

Purpose

1. To provide an overview of plans to bring forward a leisure centre as part of the development of the town centre to serve the Cranbrook new community.

Introduction

2. With the first people having moved in 2012, the new town of Cranbrook now has around 3,000 homes built and occupied and a population of just over 8,000 people.
3. The town bucks the overall East Devon age profile and has the youngest population structure for any town in Devon, with significantly higher proportions of people aged 0-14 and 25-44 compared with England. See figure 1 below for a comparison against other Devon towns.

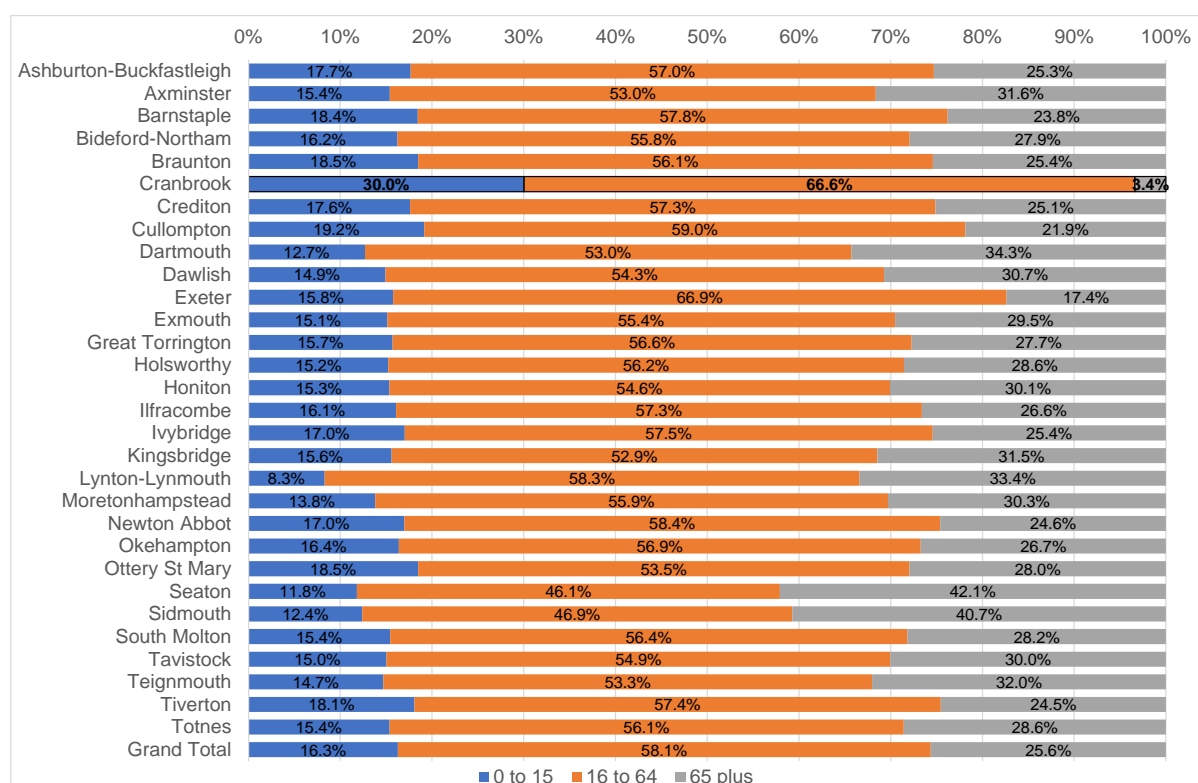


Figure 1 – Cranbrook Broad Age Structure vs. other Devon towns, 2020

Source: Small Area Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics, 2020 (via DCC Public Health Intelligence)

4. Development in the town continues with two currently active house builders and the first commercial development in the town centre since the opening of the Cranberry Farm pub in 2017. These town centre developments comprise a

supermarket, ground floor shops with residential properties above and a children's day nursery. All are expected to be completed in 2024.



