

Report to:	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leaders Portfolio		
Date of meeting:	9 th November 2020		
Report of:	Director of Place	Report number:	ECMDL759
Contact officer:	Paula Connor, Project Officer	Telephone number	01204 336129
Report title:	Horwich Town Centre Strategy		
Not confidential			
This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.			
Purpose:	This report sets out proposals for the implementation of a refreshed masterplan and strategy to guide the long-term regeneration of Horwich Town Centre and seeks approval for a series of development proposals and key actions following a period of public consultation.		
Recommendations:	<p>The Executive Cabinet Member is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Approve the Horwich town centre masterplan and strategy to guide the long-term regeneration of the centre; II. Approve the proposed approach to deliver the masterplan, as outlined in the main body of this report; III. Authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities where required. 		
Decision:			
Background documents:	<p>Report to Cabinet dated 21/01/19 entitled 'Town Centres Strategy Funding' (CAB508)</p> <p>Report to Council dated 20/02/19 entitled 'Budget Update and Options 2019-21 (CEX011)</p> <p>Report to Council dated 20/02/19 entitled 'Corporate Capital and One-off Funding 2019-2022 (CEX046)</p>		
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1: Masterplan Report BDP</p> <p>Appendix 2: Masterplan BDP</p> <p>Appendix 3: Baseline Report</p> <p>Appendix 4: Consultation Report</p> <p>Appendix 5: Indicative Phasing Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 6: EIA</p>		
Signed:	Leader/Executive Cabinet Member	Monitoring Officer	
Date:			

Consultation with other officers			
Finance	Yes	30/9/20	Corinne Davoy-Wood
Legal	Yes	1/10/20	Michelle Harris
HR	Yes	N/A	N/A
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes	29/09/20	Tammy Tatman
(a) Pre-consultation reports Is there a need to consult on the proposals?		No	
(b) Post consultation reports Please confirm that the consultation response has been taken into consideration in making the recommendations.		Yes	
Vision outcomes Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box.	1. Start Well		x
	2. Live Well		x
	3. Age Well		x
	4. Prosperous		x
	5. Clean and Green		x
	6. Strong and Distinctive		x

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2017 Cabinet approved the refreshed Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan including a series of interventions and key actions including a framework designed to support the town centre's economy. These documents set out Bolton's ambition and vision to achieve a £1bn regeneration of the town centre and sustain its immediate future to the benefit of the wider Borough and its residents, supported by £100m direct investment from the Council.
- 1.2 The Economic Strategy seeks to ensure that the Bolton of 2030 is active, connected and prosperous with key aims including successful businesses, cohesive communities and a welcoming place to study, work and put down roots. The Economic Strategy identifies the economic vision and ambition for Bolton with a vibrant town centre at its heart: Building homes, providing employment and making the most of Bolton's quality educational offer. To achieve this, it is vital the Council assists in leading, facilitating and enabling the conditions for economic growth through direct intervention in economic development and regeneration with business and communities. It is against this backdrop that the Council, in consultation with key stakeholders, refreshed its Town Centre Strategy and created a £100 million investment fund to support delivery with the aim of leveraging further funding and investment to regenerate Bolton town centre and sustain its immediate future for the benefit of the wider Borough and its residents.
- 1.3 As a result of the significant progress and in particular in the first 12 months regarding the success in attracting private sector investment proposals, together with the level of forecasted direct delivery by developers, on the 21st January 2019 Cabinet approved a £12m allocation of funding from the £100m Town Centre Strategy Fund to prepare similar strategies and masterplans and carry out targeted interventions within the next tier of larger town centres in Bolton, specifically Farnworth, Horwich, Westhoughton and Little Lever, where this can have the greatest impact.
- 1.4 On the 20th February 2019 Full Council approved an additional £4m of funding from the 2019/20 Capital Programme for further investment in district centres, principally in Farnworth Town Centre.
- 1.5 Following on from the funding announcement and the successful development of a Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan for Farnworth town centre, approved on 3rd July 2019 including the process of establishing a Town Centre Steering Group and public consultation, Council Officers were requested to roll out the process of developing masterplans and strategies for the remaining District Centres of Horwich, Little Lever and Westhoughton.
- 1.6 In October 2019, following a competitive tendering exercise via the Chest, BDP (supported by BE Group and CBO Transport) were successfully appointed to develop masterplans and key development proposals for Horwich, Westhoughton and Little Lever District Centres. In consultation with key stakeholders and the public, work on the development of these masterplans has concluded.
- 1.7 Guidance from the Ministry of Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), updated November 2019 on promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

states the importance of the design and use of the built and natural environments, including green infrastructure as major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system (taking into account the changing needs of the population). A healthy place is one which supports and promotes healthy behaviours and environments and a reduction in health inequalities for people of all ages. It will provide the community with opportunities to improve their physical and mental health, and support community engagement and wellbeing. Although the masterplans have significant focus on the physical aspects of the place, the Council has been keen to ensure the development of the masterplans for the town centres are about the people of each area and that any investment has a wider socio-economic impact, to assist in the delivery of the Council's Economic Strategy focussing on inclusive growth. Each masterplan therefore considers the needs of the local community and how the town centre can promote healthier lifestyles.

