

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	24 April 2024
Executive Member:	Councillor Vimal Choksi – Executive Member for Towns and Communities.
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Elsworth, Assistant Director of Investment, Development and Housing
Subject:	DROYLSDEN TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN - DRAFT
Report Summary:	Tameside Council is committed to improving town centres and delivering regeneration opportunities for the local communities and visitors that use them. The report includes details of the draft Droylsden Town Centre Masterplan principles and concepts, evidence base findings and results of the recent fact finding exercise. The report seeks approval to undertake a formal 4 week public consultation in June 2024.
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet be recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the findings from the recent fact-finding survey, stakeholder engagement sessions and evidence gathered. ii. Review the emerging proposals and principles identified in the draft masterplan in Appendix 2. iii. Approve to undertake formal public consultation for a period of 6 weeks starting in May 2024 on the draft masterplan vision, objectives and emerging proposals.
Corporate Plan:	The proposals support the key aims of the Corporate Plan to ensure modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations. The proposed measures shall contribute to delivering corporate priorities – housing, economic growth and employment opportunities
Policy Implications:	<p>The proposals support the policy aims and delivery of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy (2021). In light of the recent impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the generally poorly performing town centres, the regeneration of Tameside's town centres is essential for a range of social and economic reasons in order to create sustainable communities and thriving and vibrant town centres. The recommendations of this report will assist with the delivery of this objective and will bring in new people, inward investment, businesses and jobs.</p> <p>The proposals support the adopted Carbon Reduction and Environment Strategy 2021-2026. The focal points of the Strategy are all very much relevant to town centres and include Greenspace & Biodiversity, Homes Workspaces & Council Buildings, Influencing Others, Reducing Consumption & Producing Sustainably and Travel & Transport. The recommendations of this report will assist with the delivery of these areas of focus and will ensure that town centre regeneration has sustainability at the forefront of any proposals related to new developments.</p>

Financial Implications:
(Authorised by the
statutory Section 151
Officer)

As part of the Council's strategic objectives, there was a need identified to develop a masterplan for various townships in the Borough. The development of masterplans are revenue in nature, and therefore a cost pressure to the General Fund, if not previously budgeted for.

GMCA secured revenue funding from Homes England to support the development of pipeline projects for the delivery of the Greater Manchester growth ambitions.

The Council has successfully applied for, and been awarded, £0.100m for Droylsden Town Centre. The grant funding was formally accepted by Executive Cabinet on 27 September 2023. The funding was to be used to support the development of pipeline projects for the delivery of the Greater Manchester growth ambitions. The Council commissioned OPEN (Optimised Environments Ltd) to prepare the Droylsden Town Centre Masterplan following a tender process via STaR and initial development costs are within the £0.100m funding envelope.

The project is intended to contribute to the future development of Droylsden, including enhanced commercial and residential development which should drive growth in Council Tax and Business Rates in the medium to long term.

Legal Implications:
(Authorised by the
Borough Solicitor)

This report explains that the Council is going through a preliminary fact finding process and engaging with relevant stakeholders, to inform the development of a Masterplan for Droylsden. Once the preliminary research has been carried out another report will be brought forward which will consider the options and delivery options, the process of which will include legal and financial input and advice.

Risk Management:

Associated risks are set out at Section 6.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Damien Cutting – Economic Growth Lead



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tameside's town centres are at the heart of our communities. Due to changing market conditions the Council has an ambition to support, adapt and regenerate all of the town centres by building on their strengths and looking for opportunities to bring new life into them. The very best town centres have one thing in common – they are both people and quality focussed. Quality of place is paramount to thriving town centres to become a place where people feel they belong, an exciting place where people can live, work and spend time. Quality design and attention to the public realm will be critical to this success.
- 1.2 Over recent years Droylsden has seen many changes. The introduction of the Metrolink system provides easy access to and from Manchester City Centre and the ongoing regeneration of East Manchester being driven by the further planned development of the Etihad Campus and new Co-Op Live Arena due to open in April 2024. Located just 4 miles from the City Centre, Droylsden town centre has a good mixture of residential, retail and office usages, though the latter two are in need of investment and refurbishment/redevelopment.
- 1.3 The Council has been awarded £100,000 for Droylsden Town Centre to support the development of pipeline projects for the delivery of the Greater Manchester growth ambitions. The contract was awarded to OPEN (optimised Environments Ltd) to prepare the Droylsden Town Centre Masterplan following a tender process via STaR.
- 1.4 The Droylsden Town Centre Masterplan will support delivery of the Tameside Corporate Plan, Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy and both regional and national priorities helping to secure much needed investment in the Town Centre. This report seeks approval to undertake a formal 4 week public consultation on the draft masterplan following the local elections in May 2024.
- 1.5 The first stage in the preparation of the masterplan is to gather of the evidence that will support the development of a vision, objectives, and key proposals in preparing a robust town centre masterplan for Droylsden.

