

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 17 JUNE 2010  
title: CLITHEROE TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

### **1 MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

1.1 To agree the final draft Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions – In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, the importance of securing a diverse sustainable economic base in the borough is also recognised.
- Community Objectives – The issues identified in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities – Delivery of service to all.
- Other Considerations – The proposals support the Council's headline activities for the year of supporting regeneration in Clitheroe.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Following the recommendations contained within the Ribble Valley Employment Land and Retail Study, the Council subsequently agreed to work with Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the economic development arm of Lancashire County Council, to commission a piece of work to produce a Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan and subsequently Manchester based Turley Associates were appointed to carry forward the project. The purpose of the study is to provide a clear Development Strategy and Implementation Plan to enable partners to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful location. The Masterplan will provide the Council with practical and robust project plans with options to help create a thriving market place and town centre.

2.2 Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC), Lancashire County Council, and Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership (RVSP) forming the Project Steering Group commissioned this Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan. The brief has been to set out the future strategy for Clitheroe town centre, together with development principles for the Market Square. The masterplan has been progressed, and is set out, as three key workstages as follows: -

- **Baseline** - the Baseline Paper presents the headlines for Stage 1 and is informed by concise desk and site based appraisals under four key headings that will be carried through all work stages to provide clear continuity, these are; Place, People & Prosperity, Connections and Town Management. To understand the town today, the Baseline paper considers Clitheroe in its wider setting within the Ribble Valley, a more detailed appraisal of the town centre, and emerging opportunities to be considered in further detail through the second stage – Vision and Concepts.
- **Vision & Concepts** - the vision and concepts paper focuses on the key issues for the future of Clitheroe, together with the actions needed to start delivering the vision. This is set out as 10 Goals, supported by town frameworks and a number of ‘catalyst’ projects. The town frameworks set out the spatial organising principles for Clitheroe, together with a collective of smaller projects that provide the platform for larger, medium to longer-term catalyst projects capable of triggering a scale of investment and change that will strengthen existing communities and activities, attract new people and activities, and change the way in which people think about Clitheroe as a place to be and visit.
- **Implementation Plan** - the implementation plan is an important aspect within the document to lead the Vision and Concepts and priority project proposals towards establishing appropriate delivery structures to drive and manage the delivery of the Masterplan projects and in particular the key development projects.

### **3 INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Copies of the Masterplan have previously been circulated to members setting out projects and initiatives to be taken forward and provide direction on delivery forums, programming and funding. Further copies are available in the RVBC Members Room
- 3.2 The document has now been finalised and provides proposals for the Market Square development parcel and site, Castle Street, Moor Lane and details for the wider management of the project. This, in turn, will support the aspirations of the Economic Strategy by improving the quality of towns and supporting greater investment throughout the District.

#### Consultation

- 3.3 The proposals set out in the Masterplan document have been the subject of consultation through individual meetings, a Stakeholders Day and Community Consultation Days:
- The Stakeholders Day started with a ‘Business Breakfast’ for local traders, followed by a late morning discussion group for community groups and delivery agencies, and concluded with a discussion group for market stall traders.
  - The Community Open Days set out early ideas exploring the nature and degree of change that people wanted to see, together with an understanding of priorities. To ensure the engagement and representation of young people, two focus groups were arranged through local schools.

### Catalyst Projects

- 3.4 A key part of Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan document focuses upon the vision and concepts for Clitheroe's future, together with the primary actions needed to start delivering the vision, which is set out as 10 Goals, supported by town frameworks and a number of 'catalyst' projects. The town frameworks set out the spatial organising principles for Clitheroe, together with a collective of smaller projects that provide the platform for larger, medium to longer-term catalyst projects.
- 3.5 The catalyst projects are those considered to be capable of triggering a scale of investment and change that will strengthen existing communities and activities, attract new people and activities, and change the way in which people think about Clitheroe as a place to be and visit.
- 3.6 From consultations with key stakeholders, market traders, local businesses and local communities, there is a shared agenda for immediate action starting today. In response, four catalysts projects are proposed to prompt immediate action and channel the energy of those local community members and key stakeholders who are willing to begin contributing immediately:

### Town Team

- 3.7 The first Catalyst Project proposal is to create a 'Town Team', which will set in place an accountable forum to take forward the ideas and proposals set out in the Masterplan. Leadership and town centre management are essential to drive forward ideas, check progress and performance and build confidence in the town and its ability to deliver. The membership of the Town Team would be drawn from existing officers/members of the Borough Council, Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership, Lancashire County Council, Clitheroe Chamber of Trade and possibly other representatives from the local community.
- 3.8 The first step will be to agree appropriate membership, protocols and allocation of roles and responsibilities. This is likely to include acting as a collective 'Town Champion' to lead on the delivery of key projects and programmes set out in the Masterplan, including the on going refreshing of ideas, strategies and proposals bringing about an immediate step change in the quality of the day to day management functions of the town centre to deliver cleaner streets and management of vacant shop fronts raising the profile of the town through marketing and events, and extended opening hours, provide a 'one stop shop' offering one point of access for those needing support and assistance from local authorities and voluntary organisations.
- 3.9 A further three catalyst projects are proposed relating to each of the Priority Areas:

### Castle Street and Clitheroe Market

- 3.10 Castle Street is the central 'spine' of the Medieval Core, connecting Castle Gate to Market Place. It remains as the principal shopping street and natural destination and place to congregate for visitors to the town. The poor quality of the public realm and shop fronts, together with the dominance of cars moving along the street, undermine the quality of the pedestrian environment. There are few clues to draw people along the street and direct visitors into the wider streets, squares and courtyards.