- 1.8 It is proposed that any funding allocated to Horwich is targeted to key interventions in the town centre which will have the greatest impact together with cross cutting interventions such as infrastructure investment that will benefit the town centre as a whole. Interventions will include street remodelling to create a better pedestrian experience, promote a creative cluster on Hampson Street to attract more creative businesses, create new and improved existing cycling routes to create better connectivity between the town centre and key sites such as Middlebrook. It is proposed that external advisors and services will be procured, as required, to support the delivery of the Horwich Town Centre Strategy and secure private sector investment. A range of potential delivery options will be utilised.
- 1.9 The strategy for Horwich Town Centre is outlined within this report with full details including target interventions, masterplan framework and economic benefits set out within the proposed Masterplan Report attached at Appendix 1. Collectively this report and the Masterplan comprise the strategy for Horwich Town Centre.
- 1.10 It is considered vital that the Council leads and facilitates the adaptation and evolution of Horwich Town Centre through a strategy that will significantly strengthen the diversity of uses across the town centre and will enhance the town centres townscape through upgrading and redevelopment of buildings and spaces. This requires the development and regeneration of key sites for employment,
- 1.11 Without the Councils direct intervention there is a risk the delivery of the development proposals/target interventions will not be achieved. The Council will need to assist in leading, facilitating and enabling conditions for economic growth through direct intervention in economic development in partnership with businesses and communities. An indicative action plan for delivery of five development proposals/key interventions is detailed in this report.

2 ISSUES

- 2.1 Across the UK town centres are facing challenges to their future vitality and viability. Many town centres are suffering from falling retail sales, reduced footfall, rising vacancies and high maintenance costs. These issues have been exacerbated by the

Covid-19 pandemic. Town centres need to become places that offer more diverse attractions providing a range of different activities and uses such as more independent shops, housing, leisure, vibrant food and drink offers, social and community hubs and commercial and cultural enterprises, all of which should be designed to function as intergenerational spaces.

- 2.2 'The Portas Review: An Independent Review in the Future of our High Streets (2011) confirms this requirement, reimagining town centres as 'destinations for socialising, culture, health, well-being, creativity and learning' as well as 'places that will develop and sustain new and existing markets and businesses'. The Public Health England Report 'Healthy High Streets: Good Place Making in an urban setting' (2018) recognises that healthy streets are assets that promote and improve the health of local residents and users and the wider local community. To achieve such improvements' high streets, need to feature good quality design and furniture and provide accessible, safe and communal spaces that can be used to create healthier, safer and more cohesive communities.
- 2.3 Horwich is a compact and lively town centre with a pleasant and attractive feel to it. Its residents appreciate its identity and character. Although the Town Centre appears to be doing well for a centre of its size, it is believed there are a number of factors that are impacting on its performance. These issues include traffic congestion especially on Winter Hey Lane
- 2.4 The Urban structure of the town centre and Horwich as a whole is framed by a network of routes for vehicles and public transport but with less consideration for pedestrians. The most active uses and strongest built form is concentrated along the main routes of Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane which contribute to the vitality of the town centre. Lee Lane with its commercial offer stretched along Winter Hey Lane is the main spine of the town centre with Chorley New Road forming a secondary route.
- 2.5 1,000 people were employed in accommodation and food services of which 425 were located outside of the Middlebrook Retail Park accounting for 11.6% of employment. This suggests a reasonable evening economy exists locally even if the leisure facilities at Middlebrook are excluded. Linked to this arts, entertainment, recreation and other services account for 8.1% of employment outside Middlebrook which is well above wider averages.
- 2.6 The Town has a strong convenience offer, including a diverse range of local independent businesses such as shops, cafes, greengrocers, bakers and butchers. A number of national retailers including Aldi, Iceland and Sainsburys local have a presence in the town.
- 2.7 In terms of public sector employment the health sector is a local strength accounting for 13.3% of employment.
- 2.8 There were five empty retail units in Horwich in November 2019, totalling approximately 1,983 sqm. These were larger retail premises with an average size of 350 sqm and a range of 140 – 660 sqm. Three are located on Lee Lane, one on Winter Hey Lane and one on Chorley New Road. Generally, they are moderate quality terraced shops of the type which makes up most of the stock in Horwich.

