

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

REPORT OF: BUSINESS UNIT LEADER – PLANNING POLICY
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Wards Affected: All Haywards Heath Wards
Key Decision No
Report To: Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth
Date of meeting: 20th January 2021

Purpose of Report

1. This report requests the Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposed changes to the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) following public consultation and to recommend adoption by the Council.

Summary

2. This report:
 - a) Sets out a summary of the responses received from public on the draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (the draft Masterplan);
 - b) Sets out proposed changes to the draft Masterplan; and
 - c) Sets out the next steps towards adoption.

Recommendations

3. **That the Scrutiny Committee:**
 - (i) **Considers the consultation responses on the consultation draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan;**
 - (ii) **Considers the proposed modifications to draft Haywards Heath Masterplan set out in Appendix 1; and**
 - (iii) **Recommends to Council, subject to the modifications set out in Appendix 1 being implemented, that the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document**
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Background

4. At its meeting of 22nd October 2020, the Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth considered a draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (the draft Masterplan). The Committee agreed unanimously that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approve the document for public consultation.

5. Public consultation was held for 6 weeks between 9th November – 21st December 2020. The consultation was carried out in accordance with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the Community Involvement Plan (CIP). This included:
 - publishing the details on the Council’s website,
 - Notification using the Council’s social media feeds (Facebook and Twitter)
 - providing an interactive map facility to view the proposals – this was viewed over 7,500 times,
 - an email and letter notification to statutory consultees and those on the Council’s consultation mailing list,
 - a press release and coverage in local newspapers such as the Mid Sussex Times, and
 - an article in the Council’s magazine (Mid Sussex Matters) which is delivered to every household within the district.
6. There is no statutory or local requirement to hold a public exhibition, however, in order to encourage responses ‘exhibition panels’ summarising the key points of each proposal were included in an interactive map and were available to download from the Council’s website.
7. This report sets out a summary of the issues raised during the consultation. It also sets out the modifications proposed to the draft Masterplan in response to consideration of the representations made.

Response to Consultation

8. A total of **243** respondents made 424 comments on the draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan.
9. Respondents were able to make their comments using:
 - **eForm Questionnaire** – this posed a series of questions related to each proposal/element of the Masterplan as well as the opportunity for respondents to provide written free form comments. A total of 117 respondents used this method.
 - **Email/Post** – respondents were able to provide comments and attachments via email/post. A total of 126 respondents used this method.
10. Responses were received from:
 - **Residents:** 219 respondents
 - **Organisations:** 9 respondents
 - **Statutory Bodies:** 8 respondents (Environment Agency, Gatwick Airport, Highways England, Historic England, National Grid, Natural England, Southern Gas Networks, West Sussex County Council)
 - **Town and Parish Councils:** 4 respondents (Haywards Heath Town Council, Ardingly Parish Council, Cuckfield Parish Council, Lindfield Parish Council)
 - **Town Councillors :** 1 respondent
 - **Local Authority:** 1 respondent (Tandridge District Council – no comment)
 - **Site Promoter:** 1 respondent (representing promoter of Opportunity Site G – “2 The Broadway”)

11. A summary of the comments made by respondents during the consultation period is contained in **Appendix 1**.

Vision and Objectives / Principle of Preparing a Masterplan

12. The majority (70%) of respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the Masterplan should aim to encourage economic recovery, growth and investment, which is the key aim of the Masterplan.
13. Four responses questioned whether the draft Masterplan was sufficiently ambitious and whether it fully reflected the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Masterplan acknowledges that Covid-19 will change the way that town centres operate, particularly in the short-term. However, the medium to longer term impacts are not yet known. The Masterplan therefore aims to set agile principles to support economic recovery and growth.
14. A mixed response (50% agree, 50% disagree) was received in relation to the 8 Town Centre Objectives. No additional objectives were proposed, and none were suggested for deletion in their entirety.
15. Objections to the Vision and Objectives primarily related to:
 - compatibility between encouraging sustainable transport at the same time as potentially increasing parking provision or encouraging parking, and not enough mention of public transport (3 comments)
 - the closure of Clair Hall appears to conflict with the objective to nurture community and attracting people to live and work in the town centre and should to refer to retaining community uses (4 comments)
 - lack of reference to climate change / sustainable development matters (3 comments) The Haywards Heath Town Council supported the Vision and Objectives