2 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH TO PREPARING THE MASTERPLAN

- 2.1 The consultant team are working towards a comprehensive masterplan that will ensure all aspects of regeneration are considered. This will include working collaboratively with the local community and key stakeholders, so they are able to shape the proposals for Droylsden. The fact finding stage has come to an end and the baseline assessment completed. These findings have informed the draft proposals and an emerging vision for the town which will be subject to a formal 4 week public consultation period following the local elections and is based on the following influences:
 - Creating a new sense of place,
 - Bringing back purpose,
 - Supporting an aspirational community.
- 2.2 In terms of the approach, the consultant team are following the below methodology:
 - Understanding the site – This first stage gained a comprehensive understanding of the town and its community. This was undertaken with site visits, reviews of policy and adopted strategies and desktop data collation. This work has been completed.
 - Engaging the local community and key stakeholders – A survey was issued online and at local deposit points in the town centre to gather feedback from the local community in order to understand local perceptions of the town and what improvements they would like to see. This stage has now completed, and findings of this exercise are detailed in **Appendix 3** and summarised in Section 3 of this report.

- Collation of findings - The results from the fact finding exercise have been collated, analysed and reviewed and used to inform the draft vision, objectives, design principles and proposals of the draft masterplan detailed in **Appendix 2** and summarised in Section 4 of this report which, will be used to undertake a formal 4 week public consultation.
- Following the formal public consultation, the findings will contribute to refining the final masterplan content which will be subject to a further Executive Cabinet approval late Summer 2024.

3 EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The appointed team of specialist consultants have gathered information and data on Droylsden including transport, socio-economics, property market, and townscape, street scene and the built form. In addition, a survey was conducted with the local community with a total of 1,078 responses and workshops were held with stakeholder and local community groups including Droylsden Shopping Centre owners, New Era, Droylsden Academy and local ward members. This section of the report includes a summary of the findings and the full details of all of the evidence collected can be viewed in **Appendix 1** of this report.

Spaces and Places

- 3.2 Droylsden has a rich industrial history that has seen it rise from a pioneering cotton mill town. From industrialisation through a canal network, the Concord Suite development, and the introduction of the tram line infrastructure that have shaped the urban fabric of the town today.
- 3.3 The appointed team have produced a spatial assessment with regards to land uses, building quality, legibility, and green and blue infrastructure. An audit of the public realm has also been carried out. This detail has informed a SWOT analysis identifying the main barriers to regeneration as well as the opportunities for change and improvement. Droylsden's proximity to the M60 motorway, Manchester City Centre and key proposals around the Eithiad Stadium including the Co Op Live Arena provide an opportunity for Droylsden to capitalise on this growth. Some of the key strengths and opportunities relate to the strong housing market, which has seen a number of new homes built in and on the edge of the town centre in recent years and more homes proposed.
- 3.4 To ensure that the right offer exists for these new and existing residents, the town centre offer must be improved, so they utilise and access key local services. There are several vacant units in the shopping centre and opportunities for meanwhile uses could be explored. The marina is also identified as a key asset, but more must be made of this waterway to provide a more attractive place for people to use at their leisure.

Transport

- 3.5 Droylsden is well connected by public transport, with the Metrolink Tram Stop located in the heart of the town centre. The Eithiad Campus and Ashton-under-Lyne journeys are 11 minutes and Manchester Piccadilly is 18 minutes by tram from Droylsden. Regular buses also provide connectivity to these locations. The A662 provides access to the City Centre and M60 Junction 23.
- 3.6 Congestion creates a vehicle-dominated environment around the centre of Droylsden impacting connectivity, attractiveness, and environmental quality. The junction of Market Street/A662 is a key signal-controlled junction which dominates the environment.
- 3.7 Parking provision across the town is all surface level parking, some of which is of poor quality. The Council-owned car parks are pay and display, whereas the Tesco and Greenside Lane car parks are free for customers. There are 582 car park spaces over five publicly available car parks. Additionally, the informal parking situated at the Lazy Toad, Ashton Hill Lane, and Greenside Industrial Estate, provide a further 140 spaces.