- 2.9 The local retail market is modest focussing solely on meeting the local needs from Horwich and surrounding rural towns such as Adlington and Aspull. Trade and footfall are reasonable but are strongly focussed around Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane (also known as “The Lanes”).
- 2.10 Demand for smaller shops of 50 sqm from local independents is reasonable. Rents of £10 - £12 per sq.ft. are achieved for secondhand space. It should be noted there are a number of variations in rental values from £5 per sq.ft up to £15 per sq.ft.
- 2.11 Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane make up the Town Centres core where the majority of the town centre activities are concentrated. Locally called “the lanes” the two roads are the main spines of the traditional town centre, however neither have a strategic function as a primary road (A road) and are therefore not a suitable width for such purposes. Winter Hey Lane however connects Lee Lane with Chorley New Road which is a primary road (A673) and connects to the wider large-scale strategic transport network.
- 2.12 The vehicle speed along the lanes is limited to 20mph which although calms the passing traffic down, the width of the Lanes results in congestion and domination of motor vehicles in particular on Winter Hey Lane.
- 2.13 Sales of terraced housing, a strength in Horwich are similarly strong in Farnworth and Kearsley. The flat market is weak in Horwich but not noticeably weaker than may comparator locations apart from Urmston and Prestwich where flats account for 11-12 percent of the overall sale. This suggests an active local market relative to the amount of stock available. Flat sales in Horwich are below GM and North West averages but these will also include town and city centre apartments which are not comparable to Horwich.
- 2.14 Detached house sales account for 22.8% of transactions in Horwich. This is above wider averages which range from 6.6% in Farnworth, up to the North West average of 22.6%
- 2.15 House prices in Horwich whilst still up to £50,000 below GM and North West averages compare well to comparator towns. Only Urmston and Prestwich have consistently higher prices against all four housing types. Terraces and flats enjoy particularly strong average prices in Horwich and are higher than in more urban locations such as Walkden. Flat prices are nearly £40,000 higher in Horwich than in Kearsley.

3. MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT

3.1 Policy Context

3.1.1 The need for the regeneration of Horwich Town Centre is well founded in planning policy both at national, regional and local level. The masterplan is set within this context.

3.2 *National Policy Context*

3.2.1 The National Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2018 sets out the governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The development proposals/target interventions are consistent with NPPF Chapter 2 Achieving Sustainable Development, Chapter 7 Ensuring the vitality of town centres and Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities.

3.3 *Regional Policy Context*

3.3.1 The emerging Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), due for publication in November 2020, will help direct and shape development across the conurbation for the next 15 years. Its emphasis on the majority of this growth taking place on urban land in the most accessible locations, will help minimise the loss of greenbelt land and prioritise the re-use of previously developed land. With around 200,000 new homes required by the conurbation by the GMSF by 2037, the existing towns have a key role to play. The GMSF also clearly recognises that main town centres are important local economic drivers providing the focus for office, retail, leisure and cultural activity to their surrounding area.

3.3.2 The plan also seeks to boost competitiveness of the north of the conurbation with strong focus on regeneration and enhancing the role of town centres including Horwich. Opportunities to further increase the population catchments of these centres will be promoted, coupled with new infrastructure and amenities including new and improved public spaces and green infrastructure. In doing so development will be carefully managed to ensure that the local distinctiveness of each main town centre is retained and enhanced. The GMSF fully recognises the need for town centres to adapt if they are to continue to flourish and support the needs of surrounding communities.

3.4 *Local Policy Context*

3.4.1 The Core Strategy, adopted in March 2011, is Bolton's key Local Plan document. It describes what the Council, its formal partners and others with an interest in the future development of the Borough including members of the Community want Bolton to look like in the future up to 2026, and the planning policies that will be used to make it a reality, it reflects the spatial aspects of the work the Council and its partners. The subsequent Allocations Plan (2014) sets out how this will be implemented on a Proposals Map for Horwich and the Borough as a whole.

3.4.2 Policy OA1: Horwich and Blackrod has identified Horwich town centre as a traditional town centre with three conservation areas and a wide variety of housing in terms of age, size and tenure. There are small industrial areas along Chorley New Road and Crown Lane, but the major potential for new employment is at the Horwich Loco Works, Parklands and in the Lostock Industrial area. Horwich also embraces the mixed use Middlebrook area and adjoins the West Pennine Moors. There is a site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Red Moss. It also seeks to:

- Continue to promote Horwich town centre as being suitable for a mix of retailing, leisure, employment and housing uses.
- Identify Horwich town Centre as serving the western part of the borough for retailing.