Response

16. Officers are not proposing to make any changes to the Vision and Objectives other than to Objective 3 which can be amended to include reference to public transport. Objective 1 refers to nurturing community and attracting people to live, work and visit and this includes community uses. Objective 3 refers to sustainable travel which will contribute towards sustainable development goals. A Supplementary Planning Document cannot set policy therefore policies related to climate change (e.g. building standards) can only be considered in a strategic document such as the District Plan.

Consultation

17. A total of 9 comments objected to the adequacy of consultation, particularly the length and timing of the consultation and that a public exhibition was not held. However, the Council is satisfied that, given the measures set out in paragraph 5 above, that best practice was followed and that the consultation was robust.

Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure

18. The draft Masterplan proposes a number of Public Realm and Infrastructure improvements. Overall, these were supported. The following represents a high-level summary of responses, more detail can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- **Commercial Square and Station**

65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

In particular, residents agreed with the proposals for signage and better lighting/treatment of the railway bridge.

As this proposal was supported, no amendments are proposed.

- **Perrymount Road**

67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

Residents agreed that this is a key route. However, concerns were raised about whether potential for cycle lanes would meet design standards. Additional clarity will be provided based on further guidance from West Sussex County Council.

- **Muster Green Gyratory**

56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

The removal and reconfiguration of the gyratory was supported by residents overall, with few objections questioning the need/cost of doing so. Haywards Heath Town Council objected to this element as an alternative arrangement/layout was preferred. West Sussex County Council noted that any future scheme will need to be modelled fully at detailed design stage and this will be added for clarity.

- **The Broadway**

66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

Strong support was received regarding proposals at The Broadway, with some commenting that the plans could have gone further in relation to pedestrianisation. However, the consultants concluded this was a Primary Road (page 25) therefore it has an important role for vehicle access and movement within the town.

As this proposal was supported, no amendments are proposed.

- **South Road**

52% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

The principle of reducing traffic and making the area more pedestrian friendly were supported. Concern was raised by Metrobus that slowing traffic may increase congestion. Some residents commented that the plans could have gone further in relation to full pedestrianisation. However, the consultants

concluded this was a Primary Road (page 25) therefore it has an important role for vehicle access and movement within the town.

Additional clarity will be provided in relation to meeting design standards in consultation with West Sussex County Council and bus companies.

- **Sussex Road**

62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

Comments received were supportive of the proposals and identified the benefits that these would bring.

As this proposal was supported, no amendments are proposed.

- **Speed Limit**

62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

There was strong support from both residents and Haywards Heath Town Council for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in key areas of the town centre.

As this proposal was supported, no amendments are proposed.

- **Cycling**

61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

Comments were received in relation to specific designs and standards. It should be noted that detailed specific designs would be investigated further when schemes are brought forward. Alternative routes were suggested out of the town centre to adjoining villages, or within the remainder of the town. It should be noted that the Masterplan can only set principles for areas within its boundary.

In response to comments received, additional text will be included to refer to appropriately designed and located cycle storage.

- **Parking**

31% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

The Masterplan proposes consolidating the existing small car parks (Haywards West, Haywards East and Franklynn Road) into a multi-storey at The Orchards with the aim of improving capacity overall, making it easier for visitors to find a space and reducing congestion in searching for a vacant space. This supports Objective 4. The response to this proposal was mixed, with 54% disagreeing with the proposal overall and 68% disagreeing with the specific principles set out for the redevelopment of the three car parks for residential use (Opportunity Sites C, D and E). In particular, concern was raised regarding the accessibility of businesses on Sussex Road and Haywards Road which would be impacted by their closure.

