

Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan 2017

Report of Consultation

Introduction

This report summarises responses received to the consultation draft Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan, identifies and analyses the key issues and brings forward a set of conclusions for the guidance of the consultancy team in the preparation of the final draft.

All conclusions are presented in bold text. Those which suggest that some amendments to the masterplan may be appropriate to address representations received are flagged in **red**. Other conclusions which require no amendment to the masterplan but are deserving of particular note are flagged in **blue**.

Consultation Programme

The Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan was prepared with the assistance of consultants Urban Initiatives Studio and published in draft for the purposes of public consultation on 11 August 2017 with comments invited until 22 September 2017 (six weeks).

The consultation commenced with an exhibition staged in Loughborough Town Hall on 11 / 12 August 2017 after which it was relocated to the reception area at Southfields for the remainder of the consultation period. Those attending the exhibition were able to submit comments on forms provided for the purpose.

The physical exhibition was supported by a dedicated web site which permitted on line scrutiny of the draft Masterplan and the six display panels. An on line version of the comments form was provided.

The consultation was preceded by a briefing for all Councillors held on 8 August 2017. Provision was made also for presentations to a number of interest groups including:

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| • Loughborough Business Improvement District Board Meeting | 14 August |
| • Town Centre Masterplan Stakeholder Group (invitations sent to 60 individuals representing over 50 businesses, services and organisations) | 16 August |
| • Loughborough Market Traders | 4 September |
| • Charnwood Disability Forum | 11 September |
| • Wards End / Devonshire Square Business Group | 11 September |

Publicity

Publicity for the consultation process was provided through various channels:

- A conventional press release to all media channels
- An announcement on the Council's web site "landing page" linked to the dedicated consultation site, and,
- Social media promotional tweets

The consultation received extensive coverage in the Loughborough Echo edition of 9 August 2017 and was featured on BBC Midlands Today and BBC Radio Leicester on 11 August.

Responses

The consultation attracted 241 responses in the form of completed comments forms (225) and individual letters or e-mails (16).

Detailed responses are recorded in a separate document which will be published as a background paper. Those comments have been summarised and collated under the 13 headings set out under the questions that respondents were invited to address through the published consultation forms. This report follows the same format and should be read in conjunction the draft Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan (August 2017).

Q1 - Have we got the key opportunities for the town centre right?

Summary of Responses

Some 24% of respondents answered “yes,” 27% answered “no” with 17% undecided.

Some 70 respondents (32%) made reference to a wide range of other opportunities and issues that the study should consider. There is no overriding issue but several respondents raised broadly common areas of concern. They include:

- Insufficient consideration given to the needs of people with disabilities including the potential loss of parking for blue badge holders.
- Insufficient attention to the role of public transport in providing convenient access to the town centre and the adverse impact of relocating services to Lemyngton Street.
- The need to improve access for cycling and cycle parking.
- The risk that the range of projects proposed makes Loughborough the same as any other town centre lacking in local distinctiveness and independent businesses. Its role as a market town deserves greater emphasis and incentives should be provided to encourage small and more diverse businesses.
- Address the issue of drug and alcohol abuse, begging and homelessness. Pedestrianisation with street furniture has encouraged such anti-social behaviour.
- Insufficient (free) parking facilities compounded by the loss of on street parking; need to welcome cars and provide convenient parking.
- Anxiety that new housing in the town centre may be occupied by students – there is a need for affordable housing for local people.
- The project has ignored the shift towards internet shopping. It cannot compete with neighbouring city centres.

Analysis

This was a catch-all question intended to ensure that nothing material to the medium to long term strategy for the town centre had been omitted from the commission. The percentage splits between those answering “yes” and those answering “no” is not particularly informative or helpful. Rather it appears to reflect disappointment on the part of many respondents that the exercise has not:

- Revisited previous decisions such as the rerouting of bus services to Lemyngton Street and the preference for bus hubs as opposed to a dedicated bus station.
- Addressed in sufficient detail the needs of the disabled and cyclists.

- Tackled issues of social impact associated with additional student housing in the town centre and the incidence of drug and alcohol abuse, begging and homelessness.
- Brought forward proposals and incentives which will lead to local distinctiveness and the encouragement of small and diverse businesses.
- Taken into account the impact of internet shopping and the inability to compete with neighbouring city centres.
- Made provision for additional parking to accommodate projected growth and compensate for the loss of on street parking consequent upon the proposals.

The range of comments clearly express strongly held views across a number of issues which become a recurrent theme throughout the responses to the Masterplan. Undoubtedly some of the issues raised will merit further consideration and action on the part of the Council and its partners in effectively managing the town centre so as to improve accessibility by all modes and address the causes and consequences of anti-social behaviour.

However, the general tenor of the responses reflects a degree of frustration over the level of detail that some respondents had evidently expected to find in the Masterplan. It is of course a strategic exercise and as such it was never within the project remit to reopen the discussion on the routing of buses in the wake of the completion of the Inner Relief Road; that decision has been made. It is apparent that there are certain unintended consequences attached to the implementation of the Inner Relief Road and closure of the route between Swan Street and High Street (displacement of southbound bus services to Lemington Street, inadequate signage and displays to assist bus users in finding services supported by real time information, confusing junction layouts and abuse of traffic orders prohibiting general traffic from pedestrianised areas and High Street / Baxter Gate). The County highway authority is aware of these issues and is actively looking to develop detailed responses to mitigate or remove these problems without compromising the overall commitment to a traffic free town centre accessible by sustainable transport solutions. It will be important that the Borough Council continues to actively participate and encourage the County Council in the resolution of these issues.

At the strategic level the masterplan maintains a commitment to active travel; it identifies deficiencies in the cycle network and proposes specific routes to improve connectivity between the town centre and major destinations. There will be additional routes and issues of detail relating to contra flow lanes, shared surfaces and cycle parking which are valid but too intricate to address through the medium of a strategic Masterplan; the commitment to active travel sets the context for further engagement to take place on such matters of detail in partnership with the relevant agencies.

The same response applies to representatives for the people with disabilities. Further consultation will take place before any dedicated facilities for disabled parking are removed or alterations made within the public realm which might impact on accessibility for all or standards of personal safety.

The provision of off campus student housing in Loughborough is an emotive issue. The Council has been an active partner in persuading the government to introduce a specific use class for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) through the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order to better control the incidence and density of HMOs within the local general housing stock. The Council has taken the necessary steps to claim those powers which are exercised through the development management system. Student housing

providers have made the case that purpose built student housing delivered as part of a mixed use development in the town centre can assist in relieving the pressure on the general housing stock reducing the demand for HMOs. Current planning policy allows for the consideration of such proposals on their individual merits. Resolution of the local tensions attached to the student housing debate is not a matter which reasonably could have been undertaken within the remit for the Town Centre Masterplan.

The Masterplan explicitly recognises the importance of Loughborough as a market town; that role is acknowledged in the vision statement and the market is expected to continue to contribute significantly to the vitality and viability of the town centre both as a key component of the Market Place Character Area and among the “small interventions” which promote effective branding of the local offer and specialist markets. Similarly the Character Areas and townscape improvements aim to provide an attractive environment to generate additional footfall within those areas of the town where independent traders lend diversity and local choice to the retail offer.

It has never been intended that Loughborough should compete with neighbouring city centres and out of town retail parks; rather its role is complementary to those centres. The Masterplan acknowledges that the traditional High Street faces significant challenges, not just from larger centres but from growing on line sales and difficulties in attracting investment. Loughborough will continue to be accessible to a significant and expanding catchment area. The Masterplan aims to encourage a menu of opportunities to ensure that it is best placed to serve that expanding community and is capable of retaining and increasing footfall to sustain the viability of the centre overall.

The consultancy team was made aware of the results of the Charnwood Car Parking Impact Assessment (2015) and its recommendations concerning the projected need for additional provision in Loughborough. The property market review undertaken by commercial partners to inform the Masterplan recognised the costs and challenges facing local authorities in attempting to provide additional parking in town centres. It reported that town centre parking rarely comes forward in isolation through public funding; typically it is delivered through linked commercial development. Accordingly the consultancy team was charged with identifying opportunities in Loughborough where car parking might be facilitated through enabling commercial development. That task has been addressed through the Masterplan specifically through the promotion of the Baxter Gate site as an opportunity for a mixed use redevelopment.

The loss of off street parking as a result of the redevelopment of other opportunity sites (Granby Street and Southfield Road Extension car parks) clearly provoked some anxiety among respondents, notwithstanding the assurance that development of those sites would not proceed in the absence of alternative parking provision. Similarly the potential loss of on street parking as a result of public realm improvements, pedestrian preference and the introduction of two way traffic in Granby Street provoked a substantial body of concern.

Taken collectively the concerns over the adequacy of provision for on and off street parking do raise issues of strategic concern which will be addressed in further detail elsewhere in this report.

Conclusion

That issues of concern raised by respondents of a non-strategic nature, or appertaining to matters of detail, are shared with partner agencies involved in the day

to day operation and management of the town centre to permit their evaluation and appropriate intervention by the responsible agencies at the operational level.

That the issue of car parking provision is acknowledged as a matter of strategic concern and addressed through responses to specific proposals potentially impacting on levels of on and off street provision across the town centre.

Q2 – Do you support the Vision and Objectives of the Masterplan?

The proposed vision and objectives for the Masterplan state:

Loughborough Town Centre will be a successful and vibrant place with a strong identity that stems from its role as a market town and a home to Loughborough University. It will be an attractive destination with a diverse retail and leisure offer, a mix of housing and a wide range of employment opportunities.

The town will be easy to access with a well connected network of vehicular and pedestrian routes. Activity in the town will be supported by a range of events and innovative marketing, business and promotional strategies that will make Loughborough a great place to be.

Objectives:

1. **Movement and arrival:** To strengthen connections across the town centre to create a more legible network of streets and spaces linking key destinations and promoting active travel.
2. **Character, identity, uses and offer:** To enhance the townscape by ensuring that the new development responds to the distinctive pattern of uses and character across the town and to protect and enhance the town's offer.
3. **Town centre experience, events and promotions:** To support physical interventions with a series of short term interventions to promote the town's brand, attract visitors and enliven the town centre.

(5.2 - 5.3)

Summary of Responses

Some 37% of respondents supported the vision and objectives (11% strongly). 31% were unsupportive (17% strongly). 16% were neutral and 16% (33) offered further comments, of whom 10 expressed support in principle.

5 respondents believed the masterplan to be seriously detrimental to the town centre; pedestrainisation was cited as having encouraged anti-social behaviour damaging to businesses and the market. It is argued that the vision should focus on making it easier to get into town and making it less attractive to miscreants.

Several respondents again rehearsed the need to give closer attention to the needs of the elderly and disabled, facilities for cyclists and to provide more short term and (free) convenient parking. Two respondents made particular reference to the need to concentrate on driving up footfall to support existing businesses in the centre and fill up empty shops rather than encourage new developments around the edges.

General Comment:

- The town centre is an important focus of economic, social and community activity and investment – it is vital that the Council takes the lead in promoting future prosperity and regeneration. Recognition that regeneration cannot be just physical is welcome. In the absence of strong private sector investment the short term emphasis should perhaps be on the “small interventions” to increase activity as a route to encouraging private sector attention.

Analysis

The statistics reveal a broadly balanced view on the vision and objectives. Those who were unsupportive believed that pedestrianisation has encouraged anti-social behaviour. That causal relationship does not appear to be evidenced. It is the case that traffic free areas with seating clearly will encourage people to gather and engage; during the day that facility is welcomed by the elderly, shoppers and parents with children, but during the evening the pattern of usage may be less inviting. The answer perhaps resides in effective policing and the reclamation of the streets by the law abiding majority through an active evening economy.

The response of some respondents appears to have been influenced by the frustrations and disappointments summarised in the previous section; because the Masterplan has failed to address all expectations and matters of detail its vision and objectives are deemed to be inadequate.

Those who argue that the objective should be to drive up footfall to support existing businesses rather than potentially dilute the retail offer by developing new sites around the edges of the town do recognise a potential threat. The stakeholder group was very strongly persuaded that more attractive shops were needed to consolidate and grow footfall within the town centre and that the success of that strategy would “overspill” to the remainder of the town centre supporting existing businesses and attracting investment to fill vacant units. For that reason the Baxter Gate opportunity site, together with its unique potential to achieve sufficient critical mass to facilitate the delivery of a car park, attracted the general support of the stakeholder group.

However, the success of the town centre vision does not rely on the attraction of inward investment in new retail premises alone. The vision embraces a broad menu of interventions to be delivered through three themed objectives:

- Movement and arrival,
- Character, identity, uses and offer, and,
- Town centre experience, events and promotion.

The recognition that regeneration cannot rely on physical development alone is welcomed by one respondent. The property market appraisal evidences the fact that towns occupying the second tier of the shopping hierarchy (i.e. beneath city centre and out of centre retail parks) are experiencing difficulty in attracting commercial investment. Consequently Loughborough should perhaps focus on the “short term interventions” (marketing, promotion, events, animation and supporting business) in order to increase footfall which may in turn attract private sector investment.

Notwithstanding the dissenting remarks it is considered that the vision provides a clear statement of intent supported by a suite of flexible and mutually supportive objectives which capture the key elements required to support the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Conclusion

That the vision and objectives are endorsed.

Q3 - Movement and Arrival – responses to landscaping and design of carriageways and pavements.

The Masterplan recognises that the core area of the town centre is defined by the pedestrianised streets radiating from the Market Place. However the town centre extends beyond that central core to include a number of secondary frontages onto streets which remain important thoroughfares for traffic. In these streets there is greater competition for space between pedestrians, moving traffic, parking vehicles, buses and deliveries. The Masterplan proposes that the main entry points to the wider town centre are denoted by “gateway” features to mark the transition from the town to its central commercial area. It further proposes that the streets connecting those gateways to the pedestrianised core area designed to give greater priority to pedestrians and to improve the quality of the environment overall through the use of differentiated paving, planting features and street furniture. It is not proposed that these areas should be pedestrianised although some rationalisation of parking and servicing might be required to accommodate pedestrian priorities and enhancement schemes.