- Concentrate sites for new housing in Horwich town centre at Horwich Loco Works (Rivington Chase) and on other sites within the existing urban area.
- Maintain current greenbelt boundaries.
- Ensure protected open land around Horwich remains undeveloped, except to the west of Horwich Loco Works where development will be allowed to support the regeneration of the Loco Works site.
- Conserve and enhance the character of the existing landscape and physical environment, especially the conservation areas at Horwich Town Centre, Horwich Loco and Wallsuches.
- Ensure that development in Horwich respects the street patterns, the grain and the form of the predominant architectural styles and where possible makes sympathetic use of locally distinctive materials such as stone.
- Ensure that new development does not harm the landscape setting and protects views from public areas to the surrounding landscape.
- Develop new or expanded medical and health facilities at Horwich.

3.5 Market Drivers and analysis

3.5.1 A baseline review (view Appendix 3) of potential market opportunities and town centre uses, undertaken by BDP, has identified the following areas for growth in Horwich.

- *Residential*

The baseline report has demonstrated Horwich has a strong terraced and semi-detached market, the market for flats is very limited with little post transaction evidence. There is a strong rental market from younger people and commuters into Manchester, Bolton and Preston. Horwich also seems to be of interest to first time buyers. This lends itself to smaller terraced houses and possibly flats potentially indicating some demand for these housing types.

Bolton as a borough is required to bring about housing development of some 2,500-3,750 homes in the boroughs 'other areas' by the end of the local plan. Given the focus of GMSF on local centres for the development of new houses, the market opportunity identified for housing is considered to comply with local and regional policies.

- *Retail*

The local retail market is modest, focused solely on meeting needs from Horwich and surrounding rural towns such as Blackrod, Adlington and Aspull. Trade and footfall are reasonable but strongly focussed around the Lee Lane/Winter Hey Lane junction. The size of the town centre means that more peripheral areas of Chorley New Road see limited demand.

- *Leisure, Gym, Hot Food*

Food and drink are a strength of Horwich, with 15 A3/A4 sit down pubs, cafes and restaurants within the town centre. This includes several higher value independent restaurants on the three main retail streets. The evening economy is further supported by 11 pubs mostly spread along Lee Lane. Most are drinking bars with a modest food offer. There is also budget offer of 13 takeaways in Horwich and a reasonable daytime food offer of six cafes and three bakeries of varying quality. These appear to cater both to locals and the visitor economy. There is a community Leisure Centre in Horwich plus four private gyms in town centre industrial units.

- *Office and Industrial*

There are a number of large offices in The Parklands area of Middlebrook, but these are not comparable to town centre accommodation. Horwich Town Centre includes two areas of industrial premises. In the south the area comprises of Taylor Street/Emett Street/Canada Street/New Brunswick Street/St. John Street. This comprises of 19 industrial units totalling 4,355 sq.m. All premises appear in use with vacant units let within one month. In the North, on Hampson Street, a smaller group of 16 industrial units and office properties totally 1,911 sq.m exists. Much of the property is not in traditional B Class uses and includes two breweries and two arts facilities plus two gyms.

3.6 Vision for Horwich Town Centre

3.6.1 The Horwich Town Centre Steering Group was established in June 2019, consisting of community representatives, local businesses, schools, Town Councillors, Ward Councillors and officers. This group has had an influential role in shaping the vision and masterplan over the past 12 months and has provided clear direction for the master planning process to ensure outcomes benefit local communities and deliver the scale of ambition desired. A stakeholder event was held in December 2019 with over 30 attendees. The discussions held at this event contributed to a visions and master planning process for the town.

3.6.2 The draft masterplan and key development proposals were shared with the public and comments welcomed through the completion of either a paper copy or online questionnaire from 27th January until the 23rd February 2020. 324 people responded to the questionnaire and around 125 people attended the two drop-in sessions on a Wednesday afternoon/early evening (29th January) and a Saturday (1st February). A copy of the full consultation report can be found at Appendix 4.

3.6.3 This has resulted in a new vision for Horwich being developed:

“Horwich is an historic town centre with a distinctive identity focused on the Lanes. The vision for Horwich seeks to attract more residents and visitors to enjoy using local and independent business services and shops, including a growing number of cafes, bars and restaurants which extend the use of the town centre into the evenings. To encourage more visitors, the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, bus and car users will be catered for through public realm investment and the development of a car parking and access strategy, which will also serve to better connect key assets such as Station Park and the new leisure complex to the town centre.”

3.7 Physical Development Proposals

3.7.1 In order to realise the market potential of the district centre and to meet the aspirations of local people, a strategy has been developed to underpin the long-term regeneration of Horwich Town Centre which will benefit the current and future residents and businesses in the area.

3.7.2 The strategy incorporates a number of key development projects with supporting public realm and townscape improvement strategies which when implemented will underpin the transformation of the town centre.

