

Report to: Cranbrook Placemaking Group



Date of Meeting 1 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Cranbrook Town Centre

Report summary:

Since the agreement of Strategic Planning Committee in February 2024 to produce a masterplan for Cranbrook town centre, work has been underway to collate the information, evidence and stakeholder buy-in necessary to progress the document. Collaborative work with public sector stakeholders has demonstrated that some service delivery requirements have now changed and this has taken longer than originally programmed. The arising uncertainty over co-location of services means that the final masterplan will not be as prescriptive as once may have been envisaged.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the Placemaking group endorses the new timetable for the production of the town centre plan that will result in a final document being presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 1 October 2024.

Reason for recommendation:

Delays encountered in establish service requirements for Cranbrook, together with the likely re-starting of the Cranbox project means that the final document is not able to be produced in the timescale previously envisaged.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact High Impact

The delivery of Cranbrook town centre will have a high impact upon the community as a whole, including those with protected characteristics and the production of the masterplan has the ability to influence and frame how these will be accommodated and catered for. An Equalities Impact Assessment will accompany the final masterplan. As individual projects progress, they will also need to be subject of Equalities Impact Assessment by the respective project teams.

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; East Devon District Council owns land in Cranbrook town centre and is due to take transfer of most of the remaining town centre land when relevant development triggers are reached. There

Links to background information Cranbrook Town Centre masterplan - [Agenda for Strategic Planning Committee on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024, 10.00 am - East Devon](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Background

1. Following the publication of the report on the community consultation exercise that was undertaken in Autumn 2023 in respect of the development of Cranbrook town centre, in February 2024 Strategic Planning Committee agreed to proceed with a masterplan exercise for the town centre.
2. Since that time, a number of workstreams have been pursued with the following work undertaken –
 - a. completion of a topographical survey of land parcels TC2, TC4b, c, d and e;
 - b. the commissioning and receipt of preliminary ecological appraisals and biodiversity net gain baseline assessments in respect of TC2 and separately the TC4 b – e parcel;
 - c. Convening of monthly meetings with strategic stakeholders;
 - d. Research into modern town centres
 - e. Analysis to appraise what facilities may be capable of fitting on the differing land parcels and how this may impact placemaking.

Stakeholder discussions

3. The stakeholder meetings have convened representatives from East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Cranbrook Town Council, NHS Devon, Devon and Cornwall Police and Devon, Somerset Fire and Rescue and EX5 Alive (the community hub hosted at Cranbrook Education Campus). The purpose of the meetings has been to understand what each organisation’s service requirements for Cranbrook are in the long-term.
4. Table 1 below sets out the understanding of service requirements prior to the first stakeholder meeting.

Organisation / facility	Service requirements	S106 secured or expected?
East Devon District Council - Leisure Centre	Leisure centre with swimming pool, gym, studios and possibly sports hall	c. £4.5m expected from expansion areas

Devon County Council	Single building on TC4b to house library, children's services, youth centre	£3m secured under s106 deed of variation dated December 2023. Money paid at 3 trigger points.
Cranbrook Town Council	Town Council offices (the Tillhouse) to also house work hub, cultural space, café	c. £562,000 expected through future deed of variation as detailed in town centre memorandum of understanding
NHS Devon	Various health services across the NHS spectrum, including GP, mental health, maternity and community care.	c. £8m expected from expansion areas
Devon and Cornwall Police	No requirement for facilities	Nil as Police service stated that no facilities deemed required
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	Fire Station based on a two-tender model	c. £1.4m expected from expansion areas

Table 1 – Understanding of service requirements and financial expectations in February 2024

5. The stakeholder meetings that have taken place have been constructive and resulted in each organisation reviewing the positions detailed above. As a result of these reviews and discussions there have been some fundamental shifts in expectations for service delivery and therefore the facilities needed at Cranbrook, in particular from Devon County Council and the Police. Table 2 below details the changes; there have been no changes to the s106 position and so this is not repeated.

Organisation / facility	Service requirements
East Devon District Council – Leisure Centre	No change – Strategic Leisure commissioned to undertake an options appraisal of the Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy and produce an Implementation plan. This work includes consideration of a leisure centre for Cranbrook.
Devon County Council	No longer wish to pursue a single building housing 3 discrete DCC services. Want to work with and support community organisations with their activities, including the Town Council's youth provision and working with EX5 Alive to develop and strengthen community-based provision for families. This would be as part of a model of providing flexible space which can be used by a range of organisations.
Cranbrook Town Council	No change to service requirements. Discussions with Devon County Council have begun over working together to deliver a community asset.
NHS Devon	No change to service requirements but current budget pressures may mean the building is delivered in two phases – GP phase first and other NHS services second.
Devon and Cornwall Police	Now wish to have a presence in Cranbrook in the medium-long term. Likely to be a spatial requirement of around 150 – 250 sq. m. to accommodate community police officers.

