

BURY ST EDMUNDS TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

St Edmundsbury Borough Council wants Bury St Edmunds to continue to flourish. In order to plan positively for growth, the Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 has identified the need for a masterplan to be prepared for the town centre. The masterplan will contain proposals and initiatives that will help to implement the Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031. St Edmundsbury Borough Council has appointed a team of town planning and urban design specialists, led by David Lock Associates (DLA) and Peter Brett Associates (PBA), to produce the masterplan for the town centre. The Issues and Options Report sets out an analysis of the issues and options for Bury St Edmunds town centre, and is the first part of the masterplan preparation. The Issues and Options report will be subject to a period of consultation and engagement. The draft masterplan will then be prepared and will be subject to a further period of engagement and consultation in the summer of 2017.

UNDERSTANDING BURY ST EDMUNDS TOWN CENTRE

A review of existing baseline information has been undertaken together with an urban design analysis of the town centre, to fully understand the issues affecting Bury St Edmunds. This has been used to identify options as the proposed means of achieving the draft masterplan objectives. A summary of the town centre's strengths and weaknesses is set out below.

Summary strengths

- One of England's best preserved historic market towns
- High quality architecture and archaeological heritage
- Rich mix of traditional building forms, materials and detailing
- Good range of smaller independent retailers, restaurants and businesses
- Strong leisure, cultural and community offer
- Residential neighbourhoods close to town centre

Summary weaknesses

- The majority of the streets consist of hard surfaces in terms of their visual appearance
- Relatively little York stone paving survives
- The highway network around the town centre experiences congestion and 'pinch points' which impacts upon the visitor arrival experience
- Evident areas of disconnect between different locations within the town centre
- Conflict between different users and uses of the street at St Andrews Street South
- Approaches and gateway spaces do not signal arrival into the town centre
- Perceived and real walking/cycling routes from the residential neighbourhoods to adjoin the town centre

To view or download a full copy of the Issues and Options Report, and to complete an online questionnaire go to:

www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/bsemasterplan



Having considered all the issues, 8 key objectives emerge. They provide the basis for the masterplan.

OBJECTIVE 1: ACCOMMODATING AND SUPPORTING GROWTH

Capitalising on Bury St Edmunds' status as the sub-regional centre for West Suffolk through supporting the continued growth of the existing economy; offering a town rich with employment and retail opportunities, green and blue open spaces and historic and cultural assets. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Identifying potential sites to provide a new mix of town centre uses, including residential, business and leisure uses;
- Exploring opportunities to provide for the most efficient use of land and buildings in the town centre, including potential redevelopment e.g. Cornhill Walk, the bus station area, the telephone exchange, the Station Quarter, the Tayfen Road area;
- Identifying future locations for retail growth (comparison and convenience), which reflect the success of the arc without detracting from existing independent stores and traditional centre;
- Improving the leisure and retail offer to reinforce Bury St Edmunds as a visitor destination and support leisure facilities which encourage family participation, recognising the gap in current provision;
- Enhancing the leisure offer including the 'café culture' and provide a greater and wider concentration of eating and drinking facilities to enhance the night time economy;
- Enhancing the mix of uses and visitor attractions to encourage visitors to stay for longer to support the local economy;
- Encouraging a wider range of job opportunities by providing space for new business and employment uses including small businesses and start-ups;
- Increasing hotel provision within the town centre to enable additional overnight stays in the centre; and
- Improving marketing for Bury St Edmunds' facilities across the region, highlighting its unique history and position as a cultural, retail, leisure and business hub.

OBJECTIVE 2: MAINTAINING A STRONG, HISTORIC HEART FOR BURY ST EDMUNDS

Recognising that Bury St Edmunds serves a wider catchment than the town itself, it is important that Bury St Edmunds continues to serve as a destination for visitors and tourists owing to its important heritage assets and character. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Providing a range of facilities and services to ensure that the historic core is an asset for everyone;
- Supporting the continued development of the Bury St Edmunds Market through improvements to the public realm around Cornhill and Buttermarket;
- Establishing convenient, safe and attractive routes to enhance the visitor experience through the identification of distinct character areas and the use of well signed and accessible routes to promote identity;
- Preserving and enhancing access to and visibility of heritage assets to reinforce the historic character of the town and the medieval grid layout;
- Enhancing Bury St Edmunds' distinctive character by improving physical and visual links to and from the Abbey and Abbey Gardens and historic buildings such as the Cathedral;
- Ensuring improvement and greater provision of tourist attractions and facilities to maximise access to existing heritage assets;
- Protecting and enhancing key views of important buildings and spaces and preserving Bury St Edmunds' central medieval grid layout, whilst making the most of opportunities for greater enjoyment of landmark features; and
- Promoting activity at building frontages, including along St Andrews Street to increase vitality.

OBJECTIVE 3: ARC OF GROWTH

Recognising the importance of the arc as a key development area, it will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Ensuring the arc is a vibrant and sustainable area;
- Exploring opportunities to support the arc's role as a key development area;
- Supporting the arc's role as a key development area.