(5.4.1)

Leicestershire County Council Comments

Proposals affecting movement and arrival necessarily impact upon public realm within the highway which is the responsibility of the County highway authority. It is therefore appropriate to have in mind the authority’s generic comments before considering individual master plan proposals affecting highways within the defined town centre enclaves:

- **Highway Issues:** Any changes to the public highway layout etc. will need highway authority approval. Currently there is limited funding for minor highway improvements. Where 3rd party funding is available schemes will still have to comply with national standards and policy. Where proposals require Traffic Regulation Orders their implementation will be subject to available resources and the availability of full funding.
- **Design and Maintenance Issues:** non-standard materials require careful consideration to ensure they are fit for purpose – they will attract a commuted lump sum for future maintenance. Electric charge points should be installed in public parking areas. Before proposals are developed too far a clear policy regarding on street parking needs to be agreed to avoid abortive design work.
- **Tree Planting:** Concern is registered over the amount of tree planting in the highway; proposals need careful consideration and investigation to avoid underground services and drainage systems.
- **Street Lighting:** installations will need to meet Leicestershire County Council standards and funding and may require the payment of commuted sums for maintenance and repairs. However, there are a range of possibilities for street lighting including functional and decorative schemes.

- **Walking and Cycling:** cycle routes on highway will need highway authority approval and formal maintenance agreements.
- **Bus Services:** Concern is recorded over the impact of any further pedestrianisation on bus services. Bus operators need to be fully engaged in the masterplan process. If buses are pushed further away from the centre or are restricted from accessing High Street / Baxter Gate / Bedford Square this could reduce the attractiveness of services and impact on trade.
- **Implementing Measures:** road space booking / licensing will be required for all works, events and temporary uses.

The packages of public realm improvement measures which follow are proposed in principle. If carried forward specific schemes will need to be designed in consultation with the highway authority enabling careful consideration and evaluation of all of the generic concerns raised above.

The Rushes

Summary of Responses

61% supportive / 19% opposed / 20% neutral

Analysis

The proposals called for:

- Increasing the width of the pavements and improving paving where possible
- Providing tree planting from the gateway at the Canal Basin through to the town centre.
- De-cluttering the street

The majority of respondents expressed support for the proposals

Conclusion

That the proposals are endorsed

High Street & Baxter Gate

Summary of Responses

62% supportive / 20% opposed / 19% neutral

High Street and Baxter Gate attract similar comments. There is considerable frustration over the abuse of the access only traffic regulation order and the resultant risk to crossing pedestrians. Many argue that 2 way bus traffic should be permitted to bring bus stops closer to the town centre (from Lemyngton Street). Cyclist representatives seek safer provision for contra-flow cycling. The prospect of greening the public spaces and improving the environment overall generally is welcomed.

Analysis

The proposals called for:

In High Street:

- The redesign of the street surfaces to indicate pedestrian priority and restrict vehicular access more clearly.

In Baxter Gate:

- The redesign of the street surfaces to indicate pedestrian priority and restrict vehicular access more clearly.
- Enhancement of the setting of the Beacon Bingo building, and
- Improvement of the condition of buildings at the northern end of Baxter Gate

The majority of respondents expressed support for the proposals. However some respondents drew attention to unauthorised traffic in High Street and Baxter Gate and the displacement of bus services to Lemyngton Street, arguing that 2 way bus traffic should be permitted to bring passengers closer to the town centre. Cyclists also made a case for contra flow cycle lanes to facilitate more direct cross town routes.

As previously noted under Q1 these issues either fall outside the remit of the Masterplan or seek an inappropriate level of detail within a strategic exercise.

The primary intent of the approach to improve the quality of the environment to deliver improved pedestrian priority and conserve those buildings considered important to the character and appearance of the street scene is generally welcomed

Conclusion

That the proposals are endorsed

Biggin Street

Summary of Responses

52% supportive / 20% opposed / 28% neutral

Analysis

The proposals called for:

- The extension of the public realm scheme from Market Place to The Rushes Shopping Centre

The majority of respondents expressed support for the proposals with only 20% expressing opposition.

Conclusion

That the proposals are endorsed

Derby Square

Summary of Responses

50% supportive / 29% opposed / 21% neutral

Analysis

The proposals called for:

- The potential use of shared surfaces to indicate increased pedestrian priority
- De-cluttering the street through rationalisation of signage and street furniture and
- Exploration of opportunities for planting to soften the streetscene.

50% of respondents expressed support for the proposals with only 29% expressing opposition.

Conclusion

That the proposals are endorsed

Market Place to Bedford Square

Summary of Responses

41% supportive / 45% opposed / 14% neutral

The proposals provoked a diverse range of comments. Several commented on the narrowness of the pavements and the need to introduce environmental improvements / planting while expressing some concerns for public safety where shared surfaces are provided. Those who supported the removal or reduction in parking and vehicular access promoted measures to improve facilities for cyclists. However, the greater weight of respondents considered the potential loss of parking detrimental to local businesses and argued that the area should be retained unchanged to continue to provide free, convenient, short term parking.

Analysis

The proposals called for:

- The potential use of shared surfaces to indicate increased pedestrian priority
- Re-design of Devonshire Square, and
- Re-design of Bedford Square

The majority of respondents (45%) opposed the proposal with only 41% declaring support. The principal grounds for opposition were related to the loss of parking, which it was considered would be detrimental to local businesses, and compromised safety as a result of shared surfaces. Some respondents acknowledged the narrowness of pavements and the need for some environmental improvements implying support for a less ambitious improvement scheme.

A subsequent section of the Masterplan invited comment specifically on a scheme for the creation of a public space within Bedford Square. It is considered prudent to consider the potential approach to public realm improvements in Bedford Square / Wards End and Devonshire Square under that section of the report.

Conclusion

That proposals for landscaping and design and carriageway alterations in Bedford Square and Devonshire Square are reviewed in the light of wider comments addressing the illustrative scheme for Bedford Square (See Q9).

That proposals for The Rushes, High Street / Baxter Gate, Biggin Street & Derby Square are endorsed.

Q4 - Have any other areas been missed in considering movement and travel?

Summary of Responses

Many respondents used this section of the form to re-emphasise issues of concern related to movement and travel or to raise concerns over specific issues. In summary the main issues raised included:

- Inadequate consideration given to the needs and opportunities for improving access for cyclists with a great many detailed proposals advanced.
- Concern related to greater volumes of traffic occurring on Frederick Street detracting from the quality of life for residents.
- Calls for the re-introduction of bus services to Southfields Road and provision for two way buses on Baxter Gate / High Street or to permit busses to pass from Swan Street directly to High Street to bring services back into the town centre. General concern over the adequacy of bus services and the implications of there being no dedicated bus station. Dissatisfaction with the quality and comfort of bus shelters at Baxter Gate / High Street.
- The need to improve the route between the Mainline railway station and the town centre to make it more attractive / safer for pedestrians.
- An overall need to retain free and convenient parking and to provide a new car park (Aumerry Gap site)
- Many respondents offered specific comments on the need for the installation of pedestrian / toucan crossings, adjustments to traffic light sequencing, maintenance and other "local" issues which would not normally be addressed through a "strategic" masterplan.

Analysis

The issues raised largely reflect dissatisfaction with aspects of the remit of the report, its failure to revisit previous decisions and the absence of detail in respect of certain initiatives. The role of parking in servicing town centre businesses has however been noted as a matter of strategic interest and will be addressed under the relevant section of this report.

Conclusion

That those concerns which raise issues of an operational nature are noted and shared with partner agencies involved in the day to day operation and management of the town centre to permit their evaluation and appropriate intervention by the responsible agencies at the operational level

Q5 - Priorities for Improvement

Respondents were invited to rank their top three preferred schemes

Summary of Responses

Weighted averages (ranked):

- Biggin Street 2.22
- Derby Square 2.17

- The Rushes 1.94
- Baxter Gate 1.93
- High Street 1.92
- Market Place / Bedford Sq. 1.75

Five respondents added that they would see Nottingham Road / Sparrow Hill as a priority area for improvement.

Analysis

Weighted averages produce the ranking of priorities for action as set out above.

Nottingham Road / Sparrow Hill falls outside the defined town centre, although its importance in providing pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the Midland Railway Station is recognised in the suite of strategies for improving landscaping along identified key routes (See Q6)

Conclusion

That the sequence of priorities is noted

Q6 - Strategies for improved landscaping along pedestrian and cycle routes.

The Masterplan recognises a network of pedestrian / cycle routes linking to the town centre but observes that many are unmarked, fragmented and broken. It proposes improvements that extend beyond landscaping alone to these routes to support the strategic commitment to the promotion of active and sustainable travel. A network of eight corridors is identified for potential improvements variously providing connections to the university, Great Central Railway, the bell foundry and Midland Railway Station, the last by way of Nottingham Road.

(5.4.1)

Summary of Responses

Weighted averages (ranked) permit the ranking of respondents preferences as follows:

- Town Centre to University – Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via William St. 2.76
- Town Centre to University – Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via Wood Brook 2.68
- Town Centre to University - Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via Radmoor Road 2.56
- Market Place to GCR via Southfields Park 2.49
- High Street to Bell Foundry 2.41
- High Street to GCR 2.31
- Rail Station to Baxter Gate via Nottingham Road 2.31
- Rail Station to Church Gate via Nottingham Road 2.29

Main Comments:

Town Centre to University – Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via William St.

45% supportive / 26% opposed / 29% neutral

- Route infrastructure more important than landscaping
- Potential for introducing noise / disturbance into William Street

Town Centre to University – Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via Wood Brook

53% supportive / 25% opposed / 22% neutral

- Route infrastructure more important than landscaping
- Already an attractive and well used route but peters out on reaching the leisure centre
- Some opposition to routing the cycle path through Queens Park.

Town Centre to University - Epinal Way to Ashby Sq. via Radmoor Road

57% supportive / 23% opposed / 20% neutral

- Route infrastructure more important than landscaping
- Important part of maximising benefit of staff and student spending in the town - not the most direct route but probably the easiest to do.
- Risk of introducing more activity to a busy route (Radmoor Road) and potential for late night noise.

Market Place to GCR via Southfields Park

60% supportive / 22% opposed / 18% neutral

- Better way finding is probably all that is required
- Routes through Southfields Park are ugly and poorly lit. The park is abused by drug addicts.
- Cyclists should be on the road rather than through the park

High Street to Bell Foundry

61% supportive / 18% opposed / 21% neutral

- Better way finding is probably all that is required
- The bell foundry area is unattractive

High Street to GCR

64% supportive / 16% opposed / 20% neutral

- Better way finding is probably all that is required
- Parts of this area are unattractive at present

Rail Station to Baxter Gate via Nottingham Road

68% supportive / 20% opposed / 12% neutral

- Nottingham Road is not an attractive route for walking and cycling – it is dangerous for cyclists.
- Should not be landscaping new areas when we cannot maintain existing areas.
- The seating areas close to the Beacon Bingo hall attract anti-social behaviour.

Rail Station to Church Gate via Nottingham Road

68% supportive / 20% opposed / 12% neutral

- Route infrastructure more important than landscaping – pavements need to be resurfaced and signage needs to be improved.
- Nottingham Road is not an attractive route for walking and cycling – it has a sleazy image
- The entrance to Loughborough from the railway station needs to be more welcoming – it creates a poor first impression.

Analysis

The overall approach is supported with only one route attracting a supporting rating of less than 50%: the link between the University and the town centre by way of William Street. It is perhaps notable that all of the links the university attracted lower ratings potentially due to concerns expressed over the prospect of encouraging additional noise and disturbance to residential areas. However, all three routes to the university already lie along well used corridors and are extensively used by pedestrians and cyclists. Improvements to encourage the wider use of these routes and the potential for some additional disturbance must be balanced against the advantages of providing safe and attractive alternatives to dependency on the car for short journeys to the town centre.

Several respondents concur with the view that the cycle and pedestrian routes are broken and fragmented while others suggest that those deficiencies might best be addressed through infrastructural improvements and signposting rather than landscaping. In that context reference to landscaping in the question was perhaps misleading – the approach envisages a wider range of improvements including signing and enhanced connectivity.

Others identify unappealing aspects in relation to some of the identified corridors with Nottingham Road attracting the most severe criticism as being poorly surfaced, dangerous, generally unattractive and delivering a poor first impression of the town.

Anxieties over the routing of a cycle path through the centre of Queen's Park appear to be based on a drafting error appearing in the display boards; there are no cycle routes proposed through the park with all options relying upon on-road routes outside the park.

In summary there is general support for the strategic network of key cycle and pedestrian corridors. Details concerning specific initiatives to improve their capacity to attract wider usage will need to be developed in consultation with user groups, partners and the highway authority.

Conclusion

That the strategic proposals for the improvement of the cycle and pedestrian network delivering attractive routes to the town centre is endorsed.

Q7 - Proposed Changes to the Road Network – Southfields Road and access to Granby St Car Park

The Masterplan proposes the re-introduction of 2 way traffic to Southfield Road to create a more legible environment for vehicles moving through or arriving in the town centre. That alteration would also enable the diversion of traffic away from Bedford Square allowing it to become a more attractive space and point of arrival while also permitting the downgrading of Woodgate so that it could provide a more attractive environment for pedestrians.

The introduction of 2 way traffic on Granby Street, or use of Packe Street, is proposed to provide an alternative means of access to the Granby Street Car Park enabling the restriction of through traffic in Bedford Square, Wards End and Devonshire Square so that they might be redesigned to give more space over to pedestrians or for café seating within the street.

(5.4.2)

Summary of Responses

Making Southfield Road 2 Way to Allow Traffic to be Removed from Bedford Square

Supportive: 33.34% / Opposed: 53.43% / Neutral 13.24%

- Particularly strong opposition to the loss of parking in Bedford Square – current patterns of usage demonstrate the popularity of conveniently placed on street parking. Loss of parking would be detrimental to Bedford Square businesses and the town centre generally.
- Concern that two way traffic on Southfield Road and the removal of the “Woodgate link” through Bedford Square would result in serious congestion on the Forest Road / Park Road approach to the town centre.
- Cycle lobby groups recognise potential benefits to cyclists if traffic is reduced on Woodgate.