Fig 2: Development of Cranbrook town centre commenced in August 2022. (credit: Still Imaging)

5. In November 2022 East Devon District Council completed the commercial acquisition of 4 acres of land in the town centre in order to ensure that adequate land is available for non-residential uses to support the growth of the town and the needs of residents. A further 4 acres is due for transfer to the District Council and 1 acre to the County Council as part of existing planning agreements. Together, this land assembly will mean that 9 acres of land is in public sector ownership in the town centre. A number of uses are earmarked for development on this land as a result of the existing planning agreements:

- i. Health and Wellbeing Hub
- ii. Town Council Offices
- iii. Library
- iv. Children's Centre
- v. Youth Centre
- vi. Blue light services (likely a fire station)

Cranbrook Plan

6. October 2020 saw the adoption of The Cranbrook Plan Development Plan Document (The DPD) by East Devon District Council. This document sets out the planning framework for the growth of the town up towards 8,000 houses across four

expansion areas and the associated infrastructure required to support the anticipated population of around 20,000 people.

7. The DPD includes policy CB21 on Cranbrook Town Centre which seeks to ensure that the town centre is the heart of the economic, social, cultural and civic activities that support the wider town. In addition to the uses mentioned above, the policy also states that provision shall be made for the development of a Leisure Centre in the town centre.

8. Other policies in the DPD then seek to secure a capital contribution toward the cost of delivering a leisure centre. These costs were based upon a proportionate contribution of the cost of delivering a community leisure centre with swimming pool, which Sport England's Facilities Guide had costed at £10.045m at the time. This equated to a contribution of £3.994m from the expansion areas, which indexed to the most recent BCIS quarter (2Q 2023) would today mean a contribution of £4.566m.

9. Although there are now resolutions to grant outline planning permission for the majority of the expansion area sites, to date the legal agreements that will secure the payment of these monies have not been finalised.

10. The Council's Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy identifies the delivery of a Leisure Centre at Cranbrook as being a priority, with an indicative specification given as:

- a. 6 lane 25m swimming pool
- b. Health and fitness suite
- c. 4 court sports hall
- d. 2 studios

11. Together, the DPD and the Strategy make clear the Council's ambition to deliver a Leisure Centre for Cranbrook. Although land and some capital contribution will be available, there will remain a significant shortfall in capital to complete the project. It is Officers' intention that opportunities for grant funding streams are explored, although there will likely remain a funding gap.

12. Alongside Exeter, Cranbrook is part of the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot, a programme which is aimed at tackling inactivity in highlighted groups, largely through the implementation of schemes not directly linked with traditional sporting activities. It is understood that participation in this scheme may open up opportunities for grant funding and Officers are in the process of finding out more about this.

13. Consideration also needs to be given to how a Leisure Centre operates alongside other town centre facilities and in particular the planned Health and Wellbeing Hub. Work has recently been undertaken to understand the types of services that will be delivered from the Health and Wellbeing Hub and these include GP services, maternity, mental health and community nursing. There is a direct link between activity levels and health and wellbeing and there could be benefits arising from co-location with this building. However, co-location also brings about challenges particularly with timing of delivery as neither facility is yet fully funded and also with governance and management once operational as there will be multiple users. It may be better to look at a campus approach, where the two are sited close to one another, in order to realise as many benefits as possible.

14. The Council has employed consultants to undertake a community consultation exercise regarding the composition and delivery of the town centre, and this is

expected to take place in Autumn 2023. It is intended that the exercise will include elements relating to the delivery of a leisure centre and will seek residents views on this. A final report into the community consultation will be produced in early 2024.

Next Steps

15. The anticipated next steps are:
 - a. Undertake community consultation on the town centre;
 - b. Finalise town centre masterplan, to include decision on relationship with the health and wellbeing hub;
 - c. Convene a project team and establish governance;
 - d. Explore grant funding opportunities for leisure centre.

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