VALUES AND OPTIONS

Options to consider options that the masterplan could address and comprise:

OBJECTIVE 3: IDENTIFYING AN OPPORTUNITY

Engaging and acting upon opportunities presented by development sites that adjoin the town centre. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

Ensuring an integrated approach is taken to key development sites, including linkages to the Tayfen Road and Station Hill masterplans; identifying opportunities for new development to support a new mix of uses whilst also enhancing the form and function of the town centre; and supporting and diversifying key employment opportunities.



OBJECTIVE 4: SUPPORTING THRIVING MIXED-USE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Maintaining a mix of uses in those areas principally residential in character, to support those living in the town centre. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Exploring opportunities to provide a wide range of unit sizes and tenure mix in the town centre, including residential dwellings suited to families, key workers and single people and the provision of affordable housing;
- Identifying potential for retirement and older person accommodation;
- Supporting innovative housing design for all sections of the community;
- Encouraging a range of supporting community, education and health uses to ensure neighbourhoods contain a range of local facilities;
- Enhancing the range of youth and community facilities and activities; and
- Supporting the creation of linked neighbourhoods and quarters as part of the wider town centre.

OBJECTIVE 5: PROVIDING WELCOMING GATEWAYS AND APPROACHES

To identify opportunities for enhancing the experience of arriving in Bury St Edmunds and address the impression of disconnection between different locations. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Improving attractiveness of key routes into the town centre, such as Eastgate Street and Risbygate Street;
- Addressing severance caused by Parkway, Tayfen Road and the approaches to Compiegne Way;
- Enhancing connectivity across the town, particularly between the arc, the old town and the train station;
- Addressing areas of congestion within the town centre, including identifying and encouraging ways in which to reduce car traffic in the town centre, particularly during peak periods;
- Increasing the number and usability of car parking spaces in the town centre, where feasible, to accommodate existing and future demand;
- Considering redevelopment potential and expansion of St Andrews Street Car Park; and
- Improving bus provision in the town centre by making it convenient and attractive for passengers and operators.

OBJECTIVE 6: ENCOURAGING VIBRANT, WELL-DESIGNED STREETS AND SPACES

Improving the attractiveness of streets and spaces within the town centre. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Enhancing public streets and spaces to provide a more welcoming pedestrian environment, including the provision of improved street lighting and unified surface materials that are robust and attractive;
- Rationalising street furniture where appropriate to eliminate street clutter, improve the attractiveness of the town centre, and to aid pedestrian mobility, including for people with disabilities and people with visual impairments;
- Enhancing the outside spaces around the Apex including Charter Square and St Andrews Street, and at Angel Hill, to provide a more attractive and lively environment;
- Providing consistent and coordinated information and signage to aid navigation for visitors and to promote identity;
- Supporting the mix and range of uses to appeal to a broad group of people;
- Getting the detailing right both in terms of the public realm and built environment; and
- Improving public realm design quality, particularly along key streets, spaces and town centre gateways.

OBJECTIVE 7: MANAGING AND ENABLING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

Promoting sustainable modes of transport and ensuring that all uses across the town are easily accessible by users of all types of mobility. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Establishing a safer and more comfortable environment for pedestrian users and those with mobility requirements;
- Recognising the ageing demographic and provide improved and enhanced facilities to increase usage of the town centre;
- Considering targeted pedestrianisation to improve pedestrian accessibility;
- Reinforcing the attractiveness of existing cycle routes to make them safe and user friendly, and investigate potential for secure cycle racks in key locations;
- Providing improved signage and information to aid navigation for visitors;
- Ensuring servicing and deliveries related to town centre uses are discreetly accommodated; and
- Ensuring the provision of a high-quality environment that supports better mental health and well-being.

OBJECTIVE 8: CAPITALISING ON GREEN AND BLUE SPACES

Enhance access to and the quality of the green and blue edges to the town centre, recognising the leisure and health benefits which green infrastructure can provide. It will be important for the masterplan to consider options for:

- Increasing participation in healthy activities and lifestyles by providing new fitness facilities, and through employing the themes of Sport England's Active Design initiative;
- Providing and enhancing existing green and blue spaces to increase participation from across the demographic;
- Reinforcing the attractiveness of pedestrian and cycle routes for people to safely walk and cycle, connecting to the wider cycle/walking network outside of the centre;
- Considering the wider functionality and character of different locations so that they mutually support one another – Abbey Gardens, allotments at Cotton Lane and the proposed spaces at Station Hill and Tayfen Road for example;
- Increasing tree planting where appropriate to enhance environmental quality;
- Addressing potential localised flood risk through incorporation of sustainable drainage measures where appropriate;
- Protecting and enhancing areas of wildlife and biodiversity interest, many of which are important locally and support protected species; and
- Protecting the views into and out of the town centre.