

# Bolton Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader's Portfolio		
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2020		
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Place	<b>Report number:</b>	ECMDL764
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Phil Lamb, Principal Project Officer	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 336136
<b>Report title:</b>	Westhoughton Town Centre Strategy		
<b>Not confidential</b>			
This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.			
<b>Purpose:</b>	This report sets out proposals for the implementation of a masterplan and strategy to guide the long-term regeneration of Westhoughton Town Centre and seeks approval for a series of development proposals and key actions following a period of public consultation.		
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p>The Executive Cabinet Member is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) approve the Westhoughton Town Centre masterplan and strategy to guide the long-term regeneration of the centre;</li> <li>ii) approve the proposed approach to deliver the masterplan, as outlined in the main body of the report;</li> <li>iii) authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities where required.</li> </ul>		
<b>Decision:</b>			
<b>Background documents:</b>	<p>Report to Cabinet dated 21/01/19 entitled 'Town Centres Strategy Funding' (CAB508)          Report to Council dated 20/02/19 entitled 'Budget Update and Options 2019-21' (CEX011)          Report to Council dated 20/02/19 entitled 'Corporate Capital and One-Off Funding 2019-2022' (CEX046)</p>		
<b>Signed:</b>	Leader/Executive Cabinet Member	Monitoring Officer	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Consultation with other officers</b>			
Finance	Yes	30/9/20	Corinne Davoy-Wood
Legal	Yes	30/9/20	Michelle Harris
HR	Yes	N/A	N/A
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes	29/09/20	Tammy Tatman
<b>(a) Pre-consultation reports</b> Is there a need to consult on the proposals?		No	
<b>(b) Post consultation reports</b>		Yes	

Please confirm that the consultation response has been taken into consideration in making the recommendations.		
<b>Vision outcomes</b> 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.Prosporous	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 Westhoughton, 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 town 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 by Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Town 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, Little Lever and Westhoughton Town 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 This report focuses on the development of a masterplan for Westhoughton town centre, which has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders and in consultation with the public and considers the current issues and challenges facing the town centre. The masterplan has identified six key development proposals to support the transformation of Westhoughton town centre.
- 1.9 It is proposed that any funding allocated to Westhoughton is targeted to key interventions within 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 the long term proposal to redevelop Westhoughton Town Hall while at the same time looking at how best to maximise the use of Carnegie Hall and improve access with the Library, remodelling of Market Street making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to traverse, improvement works to Central Park and car parking, where necessary. It is proposed that external advisors and services will be procured, as required, to support the delivery of the Westhoughton Town Centre Strategy and secure the necessary private sector investment. A range of potential delivery options will be utilised.
- 1.10 The strategy for Westhoughton 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 Westhoughton Town centre.
- 1.11 It is considered vital that the Council leads and facilitates the adaption and evolution of Westhoughton town centre through a strategy that will significantly strengthen the diversity of uses across the town centre and will enhance the town centre's townscape through upgrading and redevelopment of the buildings and spaces.

1.12 Without the Council's direct intervention, the risk is the delivery of the development proposals/target interventions will not be achieved. The private sector will not deliver economic objectives on its own. The Council will need to assist in leading, facilitating and enabling the conditions for economic growth through direct intervention in economic development in partnership with business and communities. An indicative action plan for the delivery of the six 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 for all such as more independent shops, housing, leisure, vibrant food and drink offers, social and community hubs and business and workspace and cultural enterprises, all of which should be designed to function as intergenerational spaces.

2.2 'The Portas Review: An independent Review into the Future of our High Streets (2011) confirms this requirement, reimagining town centres as 'destinations for socialising, culture, health, wellbeing, creativity and learning' as well as 'places that will develop and sustain new and existing markets and businesses'. The Public Health England's 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 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 Westhoughton's estimated population in 2017 was 27,136 and it is well connected to the town centre having excellent links to the wider region by train, bus and road. It is a place of character appreciated by its residents and offers a wide range of assets and built environment of a reasonable quality with few poor-quality areas in and around its main spine. The qualities of the area results from the visual consistency of building frontages as well as the reasonable quality of the public realm along the main road and adjoining residential streets.

