

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN – SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

REPORT OF: Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive
Contact Officer: Sally Blomfield – Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy
Wards Affected: All Haywards Heath Wards
Key Decision: No
Report to: Council
Date of meeting: 31st March 2021

Purpose of Report

1. This report recommends the Council adopts the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (in Appendix 1) as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Summary

2. This report:
 - a) Recommends that the SPD is adopted by the Council for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications.

Recommendations

3. That Council:

Adopt the Haywards Heath Masterplan (attached in Appendix 1) as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications.

Background

4. Town centres are at the heart of local communities. They are the retail, community, leisure and business focus for the town. It is vital that town centres remain vibrant and prosperous, supporting economic recovery and growth.
5. The Council's **Economic Development Strategy** (adopted 2018) contains an objective to create "*viable and vibrant town and village centres with their own identity which meet the retail, leisure and employment needs of the growing population*". One of the actions to meet this objective is to "*Develop a Masterplan to help shape the strategic long-term vision for Haywards Heath as a destination and to co-ordinate development and investment to deliver that vision*".
6. This is reinforced in the Council's **Economic Recovery Plan 2020-21** which contains an action to adopt a Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan to set a framework and guiding principles for town centre growth and recovery and to assist stakeholders with investment decisions.

- 7. Planning Policy recognises the importance of Town Centres. The National Planning Policy Framework states that “Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.”
- 8. The Mid Sussex District Plan (adopted 2018) supports the regeneration and renewal in Town Centres. Policy **DP2: Town Centre Redevelopment** notes that this should be in accordance with Town Centre Masterplans, where adopted.
- 9. The Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan provides a framework for planning and investment decisions, with the aim of supporting economic recovery and growth.
- 10. Once adopted, the SPD will provide additional guidance to Policy DP2: Town Centre Development and will be a material consideration in making planning decisions within the Masterplan boundary. Upon adoption the Masterplan will supersede the current Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan which was adopted in 2007.

What is the role of a Town Centre Masterplan?

- 11. The primary role of a Town Centre Masterplan is to provide a framework for economic vitality, recovery and growth. An adopted Masterplan demonstrates the Town’s intentions for regeneration and renewal which in turn provides more clarity for the community, potential investors and those planning development and infrastructure. It can also provide evidence to support bids for future investment and help prioritise investment priorities and decisions.
- 12. The Masterplan cannot set additional planning policy or allocate sites for development or specific uses. Its role is to set a framework and guiding planning principles, should development opportunities arise within the lifetime of the Masterplan. Therefore, it does not include detailed designs for any scheme because it is not the delivery vehicle for any of the proposals set out within it. The identification of a particular proposal, scheme or opportunity site within the Masterplan does not guarantee it will be delivered: any implementation will be subject to further and separate detailed work.
- 13. Any future redevelopment proposals arising from the Masterplan will be to be subject to further public consultation on detailed designs, through the usual planning application process.

Content

- 14. The Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan is at **Appendix 1**.
- 15. The Masterplan contains the following 8 objectives to achieve the Vision of re-enforcing Haywards Heath’s role as a vibrant and connected town that attracts business and people:

1	Attracting people to visit, work, and live in the Town Centre
2	Retaining and strengthening the distinct character areas
3	Providing opportunities for sustainable travel and improving public realm
4	Exploring and providing opportunities to improve parking provision
5	Protecting the town’s significant green spaces (e.g. Victoria Park and Clair Park)

6	Creating positive 'gateway moments' to define arrival into the Town Centre
7	Providing a framework for enhancing opportunities to live in the Town Centre
8	Providing a framework for 'meanwhile uses' such as pop-ups to increase vibrancy

16. To help deliver these objectives, the Masterplan contains a series of Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure Improvements as well as identifying Opportunity Sites for potential regeneration.
17. Section 4 of the Masterplan identifies the Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure Improvements. These relate to Commercial Square and Station, Perrymount Road, Muster Green Gyratory, The Broadway, South Road, Sussex Road and Victoria Park. A series of proposals are suggested to improve connectivity between these locations for pedestrians and cyclists. Other proposals included relate to speed limits, parking, wayfinding/signage, and meanwhile uses to improve public realm to ensure Haywards Heath remains an attractive place to live, work and visit.
18. Section 5 of the 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. Therefore, 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.
19. Section 6 of the Masterplan includes policy interventions that will be considered as part of the District Plan Review process. This will ensure that the Council has an appropriate policy framework in place to ensure town centres are able to thrive. Section 7 sets out an Implementation Strategy. This seeks to provide an indicative timescale and the identification of further work required for each of the projects.

Public Consultation

20. The draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan was considered by Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 22nd October 2020 which resolved to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to approve the document for public consultation. 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).
21. A total of **243** respondents made 424 comments on the draft Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan. These were considered in detail by the Scrutiny Committee for Housing Planning and Economic Growth on the 20th of January 2021.
22. In total, 70% of questionnaire respondents agreed with the key aim of the Masterplan, to encourage economic recovery, growth and investment. The public realm and transport improvements were largely supported, as were the principles set out for the Orchards opportunity site. Whilst feedback on Clair Hall and the MSDC Car Parks received the most objections, many of these were due to a lack of clarity about the role of a Masterplan in relation to opportunity sites and the status of the hall on the Clair Hall site.

23. At the meeting the Solicitor to the Council advised that Clair Hall was open and therefore the document must reflect the current situation. He confirmed that the Masterplan would be amended accordingly. In addition, on the 13 January 2021 the Deputy Leader agreed that any consideration of the future use of the facility would be preceded by 'further public consultation to add to the feedback already received through the Haywards Heath Masterplan consultation...'.
24. The Scrutiny Committee for Housing Planning and Economic Growth resolved to recommend to Council that the Masterplan be adopted subject to the proposed modifications.
25. The revised Masterplan incorporating all proposed amendments is included in **Appendix 1**. A schedule setting out the details of all the changes that have been made to the Masterplan as a result of responses to the consultation and other factual updates is set out in **Appendix 2**.

Adoption

26. The Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan is at **Appendix 1**. This is the final version of the Masterplan and includes all amendments listed in **Appendix 2**. Subject to Council's recommendations, this is the version of the Masterplan to be adopted.
27. Upon adoption, the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan will be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It 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, as an adopted Masterplan demonstrates the Council's aspirations and agreed position.

Financial Implications

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

Risk Management Implications

29. 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

30. 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

31. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening have been carried out on the draft Masterplan, in consultation with the Statutory Environmental Bodies. Both Screening reports conclude that SEA and HRA are not required.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** - Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan – Final Draft for Adoption
- **Appendix 2** - Schedule of Amendments to the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan

Background Papers

- Report to Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 22nd October 2020
- Report to Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 20th January 2021