General Comments relating to 2 Way Traffic Southfield Road

- Two way traffic would impact on the Leicester Road junction.
- The Woodgate / Southfield Road one way circuit already works reasonably well – putting all traffic on Southfield Road will be chaotic.

Analysis

Any proposals resulting in changes to traffic movement will require the approval of the County highway authority which will need additional evidence and intelligence before it can comment on any scheme. The highway authority recommends a joint approach to explore the issues and advises that it is in the process of developing micro-simulation models for all Leicestershire’s market towns which may be used to establish the evidence and intelligence required to understand the implications for the wider network arising from the masterplan’s highway proposals. (See summary of LCC comments at Appendix 1)

The highway authority further cautions against schemes which could push bus services further away from the town centre or restrict access to High Street, Baxter Gate or Bedford Square which might reduce the attractiveness of the service and impact on business.

The degree to which re-introducing 2 way traffic to Southfield Road, and associated removal of the link between Forest Road and Woodgate by way of Bedford Square, would occasion congestion on approach roads, adversely impact on the Leicester Road junction or otherwise disrupt traffic cannot be fully understood without undertaking the modelling process recommended by the highway authority. Given the problems currently being encountered at the junction of Woodgate with High Street and the legibility problems associated with the new Inner Relief Road junction (Leicester Road / Jubilee Way) it is conceivable that collateral benefits may be delivered through making Southfield Road 2 way. But clearly only

detailed traffic modelling will provide a definitive answer to the prospects for improving legibility and avoiding congestion.

As a means of enabling the creation of a new essentially traffic free public space within Bedford Square the proposals for Southfield Road attract very little support. There is a perception that the scheme for Bedford Square will result in a net loss of on street parking, notwithstanding the assurance attached to the illustrative sketch layout that the existing number of spaces could be retained (Figure 5.4).

Further concerns related to the Bedford Square scheme are addressed under Q9 below however they include concerns over the impact on the re-routing of bus services which currently stop at John Storer House before passing through Bedford Square towards Woodgate. The concept of a public space within Bedford Square would be severely compromised were that route to be retained while its diversion could inconvenience passengers arriving at the southern approach to the town centre.

The potential benefits of re-instating 2 way traffic on Southfield Road are unclear while the delivery of a traffic free Bedford Square is not widely supported; a less ambitious proposal which does have the support of local businesses is addressed later in this report.

In the meantime it would be prudent to explore with highway authority partners the implications of re-introducing 2 way traffic on Southfield Road to evidence any wider potential network benefits and inform future options which might be pursued outside the masterplan framework.

Conclusion

That reference to the role of re-introducing 2 way traffic on Southfield Road as a mechanism for delivering a public space within Bedford Square and enabling an improved pedestrian environment in Woodgate is removed.

That the Council is recommended to explore with the highway authority the implications and impact of introducing 2 way traffic to Southfield Road in order to identify any network benefits and provide an effective evidence base to enable the testing of public realm improvement opportunities.

Reducing vehicles using Wards End and Devonshire Square by re-directing traffic to Granby Street car park from the west (Frederick St).

Supportive: 32.19% / Opposed: 55.13% / Neutral 12.68%

- Many respondents felt that reducing traffic passing through Wards End and Devonshire Square would be bad for business, particularly if on street parking facilities are reduced, resulting in business failures.
- Loss of parking for blue badge holders in Wards End and Devonshire Square provoked some concern.
- The introduction of two way traffic on Granby Street raised further concerns over the resultant loss of on street parking facilities, along with those for coach parking. It was further argued that two way traffic would introduce a barrier between the park / museum and the library, add to congestion and detract from the pleasant atmosphere currently enjoyed by visitors.

- A significant number of respondents advocated an alternative solution; diverting traffic to the Granby Street Car park by way of Packe Street (with a section of two way traffic on the Granby Street approach to Cattle Market) and exiting by way of a retained one way Granby Street.
- Several respondents argued that Frederick Street was already heavily congested and diverting traffic away from Wards End and Devonshire Square access the Granby Street car park would exacerbate that problem.

General Comments relating to 2 Way Traffic on Granby Street.

- Instead of making Granby Street 2 Way access Granby Street Car Park via Packe Street.
- Keep traffic one way in Granby Street

Analysis

The County highway authority's observations concerning the need for traffic modelling to understand the implications of making Southfield Road 2 way is equally valid here. In the absence of that analysis it not possible to address concerns related to the prospect of additional traffic on Frederick Street, the junction capacity at Packe Street or the impact of reducing traffic through Bedford Square / Wards End / Devonshire Square.

From the respondents perspective there was a significant level of opposition to introducing 2 way traffic to Granby Street; that concern related to the loss of on street parking, severance from Queen's Park and general congestion. The County Council highlighted in particular the potential inconvenience and threat to the safety of the library users a significant proportion of whom are young or elderly.

An alternative approach could see traffic directed towards the Granby Street Car Park via Frederick Street and Packe Street, retaining a largely one way Granby Street for exiting traffic, retaining its current function along with on street parking facilities. As Packe Street does not emerge directly opposite the entrance to the Granby Street Car Park a design solution would be required to permit a short section of two way traffic on Granby Street; that in turn raises design issues in respect of traffic which might continue to approach the car park by way of Wards End / Devonshire Square.

The Masterplan suggests that traffic entering Wards End might be "restricted" but the scope of that restriction is not clear. The loss of parking, particularly for Blue Badge holders within Wards End and Devonshire Square is a matter of concern to some respondents.

However, as a matter of principle the prospect of reducing through traffic on Wards End / Devonshire Square, while retaining some on street parking and access for servicing vehicles, would appear to create the opportunity to improve significantly the pedestrian environment in those streets, helping to sustain footfall and business survival.

In summary the prospect of public realm improvements enabled through reduced traffic flows on Wards End / Devonshire Square facilitated by servicing the Granby Street Car Park by way of a minor gyratory layout incorporating Packe Street and Granby Street would appear worthy of further examination to identify the technical requirements and compatibility with the wider network.

Conclusion

Retain one way traffic flows on Granby Street but explore options for accessing the Granby Street Car Park by way of Packe Street and clarify the extent of vehicular access restrictions which might be applied to Wards End / Devonshire Square.

General Comments relating to Transport, Parking and Highway Issues

Public Transport

- Lemyngton St bus stops are too far from the centre and inadequately signposted; buses need to access the town centre – make Baxter Gate / High Street 2 Way. The new bus shelters are uncomfortable. Real time bus departure board should be provided in the Market Place. Shelters are required for the services to the railway station (Greenclose Lane and The Rushes).
- The consultation fails to consider public transport – railways are seen as remote destinations and there is scant mention of buses and taxis.
- The bus stop near Tesco has insufficient seating and there are no refuse bins.

Analysis

The brief for the masterplan did not require that previous decisions taken in respect of provision for bus services should be revisited. It is acknowledged that there are remedial issues arising from the confirmation of the bus trial which the County highway authority is in the process of addressing (see Appendix 1).

Where there are operational matters which are not captured by the highway authority's remedial programme they may be referred to the appropriate agency for consideration.

The current provision for buses is taken as a given; the bus hubs and routing of services has only recently been confirmed (January 2016) and fully implemented following the local inquiry which dismissed objections to the traffic regulation orders excluding all traffic from the corridor between Swan Street and High Street.

Conclusion

That the comments received are noted

Traffic

- Vehicles continue to travel between Swan St and High Street [through pedestrianised area] and cyclists travel at excessive speeds.
- Traffic continues to drive through Swan St to High St.: better policing is needed
- Traffic light sequence at junction of Woodgate / High St requires attention to give priority to traffic emerging from Woodgate – signs should be placed on High Street advising no entry other than buses, taxis and disabled drivers and effectively policed. These measures would obviate need for two way traffic on Southfield Road.
- Motorists are confused by the Woodgate / High St junction – it is not clear that motorists should not turn left.
- Traffic removal does not necessarily justify the means.
- Control student cars – university and Council need to discourage students bringing cars to town to reduce parking congestion, traffic congestion and pollution

Analysis

Operational traffic management issues and abuses consequent upon the implementation of the Inner Relief Road and bus trial are being actively addressed by the highway authority (Appendix 1).

Exercising control over students bringing their own cars to the town is not an issue that reasonably could be embraced within the masterplan remit. The university does discourage students from bringing cars to Loughborough; unless students have a particular need to have a car they are not permitted to park on the campus and most privately operated purpose built student accommodation in off campus locations is required, under planning controls, to oblige their tenants to enter into a “no car agreement.” Students who choose to live in the community in privately rented homes enjoy the same rights and privileges as permanent residents.

Conclusion

That the comments received are noted

Disabled Access

- The plan fails to consider the needs of people with disabilities – what are the plans for accommodating bus stops and services?
- Parking for the disabled needs to be taken into consideration – spaces have been reduced (eg Derby Square) and are often abused (eg Biggin Street).
- Further reduction in the provision of parking spaces for the disabled is inconsiderate particularly to accommodate residential uses;
- Make access easier for bus passengers and stop traffic using High Street without a Blue Badge.
- Shared Access is a cause for concern (e.g Jubilee Square, Leicester) – dangerous for visually impaired and disabled.

Analysis

The masterplan functions at a strategic level. Specific provision to accommodate the particular needs of people with disabilities will feature more prominently in the design of resultant public realm improvements. Where any intervention occasions the loss of parking consideration will be given to the need to make alternative provision and the justification for reserving dedicated spaces for Blue Badge holders.

It is understood that people with disabilities will have different and sometimes conflicting requirements; for example wheelchair users value level surfaces while the blind and partially sighted prefer kerb lines for tapping rails and guide dogs.

Where the key principles of the masterplan are agreeable detailed projects will be prepared which will be the subject of consultation with all partners and customers before progressing to the implementation stages.

Conclusion

That the comments received are noted

Parking

- Concern over loss of blue badge parking facilities, particularly in Bedford Square and Granby Street Car Park along with two way traffic in Granby St.
- There is no indication of where alternative / replacement parking will be provided [to mitigate losses from the development sites].
- The masterplan proposes to take away parking and replace it with cafes.
- Stop taking car parks away and build another car park.
- The plan emphasises car parking with no reference to ensuring adequate and easily accessible cycle parking. It is difficult to see how the plan reduces car dependency when all the emphasis seems to be on enabling shoppers to arrive as conveniently as possible by car.
- More parking is needed [implied].
- There is an obsession with trying to remove parking – this will finish the town off.
- The problem with parking will be made worse if residential blocks are built – where is the alternative parking to be provided?
- Overall parking restrictions will impact on businesses.
- Parking is already a problem; a park and ride scheme might provide a solution.
- The plan needs to take into account the need for easy street parking accessible to short stay workers and the elderly who need to be able to park close to shops and businesses.
- More definite alternative sites for parking need to be provided.
- There is no point making the town more attractive to visitors unless traffic is minimised and parking is available.
- Provision of additional car parking is essential – any losses to development (Granby St and Southfields Road must be replaced before development proceeds. Need to ensure that development of the Baxter Gate site does not displace retail uses from elsewhere in town or prejudice the potential extension of Carillon Court.
- Overall proposals could result in the loss of 270 parking spaces (179 in CBC car parks + 91 on street) including spaces for blue badge holders. The proposed m/s car park within the Baxter Gate site offers 125 spaces – an overall net reduction of 145 spaces. Estimates for demand up to 2028 suggest a need for 200 – 300 additional spaces delivering a potential overall shortfall of 300 – 400+ spaces. There is a potential loss in income from CBC car parks of £239,000 (net) per annum. The numerical and financial impacts of the proposals need to be carefully balanced against the improvements proposed. **(CBC Regulatory Services)**

Analysis

Considering responses received across all themes addressed in the masterplan expressions of concern and objection to proposals affecting the overall provision of adequate and conveniently located car parking facilities is the dominant issue. While the masterplan proposes the delivery of a new car park in association with the Baxter Gate site it also proposes that existing facilities at Granby Street and Southfield Extension are displaced to accommodate town centre housing schemes, subject to the provision of alternative parking facilities. Respondents also point to potential losses of on street parking associated with the Bedford Square redesign, 2 way traffic on Granby Street and pedestrian priority proposals elsewhere around the town centre.

The issue is helpfully summarised in the comments submitted by the Council's own Regulatory Services team. It calculates that overall there is the potential for a net loss of on

and off street parking amounting to 145 spaces. Once projected demand for additional parking up to 2028 is factored into the equation there is a prospect of an overall shortfall in provision of over 400 spaces.

While that estimated deficit might be mitigated by alternative compensatory car parking provision some respondents reasonably query where and how those facilities are to be provided. Given the constrained nature of the town centre the provision of such alternative facilities inevitably may be exceedingly challenging. It has been noted elsewhere that the only realistic vehicle for the delivery of additional parking is likely to be through enabling development; opportunities for supporting development of the scale required to cross subsidise parking, given the strength of the current market, are likely to be severely limited and may be exhausted by the delivery of the Baxter Gate site.

The Regulatory Services team also concludes a potential loss in income to the Council from car parking fees in the region of £239,000 per annum. That need not of itself preclude the redevelopment of the car parks affected but will place a capital value on those assets which will need to be factored into any disposal and reflected in the Council's own budgets.

While complementary measures to encourage active and sustainable travel alternatives, which could include an investigation of the prospects for a viable park and ride scheme, will continue to be promoted it is apparent that sufficient and conveniently located car parking facilities will be essential to the vitality and viability of Loughborough town centre; parking is a strategic issue which must be factored into the final draft of the masterplan if it is to attract the support of stakeholders and provide a practical framework capable of delivery.

Conclusion

That the need to maintain adequate and conveniently located parking facilities is acknowledged as a strategic requirement and afforded due weight in balancing the loss of parking resulting from some proposed interventions against the potential benefits of improving spaces for people and events within the public realm and/or enabling the redevelopment of opportunity sites.