- 3.11 Clitheroe Market is an open and exposed site. The scale of the site overwhelms the market stalls, giving the impression of a vast and inanimate public space. This together with the extent of car parking creates an underwhelming experience. There are no easily visible landmarks to draw pedestrians into the Market Square.
- 3.12 Discussions and comments from consultations focusing upon Castle Street and Clitheroe Market revealed a shared consensus supporting radical changes:
- In particular, ideas to connect Castle Street and Clitheroe Market together are supported.
  - For Castle Street, improving the quality of the public realm and shop fronts, managing vacant properties, and managing vehicular access and parking were identified as important during the Community Consultations and Open Days.
  - A focus group with market traders supported the idea of strengthening connections with Castle Street and introducing new retail and mixed-use development within Clitheroe Market area to create a more significant destination.
  - The opportunity to create a more intimate, sheltered and enclosed market square at the heart of this new development was supported. The benefits of street theatre and events other than markets to animate and attract visitors were promoted.
- 3.13 The key development principles to shape proposals for Castle Street and Clitheroe Market are:
- Deliver immediate improvements to the management of buildings and the public realm by coordinating/setting quality benchmarks to existing services.
  - Redefining Clitheroe Market as key place within the Medieval Core.
  - Redevelopment as a retail led mixed-use site, to include an enclosed market square as well as space for other events and activities.
  - Define Castle Street as a pedestrian priority environment, tourist information point, and principal destination through public realm improvements and management.
  - Celebrate and mark the points at which lanes and courtyards meet Castle Street to encourage pedestrians to explore the wider network of streets and squares.
  - Explore ideas to improve connections to Booths and understand the future aspirations of the owner/operator of this opportunity site as the 'western anchor' of the Clitheroe Market and Medieval Core.
  - Strengthen the identity, cohesion and pedestrian linkages around the 'four streets' of King Street, Station Road, Parson Lane (leading to Castle Gate) and Castle Street.

## Moor Lane and Lowergate

- 3.14 Moor Lane shapes the first impressions of Clitheroe for visitors arriving from the south of Clitheroe. At present, the streetscape and extent of vacant and underused buildings gives a negative impression. The underlying townscape formed by the rising topography and stepped buildings and curved building frontages offer the potential to create a more memorable and locally distinctive gateway and approach to the Medieval Core. To a large degree, the prosperity of Moor Lane is intertwined with Castle Street and Lowergate. In this regard, the role of Castle Gate is particularly important as the principal place connecting Moor Lane to Castle Street and the loop of streets enclosing the Market Square.
- 3.15 Changes to the identity and function of Lowergate have contributed to changes in uses and street activities in Moor Lane. The recent development of retail stores between Moor Lane and Waterloo Road, with associated car parking, has expanded the retail offer of the town. Whilst this draws shoppers into the town, the challenge is to encourage people to move beyond these stores, through Lowergate and the alleys and courtyards of Castle Street and Moor Lane.
- 3.16 The properties enclosing Moor Lane are varied, creating interest and flexibility. Recent conversions and new build development have delivered a diverse blend of office, cultural, retail and residential accommodation. This approach is a valuable demonstration of the potential to bring forward new developments to retain and attract new businesses in the town. As a key approach into the town, Moor Lane is dominated by car movements and parking. Whilst short stay/drop off parking is vital to local shops and businesses, there is a need to encourage pedestrian activity with an appropriate high quality streetscape and management.
- 3.17 Discussions and comments focusing upon Moor Lane and Lowergate revealed a shared consensus supporting radical changes to Moor Lane.
- The importance of maintaining Moor Lane as a retail street were favoured over initial ideas to encourage a structural shift towards commercial and leisure uses.
  - Encouraging property owners to invest in the building fabric, bring upper floors into active use, and manage the appearance of vacant shops are all considered as being important.
  - Encouraging more shoppers and footfall through improvements in streetscape quality and management, and more coordinated management of on street and retail store car parks are all supported as fundamental steps to breath life back into Moor Lane.
- 3.18 The key development principles to shape proposals for Moor Lane and Lowergate are:
- Deliver immediate improvements to the management of buildings and the public realm by coordinating/setting quality benchmarks to existing services.
  - Improve the quality and experience of existing pedestrian connections between the town gateways, retail stores, Lowergate and Moor Lane through coordinated signage, lighting, and street cleaning.

