

Crawley Borough Council

**Report to Overview & Scrutiny Commission
30 November 2015**

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**Report to Cabinet
2 December 2015**

Crawley Town Centre Regeneration Programme Outline First Draft

Report of Head of Economic and Environmental Services
and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development
PES/195

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Members an outline draft of the Crawley town centre regeneration programme (Appendix A), comprising a delivery framework and a programme of action to unlock the sustainable regeneration of the town centre.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.2.1 Approve the outline draft town centre regeneration programme (Appendix A), prior to a period of public consultation (see section 7.3).
- 2.2.2 Delegate authority to the Head of Economic and Environmental Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development to:
- a) Approve the final draft of the town centre regeneration programme, following the period of public consultation and;
 - b) Regularly update the programme to take into account the delivery details of the individual town centre regeneration schemes listed within it, as they come forward.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the draft outline prior to a period of public consultation with stakeholders, businesses, employers and the local community.

4. Background – A Programme of Town Centre Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.1 The regeneration of Crawley Town Centre is one of the top priorities for the Council's administration.

- 4.2 Over the period June to November 2015, officers undertook informal engagement with town centre stakeholders to gain feedback and ideas on the draft programme and to clarify how stakeholders could contribute to regeneration delivery.
- 4.3 Officers have held over 40 hours of stakeholder engagement meetings with a wide range of town centre stakeholders since August. This has included meetings with the Town Centre Partnership Board, the Council's Town Centre Member Working Group, an All Members seminar, as well as meetings with major retailers, major town centre employers (e.g. the range of professional business service companies), site owners, commercial agents, landlords and developers.
- 4.4 Council officers were able to highlight at those meetings the active momentum that the Council has injected into the town centre regeneration thanks to the forthcoming Queens Square improvements via a £3.2m investment, jointly with West Sussex County Council.
- 4.5 Officers have gained significant feedback on the proposed town centre regeneration priorities. All the stakeholders received the news about a Council led town centre regeneration programme very positively.
- 4.6 The above intensive programme of stakeholder engagement has served to enrich the regeneration programme with a range of initiatives, now presented to Members in the form of an outline draft programme (Appendix A).
- 4.7 The Town Centre Partnership Board is strengthening its governance and remit and will broaden its representation, linking to new sub-groups, which will be created. Officers are supporting these actions as part of the Town Centre Regeneration programme, under the Governance, Engagement and Co-ordination pillar.

5. Description of Issue to be resolved

- 5.1 In recent times, parts of Crawley Town Centre have seen a deterioration in the built environment and an increase in the retail unit vacancy rate, in particular, zones such as Broadway and Queen's Square.
- 5.2 At the same time other parts of the town centre, such as County Mall are thriving with notable increases in business investment and occupancy.
- 5.3 The Manor Royal Business District has seen a strengthening of business space occupancy levels and the extent of business and jobs growth there has led to a shortage of available commercial space, which the town centre could help to meet.
- 5.4 A town centre regeneration plan is needed in order to map out a longer term programme of action to achieve sustainable economic growth there and to create a thriving new neighbourhood and a vibrant mix of complementary uses.
- 5.5 In recent months there has been a dramatic boost in the number of town centre residential units being delivered. Over 1,000 town centre residential units are allocated in the Local Plan, with several sites coming forward, including the purchase of Telford Place by the Council for up to 185 new dwellings. Prior approval consent for the conversion of offices to residential has led to higher numbers than anticipated coming forward in the short term. Officers forecast that 1,800 new residential units could be built in and around the town centre over the next few years.
- 5.6 Council led intervention is urgently required to unlock resources from the Local Enterprise Partnership and from private developers in order to upgrade the town centre public realm and greatly improve pedestrian and cyclist access between the town centre

and key opportunity sites such as Station Gateway, County Buildings and Telford Place as well as Central Sussex College.

