

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 15 April 2013

Portfolio:	Strategic Planning and Environment
Subject:	Locks Heath District Centre - Outcome of Consultation on Masterplan Options
Report of:	Director of Planning and Environment
Strategy/Policy:	Fareham Borough Local Plan
Corporate Objective:	Protect and enhance the environment Maintaining and extending prosperity Leisure for health and fun

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive of the outcome of the public consultation exercise on the Masterplan options for the Locks Heath District Centre and to seek approval for the next steps.

Executive summary:

A public consultation exercise was carried out during October and November 2012 at which a series of Masterplan options for the future regeneration of the Locks Heath District Centre were presented. These options all included the provision of a new food store and a new swimming pool and leisure centre. Nearly 1000 people attended the four consultation events held at the Lockwood Community Centre, 354 response forms were returned and a number of letters and e-mails were received from individual residents and interested organisations.

The responses to the consultation indicate that a majority are in favour of redevelopment proposals which extend beyond the current boundary of the District Centre including a new food store and a swimming pool. Those who supported such a development were excited by the proposals and felt that they were long overdue.

However, a significant minority are opposed to any development extending beyond the current Centre boundaries. Opposition was mainly on the grounds of loss of open space and a view that the current Centre serves the population well and does not need to expand. More detail about the views expressed on the various options proposed are set out in the following Briefing Paper.

The Borough Council now needs to decide how to move forward in the light of the results of the consultation. This report recommends that the Locks Heath District Centre section of the pre-submission draft of the Development Sites and Policies Plan is further refined to provide an appropriate planning policy framework for any future development. It is anticipated that this will be considered by the Executive in the summer of 2013. To inform this further, it is proposed to examine in more detail, potential development scenarios for the regeneration of the District Centre which take into account the views expressed during the public consultation and the continuing dialogue with interested parties.

Recommendation:

- (a) That the Executive notes the results of the public consultation on the future of the Locks Heath District Centre.
- (b) That the Development Sites and Policies Plan is further refined to provide an appropriate planning policy framework for the regeneration of the District Centre. This will be informed by an examination of more detailed potential development scenarios for the regeneration of the District Centre which take into account the views expressed during the public consultation and the continuing dialogue with interested parties.

Reason:

That the future development of the site proceeds within an appropriate planning policy framework and is fully informed by the views of the local residents and the needs of the local community, as well as reflecting the continuing dialogue with interested parties.

Cost of proposals:

There are no direct costs related to these proposals

Background papers: File of consultation responses

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date: 15 April 2013

Subject: Locks Heath District Centre - Outcome of Consultation on Masterplan Options

Briefing by: Director of Planning and Environment

Portfolio: Strategic Planning and Environment

INTRODUCTION

1. The Locks Heath Masterplanning exercise was driven by three main priorities:
 - The Council's corporate priority to build a new public swimming facility in the western wards of the Borough.
 - The need for an improved food retail offer in the light of evidence of a 70% leakage of expenditure on food outside of the immediate catchment area.
 - A desire to improve the vitality of the existing Centre, including the non food retail offer.
2. Accordingly, a series of Masterplan options were developed and at its meeting on 1 October 2012, the Executive agreed to embark on a public consultation exercise.
3. The options included the provision of a new food store in two different locations adjacent to the District Centre. They also included the development of a new swimming pool and leisure centre in three different locations. This facility would also incorporate the existing library and community centre.
4. The consultation took place over a six week period from 15 October until 26 November 2012. Public exhibitions were held in the Lockwood Community Centre on 25 and 26 October and on 8 and 9 November and the consultation material was also available to view in the Centre throughout the consultation period. Residents were also able to view the material online during this period. In addition, a separate meeting was held with the residents of the sheltered housing scheme at Old Common Gardens which directly overlooks the Centre.