- Define Moor Lane as a pedestrian priority street and principal connection linking Lowergate to Castle Gate and the Medieval Core through public realm improvements and management.
- Develop a coordinated plan setting out options to refurbish, convert, amalgamate building groups along Moor Lane and encourage property owners and tenants to invest in individual properties. The focus is upon attracting a wider range of uses into vacant and underused space.
- Explore ideas for opportunity sites that may be brought forward by land owners in the medium to longer term.
- Work with retail store owners/managers to coordinate parking management and provide information points/directions into the town centre.
- Set quality benchmarks and implement small-scale environmental improvements to improve the quality and management of the streetscape along neighbourhood streets and connections.

#### Market Place and Wellgate

- 3.19 Market Place is a principal location and key destination within the Medieval Core. It forms the northern part of the town's 'spine, connecting Wellgate to Castle Street and Castle Gate. With the relocation of the market to the Market Square, the dominance of car movements and parking, and the poor quality of the public realm, the full potential of this pivotal place and arrival point is yet to be realised.
- 3.20 The introduction of newer retail and light industrial units facing onto Waterloo Road north of Wellgate from the town centre interrupts the historic townscape. These buildings are orientated towards their car parks facing onto Waterloo Road. Wellgate is a prominent part of the wider 'front door' for the town and the format and appearance of the Tesco store and light industrial units fail to communicate the hidden qualities and experiences of Clitheroe and the Medieval Core.
- 3.21 St Michael and St John's playing fields south of Wellgate provide an attractive green space along Waterloo Road, a key approach circumnavigating the town. This is the only evidence of the Mearley Brook landscape corridor. The opportunity is to consider how this may form a key arrival point and feature for the town.
- 3.22 Discussions and comments focusing upon Moor Lane and Lowergate revealed a shared consensus for reshaping the neighbourhood with a clearer identity:
- The need to bring the Market Place back to life as a key focal point for events and activities is very important. Beyond the Market Place, there is a need to provide greater clarity of 'what lies beyond'. Many visitors are seen looking down Wellgate and, appearing to see no real clues and encouragement to venture further, turn around and return back along Castle Street.
  - The value of this neighbourhood as a place to live, right in the heart of the town is recognised. New residential developments are welcomed as they are providing a wider choice of housing types, are of a high quality and are well managed.

- Car movements between Market Place and Waterloo Road need to be managed to protect residential amenity.

3.23 The key development principles to shape proposals for Market Place and Wellgate are:

- Deliver immediate improvements to the management of buildings and the public realm by coordinating/setting quality benchmarks to existing services.
- Improve the quality and experience of existing pedestrian connections between the town gateways to Wellgate and linking to the Market Place through coordinated signage, lighting, and street cleaning.
- Define 'Well Square' as a focal point for Wellgate, arrival point for the Medieval Core and a potential point of interest on the Town Trail.
- Explore ideas for opportunity sites that may be brought forward by land owners in the medium to longer term.
- Promote the regeneration of individual development plots in Wellgate by encouraging individual property owners to explore the potential of their landholdings.
- Work with business owners/managers to coordinate parking management and provide information points/directions into the town centre. Explore the potential of St Michaels and St John's playing field to act as a temporary arrival point, gateway and places for events/recreation.
- Improve the quality and experience of Waterloo Road as a key town approach through tree planting and boundary treatments to create a strong landscape identity. Celebrate and mark the points at which local streets connect with Waterloo Road and explore opportunities for improved/additional crossing points to connect wider residential communities to the town centre

3.24 These three projects translate the strategies and proposals set out in the Town Frameworks into more neighbourhood specific development principles and projects. They provide the parameters to guide immediate actions being progressed as priorities. This approach ensures that immediate actions are informed by an understanding of and deliver the first steps of longer-term proposals. This allows the need for immediate action to be balanced with the need to plan for the longer term.

3.25 Chapter 5 of the document addresses the issues of delivery structures to drive and manage the delivery of the masterplan projects and in particular the key development projects. It is recommended that the Town Team coordinate the delivery of the vision and masterplan for the town centre. These projects will be complemented by further, more detailed consideration by the Town Team on how the Town Frameworks are to be delivered in the remaining neighbourhoods where a more limited scale of intervention is proposed.

## **4 RISK ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – The adoption of the Masterplan has no financial cost but moving forward on many of the projects will have significant costs. Some of these will fall on the public sector, including Ribble Valley Borough Council. In all these instances further reports will be presented to the appropriate Council committees.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal - None
- Political – None
- Reputation - The matters covered in this report link with the Council's objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.

## **5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Endorse the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan and adopt it in principle as a framework for further project development in Clitheroe Town Centre and that a Town Team is formed and works in partnership to assist in the delivery, monitoring, reviewing and development of the plan.

5.2 Instruct the Director of Development Services to report back to Committee where appropriate with regard to detailed projects as they arise and keeps this Committee informed of progress on the Masterplan.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan final draft

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.