3.7.3 The strategy will look to create:

- Healthy Horwich – Broadening the appeal of the town centre, attracting residents and visitors
- Horwich Makers – Supporting and promoting local businesses
- Horwich Daytime into Night time – A place to visit at all times
- Horwich Creative and Digital – promoting Horwich as an attractive place to start up and creative businesses

3.8 Public Consultation

3.8.1 BDP developed a draft Masterplan that focussed on a number of key development proposals (KDP) and interventions that have the most to offer Horwich Town Centre and the wider area, both in the short and long term. The proposals were developed following a process of evidence gathering, market viability and option testing and have been informed by stakeholder consultations and a period of public consultation alongside testing the deliverability of the proposals.

- KDP One: Mixed Use development at former leisure centre site
- KDP Two: Street remodelling along the “lanes”
- KDP Three: New residential and community use development overlooking Old Station Park
- KDP Four: Promotion of creative business cluster
- KDP Five: Green Pedestrian/Cycle route through Old Station Park
- KDP Six: Car Parking Strategy

3.8.2 The period of public consultation ran from Monday 27th January to Sunday 23rd February 2020. A questionnaire was made available online and promoted via the Council’s website, via social media and press releases in the Bolton News. A printed version of the questionnaire was available on request and copies were available in a number of public places throughout the town. An information sheet summarising the proposals was made available on the website to permit intelligent consideration and response.

3.8.3 Two drop-in events were held at Horwich Library on Wednesday 29th January afternoon/early evening and Saturday 1st February, so that residents and businesses could view the KDP’s on consultation boards and have the opportunity to speak to officers and members of the Consultant Team if they wished. The drop-in events

were promoted on the Council's website, on social media and in the local press. Around 125 residents/business representatives visited the drop-in events to give their views and 324 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire. A copy of the full consultation report can be found at Appendix 4.

3.8.4 In light of the comments received on the draft Masterplan from the period of public consultation the following changes were agreed at a meeting of the Horwich Town Centre Steering Group meeting in September 2020.

- *KDP1: Mixed Use development at former leisure centre site*

The proposal identified that the former leisure centre site is currently used as a temporary car park for the new leisure centre. The proposal was to retain the land to build a health centre but proposed that the site is large enough to accommodate other uses, including housing (town houses / apartments) and a long-stay car park which can be used by the leisure centre as well as businesses and visitors to the wider town centre.

There was a mixed response to this proposal. Whilst many welcomed the idea of a new health centre on the site, they did not welcome new housing. There were also concerns as to whether the site was large enough to accommodate health and leisure centre users. There was some disagreement to making the car park long stay to service the town centre and limiting parking closer to the centre.

In response to the comments received the mixed-use development will remain as a key development proposal with three options to develop this key town centre site. These options address different uses including office spaces and residential apartments and also potential for surface level or multi storey car parking solutions. It should be noted that MSCP is more expensive to contract and operate than surface level parking, though these solutions will release more of the site for other uses which could create value as well as increasing footfall for the town centre.

- *KDP2: Improvement to the Lanes*

This proposal was to make Winter Hey Lane more attractive to pedestrians by introducing a one-way traffic system from Lee Lane to St. John Street. In addition, the whole of Winter Hey Lane could be closed temporarily to allow street markets and other events to take place throughout the year.

There was a mixed response to this proposal. Those in favour of this proposal felt it would bring visitors to Horwich and improve the pedestrian experience. Those who were partly in favour were in favour of temporary or occasional closures for markets and events but were not in favour of introducing a one-way system. The main concern was impact on local businesses, road congestion, and the fact that it had been tried once before and was not viewed as a success.

In response to the comments receive the improvements to the lanes will remain as a key development proposal. Whilst there is an opportunity to look at early projects here such as traffic modelling and car parking surveys to develop the overall scheme, it is noted that the anticipated scale and cost of an improvement scheme for the

Lanes will be delivered by a phased approach on a street by street basis. In whatever the final scheme and programme of implementation for this KDP, it is important that a holistic approach is taken to bring the proposed improvements forward, including potential implications any changes will have on the surrounding road network. It is also important that the Horwich business community is meaningfully engaged throughout the process of developing and testing the options.

- *KDP3: Residential and Community use overlooking Old Station Park*

This development proposal looked to develop sites overlooking Old Station Park situated off St. John Street to create residential and community use. The park would provide attractive views for the new town centre homes and would also provide some natural surveillance of the park which would in turn increase perception of safety in the park. The redevelopment of this site would enable better links to be created between the park and the town centre.

Many people liked the idea of a community venue but were against more housing development. There was agreement that the park needed some improvements particularly in terms of safety and reducing anti-social behaviour. It was also felt that the parks linkage to the town centre required improvement.

In response to comments received it was agreed to keep this KDP however as there appeared to be no appetite for additional housing, the sites overlooking the park have now been identified as “future development sites” for uses other than residential that will provide natural surveillance to the park tackling safety issues and improving visitor perceptions.