5. Residents were invited to express their view by means of a survey response form, by letter, by e-mail or by telephone as well as being able to express their views in person at the exhibitions. Nearly 1000 people attended the public exhibitions. 354 response forms were received and 33 letters and e-mails were received from individual residents and other interested organisations.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

6. The Survey response form asked a total of 10 questions on people's experiences at the District Centre and on their views about future options. In addition, space was available on the form for them to make any other comments they wished. The headline results are set out below. These results were presented to a meeting of the Western Wards Community Action Team on 20 March, at which residents were also able to make comments and ask questions.
7. A key question was question 9, as this was designed to elicit a response about the scale of development. People were advised that if any changes to the District centre were limited to the land currently used by the shops and the car park, then no open space would be lost. However, a new leisure centre, including a swimming pool and a new food store would need more land. Taking this into account, people were asked if they preferred to keep the development within the land currently used by the shops and car park or if they preferred to go beyond this boundary so that the new swimming pool and food store could be built. The table below shows the response to this:

Scale of development	No.	%
Keep development within current boundary	137	40.3
Allow development to go beyond current boundary	168	49.4
Don't mind	35	10.3
Total	340	100

8. This shows that there is a clear majority (amongst those respondents who expressed a preference) in favour of a more comprehensive redevelopment. This confirms the perceptions of officers derived from talking to people at the exhibitions.
9. Question 10 asked where people would prefer to see open space replaced if a larger scale redevelopment went ahead. The responses were as follows:

Location of replacement open space	No.	%
As close to LHDC as possible	207	63.1
Elsewhere in Locks Heath	53	16.2
Don't mind	43	13.1
Not concerned about loss of open space	25	7.6
	328	100

10. Question 4 asked people how happy they were with the various facilities in the District Centre. The responses were as follows:

	Very happy	Fairly happy	Fairly unhappy	Very unhappy	No. of responses
Range of shops	32.5%	46.7%	17.0%	4.0%	347
Food shopping	35.6%	36.9%	19.2%	8.3%	349
Library	54.4%	36.7%	8.5%	1.3%	316
Community Centre	37.8%	45.4%	12.2%	4.6%	238
Genesis Centre	25.6%	40.4%	21.3%	12.7%	94
Places to eat and drink	31.7%	48.1%	14.2%	6.0%	268
Parking availability	45.5%	40.9%	8.0%	5.5%	325
Public transport links	40.1%	47.7%	7.6%	4.6%	262

11. Question 5 sought people's views on whether the District Centre would benefit from a new food store, whether it was a good place to locate a new leisure centre including a swimming pool and whether it was a good idea to locate the leisure centre and swimming pool with a new library and community facilities under one roof. The responses were as follows:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	No. of responses
District Centre will benefit from new food store	35.5%	20.8%	17.55	26.3%	346
Centre is a good place for a swimming pool	45.0%	21.8%	11%	22.1%	353
Good idea to co-locate pool, library and community facilities	29.8%	29.8%	14.7%	25.7%	342

12. Questions 6 and 7 sought views on the possible location for the new food store and whether the idea of a raised store with parking underneath was a good idea. Fewer respondents (278) answered question 6. This is probably an indication of the fact that many people felt that one of the options should have been "none of these". The omission of this as an option was deliberate as it was felt desirable to elicit people's views on location even if they were against the idea of development in principle.

13. The responses to the questions were as follows:

Location of new food store	No	%
Option 1 - North of the existing Co-op building	115	41.4
Option 2 - North of the car park	35	12.6
Don't mind	128	46.0
Total	278	100

Is a raised food store a good idea	No	%
Very good idea	44	12.7
Fairly good idea	51	14.7
Neither good or bad	60	17.3
Fairly bad idea	63	18.2
Very bad idea	129	37.1
Total	347	100

14. Question 8 asked for views on the potential location of a new swimming pool/leisure Centre. As with question 6, and probably for the same reasons fewer people (292) responded to this question.