- 5.7 The lack of momentum around commercial space development, which would create new town centre job opportunities, is a real threat to the long term sustainable regeneration of the town centre. As a result the Council will take a lead role in boosting the conditions for new high grade business space.
- 5.8 The Council will also unlock opportunities to enable new community services and amenities to be located in the town centre, helping establish a genuine town centre neighbourhood with services, which attract significant footfall from the new residents.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1 Thanks to the intensive programme of stakeholder engagement explained in Section 4 of this report, Council officers have been able to draw up an outline first draft of Crawley's town centre regeneration programme (Appendix A).
- 6.2 This draft confirms the Council's strategic priorities for town centre regeneration, following endorsement by the stakeholders met.
- 6.3 The draft also presents a comprehensive delivery framework, comprising seven pillars, setting out under each pillar the priority actions required to achieve the sustainable regeneration of the town centre.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Members are asked to approve this first outline draft of the Town Centre Regeneration programme, ahead of a period of public consultation with town centre stakeholders, businesses and the community.
- 7.2 It is crucially important that the town centre regeneration programme is underpinned by a strong, wide ranging and committed partnership of stakeholders. Public consultation is an essential part of achieving that goal.
- 7.3 Subject to Cabinet approval of this first draft, a period of web based and stakeholder consultation would run for a six week period from 7th December 2015 until 15th January 2016, ensuring that programme priorities are in line with stakeholders and residents.
- 7.4 Following completion of the public consultation period, the draft outline Town Centre Regeneration programme will be updated by the Head of Economic and Environmental Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and launched in February 2016.
- 7.5 It is intended that the outline Town Centre Regeneration programme document is regularly updated to take into account the delivery details of individual town centre regeneration schemes listed, as they are negotiated, worked up and implemented by town centre stakeholders.
- 7.6 These regular updates will be highlighted and explained on the Council's new "Regenerating Crawley" web site. Further periods of stakeholder and web based consultation is envisaged going forward.
- 7.7 There are no direct financial or legal implications associated with this report.

8. Equality Implications

- 8.1 Equality impact assessments will be carried out where and when appropriate in respect of the individual regenerations schemes listed in the programme.

9. Background Papers

None

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Interim Draft Outline

Strategic Objectives

- **Excellent Public Realm**
- **Vibrant community heart for Crawley and the Gatwick Diamond**
- **Diverse retail and business offer**
- **High quality town centre with a rich mix of uses**
- **Dynamic business growth**

Proposed Delivery Framework:

This comprises seven thematic pillars:

1. **Investing in revitalised public realm, highways and infrastructure**
2. **Bringing forward town centre key opportunity sites**
3. **Creating the conditions for new high grade business space**
4. **Developing town centre neighbourhood amenities**
5. **Governance, engagement and co-ordination**
6. **Marketing, branding and inward investment**
7. **Complementary Policy**

Each pillar consists of a number of proposed delivery actions, as follows:

1. **Investing in Revitalised Public Realm / Highways and Infrastructure**

- **Phase 1 - Queens Square – 2016-2017** A £3.2 million investment to transform the public realm, jointly funded by Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council. Improvement works due to start in 2016.
- **Phase 2 - Station Way – Friary Way – Bus Station – 2017-2018** Proposals will be drawn up for an integrated highways and public realm improvement scheme. Subject to funding availability and planning approval, this scheme would greatly improve pedestrian and cyclist access between Crawley Station, the Bus Station, County Mall and the Broadway, improving the efficiency of bus traffic flows and making the landscape more attractive.

The Broadway – Subject to the relevant developable sites coming forward successfully in the town centre core, there is the potential to draw down private funding and LEP resources to upgrade the Broadway public realm.

- **Phase 3 - Queensway – The Pavement**
Public realm improvements will be proposed to upgrade the quality of the landscaping and street furniture to the same level as to be delivered in Queens Square. These would be designed and implemented in such a way as to create the best conditions for an improved town centre market offer.
- **Additional Phase - College Road / The Boulevard**
There is potential for a future phase of public realm and highways improvements, focused on College Road and The Boulevard in conjunction with the future regeneration of opportunity sites such as County Buildings and Telford Place. This would strengthen access from Central Sussex College to the town centre and soften the landscape.

2. Bringing forward town centre key opportunity sites

- **Telford Place** – The Council has purchased the site for the residential development of up to 185 units as part of the Council's drive to enable more affordable homes for Crawley people.
- **Station Gateway** – It is hoped that this site will unlock a high quality mixed use development and a public realm and facilities upgrade to Crawley station, providing new residential accommodation and some commercial space.
- **County Buildings** – The County Council owns this site and it is designated for town centre and / or residential use by the Local Plan. This site is a highly suitable location to accommodate high grade commercial space. There are also clear opportunities for residential development.
- **Land North of the Boulevard – The Town Hall** – Several former office sites in this area are being converted to residential accommodation via Permitted Development Rights (Woodhall Duckham House, Crown Buildings, Post office). The potential for the Town Hall to accommodate other local service providers alongside the Council is being investigated.