The future development of this area of the town centre should also seek to help create stronger park gateways from Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane and better connectivity between the town centre and the park and through to the wider area. It should also be noted that any future development of this site would be subject to land acquisitions and assembly.

- *KDP4: Promotion of Creative Business Cluster*

Hampson Street is already home to a mixture of small creative businesses. Under this proposal the area would be promoted to further encourage other creative businesses and enterprises. The area is accessible and can provide low-cost business space. A creative cluster can be defined as a geographic concentration of businesses in creative sectors such as arts, crafts, brewing, distilling, production of specialist food and drink, media, and information technology which pull together resources into networks and partnerships to cross-stimulate activities, boost creativity and realise economies of scale. The aim of this KDP therefore is not to develop a cluster from scratch and invest in a large-scale physical intervention but rather to invest and build on and enhance what is already there. This will help to retain one of the main characteristics of Horwich Town Centre which is office, industries and warehouse businesses

There was overwhelming support for this Key Development Proposal. Most responders felt that this was a really good idea and welcomed further promotion of the area. In addition, some felt that the area required some environmental improvements in general and that issues around parking and congestion needed to be addressed.

In response to the comments received it was agreed to retain this key development proposal.

The Masterplan now proposes that a bespoke “Creative Business Strategy” is developed to determine the types of future businesses that will be promoted in this area. This is necessary to ensure that the viability of the existing businesses is protected and the over proliferation of uses within the cluster can be prevented in the future.

- *KDP5: Improvements to Pedestrian Links through Old Station Park*

This Key Development Proposal seeks to create green pedestrian and cycling routes through Old Station Park. These would connect with existing routes and link Old Station Park to other areas of Horwich such as the Town Centre, Middlebrook, Rivington, Horwich Parkway Station, Rivington Chase and other residential areas. It will also provide links to retail on the edge of the town centre such as Aldi and Iceland. The environmental enhancement of the park will also help to tackle current anti-social behaviour issues in the park.

The majority of respondents were in support of this key development proposal. They felt that links to Middlebrook and Rivington were important. Some respondents felt that safety issues needed to be addressed in terms of lighting the park. Those who were not in support of this key development proposal cited that cyclists already used the park and therefore the proposed improvements were not required.

In response to the comments received the decision was taken to change the key development proposal to “Improvements Works to Old Station Park”, which will include the creation of improved cycle routes. This KDP therefore proposes the implementation of the parks masterplan to increase connectivity with the rest of the town centre assets, in particular with Winter Hey Lane and edge of town retail. Dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes which connect the town centre can bring potential business benefits through increased footfall. In creating the green pedestrian and cycle route through the park and further south it is necessary to have regard to the principles of good design, designing out crime, health and safety requirements of inclusive design. Good design of footpaths and cycle routes should respond to issues such as poor lighting, road crossings, bridges and other structures that pose a hazard to the user. It is also necessary to consider the needs of users of all age and gender as well as those with physical disabilities and mobility issues.

- *KDP6: Car Parking Strategy*

This Key Development Proposal identifies that a Car parking survey needs to be undertaken to identify and address parking issues, challenges and opportunities in the town centre. Following the survey, a car parking strategy will be developed to identify the Councils short term/long term objectives and approach to parking provision and management in Horwich Town Centre. Car parking quality, quantity and control is an issue in Horwich, and a car parking strategy will help rationalise and improve local parking.

The car parking strategy should also explore ideas for business parking permits and designation of short stay/long stay parking and their implications which can include possible charges for long stay car parking.

Car parking issues were raised at both the consultation events and raised in questionnaire responses. In response to the comments received it was agreed that this KDP would remain.

3.8.5 The outcome of the public consultation along with proposed amendment to the Masterplan as detailed above was shared with members of the Horwich town centre Steering Group held on the 8th September 2020. The proposed way forward was agreed by all members of the group and the masterplan was amended to reflect these changes.

3.8.6 'Quick win' Projects

The implementation of KDP 6: Car Parking Strategy has been identified as a 'quick win' project that is to be progressed following approval of this report. The outcome of this piece of work will provide the evidence base to support changes to car parking provision in Horwich town centre and will be a key consideration in progressing KDPs 1 and 2.

4 **CROSS CUTTING THEMES/SOCIAL INTERVENTION**

4.1 By diversifying the use of town centres, they can become community hubs and meeting places that are vibrant and cater for all age ranges. There are a number of ways to achieve this and the Council have been successful in implementing his approach in Bolton Town Centre with events such as Bolton Food and Drink Festival, Winter Festival and Ironman but also with community facilities such as Bolton One, Central Library, etc. It is not intended that Horwich attempts to compete with this approach, however opportunities do exist to tackle the wider social issues that are present in the town through a similar, albeit smaller scale that caters for Horwich residents.