Q8 - Are there any other pedestrian and cycle routes that should be considered.

Summary of Responses

Many respondents called for improved lining and signing on roads for cyclists and the need for a coherent cycle network covering the whole town with contra flow cycle lanes in one way streets. Numerous additional links are suggested including enhanced connections through the University campus.

Several respondents expressed concerns for public safety resulting from shared cycle-ways and footpaths; others complained that existing cycle routes are underused.

General Comments on Cycling Issues

- Reference to active travel is welcome but is not a major feature in the plan. Cyclists are banned from pedestrianised areas and any expansion of pedestrianisation will introduce further restrictions. The vehicular movement section makes no reference to cycling or the promotion of active travel.

- Cycle Routes are unmarked and the network is fragmented and broken. While identifying some of the problems for cyclists the plan offers no solutions apart from some minor and irrelevant improvements to cycle parking.
- Permit cycle access to Market Place on non-market days
- The plan correctly recognises that cycle routes are broken and fragmented but does not really tackle that fundamental problem.
- Retain cycle parking in Market Street – where are taxi ranks to be provided?
- Cycling should be banned from pedestrian areas.

Analysis

The responses largely revisit comments made in connection with the strategic routes listed under Q6; that the network is broken and fragmented and that improved signing and lining is required. The strategic cycle network is not specifically challenged although additional routes through the University campus are commended.

Other comments reflect the conflict between cycle users and pedestrians. Cyclists clearly are frustrated by limitations in cycle use through the pedestrianised areas which oblige cyclists to undertake lengthy diversions around the centre or to dismount. Some pedestrians argue for greater separation of cyclists and pedestrian for reasons of safety.

The comments reflect the level of fine grained detail that is required to deliver a cycle network that is fit for purpose while accommodating appropriate cross town centre cycle routes without compromising the safety of pedestrians. That will require a level of interrogation that cannot effectively be accommodated within a strategic masterplan. It should suffice that the masterplan does embrace and promote active travel which provides a platform for engagement with interested parties and agencies in exploring practical operational solutions.

Conclusion

That the comments are noted and shared with partner agencies involved in the day to day operation and management of the town centre to permit their evaluation and appropriate intervention by the responsible agencies at the operational level.

Q9 - Sketch Layout for Bedford Square.

The masterplan notes that Bedford Square is currently dominated by cars and parking, cluttered and uninviting undermining its potential for providing a welcoming and attractive gateway to the town. A sketch layout is proposed which diverts traffic away from the space (to a 2 way Southfield Road) to permit the rationalisation of parking spaces (retaining the overall capacity) and reorganisation to create a public space and gathering area which could provide for a café and related seating. Woodgate could be downgraded to a lower order street with improved pavement space for pedestrians.

(5.2.1)

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 36% / Opposed 50% / Neutral 14%

General Comments relating to Bedford Square / Wards End

- Retain overall parking / permanent seating would encourage anti-social behaviour. Cycle parking and CCTV are needed in this area.
- Wards End needs improvements to the public realm – wider pavements and space for café seating in the street.
- Bedford Square is a wasted opportunity – more planting / raised beds required. Not supported as an events space – would feel very empty when not in use.
- Bedford Square is already suitable – all it needs is flowers and appropriate parking.
- Supported provided traffic can still use the route.
- Retain unchanged
- Retain unchanged and encourage better shops
- Do not alter Wards End; Bedford Square needs a bus route.
- The plan will require vast sums of money – do not waste money on Bedford Square / Wards End.
- Access to housing on Granby Street Car Park will bring more traffic to Wards End.
- There is no consideration of the routing of bus services (7 – 8 per hour) which currently use John Storer House bus stop – could these services continue to Woodgate?
- Alternative parking will be too far away [to compensate for loss of parking and loading space] – could herald the end of Wards End as a retail area.
- Concern over loss of parking from Bedford Square, Wards End, Devonshire Square, Granby Street and South Street – estimate loss as 83 on street spaces.
- Leave alone – popular free parking is available.
- Proposals beggar belief.
- Poor ideas for Bedford Square – loss of parking with no adequate replacements.
- It is a bad idea to reduce parking in Bedford Square – businesses rely on easy access short stay parking facilities.

Analysis

While a few respondents are sympathetic to the proposition of creating a new public space in Bedford Square the overwhelming response is one of opposition. That response is largely predicated on the belief that there will be a loss of on street parking, although the masterplan claims no net losses by virtue of providing for displaced parking within the redesigned layout, including road side spaces on Forest Road and Woodgate. Clearly most respondents are not persuaded that they are either genuinely capable of delivery or sufficiently convenient to service local businesses.

Several respondents made the point that the availability of free (short stay) on street parking in Bedford Square and along Wards End and Devonshire Square is a vital component of the Loughborough offer enabling people who have limited time available to make short visits to easily parking accessible bays. Some businesses argue that that facility is critical to the viability of their enterprise.

Coupled with the preference for retaining the existing parking and servicing arrangements respondents also expressed some anxiety that the creation of a public space with street furniture and complementary fixtures would attract anti-social behaviour.

The potential diversion of buses which currently pick up and set down in front of John Storer House and then proceed to Woodgate also attracted some concern on the part of respondents and the County highway authority. The concept plan would not lend itself to the

retention of a shared surface bus lane which would also raise issues of enforcement to discourage “tailgating” by unauthorised vehicles. Services would necessarily need to be diverted by way of a 2 way Southfield Road which might be perceived as less convenient to bus users, replicating the dissatisfaction occasioned by the displacement of south bound services from High Street to Lemyngton Street.

Proposals for the improvement of the public realm in Bedford Square, Wards End and Devonshire Square have been developed in response to a petition from local businesses calling upon the Council to intervene to redress the imbalance in footfall which has been perceived as detrimental to the viability of businesses in the southern area of the town. That project, the Bedford Square Gateway, was the subject of a public consultation exercise with subsequent actions held in abeyance pending the outcome of the master-planning exercise.

The Bedford Square / Wards End / Devonshire Square business group has revisited the “Gateway” scheme and expressed a preference for a variation on that more modest approach than that advanced through the masterplan. The key components of a revised “Gateway” scheme would include:

- The retention of the road through Bedford Square linking Forest Road and Woodgate.
- The retention of on street parking within Bedford Square.
- The widening of pavements and narrowing of the carriageway through Wards End to sufficient width only to allow parking along one side with the remaining highway retained at a width sufficient only to allow passing vehicles (i.e. precluding parking within the existing “no parking” limits)
- Retention of existing loading bays in Devonshire Square and provision of shared surface loading bays within the pavement in Wards End where necessary.
- Inclusion of improvements to Devonshire Lane to provide a more attractive link to the Granby Street car park and potentially Queen’s Park beyond.
- Installation of a safe pedestrian crossing facility at the junction of Cattle Market with Granby Street.

In view of the need to promote activities and events, and lend greater support to the street market explored in connection with “small interventions,” addressed in subsequent sections of this report, any scheme including Devonshire Square reasonably might make provision for part of that space to function as a public area. That might be achieved by the laying out of a pedestrian “apron” in front of the “Home Bargains” (resulting in the loss of 4 disabled parking and 7 general parking bays).

Conclusion

That the strategy for Bedford Square is replaced by a more modest proposal embracing the design principles agreed with local businesses in response to the “Bedford Square Gateway” proposal, amended to include provision for a new public space within Devonshire Square.

Q10 - Character Areas

The masterplan recognises 8 character areas across Loughborough town centre and identifies the opportunities and priorities for each, providing guidance on how new development might be integrated appropriately into the built fabric.

The Rushes / Derby Road will be transformed into an attractive northern gateway to Loughborough (5.5.4)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Enhance Derby Road and The Rushes to create a welcoming gateway to the town.
- Encourage infill development to consolidate street frontages and replace poor quality buildings, especially along The Rushes
- Provide guidelines for any future redevelopment of the Sainsbury's site
- Enhance poor quality lanes

Summary of Responses

Supportive –60.8% / Opposed -20.6 % / Neutral – 18.6%

- Concern that the canal basin fails to reflect the traditional red brick character of Loughborough.
- Some recognition of the opportunities presented by the Johnson cleaners / Kwik Fit site.
- Some confusion over the meaning of “gateway” and concern over how development is to be funded

Analysis

The overall response is supportive of the package of proposals for the enhancement of The Rushes / Derby Road approach to the town centre. The prospect of enabling the delivery of a “gateway” feature would be most appropriately achieved by the development of a building of scale within the Sainsbury's site at the junction of Derby Road with Broad Street, reflecting that of the “Waterside / Travelodge” development enclosing the canal basin. The Johnson's cleaners / Kwik Fit site could present an infill opportunity to restore a continuous frontage along both Bridge Street and The Rushes. However any such development would necessarily be opportunistic. The masterplan simply provides a basis for negotiating with potential developers and private investors an approach to guide any proposals for the re-development of the site in a manner which would complement the grain and character of the surviving traditional street scene.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for The Rushes / Derby Road are endorsed.

Church Gate is Loughborough's historic quarter and has a distinct character that must be respected (5.5.3)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Improve connections with the rest of the town centre, especially along secondary routes such as Clay Pipe Jitty and Biggin Street
- Ensure any new development is complementary the existing built form and materiality, both in and outside the Church Gate Conservation Area
- Encourage the maintenance of historic buildings
- Maintain the mix of uses in the area to preserve its vitality, especially secondary retail.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 77.6% / Opposed – 13.0% / Neutral – 9.4%

- Church Gate performs a similar function to Wards End – the two areas need to be developed in a complementary fashion
- Interpretive work is needed to demonstrate the historic importance of the area
- Four respondents call for the area to be left alone
- Improve connections to Baxter Gate
- Extend the area to include the area around the church and the old manor.

General Comments:

- The plan fails to capture within the Character Area the area around All Saints Church, a medieval grade I listed building which attracts visitors from around the world with 3,000 visitors attending the community Christmas tree festival annually. History and heritage need to be valued along with green space – the area could be better linked to the town with perhaps an urban trail connecting the church with the bell foundry and the Carillon.

Analysis

Overall the responses are strongly supportive of the character area and generally protective of its historic qualities which are recognised in the assemblage of listed buildings and the designation of a Conservation Area.

The area around All Saints Church and buildings around Sparrow Hill and Nottingham Road are included within the Church Gate character area / historic quarter and will benefit from the commitment to encourage their maintenance and to ensure that any new development enhances the character and appearance of the area.

The area certainly would be improved by interpretive materials / self-guided walks. However such interventions are matters of detail which may be explored in partnership with historical groups or other civic amenity groups without the need for a specific work stream to be specified in a strategic masterplan.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for Church Gate are endorsed.

Baxter Gate / High Street – a lively mixed use quarter on the eastern edge of the town centre (5.5.2)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Create guidelines for the redevelopment of opportunity sites at Baxter Gate and Aumberry Gap
- Protect primary and secondary retail uses
- Enhance the public realm along Baxter Gate and High Street
- Enable the delivery of a new privately funded town centre car park on the Baxter Gate site to bring people into the area.

General Comments:

- The old job centre building looks dreadful – could it be considered for housing.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 59.6% / Opposed – 20.2% / Neutral – 20.2%

- Several respondents referred to the use of Baxter Gate as a bus hub – some believed that the buses discouraged investment in retail and that a bus station would have provided a better solution. Others argued that additional road space should be given over to buses with two way bus routing and exclusion of other traffic.
- Poor standards of cleaning and policing make the area unattractive.
- The buildings between Baxter Gate, Pinfold Gate and High Street are unattractive – support for the redevelopment of Aumberry Gap but less convinced over Baxter Gate.

General Comments:

- High Street is not now connected to the town centre – encourage residential and remaining businesses to consolidate within the centre.

Analysis

Overall the general response to proposals for Baxter Gate / High Street are supportive, although the comments received capture the tension between planning for stability and growth or, alternatively, the gradual decline and consequent shrinkage of the traditional High Street.

High Street in particular has become more marginalised as the focus of activity in the Town Centre has tended to shift along the axis defined by the Market Place, The Rushes and the Cineworld complex. That decline in the commercial strength of the High Street is reflected in the standard of maintenance and repair apparent in some properties. One respondent suggests the realignment of High Street which would see its role and function move in the direction of residential uses; effectively a contraction in the commercial extent of the town centre.

The stakeholder group clearly favoured a strategy directed towards encouraging opportunities for new investment in Loughborough's retail offer and the Baxter Gate / Aumberry Gap site was recognised as the option above all others which was most likely to attract any commercial investment interest which might attach to the town centre. The masterplan therefore brings forward a preferred option for the redevelopment of the Baxter Gate which features a significant retail and leisure component together with the protection of primary and secondary retail frontages. If that strategy is unsuccessful the masterplan offers a number of alternative options for the Baxter Gate site incorporating increasing proportions for residential purposes.

As noted elsewhere the masterplan was not required to revisit previous decisions concerning the provision made for buses serving the town centre. The viability of operating two way bus services along High Street and Baxter Gate, together with the practicality of providing bus hubs as opposed to an off street bus station have been thoroughly examined by the County highway authority in the assessment of options prior to the recent implementation of the current solution.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for Baxter Gate / High Street are endorsed.

Market Place will remain the heart of the town but with an increasing programme of events and activities to animate the space (5.5.1)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Extend the programme of events / specialist markets
- Protect primary retail frontages
- Enhance secondary route network connecting to Market Place such as Town Hall Passage
- Preserve the Town Hall as the area's most prominent landmark
- Ensure that any new buildings are of high quality respect the area's continuous building frontage and character.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 55.2% / Opposed – 22.9% / Neutral – 21.9%

- Market Place provoked alternative views: some respondents called for more features (fountains) planting and active use of the space with imaginative events, specialist markets, café tables etc. – others felt that the space was uninviting, poorly policed, attractive to anti-social behaviour, dead at night and in need of more attractive retail businesses.

