

Report to: Cranbrook Placemaking Group



Date of Meeting 16 September 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan

Report summary:

Progress is being made on the production of the Cranbrook town centre masterplan, with plans and supporting text being drafted.

The council's Strategic Planning Committee is meeting weekly during the month of October in order to move forward with the new Local Plan, which is a corporate priority. To help keep the agendas clear for Local Plan items, it is proposed that the masterplan now be presented to the committee on 29 October 2024 instead of 1 October 2024. This additional 4-week delay will also enable officers to further refine the masterplan, take on board the feedback of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group and engage with stakeholders.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That the Cranbrook Placemaking Group note the progress made on the town centre masterplan to-date and provide feedback to guide the refinement and completion of the masterplan
2. That the Cranbrook Placemaking Group agree to the town centre masterplan document being presented to Strategic Planning Committee at their meeting of 29 October 2024

Reason for recommendation:

It is important for the members of the Placemaking Group to have the opportunity to guide the content of the masterplan and feedback from the members on the current plans and text will assist with its refinement and completion.

A further 4-week delay to the sending of the masterplan to Strategic Planning Committee will allow the Committee to prioritise their work on the council's Local Plan and will allow time for further work on the masterplan to be completed.

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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.

Links to background information Cranbrook Town Centre masterplan - [Agenda for Strategic Planning Committee on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024, 10.00 am - East Devon](#) Cranbrook Town Centre masterplan - [Agenda for Cranbrook Placemaking Group on Monday, 1st July, 2024, 9.30 am - East Devon](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
- Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- Resilient economy that supports local business
- Financially secure and improving quality of services

Masterplan structure and content

1. At the previous meeting of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group the following broad headings/themes for the masterplan were set out:
 - 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.

As the masterplan has been drafted, some of the elements of these headings have moved such that they interlink with one another. For the ease of setting out what is in the document, this report nevertheless sticks to the headings as detailed above.

2. Context and background – This section details the history of the town, summarising in particular the facilities and services delivered to date, the Cranbrook Economic Development Strategy, Our Place Plan, Cultural Development Strategy, the Cranbrook Plan and the findings of the 2023 town centre community consultation. It also details the age and demographic profile of Cranbrook and how this makes the needs of the community different

to other East Devon towns, the existing and future land ownership structure and why we need to seize the opportunity for a masterplan now.

3. What outcomes are desired – Setting a purpose of the strategy, with key priorities being:
 - a. Resilience and flexibility – user needs and customer demands change as time passes and it is imperative that spaces and buildings are designed flexibly so that they have alternative futures without rebuilding;
 - b. Community identify and cohesion – designing a town centre that encourages social interaction and builds strong social networks, it must be equally attractive and accessible to the whole community;
 - c. Local enterprise – opportunities for businesses to establish, thrive and grow. We know that there is lots of enterprise in Cranbrook already and the town centre will be a core location for the local economy.
4. These outcomes will be achieved through:
 - a. Helping to direct design in order to give the town centre a high quality architectural distinctiveness;
 - b. Stimulating and directing development;
 - c. Providing clear direction on what should be achieved and what should be avoided so that the town centre is fit for purpose;
 - d. Recognising the necessity for flexibility so that spaces have alternative futures as needs and demands change;
 - e. Addressing the wider determinants of health – enabling a broad range of employment; providing places and spaces where social bonds and good relationships can be fostered.
5. Provide direction on what should be achieved, detailing a focus on linking places and spaces to make the heart of the town as legible as possible to navigate in line with the community priority to make the town centre pedestrian and cycle friendly, a place where people want to spend time and travel to by active or public transport.
6. It is acknowledged that visitors to the town centre will also arrive by private car. A representative for Morrisons has verbally confirmed that the supermarket car park will be available for visitors to the town centre with a 2 - 3 hour time limit (precise time TBC) so can serve other town centre facilities, not just the supermarket. This is positive news as there is inadequate space in the town centre to provide significant additional parking. The strategy should be to provide minimal additional car parking across the town centre beyond that for staff and those with additional needs who benefit from parking close to the place they are visiting.
7. Key viewpoints and locations of key buildings are identified, including views along Court Royal, Tillhouse Road, from the country park and the direction of the Cranberry Farm public house and beyond. These key views translate into locations for frontages and areas where development will need to be high quality and distinctive. Distinctiveness is important to help with legibility, which is particularly important for people who struggle with orientating themselves and way-finding, such as those with dementia.
8. The Tillhouse Road frontage on parcel TC2 forms one side of the town centre high-street and needs to be active and have features that encourage interaction with passing people, maximise vibrancy and the chances of business success such as regular narrow shop-fronts and a diverse, changing offer. The aim is to provide space that encourages visits to the town centre as a destination for social, leisure, creative and cultural purposes rather than a simple focus on retail activity.
9. A link with the country park was highlighted as a community priority in the 2023 town centre consultation. It's proposed that this is incorporated through a series of linked green public

open spaces between the town square proposed on TC2 and the existing informal pedestrian access to the country park.