4.2 Through the stakeholder event and public consultation exercise a number of cross cutting themes were identified and below is a summary of the approach proposed to address them.

4.3 *Health*

4.3.1 As stated in paragraph 1.7 Guidance from MHCLG on promoting healthy and safe communities (updated November 2019) states the design and use of the built and natural environments, including green infrastructure are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles.

4.3.2 Linkages will be made across a number of the development proposals to ensure the Council will:

- Work with our partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in Horwich Town Centre, particularly in Old Station Park;
- Tackle social isolation, in particular focussing on older members of the community to ensure that they are engaged and fulfilling their potential within the community;

- Take into account new models of health and social care to meet the needs of local people and improve access;
- Develop a 'green' environment that makes the best use of the existing Old Station Park and existing cycleways. This could include cycle and walking routes to promote healthy living; and
- Investigate opportunities for increased access to health services in Horwich Town Centre.

4.4 *Community Events*

4.4.1 To encourage/support local businesses and communities and attract people to the town, opportunities will be investigated to utilise Winter Hey Lane and other areas of the town for hosting events and other activities that promote additional footfall. This could mirror the events that take place in Bolton Town Centre and include pop up businesses/specialist markets. There is also an opportunity to build momentum for larger events such as the Food and Drink Festival by utilising smaller local events on the lead up. Housing providers as well as Bolton Council networks would be able to work with communities to develop priorities.

4.4.2 To improve community and youth service provision in the district centre consideration to be given to the opportunity presented by the planned improvement works to Old Station Park.

4.5 *Digital*

4.5.1 Developing digital infrastructure in Horwich to facilitate changing working patterns i.e. working from home and business incubation. The Councils Local Full Fibre Network is currently rolling out dark fibre installation across the borough.

4.6 *Connectivity*

4.6.1 To reduce reliance on vehicles across the town centre in the future, to improve social distancing measures in response to the Covid 19 pandemic and to increase walking, cycling and the use of public transport consideration to be given to:

- Prioritisation of pedestrian and cycle movements across the town centre with the creation of filtered neighbourhoods;
- Improving active travel to the town centre from surrounding neighbourhoods; and
- Making linkages to the Bee network and TfGM's Streets for All Programme.

4.7 *Horwich's Unique Selling Point (USP)*

4.7.1 The unique historical character of Horwich town centre should be preserved and enhanced wherever possible, especially the existing Heritage Centre and close proximity to Rivington.

4.7.2 Opportunities should be explored to promote Horwich town centre as a place to visit, to people who visit areas close to the town centre i.e. Middlebrook and Rivington.

4.8 *Next Steps*

- 4.8.1 When it comes to implementing the masterplan, every effort will be made to secure funding from external sources to supplement Council funding. Funding will be made available to enable work to commence, as soon as possible on the 'quick win' project (KDP 6) identified within this report. However, recommendations and decisions regarding bids for external funding, and the allocation of further Council funding will be subject to the presentation of a future report to the Executive Cabinet Member and portfolio holder for Development and Regeneration (Deputy Leader) for approval.
- 4.8.2 Governance will be developed in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The Council will utilise internal resources and liaise with partners and relevant groups where required. The intention is to continue with the Horwich Town Centre Steering Group, whose membership has been drawn down from Ward Members, education providers, local businesses, housing providers and community groups. Membership has also been extended to include Blackrod Town Council who as part of the 25-point agreement will benefit from some of the funding allocated to Horwich. As plans are developed, the community will be consulted through the Steering Group.
- 4.8.3 Please find attached at Appendix 5 an indicative action plan for delivery of the six development proposals as detailed in this report.

5 IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 On the 21st January 2019 Cabinet approved a £12 million allocation of funding from the £100 million Town Centre Strategy Fund to create strategies and masterplans in consultation with the local community and support targeted interventions in Farnworth, Horwich, Westhoughton and Little Lever town centres where they will ultimately attract private sector investment and secure development proposals.
- 5.1.2 On the 20th February 2019 Full Council approved an additional £4 million of funding from the 2019/20 Capital Programme for further investment in district centres, primarily in Farnworth Town Centre. This is additional to funding already allocated to projects within the Council's mainstream capital programme, which also funds (and continues to fund) projects in other district and local centres.
- 5.1.3 The level of funding given to any town will depend on the overall content and quality of the strategy and masterplan and the level of support needed to initiate development.
- 5.1.4 BDP and team of consultants have undertaken a costing exercise to determine a level of funding that would be required to deliver each of the KDP's as listed above. A portion of the Council's funding would be required to support the delivery of the masterplan in Horwich with the aim of leveraging further funding and investment to regenerate the town centre and sustain its immediate future to the benefit of its residents. The Council's funding is also designed to unlock private sector and other public sector investment and to secure capital receipt and income generation to the

Council, which would then be reinvested into the Town Centre Strategy Fund to recycle the fund thus enabling further investment where possible. Investment will create significant development value and achieve wider economic benefits including economic spend.