Analysis

The overall response to the proposals for the Market Place is broadly supportive.

Market Place effectively defines the town centre. It provides primary shopping frontages grouped around a central space which is required to serve many functions and activities: the street markets, the annual fair and numerous other events over the course of the year. Consequently it is designed to be flexible. That in turn means that when is not hosting an event it can appear open and uninviting.

Anti-social behaviour and abuse is a matter for effective surveillance and policing.

Provision of additional seating, planting and other features might lead to less flexibility and / or additional costs in the staging of activities and events.

It is apparent that events (small interventions) are likely to be particularly important in driving up footfall within the town centre delivering collateral business opportunities for shops and services. The retention of high quality open spaces within the fabric of the town centre such as the Market Place together with the green spaces and potentially Devonshire Square will be essential in accommodating a programme of events and activities.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for The Market Place are endorsed.

Woodgate will retain its employment function but with an increasing residential population (5.5.8)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Create better secondary walking connections in an east / west direction between Market Place and Southfields Park
- Develop the Southfield Road car park as residential
- Investigate longer term proposals to improve the public realm along Woodgate and create stronger connections to the Great Central Railway and Taylor's Bell Foundry via Leicester Road.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 35.8% / Opposed – 39.6% / Neutral – 24.6%

- Most respondents commented on the concentration of student housing in Woodgate, some suggesting that the area is appropriate for student accommodation and others calling for any new housing to be provided for groups other than students.
- Several commentators felt that the area was already overwhelmed by high rise flats leaving few opportunities for general purpose housing.
- Only one comment reflected employment issues suggesting that more employment options are needed for a successful mixed-use town centre.

Analysis

Opinion on the proposals for the Woodgate character area is split and somewhat inconclusive.

Elsewhere proposals for the development of the Southfield Road Car Park Extension have attracted strong opposition on the grounds of loss of parking to service local shops and businesses. The association with that proposal has conceivably injured the public perception of the Woodgate character area.

It is apparent too that some respondents find the concentration of 5/6 storey buildings somewhat out of character with the established Loughborough townscape while the accommodation of students in off campus locations is not always well received.

While acknowledging that issue other respondents recognise the area as being suitable for student housing together with additional housing for other groups.

Other than provision for the development of the Southfield Road Car Park which is considered in further detail elsewhere in this report, the proposals for the Woodgate character area appear to be soundly based.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for Woodgate are endorsed, subject to the review of proposals for the redevelopment of the Southfield Road car park site.

Ashby Road / Market Street will become Loughborough's creative quarter (5.5.5)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Improve the public realm along Derby Square in line with the Public Realm Strategy
- Encourage residential use on the upper floors of buildings
- Encourage development of affordable workspace, including the redevelopment of the Generator building on Packe Street
- Encourage street art, temporary uses, interventions and activities in empty shops and spaces to enliven the area.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 41.4% / Opposed – 30.9% / Neutral – 27.7%

- Some respondents were not convinced that this area should be branded as a creative quarter, or that any “quarters” should be recognised – the area was recognised as already supporting a range of businesses including many cafes.
- Others suggested that the town already has creative quarters, variously at Wards End and Churchgate while other parts of the town might be promoted as part of a creative quarter: High Street / Baxter Gate, Nottingham Road and the area around the museum, library and town hall.
- Three respondents made reference to the potential contribution of “The Generator” to the creative quarter. The project will attract dozens of businesses, generate more than 100 jobs in creative industries, act as a new destination driving up footfall, encourage wider community engagement, conserve a landmark building and provide a vehicle for partnership working involving the Council, Loughborough University Charnwood Arts and Love Loughborough BID. For these reasons it is argued that the “Generator” should be a specific proposal of the master plan – that would confirm its status, consolidate Council support and enhance its prospects for securing the funding required to enable its delivery including the investigation of more innovative approaches to funding (prudential borrowing, invest to save etc.).

General Comments:

- Proposals for the development of the “Generator” creative industry hub are supported.

Analysis

Opinion in response to the proposals for the Ashby Square / Market Street character area is divided.

However, Ashby Square and Market Street, together with Derby Square, provide an important “landing platform” for students coming into the town centre. Many businesses in the locality are specifically targeted at the student market and the area is home to a significant number of student apartments.

The “student pound” has a significant impact on businesses trading in the town centre and the prospect of encouraging additional students to visit the town centre offers the potential for attracting additional spending and promoting cultural benefits.

The concept of the area becoming a “creative quarter” recognises the stronger association with the university and its students, derived from the locality’s geography and assemblage of

uses and businesses. The prospects for that association being enhanced are presented by the proposals for the conversion of the former University School of Art and Design (LUSAD) premises into a hub for creative businesses (The Generator), including the accommodation of Charnwood Arts.

The attachment of the term “creative quarter” in the masterplan is considered an appropriate theme for the purposes of defining the character area; it is not in this context advocated as a specific brand, although as the reputation of the area develops that application might be considered helpful in raising its profile and identity.

“The Generator,” as its supporters suggest, has the potential to create a significant number of jobs within the town centre with the capacity to support local businesses. As such it has the potential to deliver significant economic and commercial advantages but clearly will require substantial investment to secure its delivery. Recognition as a specific proposal within the body of the masterplan could provide additional leverage in the negotiation of funding from potential partners improving its prospects for delivery.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for Ashby Road / Market Street are endorsed.

That the conversion of the LUSAD building to provide a hub for creative businesses is identified within the masterplan as a specific opportunity site (under section 6) with a related development profile and viability statement.

Ward’s End / Bedford Square could become Loughborough’s café quarter (5.5.7)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Create guidelines for the redevelopment of the Devonshire Square opportunity site to ensure design quality and improve access to the Queen’s Park.
- Improve the public realm including a re-design of Bedford Square
- Protect ground floor commercial uses.

Summary of Responses

Supportive –30.2% / Opposed – 51.6% / Neutral – 18.2%

- Many respondents argued that Loughborough already has too many cafes and that “café quarters” are established already in Market Street and Baxter Gate. Many suggested that cafes are better spread across the town and complement the range of choice within retail frontages. Several respondents opposed the proposition strongly in the belief that existing retail businesses would be compelled to relocate / close to make way for cafes.
- Several respondents argued that Bedford Square already works well and the provision of on street parking is material to its success – therefore it should be left well alone.
- Referring to Bedford Square (and removal of through traffic) some respondents pointed to the inconvenience and disruption that would be occasioned to bus services and called for the retention of a bus / cycle lane through the Square.
- Permanent seating might encourage anti-social behaviour and Bedford Square should be covered by CCTV.

Analysis

The Wards End / Bedford character area proposals attracted a substantial level of opposition. Anxiety over the loss of on street parking lie at the heart of that concern together with concerns over the potential for attracting anti-social behaviour and the re-routing of buses. Those issues have been considered previously in the consideration of the sketch layout for Bedford Square (see Q9) which concluded that the proposed scheme be abandoned in favour of a more modest proposition reflecting the design principles supported by local businesses.

The substantial abandonment of the more expansive Bedford Square public realm scheme potentially undermines the capability of the area to function as a café quarter. The area has however retained a strong independent tradition with growing representation from the food and drink sector; there is potential for that offer to improve and develop over time permitting its identification as an independent food and drink quarter.

Under the previous reference to the area becoming a café quarter there was clearly some alarm that “non-conforming” businesses would be forced out of the area; there was no prospect of any such intervention, nor is there any threat of such action should the area be recognised as a food and drink quarter. Change may be expected to occur incrementally over time.

Comments elsewhere indicate support for improvements to the Devonshire Square (“Home bargains unit”) and improved links to Queen’s Park while implicitly there is continuing support for the protection of ground floor commercial uses throughout the area.

Conclusion

That the Wards End Bedford Square character area is redefined as an independent food and drink quarter.

That the suite of potential interventions is amended to reflect the revised approach to the improvement of the public realm in Bedford Square and Wards End incorporating the retention of the existing bus route between Forest Road and Woodgate.

Queen’s Park will be better integrated into a green network for the town and access and use of the space will be increased (5.5.6)

Key elements of the masterplan approach include:

- Improve connections to the park from Brown’s Lane and Devonshire Lane
- Improve access to Wood Brook as a green walking and cycling route between the town and the university
- Ensure that new development across the town does not impact upon views to the Carillon Tower
- Encourage the use of the park for events

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 50.0% / Opposed – 37.1% / Neutral – 12.9%

- Respondents recognise the importance of Queens Park and support its preservation.
- Many view proposals related to the park as a potential threat:
 - Development on the Granby Street Car Park is opposed on the grounds of loss of well used spaces and housing overlooking the park with an entrance for residents taken off New Street damaging to the setting of the park.
 - Additional entrances are not required – sufficient already and poses a risk to the security of the park outside opening hours.
 - Opposition to the routing of a cycle path through the middle of the park – should be routed outside the park / along the edge.
- A minority of respondents recognised the park as being detached from the town centre or hidden away, some implicitly in suggesting better connectivity to Wards End and Devonshire Square (facilitated by the demolition of the “Home Bargains store.”

General Comments:

- Apartments and mews housing on the Granby Street car park would have a hugely damaging impact (visually intrusive, overlooking children’s play area, detract from the character and setting of the Carillon, overshadow bowling green detracting from its condition). There is no need for another entrance or café while the parks yard is needed for operational purposes. It is assumed that access is to be allowed 24 hours a day leading to vandalism and deterioration of the park.
- Concern over loss of trees [related to adjacent housing proposal] – there is already a café in the park and others nearby. It already has six access points – there is no need for another.
- The plan will destroy the context of the park
- Retain unchanged
- John Storer House should be replaced with a landmark quality structure.
- John Storer House could be improved but seems to have been ignored.

Analysis

Opinion is split in respect of responses to the Queen’s Park character area. From the representations received it is apparent that Queen’s Park is held in high regard, and with every justification.

Most of the opposition perhaps resides in concern over the perceived impact of adjacent housing development proposed within the Granby Street Car Park (That issue is examined in further detail at Q13d and found to be unsuitable).

The overall intent of the masterplan is to conserve the very special qualities of Queen’s Park, but to make it more accessible and to achieve closer integration with the town centre in order that its potential to support footfall enhancing the commercial viability of the town centre is maximised.

There are no proposals to route a cycle path through the park.

A new entrance is proposed to permit improved connectivity to the commercial centre by way of an improved Devonshire Lane. Given that one of the primary means of driving up footfall will be the staging of events there is a potential role for the park in supporting or hosting such activities. That role would be enhanced by a more direct connection into the commercial frontage.

The design of any entrance will be a matter of detail but it is likely to be more successful if it functions as a “gateway” framed by related structures. The masterplan suggests a café and replacement bowling pavilion but any viable combination could be considered and would need also to take into account the operational needs associated with park maintenance. There is no suggestion that the park would be open 24 hours a day; that will be a matter for the park management team to address. If the principle is approved all detailed schemes would be the subject of full consultation with the park user groups.

John Storer House is in the ownership of a trust. In the event of any proposals to redevelop or refresh the building the Development Management team will be available to assist and advise on matters of design with a view to improving the building’s landmark qualities and gateway setting.

Conclusion

That the character area proposals for Queens Park are endorsed.

Q11 - Lanes Strategy

The masterplan recognises that Loughborough’s secondary movement network consists of a number of lanes and alleyways noting that many are dark and uninviting yet connect important retail and other destinations. The Lanes Strategy aims to enhance these lanes through art and temporary interventions which would:

- Support the proposed public realm improvements
- Create more attractive and safer connections
- Create stronger “retail loops” in the town
- Offer opportunities for local artists and the University’s Arts School to showcase their talent.
- Incorporate designs that reflect the town’s cultural and industrial heritage.
- Add the “cool factor” and change perceptions of the town.

Summary of Responses

Supportive – 50.3% / Opposed – 21.6% / Neutral – 28.1%

General Comments relating to The Lanes Strategy

- Brookside requires attention – provides a link from Ashby Square to The Rushes and onward to Church Gate. Generally the town would benefit from de-cluttering of signage.
- Supported but needs to be good quality with a degree of permanence supported by better sign posting.
- Developments need to be of high quality to ensure they are attractive and effective.
- The sooner the better.
- Would encourage anti-social behaviour in the more remote lanes.
- A good idea but needs to respect local heritage which could be captured in lane themes.
- Involve community groups in design and reflect multicultural nature of the town
- Lanes Strategy is supported

- Dangerous for people, particularly women, walking alone.
- How will the strategy be funded?

Analysis

On balance respondents are more inclined to be supportive of the Lanes Strategy.

Those who saw the opportunity to involve communities and reflect local heritage and culture in the design of improvement schemes within the lanes are very much in tune with the stated aims of the proposal. Quality standards may be defined and managed by the commissioning authority while opportunities for funding could include sponsorship packages with local business partners, as well as direct investment on the part of the Council subject to satisfactory business cases.

Many of the lanes are currently uninviting and threatening; the purpose of the strategy is to bring light, life and activity to these corridors in order that they might be capable of providing safe and attractive pedestrian routes which will add to the permeability of the town centre.

Conclusion

That the Lanes Strategy is endorsed.

Q12 – Support for Softer Interventions

Summary of Responses

Events – such as specialist markets, sports events, industrial / cultural heritage events

Supportive – 70.3% / Opposed – 12.0% / Neutral – 17.7%

Temporary public realm and environmental improvements such as “pocket parks,” traffic calming measures and temporary improvements to facades and frontages

Supportive – 53.8% / Opposed – 26.7% / Neutral – 19.5%

Temporary uses such as pop up shops, weekend food markets on vacant sites, and trial information kiosks to advertise events.

Supportive – 54.7% / Opposed – 24.2% / Neutral – 21.1%

Any other Ideas that should be considered

Suggestions offered were mixed and varied:

- Attract more decent permanent shops (reduced business rates and other incentives)
- Promote tourism – provide a tourist information centre (Town Hall)
- Pro-active Council engagement – use CPO powers to redevelop sites (Devonshire Square)
- Allow southbound buses through the town centre.
- Provide a cycle hub for secure parking and cycle maintenance facilities – potential cycle hire scheme.
- Improve policing / enforcement (ASB and drinking)
- Retain parking spaces (Granby Street / Bedford Square)

- Invest in long term public realm improvements – green the town with planting and provide better quality street furniture to deliver a smarter more coherent town centre.
- Encourage more art across the town
- Encourage market stalls in Church Gate to increase footfall in the heritage quarter.