2.4 Although average 2019 house prices in Westhoughton are below the Greater Manchester and North West averages they compare well against comparator towns of a similar size and offer. Terraced houses and flats have particularly strong prices with flats nearly £30,000 higher in Westhoughton than other parts of Bolton. Average house prices by type are as follows:

House Type	Price
Detached	£232,969
Semi detached	£139,598
Terraced	£114,861
Flat	£82,276

- 2.5 The town centre offer includes a wide range of assets that are deemed exceptional in terms of diversity for a town centre of its size. The town centre assets include the Town Hall, the Carnegie hall and Library, an indoor market, independent businesses, shops and cafés, a leisure centre, Central Park, a primary school, high school, therapy centre, national convenience retail, food and drink offers, new office-space, banks and building societies.
- 2.6 The town centre's main retail offer is provided at Pavilion Square, a shopping centre offering a range of national retailers and car parking. Along the town centre's high street, the indoor market and Aldi, together with a range of independent shops supplement the town centre's shopping profile. Market Street also includes a number of good quality eateries and evening economy activities. The town centre's convenience food offer is augmented by Sainsburys and Lidl on Cricketers Way but the road itself can be viewed as a physical barrier to linked trips to the wider town centre.
- 2.7 While the town centre has many assets and is generally working well, it is believed that a number of factors are negatively impacting the performance of the town centre. Market Street is the main spine of the town centre today and owing to the completion of a town centre bypass (A58 Cricketers Way), is lightly trafficked. Whilst being less trafficked is usually a positive aspect of a high street, it brings with itself the challenge of insufficient footfall in the area. There are also issues regarding car parking, visual impacts of poor-quality public realm in some areas, poor pedestrian and cyclist experience and shop vacancies. The masterplan seeks to address these issues.

### **3 MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT**

#### **3.1 Policy Context**

- 3.1.1 The need for the regeneration of Westhoughton 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 Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2018 sets out the government's 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 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes, 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 is 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 town centres 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 areas.
- 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 Westhoughton. 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; the Mayor's Town Centre Challenge positively promoting that evolution.

### 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 of the Council and its partners. The subsequent Allocations Plan (2014) sets out how this will be implemented on a Proposals Map for Westhoughton and the Borough as a whole.
- 3.4.2 Policy OA3: Westhoughton, states that the town centre serves the south-western part of the borough and will be allowed to expand for additional convenience floor space if a site became available and the council will continue to promote Westhoughton town centre. It also seeks to:
- Concentrate sites for new housing in Westhoughton town centre and on other sites within the existing urban area.
  - Renew the buildings of Westhoughton High School.
  - Maintain current Green Belt boundaries.
  - Ensure Protected Open Land around Westhoughton remains undeveloped.
  - Conserve and enhance the character of the existing physical environment, especially the conservation area in Westhoughton town centre.

- Ensure regard is had to the character of farm complexes, folds, vernacular cottages and the wider open landscape
- Develop expanded medical and health facilities at Westhoughton.

### **3.5 Market Drivers and analysis**

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

#### Residential

3.5.2 While still below the GM and North West average house prices in Westhoughton compare well when assessed against a number of comparator towns in relation to all 4 housing types. Since the last recession Westhoughton shows a period of consistent house price growth. In relation to the rental market, rents in the town are mostly comparable to those in Bolton, at least for properties of 1-3 beds, which are most commonly offered for rent.

3.5.3 Local agents see Westhoughton as a popular and ‘up and coming’ town, benefiting from an attractive local environment, services and strong road access, although traffic congestion is a big issue. The area of Westhoughton north of the A58 is more popular than the south, given the higher quality of housing and more limited congestion issues. Although primarily a market for houses, not flats, all types of housing are felt to be popular, with demand exceeding supply and house prices being reasonably high, but not unaffordable for average buyers.

#### Retail and Leisure Market

3.5.4 Westhoughton has three anchor supermarkets Aldi, Sainsbury’s and Lidl and together they provide a reasonable mix of budget and higher value convenience shopping. Located to the south of the A58, the Sainsbury and Lidl are somewhat separated from the town centre. Shoppers will likely come and go from both, with little incentive to cross the busy main roads to the rest of the town centre. Aldi is better integrated into its wider context, and there is also a good offer of smaller convenience retail on the main town centre streets. This includes B&M Bargains and Fultons Foods in Pavilion Square. Additionally, Westhoughton Market has seen recent investment and now has a stronger convenience element although the Co-op on Market Street has recently ceased trading.