The closure of smaller car parks will be subject to additional further work through the Council's Parking Investment Strategy, which will consider capacity and other measures. Any proposed closure of car parks will take account of the aforementioned responses. This will be clarified within the Masterplan.

- **Victoria Park**

67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

Residents supported the role Victoria Park plays in providing leisure and open space within the town centre, and that there was potential to open it up for community uses (particularly at the northern end). However, concern was raised by 5 residents around the removal of the hedge.

This proposal was supported in the main, therefore no amendments are proposed.

- **Gateways and Wayfinding**

64% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

The principle of improving navigation around the town was largely supported. In particular, it was felt that tourists and visitors would benefit.

As this proposal was supported, no amendments are proposed.

- **Other Small-Scale Improvements**

63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

These proposals were largely supported, based on the questionnaire response. No additional comments were provided on this matter; therefore, no amendments are proposed.

- **Meanwhile Uses**

51% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the rest were unsure).

These proposals were largely supported. No additional comments were provided on this matter; therefore, no amendments are proposed.

Opportunity Sites

19. The draft Masterplan identifies "Opportunity Sites" within the Town Centre boundary that have potential for regeneration and renewal and which could help deliver the Vision for the town centre. The identification of these sites does not imply they are available or viable, and additional work will be required to establish the precise opportunities these sites could provide.

20. A series of Aims and Principles have been established for each of these areas to guide future development and respondents were asked to comment on them. It should be noted that the Masterplan does not contain specific detailed proposals. It seeks to set broad aims and principles which would apply should any redevelopment be proposed for these sites.

- **The Orchards**

The Masterplan sets out three measures that aim to increase footfall, encourage a flourishing night-time economy, and maintain an attractive destination for those wishing to trade (both by retaining existing tenants and encouraging new ones). The Masterplan therefore proposes:

- Incorporating other uses, e.g. leisure or community;
- Improving the public realm and built environment; and
- Enhancing Town Centre parking

63% of respondents supported the principle of encouraging non-retail uses to The Orchards, recognising the benefits this would bring in terms of footfall, encouraging night-time economy and ensuring the centre remained vibrant and viable. A total of 9 responses suggested this would be a good location for the provision of a cinema, community/leisure building or library to help drive footfall.

In relation to improving the public realm, 62% agreed. Comments received noted that the centre feels tired and in need of a facelift, and that improvements would encourage more shoppers, retailers and other uses.

Nine respondents raised concerns about the provision of a multi-storey car park at this location, with 56% of questionnaire respondents disagreeing that The Orchards should be the focus for car parking. In particular the respondents referred to multi-storeys feeling unsafe, are urbanising, would dominate the area and impact on neighbouring amenity. Whilst the Masterplan includes safeguards related to design, officers propose that changes be made to strengthen these requirements should a multi-storey car park be proposed in the future.

- **Clair Hall**

Given its strategic location and that the building was nearing the end of its economic life, the Clair Hall site was identified as an Opportunity Area within the 2007 Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan.

The site continues to represent an opportunity for regeneration. The Masterplan sets out Aims and Principles to guide future development. The first principle requires an assessment to be undertaken to establish the need for such a facility and whether community facilities could be re-provided on this site or elsewhere in the town. Other important principles such as the relationship with existing buildings and Clair Park are also set out.

The Masterplan consultation asked a series of questions related to the Clair Hall site. These sought views on the content within the Masterplan but also sought the community's views on the permanent closure of Clair Hall. The response to these additional questions will be used to inform the assessment of need, in line with the requirement of the first principle of the Masterplan and will help to inform decisions about the future provision of community

facilities. Although this work is ongoing and is separate to the Masterplan, for completeness officers have summarised all the response in Appendix 1.

Sixty two percent of respondents indicated that they disagreed with the principles set out in the Masterplan. However, the associated written comments generally related to the closure of the building and overall principle of redevelopment not to the planning principles set out in the Masterplan. Indeed, there was only one comment, from Historic England (below), relating to the planning principles that would apply should redevelopment be proposed.