Location of new swimming pool	No	%
Option 1a - Eastern end of new car park	58	19.9
Options 1b,2a,3a - On existing car park by petrol station	86	29.4
Options 1c,2b,3b - Southern end of existing car park	64	21.9
Don't mind	84	28.8
Total	292	100

15. Question 11 asked if people had any further comments they wished to make and a total of 206 respondents took the opportunity to do so. These have been divided up into a number of categories, which total more than 206 as many people commented on a number of different issues. Issues on which 5 people or less commented have not been included. A sample quote for each of the comments is provided.
16. Opposition to any redevelopment- 43 comments: *I am quite happy with the centre as it is. It has the atmosphere of a small town centre where people meet and chat. The new proposal makes it look like an out of town retail park.*
17. Concern to keep any development within the boundary of the existing District Centre- 13 comments: *I would prefer the existing Co-op to enlarge. A new superstore would ruin the village feel for small shops.*
18. Opposition to/concerns about loss of open space - 42 comments: *I am appalled by the proposed major redevelopment, not least the fact that the loss of our lovely open space is even under consideration at all. The centre is an unusually pleasant area, well laid out with the present incorporation of trees and shrubs with adequate shopping facilities and a friendly atmosphere and air of calm, apart from the occasional vandal, together with the wonderful green, together with the wonderful green.*
19. Overall support for proposals - 32 comments: *I am very excited by the proposals. Locks Heath District Centre desperately needs revitalising. More than that, we need a choice of supermarkets, choice to shop without having to travel further afield. Locks Heath has the potential to become a community centre for all with a real choice in the ability to shop locally.*
20. Question the need for a new food store - 31 comments: *I am concerned that the development is predicated upon the building of a new larger food store. The current size of the Co-op suits the needs of the local population.*

21. Concerns about traffic generation and parking - 23 comments: *I am concerned about creating too much traffic down Locks Road. It is already affected by off street parking.*
22. Support for new swimming pool at Coldeast - 21 comments: *The leisure centre and pool would be more suited to the new housing development at Coldeast*
23. Support for new swimming pool at Locks Heath - 21 comments: *It's a great idea. We desperately need a pool open to all.*
24. Support for a new food store - 16 comments: *I think that this is a good plan which will allow me to do my shopping closer to home.*
25. Question need for new non food shops - 8 comments: *We already have a good selection of shops and at weekends the car parks are overflowing. Do we really need more shops? A post Office, a chemist and the library are essential.*
26. Concerns about public transport- 8 comments: *The Fareham Rapid Transport scheme excludes the western wards. Please reconsider this as well as maintaining and expanding current bus services.*
27. Concerns about impact of development on independent shops - 6 comments: *The Centre currently has a wonderful local feel and this must be retained in any redevelopment, particularly with regard to the small independent shops, which may all too easily be pushed out by a larger food store.*
28. In addition to the survey response forms 33 responses were received by letter or e-mail. 7 of these were received from interested organisations and these are summarised in the next section. Of the 26 responses from local residents, 11 were in favour of redevelopment, 10 were opposed and the remainder made neutral comments which could not be interpreted as being in favour or against.
29. Sample comments from these responses are set out below:
 - (a) *We welcome a new food store and leisure centre but are concerned about the increase in traffic. Well done to the Council.*
 - (b) *I think that the proposed development is a fantastic idea for Locks Heath. The area has been in desperate need for a swimming pool for quite some time. The new pool will give the area a real community feel and be excellent for the youngsters. It will also be great for reducing the carbon footprint of the area as at the moment we travel some distance to use leisure facilities. Overall, I would be happy with any of the proposals as long as development could start quickly.*
 - (c) *The proposed development is a great idea. The addition of a swimming pool will be fantastic for me and my family. The extra shops will allow us to do less travelling, saving on fuel, reducing our carbon footprint and keeping our expenditure within the local area.*

- (d) *The Centre has a good range of shops, a library and a leisure centre already. The development would result in the loss of two valuable open green spaces which are lacking in this area of the ward.*
- (e) *The food store should not be moved. If the entrance is moved, the existing shops will die. The existing ones are not fully used now. Green space must not be sacrificed for unnecessary new shops. What will happen to the public house? A swimming pool is urgent.*
- (f) *We need open space for children to play and not all parents can afford to pay for a swimming pool etc. It makes Locks Heath a nice place to live with open space near to shops and library.*

30. Old Common Gardens is a private sheltered housing scheme which directly looks out over the existing open space. The impact of any new development would, therefore, be greatest for these residents. As many of the residents were frail and had difficulties in attending the public exhibition, a separate meeting, attended by 28 residents, was held in the Common Room of the building. Residents felt very strongly against any form of development and were particularly opposed to building a new food store on the open space adjacent to their homes.

