

Lichfield City Centre Masterplan

Cabinet Member for Major Projects & Economic Development



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Local Ward Members: All Members

CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In Summer 2019, following a competitive tender, consultants David Lock Associates (DLA) were commissioned to produce a Masterplan for Lichfield City Centre. Following the production of an Analysis, Issues and Options report in October 2019, a draft Masterplan was produced. This was subject to public consultation during January/February 2020 and the document was amended as a result of the feedback. The final document was submitted to LDC in March 2020 and duly considered by EGED O&S Committee.
- 1.2 In response to issues raised by the EGED Committee, further work has been commissioned that will provide advice in regards to the impact of Covid-19 on city centres and on the implementation of the Masterplan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet:
 - i) Notes the progress and submission of the final amended masterplan by consultants David Lock Associates; and,
 - ii) Notes the requirement to test the viability and deliverability of the masterplan as presented and,
 - ii) Notes the issues raised about the potential impacts of CV19 on centres across the country and the need to assess this in the context of Lichfield and the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan.

3. Background

- 3.1 David Lock Associates were commissioned by the Council in July 2019 to undertake work and formulate a Masterplan in respect of the future Lichfield City Centre. Following engagement with officers and members and external stakeholders based upon a detailed baseline assessment and analysis, issues and options exercise, a draft Masterplan was duly prepared.
- 3.2 The document envisages a 20 year implementation process and considers the Council's role in implementing and funding the key projects. The Masterplan is aspirational, whilst continuing to support and facilitate the vitality and characteristics of the city centre that make it attractive and popular. As well as supporting emerging planning policy, the projects set out in the Masterplan will also be used to shape the future of the city centre by encouraging appropriate land uses and public realm improvements to ensure Lichfield continues to prosper in a sustainable way which is sensitive to the city's character.

- 3.3 The Masterplan is a flexible framework rather than a rigid blueprint, setting out clear aspirations that the Council would like to achieve while being able to adapt to changes in the economy, required uses or other events that impact on city centres and development in general. This includes the impact of Covid 19. As with any masterplan it will be essential to keep it under review and ensure that the evidence base that supports it is still valid. In addition the implementation of any of the development schemes proposed within the Masterplan will be subject to rigorous viability and deliverability assessments and can be adapted and designed to meet the economic and community demands at that time. The plan is deliberately designed to evolve over the 20 years of its intended life as inevitably there will be significant socio- economic changes during this period.
- 3.4 Public consultation on the draft Masterplan took place from the 6th January 2020 to 3rd February 2020. This included a drop-in session over two days at the St Mary's Hub in the centre of Lichfield. 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.
- 3.5 All comments received as part of the consultation were 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 in respect of 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 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. As a result of the public consultation the document had a number of changes made to it and a final Masterplan was submitted to the Council in March 2020. This is attached at **Appendix A**. It is envisaged that the Masterplan, once approved, 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.
- 3.6 In setting out the recommended approach, DLA carried out high level viability testing of the component proposals and have included suggestions and recommendations how the masterplan could be delivered. As would be expected given the nature of the masterplan and its contents – being of a high level nature - further work to confirm the viability and deliverability of proposals will need to be undertaken if the masterplan framework is to be duly supported and the Council wishes to pursue delivery of schemes/projects in line with this.
- 3.7 The EGED Committee at its meeting on 9 June 2020 raised the issue of the specific impacts of CV-19 on the national and local economy and centres like Lichfield. In the light of these it was suggested that the Council may wish to satisfy itself that the masterplan and the proposals set out within it remained robust and capable of delivery. As a consequence, DLA have been commissioned to provide advice in regards to the impact of Covid-19 on city centres generally and also in relation to the delivery of the Masterplan. This advice is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 3.8 The advice sets out an overview of relevant information as to the impact of CV-19 on city centres. It advises that there is now an increased awareness of the need for green space in city centres and a healthy outdoor environment. It also sets out that multifunctional spaces are needed, along with less need for office space due to more home working.

