place on specific development opportunities prior to statutory consultation via planning applications etc | Yellow |
| C | | | |
| D | | | |
| E | | | |

Background documents

[Draft City Centre Masterplan \(DLA Associates\)](#)
[Consultation Report \(February 2020\)](#)

Relevant web links