31. The age range of people who responded to the survey is set out below:

Age	%
16-24	0.3
25-34	3.1
35-44	6.5
45-54	11.6
55-64	20.3
65+	52.2
Prefer not too say	6.0

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS

- 32. In addition to responses received from local residents, responses were also received from 7 interested organisations including one local trader.
- 33. The response from an independent local trader welcomed proposals to enhance and improve the centre and the provision of a new leisure centre but objected to the location of the proposed new food store as it would shift the focus away from the existing Centre to the detriment of existing retailers.

34. The Fareham Society recognised the need to assess the role of the Centre to take account of changes and growth in the surrounding area. They objected to options 2 and 3 due to their impact on the surrounding residential properties and, if they were to choose one of the options, it would be option 1c as this would mean that the new leisure facility was adjacent to the existing small shops, thus evening out the footfall over the whole site.
35. Hampshire County Council were broadly supportive of the proposals and felt that in taking the masterplan forward, the relationship between the District Centre and the land it owns to the south, which has a proposed allocation for new housing, should be taken into account. This would be particularly the case, if there were any proposals to use part of this land for replacement open space. The County Council were supportive of plans to integrate the library with a new leisure centre as it felt that there was a need to improve and ideally expand its existing service. Options 1c or 2b were preferred as they located the leisure centre next to existing shops.
36. Roger Tym and Partners responded on behalf of New River Retail, the current owners of the District Centre. They supported the objectives of the Council in undertaking the consultation exercise and felt that the District Centre plays an important role but is in need of expansion and investment. They felt that the provision of a new food store and the enhancement of the leisure and comparison goods shopping facilities would allow for a significant uplift in the vitality and viability of the Centre, increasing its attractiveness to local residents and securing additional footfall. They favoured option 1 as a location for a new food store, but expressed no particular preference for the location of the leisure facilities. They considered that options 2 and 3 did not represent viable solutions in terms of car parking arrangements and service access.
37. CBRE responded on behalf of Waitrose. They generally supported the need for additional convenience floor space in the west of the Borough but expressed concern that the timing of the consultation alongside the consultation on the draft Development Sites and Policies (DSP) Plan suggested a level of predetermination and that, to avoid this, the role of Locks Heath should be considered as part of an emerging plan led consultation strategy. They felt that the options proposed needed further review for a number of reasons including the scale of a proposed new food store and its relationship with the existing Co-op store, the impact on adjacent residential properties and the impact on open space and woodland.
38. Signet Planning responded on behalf of Discovery Properties Ltd which has an interest in a site at Segensworth West Industrial Estate (off of Little Park Farm Road. This site is currently an existing Employment Site and Area in draft DSP Plan (No. 80). They considered that the consultation process was flawed in that the location of a new food store in the west of the Borough at Locks Heath appears to be predetermined and questioned whether this was the most appropriate location given the existence of an anchor food store in the Centre already. They considered that an alternative location in the west of the Borough such as at Segensworth West Industrial Estate (off of Little Park Farm Road) would be a more appropriate solution where a new district centre could be anchored by a food store with other associated commercial and community uses.