Addressing Events specifically:

- Promotion of “town and gown” events may not be bad objectives in themselves but there is insufficient thinking about how these might be organised and resourced. The term “town and gown” is divisive – it does not reflect the mixed pattern of engagement and mixed activities across all communities. Not convinced that the infrastructure exists to support large scale participation sports events (LU).
- Avoid events injuring the role and function of the market
- Give additional funding to Loughborough Half Marathon rather than a great Loughborough Run.
- Encourage live entertainment in the centre / free music concerts.
- Community space such as the market place project with Radar – have space where pop up events can take place
- Consider a large screen and sound system in the Market Place / electronic events board.
- Other potential events:
 - Christmas market with food stalls
 - Funfairs
 - Book fairs
 - Arts and Crafts fairs (Local artists sales)
 - Health / zen fairs
 - Science festival
 - Food festival
 - Historical market
 - Industrial history celebrations
- And a cautionary note.....large scale works can cause disruption to local shoppers who might be driven out and they are then hard to win back.

Analysis

There is overall support for smaller (softer) interventions with respondents suggesting a wide range of events and activities.

Traditionally town centre masterplans have focused on potential physical improvements: enhancement of the public realm and attracting inward investment in redevelopment opportunities in order to improve the attractiveness of a particular centre and drive up footfall. This masterplan is no different in that respect; a traditional approach is embraced with proposals to improve the gateways to the town centre, enhance the public realm within the approach routes to the core pedestrian area, regenerate the lanes and promote specific opportunity sites for development targeted primarily at attracting new high quality retail floor space such as that at Baxter Gate / Aumbery Gap, or to promote town centre living such as might be delivered at Granby Street car park.

There is nothing wrong in that approach; it reflects and supports the expressed ambitions of local stakeholders to consolidate and enhance Loughborough's position in the shopping hierarchy and in so doing improve the prospects for local businesses, their owners and employees.

However, the delivery of traditional solutions will be challenging and potentially capital intensive. Key partners who might be engaged in the delivery of enhancements to the public realm have indicated that there is likely to be limited funding for improvements within the highway. The Council may be obliged to explore other potential funding opportunities which are explored further in the implementation section below.

Similarly the property market review, presented at section 4 of the masterplan, reflects the current state of the market. It is apparent that retail investors are concentrating their investment strategies on the top 25 – 50 shopping centres across the country. There has been a shift towards a much greater proportion of retail development taking place in out of centre locations offering ease of access, plentiful free parking and modern large well configured retail units.

New trading channels introduce additional competition to the traditional High Street: local convenience stores, service stations, click and collect, TV shopping, mobile shopping and, not least, on line sales which in 2014 accounted for up to 12% of retail sales. The diversity and attraction of new retail channels is increasing constantly in an expanding digitally enabled economy.

Nationally the following trends are apparent:

- Comparison retailing has been represented primarily by the value oriented sector (Primark, 99p Stores, Poundland etc.) There has also been a trend towards increased demand from the higher quality fashion led goods and luxuries sector, often seeking additional floor space. The middle ground retailers are being squeezed in this market.
- Service sector growth performance has been variable with betting shops and pawn brokers faring better than others.
- Restaurants, cafes and takeaways have seen rapid growth. Shopping mall extensions typically allocate 15 – 20% of space to leisure and eating out businesses.
- Food store development has moved away from large scale super stores; The market leaders are focusing on the convenience sector providing stores of typically 3,000 sq ft or less).

A snapshot of retail demand in Loughborough indicates 16 requirements amounting to a maximum of 6,173 sqm of which 50% are café, restaurant, public house or takeaway uses. The figures must be treated with some caution as not all requirements will be registered and some will be seeking out of town locations.

Even where there is evidence of demand delivery of suitable sites may prove challenging; that issue also is discussed further under the implementation section below.

In summary the evidence point to significant challenges if traditional solutions are relied upon as the primary drivers of foot fall.

Alternatively efforts to drive up footfall might more practically be delivered through the co-ordination and delivery of a wide range of events and activities to enhance the “experiential” aspects of a visit to the town centre.

The Love Loughborough BID is already active in this arena and the Council is actively engaged in the organisation and delivery of events as an active partner or through assistance with funding.

However events will require space in which to take place. The Market Place is a regular venue for the market itself and other activities, but accessible space closely related to the shopping frontage elsewhere around the town centre is constrained. Queen’s Park and Southfield offer a forum for events which could be enhanced through improved connectivity to the town centre. More immediately Devonshire Square is well placed to extend the existing “forum” provided by Market Place and Cattle Market offering the potential to improve the street market and provide a public space for supporting events with a convenient link by way of an improved Devonshire Lane to Queen’s Park.

The successful deployment of “smaller interventions” has the potential to attract increasing footfall at lower cost over a shorter time scale which could in turn attract retailers and investors to take an interest in the identified physical development opportunities in the longer term.

Suggestions that the term “town and gown” is potentially divisive should be a matter for concern. The overall approach adopted and evidenced through various elements of the masterplan aims to forge stronger and productive connections between businesses within the town centre and the student community. In that context a new language is required to reflect the integrated pattern of engagement required.

Conclusion

That the framework for supporting softer and smaller interventions is endorsed.

That the term “town and gown” is substituted with a more cohesive terminology.

Q13 – Support for principles of development on the key sites

Summary of Responses

| | Support | Oppose | Neutral |
|--|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| A retail led mixed use development on Baxter Gate | 57.0% | 24.3% | 18.7% |
| Private apartments on Aumberry Gap | 38.6% | 39.0% | 22.4% |
| Refurbishment & extension of Devonshire Square unit | 47.9% | 34.5% | 17.6% |
| Development on Granby Street Car Park | 22.4% | 55.6% | 22.0% |
| Development of Southfield Road Car Park Extension | 26.0% | 55.2% | 18.8% |

Q13a - Baxter Gate

The Baxter Gate site together with the adjacent Aumberry Gap site were identified as an opportunity site for redevelopment in the 2007 masterplan. The Cineworld complex facilitated the redevelopment of the northern element of the site but the remainder, save for the health centre, remains vacant, underused or comprises poorer quality accommodation. The masterplan explored the viability of a number of options for the Baxter Gate site incorporating differing proportions of retail floorspace. The preferred option offered the

prospect of maximising the potential retail floorspace off a central concourse off High Street which would connect to Baxter Gate (through the Cineworld site) and Pinfoldgate. That option would deliver:

- Retail: 5,150 sqm at ground floor
- Re-provisioned health centre: 1,000sqm with 176 student bed spaces over
- General apartments at 1st floor and above: 60 units
- Parking: 125 space car park at 1st floor and above.

This option was evaluated as having good prospects of being viable if sufficient retail demand can be identified.

(6.2)

Summary of Responses

- Car park access to Jubilee Way is supported – satisfactory alternative site is required for the Post Office. The preferred option provides a sensible combination of retail and housing while retaining the health centre.
- The first thing that needs to happen is for the health centre to move followed by the construction of a multi-storey car park. More accommodation for students is not needed – we require social / affordable housing.
- A larger car park is needed – not convinced of the need for more retail space.
- Agree that student housing is best included as part of a larger mixed use scheme.
- Support for most of scheme but disagree with additional parking element as could lead to congestion and disruption of bus services in Baxter Gate.
- There should be no further retail development until vacant units have been filled and charity shops removed.
- Thought needed to make this area attractive – car park should be reconsidered.
- There is no need for more housing.
- No more student housing is needed in town.
- Opposed to student housing
- Any further student housing should be built on campus.
- Is more student accommodation needed in the town centre?
- Student housing is not supported – many people will object to moving the health centre.
- Medical centre should be retained.
- Pinfold Medical Centre is too important to move.
- There is already ample parking for the health centre.
- Concern over loss of parking spaces

Analysis

The redevelopment of the Baxter Gate site attracts the widest support among respondents. The key issues raised by respondents relate to the provision of car parking, student housing and impact on the Pinfold Gate health centre.

One of the primary factors commending the identification of the site as a development option has been its capacity to achieve sufficient critical mass to necessitate and support the delivery of a car park. No other site affords that opportunity.

The scale of parking will be a function of the overall scale and content of the development. For the purposes of the masterplan a facility delivering 125 spaces has been assessed as being commercially viable. A larger facility would be dependent upon additional value being achieved across the remainder of the site and / or additional investment unrelated to the enabling development. It is proposed to access the car parking element off Jubilee Way in which case there would be no impact upon bus services operating in Baxter Gate.

All of the options envisage the retention within the potential development site of the function currently delivered from the Pinfold Gate Health Centre and the Sexual Health Clinic. The means by which that can be achieved will need to be a matter of negotiation between the delivery agents and the NHS which holds the freehold of the property and adjacent parking area. Other freeholders and occupiers, including the Post Office, would similarly need to be engaged in negotiations to buy out their interest in the site or otherwise provide for their accommodation within any new development.

A modest element of student housing is proposed which may be essential to achieving the viability of the overall scheme. Student housing is attractive as a component within a mixed use town centre development as it can deliver additional value to a scheme without being required to provide “non-productive” on site car parking which market housing is required to provide in accordance with adopted standards. Managed purpose built student housing is widely accommodated elsewhere in and around the town centre (Woodgate and Greenclose Lane) in a manner which the operators will claim satisfies a need, introduces active living and vibrancy into the town centre, supports local businesses and reduces demand for the creation of HMOs within the stock of “family housing.”

Conclusion

That the principles for the proposed redevelopment of the Baxter Gate site are endorsed.

Q13b - Aumberry Gap

As recorded above this “island site” comprised part of the opportunity site for development promoted through the 2007 masterplan. The daft replacement masterplan continues to recognise its development potential with all options proposing a residential scheme delivering 65 apartments and 8 town houses fronting Pinfold Gate serviced by a ground level car park and incorporating a “gateway” feature at the corner of High Street and Jubilee Way marking the southern entrance to the town centre.

(6.2)

Summary of Responses

- More parking is needed – parking preferred for this site.
- The principle of redevelopment is supported but purpose built student housing is also suitable – a development of c 540 student bed spaces could release c 180 homes for families / young professionals [HMOs]. Student housing offers better economic viability and could release investment for a landmark / gateway feature – there is potential to extend up to 7 storeys [rather than 5] in the creation of a landmark feature which would not impact on residential amenity – requested that the masterplan allows for alternative options / flexibility so that the site might be used for student accommodation, retail etc.

- Would prefer more parking spaces.
- Must not give up too much of the town to accommodation
- The site is negatively affected by social housing.
- Site should be a bus station
- Site suitable for parking.
- Proposals lack impact and imagination. Housing on the Aumberry Gap site is not viable – that would require 200+ residences. Why is the Phantom pub excluded from the opportunity site? The Baxter Gate site mirrors the Rushes development which has not been great [successful]. Lack of demand for retail suggests that the town would need to see significant increase in footfall to attract investors necessitating more ambition for the Aumberry Gap site to reinvigorate the High Street.

Analysis

Although the site marks the southern entry point to the town centre it is somewhat detached and remote from the centre of commercial activity. While some respondents would clearly prefer to see the development of the site to provide for a bus station or a car park there is no obvious mechanism to facilitate the delivery of either. Additionally, as noted elsewhere, the justification and potential to provide a bus station has been considered at length as part of the options appraisal process which concluded in favour of the current distribution of on street bus hubs delivered in association with the Inner Relief Road project.

With the exception of the site of the Phantom public house the remaining land within the quadrangular site is held in one ownership. The development of the site does not rely on the availability of the Phantom site but there would be no impediment to its inclusion should the brewery wish to commit its asset to the scheme.

Residential development of the scale proposed on the site has been deemed to be viable, although it is not clear whether that is only achievable as part of the wider Baxter Gate scheme.

The challenges facing the attraction of investors to the Baxter Gate site are acknowledged elsewhere in this report but given the market assessment it would seem rather improbable that the Aumberry Gap site could attract a strong retail interest; accordingly the overall ambition for the site is not considered unreasonable.

Greater ambition is perhaps reflected in the submission of a prospective developer who appeals for a more flexible policy framework which could allow for a mixed use with retail and other uses at ground floor with student housing above. It is suggested that such a scheme would offer better economic viability and introduce a wider range of potential benefits both in terms of reducing the demand on the local housing stock to provide HMOs and offering the level of investment and architectural opportunity to deliver a substantial gateway / landmark feature on a primary approach to the town centre.

Notwithstanding some concerns expressed over the level of student housing within the Woodgate character area, student housing as part of mixed use development, has been consistently approved around the southern margins of the town centre and schemes generally have successfully contributed to the delivery of active frontages at ground floor contributing to the commercial vitality and viability of the town centre.

A more flexible approach to the development of the site could enable the delivery of a more prominent mixed use development with the content being market led and design, including the height of any gateway / landmark element, being controlled through the development management process.

Conclusion

That proposals for the Aumberry Gap site are reconsidered with a view to enabling a more flexible development solution retaining active ground floor uses and frontages and a landmark gateway component at the junction of High Street and Jubilee Way, together with the potential for student housing at first floor and above.

Q13c - Devonshire Square

The Devonshire Square and Granby Street sites are located adjacent to Queen's Park; both were identified as opportunity sites for development in the 2007 masterplan but complexities related to land ownership and the popularity of the car park, together with parking revenues, have discouraged redevelopment interest to date. The refreshed masterplan continues to recognise the potential that the combined sites continue to offer for regeneration.

The preferred option recognises that the existing block fronting Devonshire Square [the "Home Bargains unit"] could be refurbished and extended upwards to deliver a 1,850 sqm aparthotel providing 40 bed spaces. The return wall onto Devonshire Lane could be converted to deliver an active frontage complementing any public realm enhancements implemented to deliver improved connectivity to Queen's Park by way of a new entrance flanked by a café and a replacement bowling pavilion.