10. How the boundary between the Morrisons car park and the remainder of TC4e is addressed is important. The car park is cut into the land such that there is a low but steep embankment up to TC4e, with the TC4e land being at grade with Badger Way. It is officers' view that this space is prominent in the public realm and rather than back a development on to it or tuck a car park in the location behind a building, an alternative strategy is to use the space to provide further space for movement by walking and cycling, following the natural desire line diagonally across the parcel.
11. There are routes into TC4 from the Crannaford green lane to the east, from the path running to the north of Morrisons linking Court Royal with Elm Drive (the road to the nursery) and from Tillhouse Road to the north and Badger Way to the south. Routes from each direction will be joined wherever possible to maximise connectivity across the parcel and integrate the health and wellbeing centre, leisure centre and other uses on the site with the rest of the town centre and, in turn, linking the town centre with the residential development around it as best as possible.
12. Recommend how the next stages of development can be located and designed – for this section we now have a much clearer picture on key buildings for the town centre.
13. The Tillhouse building will be located on TC2 to the north of the town square under construction on TC4a, set behind a second town square. The size of this square is yet to be set and a steer from members on the expectations for this space would be of assistance.
14. Cranbox will provide flexible space on parcel TC2 and is a key priority that will be taken forward as the first development on TC2 once the land transfer has completed. A precise location will be determined in tandem with the separate project for Cranbox and will determine if it is set around the second square or at the western end of TC2, utilising the access and road proposed as part of the Extra Care scheme. For either location there will be an element of the development that will front onto Tillhouse Road. Officers note that members have expressed that Cranbox should provide an adaptable building or structure that allows for temporary uses and an ongoing process of change, enable provision of a high-volume of space at low cost and occupies a permanent site. It is seen as being critical to allowing Cranbrook to both develop a Unique Selling Point (USP) to encourage visits from the wider community and enable the community to build a diverse and resilient indigenous economy.
15. There is inadequate space on TC2 to locate the leisure centre and health and wellbeing centre together with the Tillhouse and Cranbox and so it is recommended that they are instead sited on TC4. Here they will adopt a campus style approach as is important to locate these facilities alongside one another to increase the success of social prescribing from the services operating from the health and wellbeing centre using the facilities and services offered within the leisure centre.
16. Following Cabinet approval in March 2024, the council commissioned an options appraisal and implementation plan of its Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy. This work has been ongoing and has involved consideration of how a leisure centre at Cranbrook will fit into the wider leisure estate and of the needs of the community in this part of the district. As a result of this work, it is the intention that the leisure centre in the town centre be accommodated on the basis that it will include a swimming pool, gym and fitness studios but without a sports hall. There is already a sports hall that is used by the community (outside school hours) at the Cranbrook Education Campus and a second one at the Broadclyst Leisure Centre adjacent to Clyst Vale Community College and it is therefore felt to be unnecessary to include a third facility in the town centre.

17. This decision not to accommodate a sports hall as part of the leisure centre is beneficial for placemaking as the size and nature of a sports hall (being a minimum of 34.5m x 20m x 7.5m high plus storage and changing) meant that finding a suitable location for a leisure centre with sports hall within the town centre was very challenging and if achieved would be likely to be at the cost of significant reduction in the quality of the public realm.
18. At the time of writing we are still awaiting an update from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service regarding the outcome of their risk analysis for Cranbrook and so it remains unclear if a fire station is required. If one is required within the town centre and depending upon service needs, it will be accommodated on TC4.
19. There is a role for additional housing development on the town centre land covered by the masterplan. This can be accommodated above ground floor level or on the periphery of TC2 and potentially also on parts of TC4. Housing development needs to be high density to reflect the town centre location and help support services within it.

Next steps

20. At the meeting of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group in July 2024 a new timetable was endorsed that would see the masterplan be presented to the council's Strategic Planning Committee on 1 October 2024. The production of the new Local Plan is a top priority for the council and has resulted in the Strategic Planning Committee now having weekly meetings scheduled throughout the month of October in order to get through all the matters requiring addressing so that a regulation 19 version of the Local Plan can be published within the expected timeframe of a new National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Plan must take corporate priority over the town centre masterplan and it is therefore proposed that the masterplan is now presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 29 October to enable Strategic Planning Committee to remain focussed on the Local Plan.
21. These additional 4 weeks will also give officers time to refine the masterplan and better take on board feedback from the Cranbrook Placemaking Group and other stakeholders in advance of presenting a final version of the document to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implication resulting from the report.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are covered in the report (2855/Sept/ALW)