39. Barton Willmore responded on behalf of the Co-op. They objected to all of the options presented on the grounds that their delivery was predicated on the reconfiguration of the existing Co-op store. The Co-op wished to retain their store and have no intention of allowing it to be reconfigured in the manner proposed. Furthermore their view was that the Council's Core Strategy did not support the major expansion of the District Centre and that, although the emerging DSP Plan provided for such an expansion, this was at an early stage in the process and had not been tested at Examination. They did not consider it "sound" to adopt a Masterplan as a material consideration in advance of this. They considered that the GVA Retail Study overestimated the capacity for convenience floor space in the Locks Heath area.
40. The Co-op put forward an alternative proposal. This involved the expansion of the existing Co-op store to provide approximately an additional 42% of floor space and the provision of a leisure centre and associated car parking on the council owned open space. A public exhibition of their proposals was held over two days in November 2012 and was attended by around 200 people. 97 people responded to a survey, 84.5% of whom were broadly in favour of the Co-op's plans.
41. The Co-op urged the Council to engage further with them to work up alternative Masterplan options and to delay progressing the Masterplan until the adoption of the DSP Plan.

NEXT STEPS

42. Although the consultation process has elicited a great deal of support for the regeneration of the District Centre to include a new food store and a new swimming pool, it has also raised a number of concerns. These can be summarised as:
 - Loss of open space
 - Need for new shops
 - Impact upon existing traders
 - Increased traffic generation
 - Proceeding with proposals in advance of the formal adoption of the DSP Plan.
43. The DSP Plan is part of the Local Development Framework and a draft of this was the subject of consultation during October and November 2012. The pre-submission draft is currently in preparation and it is anticipated that it will be considered by the Executive in the summer of 2013. Following that it will be submitted to the Secretary of State, after which an Inspector will be appointed who will conduct an Examination in Public. This will probably take place in late 2013. It will then be formally adopted by the Council in early 2014.

44. It is recommended that the section of this Plan which refers to the Locks Heath District Centre is further refined to take into account the need to expand the Centre to ensure that it remains the most sustainable location for new food retail shopping and also the most sustainable location for a new swimming pool/leisure centre. In addition to the evidence contained in the Retail Study carried out by GVA in 2012, further evidence is also being gathered concerning the likely impact of any new food store on the existing traders in the Centre and on the feasibility of the provision of more non food (comparison) retail at the Centre. This evidence will be fed into the draft DSP Plan.
45. Views expressed by the community regarding the need to retain as much open space and traffic generation will also need to be fed into the Plan and to this end consideration will be given to including the northern part of the site immediately to the south within the District Centre boundary. This site is currently owned by Hampshire County Council and is being promoted by them for new housing. Discussions with the County Council concerning an integrated approach are under way.
46. Alongside refining the DSP Plan, it is also proposed to develop some further development scenarios to achieve the regeneration of the District Centre which take all of these issues into account. These potential development scenarios would, for instance, explore opportunities for improving or retaining open space, whilst delivering new retail and community uses.
47. This approach will ensure that the future regeneration of Locks Heath District Centre is carried out within an appropriate planning policy framework and takes into account the views of local residents and interested parties as well as appropriate evidence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

48. There are no financial implications arising from the specific proposal outlined in this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

49. There are no risks associated with the specific proposals set out in this report.

CONCLUSION

50. The public consultation on the Masterplan options for the regeneration of the Locks Heath District Centre demonstrated a small majority in favour of a development extending beyond the boundary of the existing Centre to include a new food store and a new swimming pool and leisure facility. However a significant minority opposed redevelopment, mainly on the grounds of loss of open space and a view that the current Centre served the population well and does not need any expansion. A view expressed by some interested organisations was that the Council should not proceed with the development of a Masterplan in advance of the adoption of the DSP Plan.

51. In the light of this views expressed in the consultation it is recommended that the Council proceeds by further refining the section of the DSP Plan which refers to the Locks Heath District Centre in order to ensure that any future redevelopment is within the context of an appropriate planning policy framework. Further development scenarios will be developed showing how the regeneration of the District Centre could be achieved taking into account the results of the public consultation and the appropriate evidence, whilst continuing a constructive dialogue with interested parties.

Reference Papers:

Report to the Executive – 11 June 2012

Report to the Executive – 1 October 2012