(6.3)

Summary of Responses

- CPO powers should be used to acquire the site and redevelop, possibly providing a new gateway to Queens Park – alternatively build a multi-storey car park on the site.
- Council should use CPO powers to acquire the "Home Bargains" building and redevelop the site to provide a new landmark gateway entrance into Queens Park – alternatively level the building and build a new multi-storey car park on the footprint of the building.
- Demolish "Home Bargains" unit and rebuild in reclaimed brick.
- [Home Bargains] unit is already high enough.
- Can the structure support development above?
- [The Home Bargains unit] is beyond redemption.

Analysis

The building enclosing the western side of Devonshire Square, currently housing the Home Bargains store and a number of smaller units, is a functional concrete structure dating from the 1960's. It possesses little if any architectural merit. Efforts have been made to mitigate its impact on the street scene through the commissioning of a mural depicting the history of the town.

Several respondents call for its demolition, potentially with the assistance of CPO powers to facilitate site assembly. However, as a commercial entity the unit is functioning reasonably

well. The new owners advise that the units are fully tenanted and they are satisfied with the return on their investment. In short, the property is commercially successful. Redevelopment on the same footprint would incur substantial costs and would be unlikely to attract rental values much higher than those currently attained. Redevelopment of the property is not viable.

The owners of the property are receptive to the suggestion that an active return frontage to Devonshire Lane might be installed to add life and interest to that corridor as part of an initiative to improve connectivity to the Granby Street car park, and potentially Queen's Park beyond.

Development above the existing structure affords the opportunity for generating the additional value required to address the deficiencies in the ground floor facade to Devonshire Square. The property market review points to little demand in Loughborough for offices and the absence of attached ground floor space to accommodate parking restricts residential uses. Consequently the study identifies an aparthotel as the most viable vehicle for the delivery of development above the existing structure. Any such development would be conditional upon satisfactory structural surveys and other consents.

Conclusion

That the principles for the proposed redevelopment of the Devonshire Square site are endorsed.

Q13d - Granby Street Car Park

The masterplan addresses a number of options for development within the Granby Street Car Park based on incremental expansion of the housing element. The preferred option could deliver 22 apartments and 9 town houses accessed off Bleach Yard, allied to the delivery of a new entrance to Queen's Park flanked by a café and replacement bowling pavilion.

Overall the development would result in the loss of 93 public car parking spaces. The masterplan acknowledges that development could only proceed if replacement car parking can be provided elsewhere in the town centre.

The consultants were invited to evaluate a further option incorporating the provision of a three decked car park on the balance of Granby Street Car Park to accommodate 260 vehicles. It was concluded that the structure would have an adverse impact on Queen's Park and would not be economically viable if dependent for delivery upon private sector investment and or enabling development.

(6.3)

Summary of Responses

- Totally opposed to loss of parking for property development. Disastrous for local businesses which rely on the parking and any encroachment on the park would be horrendous. Development would spoil views of the Carillon and overlook the children's play area.
- Queens Park should not be compromised by being overlooked by flats nor should there be any changes to the structure of the park.

- Apartments are inappropriate adjoining Queens Park. The new access, café and mews housing is supported but reservations over an aparthotel. A multi-storey car park would be overbearing and increase traffic on Granby Street.
- It is essential that parking spaces are retained and that Queens Park is protected from development which would injure its historic character or damage the character and setting of the Carillon. Flats should not overlook the children's play area. Parking here is needed by the elderly visiting the park.
- Increased private residential homes in the town centre is important.
- Underground parking would be a good idea.
- What provision is made for parking, servicing etc. Allow Devonshire Square redevelopment to extend over Woodbrook and create shambles style scheme.
- No need for housing – retain for car parking
- Well used and attracts people to the Wards End area and Queens Park. Apartments are not needed; they would spoil the outlook from the park, result in the loss of trees, make dangerous the shared access off New Street and be too close to the children's play area.
- Loss of parking will not encourage people to support the park and Wards End area.
- Parking is needed for access to the Town Hall and the market.
- Support for affordable housing only.
- Any loss of parking spaces must be provided within 100 yards.
- Development would reduce the open aspect of Queens Park.
- Retain unchanged.
- Do not build on the car park
- Design a frontage of differing heights to make the building more attractive (eg Little Lane Mountsorrel)
- Proposal to build in the car park is daft. Significant problems are not identified in the plan because there are none. The plan will restrict access to the town centre and discourage shoppers.
- Any loss of parking spaces would be catastrophic to businesses.

Analysis

The very special place that Queen's Park commands within the community is acknowledged within the masterplan and recognised by the Council; it is a designated Conservation Area. It is that very special quality that the masterplan seeks to capture as a vehicle for supporting and sustaining the long term vitality and viability of the commercial centre.

Elsewhere in the masterplan the case is made for the promotion of activities and events as a mechanism for attracting footfall to the centre. The space within which those activities can take place is constrained, and such space as is available is occupied by the market at key demand periods. Queen's Park has the potential to come to the assistance of the town as an attractive venue but it needs to be better connected to the "High Street." That could be achieved by way of a new entrance accessed directly off an improved public realm along Devonshire Lane. The masterplan proposes a new gateway to the park marked by a café and replacement bowling pavilion; in practice that gateway might be marked by an alternative configuration of buildings and structures which might be developed in consultation with local interest groups.

Enabling the delivery of new housing within a town centre reintroduces life and activity providing a “captive market” for businesses, an enlivened evening economy and a degree of natural surveillance to discourage crime and anti-social behaviour.

Some respondents in this instance are clearly concerned that housing development would have an adverse impact on the park by reason of overlooking, intrusion, the loss of trees and damage to the character and setting of the park and its landmark features. While not disregarding those concerns it is considered that care and attention to detail in the design of any apartments and town housing could be achieved without detriment to the park and the provision for casual overlooking might even act as a deterrent to aberrant and anti-social behaviour.

However, the most compelling argument against building on the site resides in the resultant loss of public car parking (93 spaces). The masterplan acknowledges that development could not proceed until adequate alternative car parking can be delivered but in reality there is little prospect of achieving that requirement within a constrained town centre. Several respondents make the point that simply replacing parking on a like for like basis, even if that could be achieved, is not enough. Businesses within the Bedford Square / Wards End / Devonshire Square quarter rely on that parking.

The overall impact of potential losses in parking provision (and revenues) is addressed elsewhere in this report, as is the overall projected shortfall in strategic provision across the town centre as a whole.

The delivery of housing proposals on the Granby Street car park is highly unlikely to be viable and as such the retention of the proposal raises false expectations diverting resources from the delivery of the remaining masterplan proposals

Conclusion

That proposals for the provision of housing on the Granby Street car park are deleted in favour of the retention of the existing parking together with enhanced connectivity from Devonshire Lane to a new entrance to Queen’s Park in the vicinity of the current bowling green.

Q13e - Southfield Road Car Park Extension

The masterplan recognises this car park in the ownership of the Borough Council as a potential housing opportunity with the capacity to deliver 38 apartments serviced by under-croft parking. Development would result in the loss of 42 public parking spaces and accordingly the masterplan acknowledges that development could not proceed until compensatory provision had been made for displaced parking elsewhere in the town centre.

(6.4)

Summary of Responses

- Only acceptable if the same number of parking spaces can be provided in the same area of town.
- Should only be considered if the same number of parking spaces can be provided in the same area of town (eg the development of a multi storey car park on the “Home Bargains” site).

- Car park is close to significant student housing provision on Woodgate and steps to create a balanced community would be important.
- Create low rise housing for the elderly.
- No need for housing – retain for car parking
- Nearby businesses rely on this car park.
- Development supported provided it is not student housing.
- Concern over loss of parking
- Concern for loss of parking required by office workers and Premier Inn customers

Analysis

The benefits to be derived from the development of town centre housing have been set out fully in the analysis of proposals for the Granby Street car park site (above).

However, the potential loss of 42 conveniently located parking spaces attracts a similar reaction from respondents as that for the Granby Street Car Park site. The same issues apply: there is no obvious prospect for delivering compensatory facilities within the same broad locality, there is an overall strategic shortfall in parking provision across the town centre and the loss of this parking area would compound that shortage and impact on parking revenues.

In view of these considerations there is little prospect of housing on this site being viable.

Conclusion

That proposals for the provision of housing on the Southfields Road Extension car park are deleted in favour of the retention of the existing parking.

Q13f - Sainsbury's Site

The masterplan concludes that the Sainsbury's store has a negative impact on the townscape. Its scale and the large expanse of car parking is out of character with the fine grain of the town. The positioning of the building fails to create active frontages to key routes into the town centre along The Rushes or Ashby Road and the site is a significant barrier to pedestrian movement.

Although Sainsbury's have advised that the company has no immediate intentions to redevelop this site the masterplan brings forward a set of design principles to guide any future consideration of the issue. Those principles provide for:

- Remodel the store entrance on the northern facade
- Provide new pedestrian routes through the site connecting to Broad Street, The Rushes and Greenclose Lane
- Deliver a block of student housing with a gateway landmark feature to the corner of Broad Street / Derby Road (Northern Gateway)
- Potentially provide for displaced parking through the provision of a decked car park solution
- Installation of an arts / lighting feature to assimilate the store's Ashby Road frontage.

(6.5)

Summary of Responses

- Pedestrian routes to Greenclose Lane and The Rushes are supported – a pelican crossing should be installed near the [proposed] pedestrian exit to The Rushes.
- Sainsbury's should not be required to improve the appearance of their store – there is no need for a pedestrian link between Broad Street and Greenclose Lane.
- Development of student housing on the Sainsbury's site could close off choices for any future redevelopment of the site. The Kwik Fit site should be considered as part of the gateway – potential for Sainsbury's site and Kwik Fit sites to provide multi-storey parking.

Analysis

The masterplan has been shared with Sainsbury's and a meeting held with their representatives. While reaffirming that the company had no immediate proposals for altering their store and site layout the representatives raised no objection to the range of development principles proposed. Clearly, any alterations within the site can only be undertaken with the engagement and co-operation of Sainsbury's.

The Kwik Fit site is unrelated to Sainsbury's but it is recognised elsewhere in this report that any proposals which might emerge for the redevelopment of that site (along with the dry cleaning premises) would fall to be considered within the context of the Rushes / Derby Road character area guidelines.

Conclusion

That the principles for the proposed redevelopment of the Sainsbury's site are endorsed.

Q13g - Alternative Development Option

Summary of Responses

- Demolish all buildings between New St and Granby St backing onto Woodbrook and all properties between Bedford Square and South Street to create a major redevelopment opportunity.

Analysis

The proposal is visionary and ambitious but unlikely to be commercially viable.

Conclusion

That the comment is noted but no action taken.

Other Comments

Housing

Summary of Responses

- Housing is welcomed but there is no indication as to how much will be social housing - could also attract additional traffic conflicting with pedestrianisation.
- More town centre housing will only encourage more fat cat landlords.
- Encourage good quality housing in the town centre for the elderly with parking.

- Housing should be provided in existing housing areas and have community gardens / green roofing.
- Additional housing is not needed in view of the number of empty properties. Student housing is increasing (Beehive Lane).
- We need to reduce student housing and restore family housing to create a steady flow of customers. House students on campus and make Loughborough a family oriented town. Tackle anti-social behaviour.

Analysis

The evidence underpinning the Council’s overall planning strategy clearly demonstrates that there is a need for additional housing provision across the Borough. There is also a continuing demand for student housing which fuels the HMO market, which some regard as injurious to the balance of housing provision across the local market.

The masterplan generally aims to encourage town centre living as a vehicle for injecting life and activity back into the town centre. That is achieved through the promotion of “living above the shop” in those parts of the town where there is a legacy of underused and vacant space above the commercial unit, and through the inclusion of housing elements with the specific town centre redevelopment options.

Student housing may be acceptable subject to the individual merits of specific proposals and has the capacity to make mixed use schemes viable which might otherwise be incapable of economic delivery.

The delivery of social housing elements within commercial schemes will be subject to negotiation informed by an assessment of economic viability.

Conclusion

That the comments are noted

Publicity

Summary of Responses

- Publicity for the consultation was poor – many do not have internet access.
- More publicity would have been helpful.

Analysis

A full account of the consultation programme and publicity attached to this project is set out in the introductory sections of this report. It is considered that the level of publicity has been appropriate.

Conclusion

That the comments are noted.

Delivery and Funding

Summary of Responses

- The plan would be enhanced by inclusion of timescales, especially for short term projects. Little data is presented on “leakage” of spending to other centres and on line sales.
- The Council needs to be more proactive – use of CPO powers would speed up site assembly and give confidence to complete new schemes – opportunity to retain an equity share in any redevelopment (The “Manchester Model” retains a 25% share).
- The plan will need County Council buy in.
- Implementation is a key issue with limited public funding and lack of private interest; creative approaches are needed along with close co-operation between partners and delivery agencies. The Council is urged to be creative and innovative; it is encouraging to see reference to planning agreements, prudential borrowing and investment funds as well as conventional sources. Asset backed approaches have been successfully used by Councils elsewhere. A commitment from the Council to ensure that town centre improvements are included in ongoing capital and revenue budgets is essential for the delivery of initiatives. Continued support and funding to match income generated by the BID would enable the delivery of the “small interventions.” A new town team needs to be established with a clear remit as soon as possible (drawing upon the former *Loughborough Town Team* and *Love Loughborough Partnership*). The *University* has become campus consolidated; it needs to be actively engaged in the Town Team and encouraged to adopt a greater presence in the centre. Safety and security are key aspects of an attractive town centre; The *Police* need to be engaged in the Town Team and pressure needs to be brought to bear to maintain and improve town centre policing. The *County Council* needs to be engaged – it has a major responsibility for the public realm and needs to continue its review of the operation of the highway network following the completion of the Inner Relief Road and to ensure that the pedestrianised areas can be fully utilised for events and activities. The *LLEP* needs to maintain its commitment to town centres and make funds available to support regeneration. The masterplan also recognises the role of the *BID* and the new *Chamber of Trade and Commerce* as partners in the improvement and promotion of the town centre.