- 3.9 In terms of the Masterplan it sets out that whilst there is uncertainty, there is also opportunity and the flexibility of the Masterplan means that, whilst the ambitions within it are still relevant and appropriate, the Council is able to make changes to the proposals where necessary, to reflect the changes of demand and need. They state that Lichfield is well placed and indeed 'ahead of the curve' due to having a framework in place which can be used to underpin the recovery action plan.
- 3.10 The paper goes on to state that there is now chance to assess and undertake specific actions, for example, in relation to the delivery of a public realm strategy. The paper sets out that this could be a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to make lasting changes that will benefit health and wellbeing and help to combat climate change. The paper sets out many initiatives that could be included in such a strategy and are integral to the Masterplan and its overall objectives including green space provision, pavement widening/pedestrian priority streets, cycling lanes and storage and any reduced vehicle movements. The latter will also inform a car parking strategy which would reconsider the City's parking needs and provision, as well as drop off requirements reflecting the acceleration in on-line purchasing. Both of these strategies will assist in laying the foundations and providing guidance and information for the delivery of the Masterplan.
- 3.11 The paper recommends the delivery of development and buildings which would respond to the 'new normal'. These would potentially include a reduction in retail floorspace, bespoke rather than speculative office space, more green space, live/work dwellings with private outdoor space, more outdoor activity space, including space for bars and restaurants outside, and a reduction in car parking spaces. These types of refinements to development proposals would be picked up in any development brief and implementation of schemes at any of the locations identified as a matter of course.
- 3.12 In terms of specific development sites DLA advocate that the Birmingham Road Gateway could be reconfigured to allow for a larger footprint transport interchange, more outdoor space for bars and restaurants, more convenience retail and a reduced sized MSCP. It advises that the cinema and hotel market will need to be monitored closely. DLA also cite the Goldsmith Street in Norwich development and the Trent Basin in Nottingham housing schemes as good practice in terms of their private and public outdoor space and advocate that this type of residential development could be suitable for the Birmingham Road site. At Bird Street Courtyard there is opportunity for public space with other uses including leisure and car parking. At University West, the need for coach parking should be addressed within the car park strategy but sets out that the demand for the proposed use of the site for SME and start up business should be monitored further. Again any changes required will be picked up on a site by site basis as development occurs
- 3.13 It is also suggested that the public sector, and the funding that it can provide, will be called upon to take a more active role in delivery of development during the time in which the economy is rebuilding due to the extreme caution that private sector developers are likely to display.
- 3.14 The paper sets out that assessing development viability will be extremely difficult, although it is noted that there is likely to be a lot less competition for sites, especially those in non-prime locations. However they do state that small towns and cities, such as Lichfield, with green spaces and attractive centres are predicted to bounce back quicker from the effects of the pandemic than centres in larger conurbations. They advise that it is likely that there will be a period of development inactivity and much will depend on how well the CV-19 is kept under control and what a new normal will look like. Ongoing information gathering and monitoring of economic performance is key to the delivery of the Masterplan and its inherent parts.

3.15 Whilst Covid will inevitably affect our economy it is too soon to be specific about what the results will be either nationally or at a local level. The Masterplan, given its framework approach gives flexibility for each site to be considered carefully in light of the existing conditions of the market when it is bought forward for development. As David Locke Associates highlight the Masterplans overarching approach is still relevant and appropriate

Alternative Options	1. N/A
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The draft Masterplan has been subject to public consultation as outlined in the main body of this report. Ongoing consultation and engagement with key stakeholders including local residents will take place going forward 2. At the Overview and scrutiny meeting on 9th June the following issues were raised and have been considered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Covid 19 impact. The assessment has been undertaken by DLA and the report is attached, Paragraphs 3.7 -3.14 above refer. (b) There was discussion on the use of Council finding to support development schemes. It is accepted that it is too early in the process for such discussions and decisions to be considered. The Masterplan once adopted will provide a framework for individual site development and it is at that stage that viability and deliverability, including the councils role in it will be considered fully by Council . (c) the overall view was that the plan as presented was appropriate and should be taken forward
Financial Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The Covid 19 report was undertaken from the Covid budget. 2.
Contribution to the delivery of the Strategic Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Masterplan will particularly help support and deliver the Council's strategic objectives of developing prosperity and shaping places to benefit residents and business. 2. The formulation of the strategy's and implementation of projects will also assist in enabling residents and those who access services and facilities within Lichfield city centre to live healthy and active lives.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None
Crime & Safety Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None
Environmental Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None directly from this decision, although some of the strategies and projects will be able to contribute to the Council's ambitions regarding sustainable development
GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not applicable

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	The draft masterplan is not taken forward 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 and therefore it should reflect the aims and objectives as set out previously	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	The proposals will require capital and revenue funding and this has not yet been included in the MTFS and may not be available	A budget will be drawn up and reported on regularly. Options for funding from other public bodies will be researched. Funding options for development projects will be further considered	Yellow
D	Officer resource may not be available and delivery of the projects may be delayed	Recruitment is taking place for a further team member within the Major Development Projects team. Further resource requirements will be identified in due course.	Yellow
E	A major overhaul of the planning system including the introduction of a zonal planning system may delay the implementation of the masterplan	Monitoring of government guidance on the reforms, potential to use Local Development Orders to ensure development is appropriate and delivered as needed	Yellow
F	The impact of Covid-19 on centres is not yet ascertained. Economic instability will have an impact on investment funding of major projects. Local government funding may also decrease and the ability to bring forward development projects may be severely hampered	Commercial property markets will be monitored and professional advice will be taken as necessary. Budgets will be monitored and work programmes will be adjusted to cater for the economic impact that the epidemic will have	Red

Background documents

Appendix A - City Centre Masterplan (DLA Associates)

Final Report (March 2020)

Appendix B – Lichfield City Centre Masterplan: Potential Impacts of Covid-19 Briefing Note (DLA Associates)

June 2020

Relevant web links

None