3. Creating the Conditions for new high grade business space

- **Business Networking Hub** – Proposals are being drawn up to provide a prominent venue for businesses and local entrepreneurs to hot-desk, to meet and to do business. Its location will maximise its usage by business people on the move.
- **Live-work space** – The opportunity for live-work space should be investigated in association with new residential development coming forward. The purpose would be to attract professionals keen to access office space close to their homes to reduce costs and improve individual quality of life and work-life balance.
- **Small business space** – The Council is working with West Sussex County Council to identify suitable locations for small business space. To develop new high grade office space would send out an excellent message about Crawley town centre as the natural place for jobs and business.
- **Incubation space** - Officers are working with town centre stakeholders to identify a suitable location to accommodate business start-up desk space and small office space for fledgling companies.
- **Upgrade of retail space** –The Council will explore using Section 215 powers to encourage vacant site owners to improve the quality of retail units and so attract new retailers.

4. Developing Town Centre neighbourhood amenities

- **Good quality town centre market** – The existing market on Queens Square will be relocated to the Broadway in the New Year, pending the Queens Square improvement works. A feasibility analysis and business case will make recommendations on how to improve the town centre market offer.
- **Town Centre Museum** – The Council is leading the development of a brand new Museum offer in Crawley town centre, drawing on £1.15 million of HLF funds alongside over £760,000 of Council funding. The Museum is to be located in one of the town centre's oldest buildings - the Tree and also The Tree Annexe - with a glass link

between the two. Works are expected to complete next year ready for the Museum to be opened.

- **Memorial Gardens** – The Council will continue to champion, celebrate and ensure good community use of this high quality and attractive green space, which is a major asset to the town centre. In 2016 the bandstand will be relocated there from Queens Square.
- **GP Surgery / NHS Clinic / Dentist services** – Officers will review these services with health sector colleagues to determine whether additional provision is required in the town centre both as amenities for the new neighbourhood and to attract footfall.
- **Employ Crawley hub** - Officers will engage with Job Centre Plus, Central Sussex College and other key stakeholders involved in the Crawley Employment & Skills Plan to identify and implement ways to link up employment and skills services more closely in the town centre.
- **Expand role of Central Sussex College in town centre** - Officers will work closely with Central Sussex College to develop more initiatives focused on the town centre. These could include: I) Apprenticeships to benefit town centre businesses; II) “Skills Academies” on town centre regeneration sites, where the College can train local people in construction skills to access on site construction jobs and apprenticeships. III) Engaging students to support the design of town centre public realm improvements;
- **A High Street Action Plan – Strengthening the Evening economy offer** –The prospect of up to 1,800 new residential units being built in and around the town centre over the next few years presents excellent opportunities for Crawley High Street and its businesses as a stronger focal point for the evening economy. Officers will work with High Street businesses to draw up a High Street Action Plan, which will define and deliver initiatives to boost footfall there and to improve the business environment.
- **Strengthening Public toilet provision** - This will involve improving public toilet amenities in the town centre.
- **Town Centre maintenance and cleaning** – A robust town centre maintenance and cleaning programme will be led and co-ordinated by the Council’s Community Services team, working closely with the Town Centre Partnership Board and town centre stakeholders.

Supported by:

5. Governance, engagement and co-ordination

- **Engagement & Partnership with town centre site owners / landlords** The Council is strengthening relationships with town centre site owners and landlords in order to work together to attract new retailers, to develop a common vision for town centre regeneration and to establish co-operation and partnership in regeneration delivery.
- **Town Centre Partnership Board (TCP)** – Council officers are working with the Board to strengthen its remit by broadening its representation across retailers, small businesses, County Mall, non-retail employers and High Street restaurants as well as property agents. The Board will work with the Council to oversee the development of key sub-groups (below) representing specific town centre interests. The Board, alongside these sub-groups will update its governance structures and monitor delivery of the Town Centre Regeneration programme, contributing to the design and roll out of individual initiatives.