- 3.8 While the central core benefits from pedestrianisation, the pedestrian links to the different areas in Droylsden are not all direct, clear or attractive. This deters pedestrian movements between the retail core, residential areas, Droylsden Marina, and Tesco. The pedestrian movements around the Marina and along the canal could be improved as key green and blue corridors that support active travel.

Property Market Analysis

- 3.9 The residential stock in the study area is dominated by semi-detached properties (41.6%), higher than all wider benchmarks. Additionally, the proportion of flats is also much higher, representing 22.1% of the stock compared to less than 17.1% in all other areas. In contrast, given its Town Centre location, the proportion of detached properties represents less than 5% (4.5%), lower than the wider areas, particularly nationally (22.9%).
- 3.10 Tameside Council own the freehold to Droylsden Shopping Centre with their main land holding being the Concord Suite, a 3-storey building which sits above the retail of the shopping centre. The retail units of the shopping centre are on long leasehold to New Era Properties since 2018. New Era is working up proposals for the shopping centre and wider area, including the Concord Suite however interventions so far have been limited due to multiple complicated lease structures to work through between parties, wider issues in the retail sector and the current dated appearance of the centre.
- 3.11 Home to Droylsden Football Club, the Butcher's Arms Stadium is located on Greenside Lane and owned by Tameside Borough Council. This is a strong community facility located north of the shopping centre, in the heart of the town centre however, the current condition of the stands/ facilities is poor and in need of an investment/upgrade.

Socio-economics

- 3.12 Droylsden illustrates deprivation challenges most clearly around the categories of health and crime, with 60% of LSOAs falling within the 20% most deprived areas in England in terms of health and 80% of LSOAs being the most deprived in terms of crime. Data suggests that there is more deprivation in parts of Droylsden West than Droylsden East, and Droylsden is broadly in line with the rest of Tameside's towns and urban areas in terms of multiple deprivation.
- 3.13 However, the area is performing particularly well in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services, with none of the LSOAs surrounding the Droylsden area within the 20% most deprived in England LSOAs in this category. House prices in the Droylsden study area follow a similar pattern to Tameside prices over the past 10 years, but in 2022 median house prices in Droylsden were 6% lower than the Tameside average.
- 3.14 As of 2022, house prices in Tameside were 7.2 times higher than the annual workplace earnings, suggesting housing in Tameside is on par with Greater Manchester in terms of affordability and more affordable than housing in the rest of England as a whole, which had a ratio of 8.3.
- 3.15 Droylsden is home to 400 businesses (2023) and the number of businesses has grown in the past 5 years by 25 (6.7%). This is a slightly higher increase than Tameside (6.1%) and significantly higher than Greater Manchester (0.2%). In Droylsden, there has been rapid growth in some sectors, such as a 66.7% growth rate in the Accommodation and Food sector and a 40% growth rate in the Arts, entertainment and recreation sector. Droylsden's employment composition is mainly specialised around Public Administration, Education, the Arts, retail and construction.

Online survey and Stakeholder meetings

- 3.16 The fact find exercise has been key to gathering the views of the local community in Droylsden. The online survey generated 1,078 responses which is seen as a good number of replies. In addition, interviews and workshops were undertaken with key stakeholders, residents, young people, and businesses.

3.17 Local people, businesses and the young people of Droylsden Academy had a lot of positive views of the town and identified what they liked. These include the football club, new bars, good transport links, the library and the marina. In terms of what they would like to see improved, these included the Concord Suite, filling vacant units, more greenery, markets, and community spaces.

3.18 A summary of the analysis of the online survey results included:

- Just 9% of respondents agreed that Droylsden had a good selection of shops.
- 55% of respondents lacked a sense of civic pride, although 22% were unsure.
- 61% of respondents disagreed that the town had a good food and drink offer. This is coupled with 81% of respondents who wanted to see an improved nighttime economy.
- In terms of safety, 54% of people disagreed that Droylsden felt safe.
- 62% of respondents disagreed that the canal is a well utilised asset.
- 52% of respondents felt that providing new and enhanced amenities is important.

