
TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PROCESS

SUMMARY REPORT**Purpose of the Report**

1. This is a covering report to support a presentation to Place Scrutiny to update Members regarding the public engagement that follows on from last year's Town Centre Strategy work.
2. This is an opportunity for Members to comment on the engagement process and emerging outcomes and make any recommendations for further work.

Summary

3. Cabinet adopted the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy Part 1 – Developing the Vision – Cherishing the Assets on the 4 December 2012. Various issues were identified for further work in the first half of 2013. To undertake this work another round of engagement has been planned around car parking, bus and coach facilities and the vision for the markets.
4. Following this engagement there will be technical work undertaken to develop options that will be formally consulted on in March and April 2013.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Members note the content of this report and the presentation.
 - (b) Members comment on the engagement process and the emerging findings.

Richard Alty – Director of Place

Background Papers

- i) Town Centre Regeneration Cabinet Report 4 December 2012
- ii) Darlington Town Centre Regeneration Strategy – Part 1 – Developing the Vision – Cherishing the Assets (Appendix 1 to the Cabinet Report)
- iii) Town Centre Strategy Engagement Plan (Transport Matters – Attached)

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Safety and security has been a key consideration in developing the options.
Health and Well Being	The opportunity to maximize opportunities for sustainable and healthy transport choices is a key consideration in the development of the emerging strategy.
Sustainability	The principles of sustainable transport underpin the development of any options.
Diversity	Equalities Impact Assessment (EqA) and Disability EqA are integrated into the preparation of the options.
Wards Affected	Central, All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The strategy is being developed within existing resources.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The LDF Core Strategy is the spatial expression of 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'. The regeneration of the Town Centre is a key deliverable in One Darlington Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	The workload proposed assumes resources at existing level in Strategy and Commissioning, no additional requirements being placed on the team, and the availability of staff time from key officers across the Council whose service requirements need to be reflected in the LDF in a coordinated way.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. On the 4 December 2012 Cabinet approved the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy – Part 1 – Developing the Vision – Cherishing the Assets.
7. This Strategy identifies the key principles guiding the regeneration of the Town Centre within the context of the Local Plan and One Darlington Perfectly Placed. The vision for the Town Centre briefly comprises:
 - (a) A focus on leisure and office development in the Feethams area, building on the successful procurement of the cinema and hotel development and the already established office uses of the Town Hall, Beaumont House, etc.
 - (b) The further promotion of the larger shops for non-food retail, for example, fashion to the north of the Town Centre, with a possible expansion subject to the delivery of improvements to the road network.

- (c) Improvements and investment in the Covered Market and the further development of the offer of the markets in general.
 - (d) The continued support of the independent retail sector to the south and west of the Town Centre.
 - (e) The rationalisation/improvement of bus and coach facilities to improve access and further enhance the public realm in the Pedestrian Heart.
 - (f) Improvements to the accessibility, convenience and quality of car parking facilities.
 - (g) The development of the evening economy and the cultural life of the town, focussed on the Town Centre.
8. A number of matters in the vision outlined above remained unresolved at the time of adoption and the report identified areas where further work is required. These areas were;
- (a) Bus and coach facilities
 - (b) Bus stops
 - (c) The indoor market
 - (d) The parking, access and public realm of Skinnergate and Duke Street
 - (e) A detailed parking strategy
 - (f) The future of privately owned sites
 - (g) Links to the Town Centre Fringe
 - (h) The delivery of a department store in the Town Centre
9. The current round of engagement deals specifically with the transport related issues. Separate pieces of work are being undertaken to further understand the issues around the markets and develop options. The Town Centre Fringe Masterplan is to be adopted in the Spring of 2013 and negotiations continue with developers to deliver a department store.
10. The engagement plan (**see Appendix**) attached to this report identifies the process of gathering views, developing options, formally consulting upon these options and the integration with the development of the Local Plan.
11. It is anticipated that in line with the results of the public engagement and following various technical studies issues and options will be consulted on formally in March and April 2013.

Next Steps

- 12. The results of the engagement process will be used to develop options for bus and coach facilities, the rationalisation of bus stops, car parking and Skinnergate and Duke Street.
- 13. The results will be reported to Place Scrutiny alongside the technical work and options prior to consultation.