- **Independent retailers sub-group** – Establish a new TCP sub-group to give a strong voice to Crawley town centre’s independent retailers in relation to how the regeneration of the town centre should be taken forward. Work with them to access services which will strengthen their business competitiveness.
- **High Street Business Forum sub group** - Establish a new Forum of High Street businesses to work alongside the Council to draw up and implement a High Street Action Plan to boost footfall and improve the business environment. This will be a sub-group of the Town Centre Partnership Board.
- **Professional Business Services Forum** - Establish a new forum of town centre professional business services employers, including law firms, accountants and banks. This will identify further how they can contribute to town centre regeneration and how town centre regeneration can benefit them. Priorities will include growing the town centre cluster of professional business services, making the town centre leisure / evening economy offer more attractive and dynamic for them, promoting Crawley Town centre as a location for their employees to both work and live and highlighting new town centre residential accommodation.
- **Healthy High Streets** – Support the major retailers in consolidating this network, where the likes of Marks & Spencer’s, Santander, Greggs and EE are providing expertise to strengthen the town centre business environment.
- **Feasibility analysis for a Town Centre BID** – Investigate the potential to resource and enable a feasibility analysis on the creation of a dedicated Business Improvement District body for Crawley Town Centre.
- **Strengthen links between the Town Centre and Manor Royal** - Explore and define how town centre stakeholders should co-operate more closely with the Manor Royal BID. Strengthen business and commercial links between the town centre and Manor Royal.

6. Marketing, branding and Inward Investment

- **Vibrant town centre events programme** – Council Communications Team to lead on the co-ordination, delivery and expansion of the town centre events programme, working closely with Community Services, the Town Centre Manager, local retailers and private sector events expertise. This will generate footfall and boost the identity of the town centre, promoting a positive reputation through a high quality programme of events. It will be underpinned by a partnership approach with stakeholders including the Town Centre Partnership, Healthy High Streets and non-retail business.
- **Strong town centre place branding** – The Council will work with the Town Centre Partnership Board, town centre sub-groups, businesses, stakeholders and the community to develop a dynamic new town centre place branding for Crawley, which will be used to attract new business investment and generate a much more positive image for the town centre.
- **High quality signage and wayfaring** – Based on the future town centre branding, officers will co-ordinate the design and roll out of new town centre signage and wayfaring, working closely with town centre stakeholders, businesses and the community to ensure buy in.
- **Develop investor relations communications, working with commercial agents** – The Council will work with commercial agents, the Town Centre Partnership, local

business employers and other stakeholders to draw up and launch inward investment communication and promotion to attract new businesses and jobs into the town centre.

- **Plan and deliver effective networking events with commercial agents** –The Council will work closely with commercial agents, the newly formed professional business services sub-group and other local business agencies to plan and deliver networking events to promote Crawley town centre.
- **Strong, regularly updated town centre regeneration micro-site** – This new web site, which has recently been launched, will promote and highlight progress with the physical, economic and community regeneration of the Town Centre. It will also be used to communicate and consult with the local community on the roll out of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme. It will be used to highlight commercial and community assets in the town centre, including the High Street and its evening economy.

7. Complementary Policy

- **Crawley 2030, the Crawley Borough Local Plan and Town Centre Supplementary Planning guidance** –The Council's Local Plan allocates a significant number of development opportunity sites within the town centre. The Council will bring forward more detailed planning guidance, in support of the sustainable regeneration of Crawley Town centre, encouraging an appropriate balance of mixed uses across the area. This will contribute to transforming the town centre into a vibrant new neighbourhood and a dynamic hive of business and economic activity.
- **Town Centre Skills Academy** – The Council will work with Central Sussex College, site developers, builders and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to establish “Skills Academy” status across Town Centre regeneration sites. Skills Academy status is granted by the CITB if there is a commitment from site developers, working with the College, Job Centre Plus and the Council to maximise the recruitment of local residents into construction site jobs and apprenticeships. This also features as a flagship project in the emerging Crawley Employment and Skills Plan.
- **Community Safety** –There will be ongoing close working with the police, other local agencies and voluntary sector partners through the Council's ASB Team to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve the town centre's image as a safe and friendly environment, boosting footfall.
- **Environmental Health & Licensing** – Environmental Health Officers will work with colleagues, the Town Centre Partnership and stakeholders in order to consider and if viable evoke powers to oblige private town centre site owners to tackle and improve poor quality town centre building stock. Section 215 powers give the authority the ability to oblige site owners to invest in dilapidated buildings or to undertake the building improvements directly, which would be charged to the site owner, once the building is sold on. Environmental Health officers will continue to take enforcement action to address unauthorised waste left in inappropriate town centre locations.
- **Affordable Housing** – As part of the programme of residential development taking place in the town centre, the Council is ensuring that the maximum amount of affordable housing development is unlocked to benefit Crawley residents.