- 5.1.5 The breakdown of the investment by proposal is outlined below, however the costs provided are only indicative and each proposal will need designing and fully costing which may lead to an increase in the amount being asked for.

Proposal	Cost
1. Mixed Use Development at former Leisure Centre site	
Option 1: Surface level car park (Council Funded)	£480,000
Option 2: Residential development*	£11,150,000
Option 3: Commercial/retail development*	£10,150,000
2. Improvements to the 'Lanes'	£1,120,000
3. Future development sites overlooking Old Station Park*	*
4. Promotion of Creative Business Cluster**	**
5. Improvement works to Old Station Park including creation of green pedestrian/cycle routes	£450,000
6. Car Parking Strategy	£7,000

* Private sector led, subject to identification of a viable scale and mix of uses.

** No figure provided as will depend on the level of intervention chosen to implement

Note: These figures do not include the following: VAT where applicable, Planning and development costs, Contingencies, Legal, professional and consultancy fees, Site abnormalities or improvements to existing drainage, Site surveys, Finance costs where applicable, Construction industry inflation beyond Q3 2020. As a result of these omissions the figures quoted in paragraph 5.1.4 are likely to increase.

5.2 Legal/Procurement

- 5.2.1 In order to achieve delivery of the development proposals/target interventions as detailed in this report consideration will be given to delivery options including, but not limited to the following (within which there are potential variations):

- Land Disposals and Land Acquisitions in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- Outsourcing the delivery of works, supplies and services in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and procurement procedures (for example contractors, developers, professional services, advisors);
- Joint Venture potentially involving ownership and control by a range of stakeholders including (but not limited to) staff, the Council, or independent providers. There are a number of potential structures, including:
 - Partnership based structures
 - General partnerships (including contractual joint ventures)

- Registered Limited Partnerships
- Limited Liability partnership
- Private limited companies

5.2.2 The Director of Place will work with the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Chief Executive to identify the most appropriate delivery model and where so authorised by the Constitution shall negotiate the terms of any arrangements and carry out the practical formalities required to implement the development of proposals. Where those proposals fall outside the scope of the Constitution, authority will be sought from either Cabinet or the relevant Executive Cabinet Member, as appropriate.

5.2.3 Where the Council is making investment decisions the legal requirements such as State Aid compliance will be fully considered by the Director of Place and Borough Solicitor.

5.2.4 The development and regeneration of land not in Council ownership will be encouraged through ongoing engagement with landowners. Within the development proposal areas, where appropriate the Council will also make strategic acquisitions of land as part of its target interventions as outlined above. Where proposals require land to deliver key infrastructure and/or critical mass of comprehensive development, the Council will give due consideration to the use of its Compulsory Purchase powers if necessary, to acquire outstanding land interests as required. In doing so the Council will need to be satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest as a key part of that consideration.

5.3 HR

5.3.1 The implementation of Horwich Town Centre Masterplan will be supported by the Councils town centres and major developments team led by Economic Development and Regeneration Division.

5.4 Climate Change

5.4.1 Officers will seek to mitigate any negative impacts on the climate when implementing the key development proposals set out in this report. Investment in Old Station Park and other cross cutting themes such as walking and cycling may, in the long term, lead to an improvement in air quality.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 Under the equality Act 2010 the Council must have due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- 6.2 It is therefore important to consider how the proposals contained within this report may positively or negatively affect this work. To support this analysis, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening form has been completed for the proposals outlined in this report and is appended to this report (Appendix 6)
- 6.3 The EIA looks at the anticipated (positive and/or negative) impacts of the proposals on people from Bolton's diverse communities, and whether any group (or groups) is likely to be directly or indirectly differentially affected.
- 6.4 The proposals outlined in this report have been designed to enhance and regenerate Horwich town centre, which in turn, benefit residents, customers and visitors alike in this area. However, it has been noted that due to the nature of the proposals, it is possible that there could be some adverse impact for people with disabilities but any potential for differential impact will be prevented through the planning control and building control processes. This analysis is set out in more detail in the EIA.

7 VISION 2030

- 7.1 Within the Vision 2030 Strategy, the Council will strive to deliver services more efficiently, through service improvement, redesign, recommissioning and decommissioning, based on evidence of impact. The proposals within this report contribute to this strategic council aim.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Executive Cabinet Member is requested to:
- i) approve the Horwich Town Centre masterplan and strategy to guide the long-term regeneration of the centre;
 - ii) approve the proposed approach to deliver the masterplan, as outlined in the main body of this report;
 - iii) authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities where required.