	Response calls would be dealt with from other police stations (e.g. Exmouth and Middlemoor).
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	Need to review if a fire station is required at Cranbrook by running a new risk analysis. At the time of writing, this has not yet been undertaken so unclear if a station is required.

Table 2 – Service requirements in June 2024

6. Cranbrook Town Council continue to have ambitions to be located opposite the town square that is under construction on the southern side of Tillhouse Road. This has been explored by the council's Urban Designer as part of the work to-date and is considered to be a sensible location for this civic and community building.
7. In terms of the County Council the changes have been necessitated in part due to budgetary pressures being experienced across all County services. They are also influenced by inflation in the construction sector meaning that the £3m expected to be received from the East Devon New Community partners (developer consortium) will not achieve the construction that it once would have. This £3m figure was agreed between Devon County Council and the developer consortium in 2021 as part of the negotiations for the town centre memorandum of understanding that was signed in May 2022, however the legal agreement securing the monies wasn't finalised until December 2023 and the £3m hasn't been indexed from the point it was originally agreed. Devon County Council have previously received their own Cabinet's approval to use some of the recycled South West Exeter HIF funding to close the funding gap on a building. However, these monies have not become available at the rate originally anticipated.
8. Devon County Council have now indicated that they are unlikely to want to own and run any community building that houses services operated by them at Cranbrook and to that end a discussion with Cranbrook Town Council has begun in order to explore the opportunity for the co-location of services. They are also willing to discuss the option of having one large health and wellbeing hub building where all facilities are co-located. This latter option is something to be explored but bringing together so many organisations is likely to result in further delay in delivery.
9. Devon and Cornwall Police's position has also changed fundamentally. When the Cranbrook Plan was being produced, they force was consulted and advised that it had no operational base requirements for Cranbrook and therefore they are not included in the list of town centre facilities within the Plan, nor is there any expectation of a capital contribution from development toward any police facility. The police service now wishes to have dedicated space for a neighbourhood police base in the town centre. Their preference is to be located with another blue-light service (the Fire Service as there is no requirement for ambulance provision) but if this is not feasible then they are open to exploring co-location with other civic functions. There are examples of the police being co-located in both manners across the force region. It must be stated that this change of position is subject of further consideration by the force and as there are no identified s106 monies toward police provision from the Cranbrook expansion areas there has not yet been consideration of how their presence in the town would be funded from a capital perspective.
10. It has taken much longer than originally anticipated to reach the current position with stakeholders. The emerging picture from a service delivery perspective is particularly helpful in terms of clarifying that Devon County Council no longer want a single building housing their services but the overall picture remains unclear with discussions ongoing over who is willing to co-locate with one another and how timescales for doing so may align.

Masterplan

11. The combined impacts of the time taken to establish stakeholder requirements, the calling of a general election and reinvigorated work on Cranbox means that the council is no longer able to meet the deadlines originally set for the production of the masterplan document in

the Project Initiation Document (PID). A revised date for taking a document to Strategic Planning Committee is recommended to be 3 October 2024.

12. In terms of the structure of the final document, with the degree of uncertainty that remains with stakeholders, it is the view of officers that a detailed masterplan is not capable of being produced. The report to SPC in February 2024 stated that: 'This masterplan will seek to set out where the main uses will be located and high-level principles for the form and feel of the town centre.' Although some high-level principles for the form and feel of the town centre can still be achieved, it's unlikely to be feasible to articulate how the built form is going to locate all of the main uses because of the remaining uncertainty over service provision. The structural change in town centres across the country over the past two decades serves to tell us that we need to remain flexible in our approach if the town is to be able to react to changing circumstances and adapt for the future.
13. The completed document needs to build upon the information available now and provide direction for the next steps toward delivery. It must also take on board the views expressed by the community as part of the town centre consultation in 2023 and discuss how these are to be achieved, for example the strong views expressed about having public spaces to site and interact, street cafes etc.
14. The masterplan is to be framed as a document that sets out a development narrative and strategy for the town centre. The resultant work would have the following broad headings/themes:
 - a. Context and background including why this approach is being taken forward
 - b. What outcomes are desired for the town and the town centre
 - c. Provide direction on what should be achieved, what should be built where possible, how to build a detailed picture of what to do and develop
 - d. Recommend how the next stages of development can be located and designed
 - e. Plans to be included – constraints and opportunities, buildings whose future location is known, recommended stages of development, indicative plan on public realm, range of suitable development heights.

Financial implications:

No financial implications, costs remain within expected budgets.

Legal implications:

No legal implications at this time.