4 DRAFT MASTERPLAN

4.1 The consultant team have reviewed the findings from the fact-finding exercise and have begun to draft some of the key influences and concepts that have started to emerge. The final masterplan will include a vision for the town, key aims and objectives, proposals for improvement, and both some 'quick wins' and longer-term aspirational opportunities for change.

4.2 Some of the emerging influences are centred around creating a new sense of place for Droylsden, re-establishing a purpose for the town and a reason for people to visit the town, and providing support to an aspirational community. These place focused objectives are set out below:

1. Celebrating our canals - both here and gone - bringing activity and life to Droylsden's Marina and bringing back to use lost remnants of the Hollinwood Branch.
2. Creating a centre for all - making more of the space within Droylsden to support community events, creating animation and activity at the heart of the town.
3. A town that's connected to its residential neighbourhoods - Reconnecting the town centre with its residential neighbourhoods, both existing and new, by creating new safe and legible streets by forging new desire lines to the heart of the town and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.
4. A people & place focused town - reducing the negative impact of highway infrastructure, promoting comfortable and safe pedestrian journeys across the town and onto wider open spaces and leisure destinations.
5. Making more of our heritage - bringing vacant, historic and culturally significant buildings back into life, giving them purpose and reinforcing local identity.
6. Animated and colourful - celebrating and amplifying local identity through art, by supporting and attracting local businesses and entrepreneurs, encouraging programmes of events and activities, and promoting spaces for community gathering and agency across the town.

4.3 The above influences have informed some of the following key proposals that will be the subject of the formal public consultation to gauge whether the emerging proposals are in line with local community and stakeholder aspirations.

1. Re-connecting the town between the Marina and the retail core by opening up the Hollinwood branch of the canal and creating a pedestrian and cycle route under Manchester Road.
2. Creating a community focused heart of the town centre including a reconfigured shopping centre with a mix of uses including residential, commercial/office, retail, and an improved public realm environment.
3. Creation of a football stadium approach for match/events days.

4. A more people focused public realm with trees and planting to soften the hard infrastructure and screen the highway. Villemombe would be a focus for 'greening' along the edge of the carriageway and improve local biodiversity.
5. Options to reduce the impact and barrier of the A662 Manchester Road to pedestrian movement and reduce the amount of highway that people must cross whilst improving the overall public realm.
6. Options relating to the future use of the Concord Suite including improving the façade, partial, or full demolition.
7. Improving the connections for local residents walking into the town.
8. Improve the offer of Greenside Mill for live/work purposes and opportunities for identifying development sites surrounding the heritage asset.

4.4 The Concord Suite will be considered as part of the wide proposals for the shopping centre.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Council will undertake a formal consultation on the draft masterplan principles and emerging vision for period of 6 weeks starting in May 2024. Activities will include:
- Online survey with hard copies placed at deposit points across the town centre,
 - Posters placed in local business windows with a QR code linking to online survey,
 - Issue press release with details on how people can access the information and survey,
 - Local ward member briefings,
 - Engagement workshops with key stakeholders including New Era, Droylsden Academy, Droylsden Football Club, local businesses and residents, and other key stakeholders.
 - Use of a vacant town centre unit to display exhibition boards of concepts and proposals. Dates, times and location to be confirmed.
- 5.2 On completion of the public consultation, the findings will be used to inform the proposals and actions in the final masterplan, which will be subject to approval at a further Executive Cabinet report at the end of Summer 2024.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The main project risks associated with delivery of the Droylsden Masterplan have been identified in the table below.

Risk Area	Detail	RAG Rating	Mitigation	RAG Rating
Programme	Lack of resource capacity to undertake workstreams in line with expectations.		Apply adequate resource to the project to ensure programme adherence.	
Programme	Approval not given to proceed with 4 week public consultation following local election period		Programme amended to demonstrate undertaking of consultation in July. However, this would mean consultation over the summer holiday period.	
Financial	Masterplan not delivered within agreed funding timescales leading to funding not		Early engagement with internal Council teams and external partners	

	spent being returned to Homes England.		to clearly understand requirements.	
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7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 As set out at the front of the report.