Analysis

Broad timescales for the delivery of the masterplan recommendations (Short, medium and long term) are set out in the Strategic Action Plan (Appendix B of the masterplan).

A whole chapter of the masterplan (Chapter 8) is given over to the “Implementation and Delivery Strategy.” (As an essentially technical process it did not feature prominently in the public exhibition materials).

The masterplan is clear in its recognition that the Council cannot deliver its provisions acting alone; it will need to be supported by the active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, delivery partners and agencies, both public and private. The Council is expected to take a key role in leadership of the programme but partners may be involved variously in enabling, funding and delivering projects.

Stakeholders were engaged in a working group to guide and advise the consultancy team in the preparation of the masterplan. The previous masterplan dating from 2007 was also prepared with significant input from stakeholders who retained an interest throughout its implementation under the banner of the “Loughborough Town Team.” There will be

considerable merit in re-engaging core representatives from the former Town Team and the Love Loughborough Partnership together with representatives from the key delivery agencies to co-ordinate, co-operate and advise on the delivery of the new masterplan.

In a period of continuing pressure on public funding the delivery of interventions which rely primarily on the public purse will be challenging. The County Council cautions that there is currently limited funding for highway improvements (Appendix 1).

The masterplan recognises a range of potential funding streams drawing upon combinations of public and private sector investment with the balance of need for funding varying depending on the type, nature, cost and commercial viability of the project concerned. Those funds might include:

- LLEP administered grants and funding streams
- Prudential borrowing
- Section 106 Agreements (Developer contributions)
- Housing revenue
- Rolling investment funds
- Capital programme schemes
- Lottery funding
- Transport funds

The County Council suggests this menu should be supplemented by innovative funding sources such as crowd funding.

It is apparent too that the Council will need to consider suitable delivery mechanisms to underpin initiatives such as:

- Local Development Plan policies
- Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Development and Design Frameworks and
- Action Plans.

The masterplan recognises a number of delivery vehicles: private sector led, public sector led and public / private development partnerships. The last of these is the most common form of delivery mechanism used to procure more complex urban regeneration schemes. Such partnerships typically are delivered through a core agreement setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners, preconditions to be satisfied before development, and the apportionment of financial returns. One of the main powers that the public sector can bring to such partnerships is that of compulsory purchase to enable the assembly of land where that cannot be achieved through private treaty. Local authorities might also consider equity share models or asset backed vehicles as a means of engaging private sector partners in joint ventures.

In summary the Council will have a leading role in the delivery of the masterplan. It might be expected that there will emerge a range of delivery mechanisms and vehicles with differing partnership engagement depending on the type, scale, nature, risks and viability of the intervention proposed. In delivering that leadership function it is clear that the Council will need to act proactively and embrace the role of an active partner in the co-ordination and funding of interventions.

Some interventions may bring modest costs and challenges; for example the delivery of events and activities in partnership with business and community groups. Others, and especially those related to the delivery of major opportunity site development, may be expected to require significantly greater involvement with proportionately greater costs and risk.

In progressing these schemes to Council will need to make appropriate provision within its revenue budgets and capital plan to permit seed corn funding of projects to leverage necessary partnership investment.

Conclusion

That the need is noted to re-establish a Town Team partnership of key stakeholders and agencies to co-ordinate, co-operate and assist in the delivery of the masterplan.

That it is noted that while the Council cannot expect to deliver the masterplan alone it will need to assume a pro-active and interventionist role in providing the leadership required to drive forward the plan's proposals, including the commitment of seed corn funding as appropriate to leverage partnership investment.

General Comments (Specific Issues)

Summary of Responses

- **University Connectivity:** Consideration could be given to maximising potential benefits of University staff and students (=1/3 of town's population) – consider how students can be made aware of what the town has to offer – Sainsbury's / Ashby Square area is the main point of arrival from the campus and could be made to feel more like the rest of the centre to draw people into the rest of the town.
- **Residents Preference Parking:** Hastings residents have appealed for residents' preference parking to stop streets being used for workers' parking.
- **Health Impact Assessments** should be undertaken of the proposed changes
- **Woodbrook:** A long term strategy should aim to open up and illuminate the watercourse to provide a water feature running through the town centre
- **Anti-social behaviour:** Tackling presence of undesirables would be more useful than any other measure.
- **Signage:** Signage to the historical quarter is poor – a historical trail could be done quickly.
- **Signage and Information:** Provide better signage for HGVs. Provide more disabled parking facilities. Provide more information on tourism, local services, events, hospitals, libraries, cycling and police. Pinfold Health Centre is too small and has too little parking. Bridge Street Medical Practice should be considered for redevelopment as it is not ideal on a busy corner site.

Analysis

Attracting additional spending by staff and students from the **University** within the town centre is recognised as a readily accessible means of improving footfall. A marketing strategy may be developed with BID and others to raise awareness of what the town has to offer and to gather intelligence of what range of goods and services might attract greater

patronage. That work reasonably might be undertaken within the remit of the “small interventions” which include various initiatives to support business. (Section 7.2.3).

The importance of the Ashby Square / Market Street character area (the creative quarter) as the primary arrival point for students coming into the town is already acknowledged (see 5.5.5). The range of interventions recommended to define and enhance the character area is consistent with the objective of improving connectivity with the University community.

Residents Preference Parking scheme fall outside the remit of the masterplan.

Health Impact Assessments may be undertaken where necessary as part of the implementation process.

The **Woodbrook** corridor is recognised as an important link within the pedestrian / cycle network (2.4.5). Unfortunately much of the course of the brook passes in culvert beneath the roads and buildings of Loughborough. Where it is open to view it has the appearance of a functional drainage channel. Even as part of a long term plan there is little prospect of restoring the watercourse to an attractive feature through the centre of the town.

Many respondents have cited the need to address the incidence of **anti-social behaviour**. It is not something that a strategic masterplan reasonably can be expected to resolve. The issue is already the subject of multi-agency intervention the effectiveness of which might be monitored by the proposed Town Team.

Signage and information, other than that required to service a strategic objective also falls outside the remit of the masterplan. Existing joint agency teams with responsibility for the maintenance and management of the public realm, including highway authority representation, keeps signage under review.

Conclusion

That the development of a marketing strategy to attract the University community to visit the town centre is added to the schedule of small interventions designed to support the work of the BID at section 7.2.3.

That the remaining comments relating to matters of detail are noted and referred as appropriate to partner organisations and established project teams for their consideration.

General Comments (General Issues)

Summary of Responses

- Encourage businesses occupying houses as offices around the edges of the town to relocate in the centre, occupying vacant units and releasing houses back into the general stock.
- Pedestrianisation has killed the town centre
- Undo the mess that has been made of the town centre.
- The plan falls radically short of addressing the decline of the town centre – i.e. car parking and more shops.
- Attracting new shops is not mentioned.
- There is no reference to better shops – presumably because they can't be attracted.

- There is no reference to encouraging business in the town.
- The plan will do nothing to encourage new users to the town.
- The plan proposes only slight alterations with no real improvements.
- It would be preferable to concentrate on a smaller area and attract well known retailers.
- We do not need more shops – the Baxter Gate development will cause the town centre to be spread too thinly.
- Reduce charges on retailers. Make the town more accessible to transport by [stopping] pedestrianisation, providing a bus station and retaining parking spaces.
- The Council has failed to develop the unique market town attraction of Loughborough as an alternative to competing with Cities. It now looks run down with unattractive betting shops, discount stores and charity shops.
- A useless plan
- Stopping cars and buses going into the centre was bad enough.
- Loughborough's main problem is the huge number of derelict / run-down buildings. The plan recognises that but needs more radical solutions if the town is to compete with neighbouring centres. It requires more greenery, public space and pedestrianisation together with convenient and affordable (free) parking.
- Loughborough is rapidly becoming a town of vacant units, charity shops and national chain stores which drain money from the local economy – Embrace a future where people are attracted to shops and restaurants for goods and services that cannot be accessed online. The plan has no real feel for the area.
- The town centre is becoming a no man's land with charity shops, pound shops, estate agents and junk food stores.
- Create a greener, more active, friendlier, safer, cleaner, more secure town with free activities – encourage everyone to come into the centre.
- The plan will cost money – more money is paid in Council Tax for less service.
- The plan seems to propose change for the sake of change without an understanding of the town. Hopefully Councillors will oppose the more ludicrous ideas.
- Hope the public are listened to.
- This plan is not good.
- The plan is a disaster – simply aims to make the centre the same as every other town.
- The town centre looks pitiful; Market traders and shop keepers are openly down-hearted. There are no free public toilets, parking is limited and costly and residents feel that the town is dominated by the University and students. Areas feel unsafe with unchallenged anti-social behaviour. Reduced bus fares would be a step forward.
- Hope a positive difference can be made – Loughborough is way behind many nice market towns.
- Loughborough is much improved due to changes over the past 20 years: keep consulting in the development of plans. Allow access for cars and people but keep the centre free of buses and other vehicles, and pedestrianised. Promote the market and the small shops that make Loughborough unique.
- Improvements to the housing stock are needed before any other improvements are made. Loughborough is becoming a very depressed area to live and work in, more areas are becoming overrun with houses in poor condition, leaving behind students and those of limited means. The Council is doing too little too late having missed the

opportunity to improve the town and its ability to create an individual and vibrant town centre when the market square and Baxter Gate development went ahead.

Analysis

It is apparent that many respondents are disillusioned with the current offer and supporting facilities found within the town centre. Many clearly are not persuaded that pedestrianisation and the redirection of buses, coupled with the absence of a dedicated bus station, has improved the situation; quite the opposite, with some believing that those alterations have contributed to the deterioration of the town centre.

Based on that frustration it is apparent that some respondents believe that the new masterplan cannot improve the situation and will be ineffective and an unnecessary burden on tax payers.

Several respondents find no reference within the masterplan to the attraction of new shops and businesses. That perhaps derives from a limited understanding of the operation of the market, both nationally and locally, or the powers available to the Council to encourage retailers and investors to target Loughborough. They have also apparently overlooked the proposals to promote a major retail led redevelopment of the Baxter Gate site.

The property market review (Chapter 4) is helpful in explaining the challenges confronting market towns such as Loughborough and the need to “reimagine” town centres to appeal to a different market, offering a range of goods, services, specialities and entertainment that cannot be satisfied on line or through other emerging retailing channels.

Town centres are highly dynamic and to survive as the centre of their communities they must quickly adapt to changing customer tastes and expectations. Cafes, fast food restaurants, betting shops and discount retailers are doing well on the High Street because there is a market for their product; mid-range stores appear to be losing out to competing city centres and on line retailers where customers can find greater choice.

A smaller proportion of respondents are persuaded that Loughborough has improved as a result of the changes introduced over the past 20 years, welcoming pedestrianisation and a traffic free central area. Others do acknowledge the need to make the town more attractive through the provision of more greenery, public spaces and pedestrian areas with higher standards of cleanliness and activities.

Conclusion

That the general comments are noted.

Appendix – Comments of Leicestershire County Council

Economic Growth: Masterplan is endorsed especially as it focuses on the town centre experience with less reliance on retailing. Other comments:

- Could be greater effort to establish links to the Grand Union Canal / basin
- Emphasis on walking and cycling but no reference to the health agenda
- More detail on alternative funding sources could be referenced e.g. crowd funding.
- Housing proposals could be more aspirational – attract high end mews properties.

Libraries: Concern that if Granby St is made 2 way and a multi storey car park is provided on Granby St car park increased traffic could adversely affect library and museum users (young and elderly)

School Organisation – Place Planning: Six opportunity sites are identified for development – if residential apartments are 2+ bedrooms it is likely that a request will be made for section 106 contributions to fund school places.

Transport and Flood Response: Detailed comments have already been made on the Bedford Square gateway scheme (separate project). Without necessary evidence and intelligence it is difficult for the highway authority to comment on highway proposals resulting in changes to traffic movement. A joint approach to explore these issues would be welcomed.

Highway Issues: Any changes to the public highway layout etc will need HA approval. Currently there is limited funding for minor highway improvements. Where 3rd party funding is available schemes will still have to comply with national standards and policy. Where proposals require Traffic Regulation Orders their implementation will be subject to available resources and the availability of full funding.

Design and Maintenance Issues: non-standard materials require careful consideration to ensure they are fit for purpose – they will attract a commuted lump sum for future maintenance. Electric charge points should be installed in public parking areas. Before proposals are developed too far a clear policy regarding on street parking needs to be agreed to avoid abortive design work.

Tree Planting: Concern over the amount of tree planting in the highway – needs careful consideration and investigation to avoid underground services and drainage systems.

Street Lighting: installations will need to meet LCC standards and funding (commuted sums) However, there are a range of possibilities for street lighting including functional and decorative schemes.

Walking and Cycling: cycle routes on highway will need HA approval and formal maintenance agreements.

Bus Services: Concern about impact of any further pedestrianisation on bus services – bus operators need to be fully engaged in the masterplan process. If buses are pushed further away from the centre or are restricted from accessing High Street / Baxter Gate / Bedford Square this could reduce the attractiveness of services and impact on trade.

Implementing Measures: road space booking / licensing will be required for all works , events and temporary uses.

Current LCC Work:

- **Loughborough Transport Model:** LCC is developing micro-simulation models for all principal market towns to assess and mitigate impacts – model may be used to test and establish evidence and intelligence required to understand master plan proposals.
- **Bus Trial Remedial Work:** LCC addressing remedial measures required following opening of the Inner Relief Road:

- Improving signage for passengers at Biggin St / Lemyngton St
- Improved waiting and boarding conditions at Lemyngton St.
- Improved bus information at Market Place
- Junction changes at Alan Moss Road / A6 Derby Road
- Addressing unauthorised use of High St / Baxter Gate – signing and lining with minor civil works.