In order to provide clarity on this point, Officers propose to amend the text related to the Aims and Principles to reinforce the fact that the planning principles only apply if the first principle (related to the assessment of need and options for re-provision) has been satisfied.

Historic England requested that the Heath Conservation Area should be adequately protected from any redevelopment of the site. The Aims and Principles in the draft Masterplan already refer to the conservation area and the need for any redevelopment to accord with District Plan policy DP35: Conservation Areas. Therefore, officers propose no further changes.

- **MSDC Car Parks**

As noted in paragraph 18: 'Parking', the majority of respondents to the questionnaire (68%) did not agree with the principle of redeveloping the three small car parks. In addition, 33 comments from residents and local businesses, referring to the impact on adjacent businesses and reduced ability for their customers to park, were received.

Since the consultation commenced, the Council has adopted a Parking Strategy. A key action in the plan is to develop an Investment Strategy which will consider usage/capacity and future proposals for the MSDC car parks.

The Aims and Principles for the Car Parks would only apply should the decision be made in the future to redevelop them. To address these concerns, officers propose to make the approach towards the decision making clearer in the supporting text for this section. However, officers recommend that the development principles set out be retained in order to guide any future development proposals should they be brought forward in the future.

- **Additional Opportunity Sites**

The draft Masterplan also identifies 8 additional opportunity sites that have potential for smaller-scale improvements. These are located in prominent/gateway locations, the principles for each relate to supporting vibrancy and vitality.

Site (G) "2 The Broadway" and (I) "59-83 South Road" (previously occupied by Woolworths/Co-Op) received overall support.

Concern was raised about existing occupants. The Masterplan is clear that these are opportunities only, and do not imply that the sites are available or

viable, and that further work would be required to bring these forward. However, officers propose to review the text to provide clarity.

A number of comments suggested that Stockwell Court should be added to the list of additional opportunity sites. Given that this is a significant flatted development above a range of mixed-use units and given the high number of different ownerships within the building, it is unlikely that a viable and deliverable scheme could be developed within the timeframe of the Masterplan however reference can be added to improving shop facades on this site.

Implementation

21. The Masterplan includes an Implementation Strategy. Seven comments were received relating to implementation, with no overall objection. Amendments were suggested to improve clarity which officers agree with and these will be included in the Masterplan.

Amendments Proposed to the Masterplan

22. Appendix 1 contains the detailed response by officers to the points raised, and suggested amendments to be made to the Masterplan as a result ahead of recommending it to the Council for adoption. The proposals and principles within the Masterplan are in the main supported. Therefore, only a small number of amendments to improve clarity or correct factual errors are required ahead of adoption.

Next Steps

23. Subject to Member consideration, the draft Masterplan will be revised in accordance with the proposed changes set out in Appendix 1.
24. Following this the Council will be asked to consider the final version of the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (incorporating the proposed changes) and to adopt the Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document.
25. Once adopted the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan SPD will be a material consideration in the consideration and determination of planning applications. It will also be used to stimulate inward investment and to inform any investment funding opportunities.

Other Options Considered

26. An option would be to not adopt a Masterplan and rely on District Plan Policy DP2: Town Centre Development. However, this is a general policy and does not provide the level of supplementary detail or certainty to support economic recovery and assist in securing inward investment in this location.

Financial Implications

27. The costs of preparing the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan have been funded from the Development Plan Reserve.

Risk Management Implications

28. The Government's focus is on economic recovery and growth, and ensuring vitality of Town Centres, which this Masterplan supports.

Equality and customer service implications

29. The draft Masterplan was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. This concluded that the document does not discriminate against any members of the community that have 'protected characteristics.'

Other Material Implications

30. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening have been carried out on the draft Masterplan. Both conclude that SEA and HRA are not required.

Appendix

1. Summary of Consultation Responses and Proposed Amendments