3.5.5 Westhoughton’s comparison offer is strong and diverse, relative to the size of the centre and likely competition from centres such as Bolton, Middlebrook and Wigan. Westhoughton benefits from a number of independent shops with the only noticeable gaps in the local offer being sporting goods and gift shops. It is worth noting that most of these are located on Market Street, in the heart of the town centre.



- 3.5.6 Westhoughton is well served by food and drink establishments with 17 A3 or A4 sit down pubs, cafes and restaurants in the town centre and includes a strong selection of higher value restaurants on, or near to Market Street. The evening and daytime food offer is also served a number of pubs and cafes. By comparison, the number of hot food takeaways is not excessive with only four outlets in the town centre. Since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, four of the cafes/restaurants have closed and are not expected to reopen.
- 3.5.7 Westhoughton also has a Community leisure centre which is linked to Westhoughton High School. It offers a range of facilities and activities such as use of a gym, swimming pool and squash courts. There are two private gyms on School Street. Initial interest has been noted from Pure Gym for a 7,000 sqft (650 sqm) gym in Westhoughton. Pure Gym are seeking visible locations close to transport hubs and would be happy to sit within mixed-use schemes.
- 3.5.8 While there are no hotels in the town centre, Westhoughton is served by the Mercury Hotel on the A6, along with multiple hotels in and around Middlebrook. The nearest cinema and bowling alleys are located at Middlebrook Retail Park

#### Offices

- 3.5.9 Existing office space in Westhoughton is generally limited to a small number of offices above shops plus some B1(a) space in Pavilion Square. Overall eight office deals are recorded over 2009-2019, with four being small offices above shops on Market Street of 12-16 sqm. Demand in Westhoughton town centre is for smaller serviced office space.

#### Infrastructure and Public Services

- 3.5.10 There is already a range of civic and social infrastructure in the town, including the Town Hall and Library although all council staff have now vacated the Town Hall. There is a small health centre on Market Street and other health provision is provided at the nearby Winifred Kettle Centre. However, even prior to the Covid 19 pandemic current health facilities were under significant pressure as the level of public services has failed to keep pace with the level of residential development.

### **3.6 Vision for Westhoughton District Centre**

- 3.6.1 The Westhoughton Town Centre Steering Group was established in July 2019, consisting of community and faith representatives, landowners, GMP, businesses, ward councillors and officers. This group has had an influential role in shaping the vision and masterplan over the past 12 months it 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 on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019, with around 35 attendees. The discussions and workshops held at this event contributed to a visioning 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 27<sup>th</sup> January until the 23<sup>rd</sup> February. 159 people responded to the questionnaire and around 160 people attended the two drop-in sessions on a Wednesday afternoon/early evening (12<sup>th</sup> February) and a Saturday (15<sup>th</sup> February). (Appendix 4, Consultation Report).

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

“Westhoughton’s historic Market Street, from St Bartholomew’s Church to the Town Hall, is the heart of the town centre. The vision for Westhoughton promotes better use of Market Street, improving the pedestrian and visitor experience through public realm investment and encouraging new town centre uses for underutilised sites and premises, from shops and cafes to managed workspace and offices. Better pedestrian connections to surrounding assets such as Central Park, the Leisure Centre and the shops and car parks of Pavilion Square and along Cricketers Way will encourage visitors to walk and cycle whilst a parking strategy will respond to the needs of car-based users.”

### **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 Westhoughton town centre which will benefit the current and future residents and businesses in the area.

3.7.2 The strategy seeks to maintain Market Street as the heart of the town while reduce the impact of traffic vehicular traffic on this street. It also seeks to provide better pedestrian, walking and cycle routes to the town centre. People who visit the town centre need a wider range of reasons to be there such as eating and drinking, visits to the library and events. The inclusion of Central Park as a key proposal, together with proposals for the Town Hall, Carnegie Hall and the Library will assist with making Westhoughton a more diverse and inclusive town centre that takes account of everyone’s needs.

3.7.3 The strategy will look to create:

- Shop local – supporting local and artisan shops that provide goods people need and complementing the larger shops making it possible to do more local shopping
- A living town centre – Promoting Westhoughton as an attractive place to live with a wider range of town centre facilities
- A place for business – for start- up and small businesses to flourish with town centre facilities on the doorstep and convenient access to the city region by road and rail
- Going out in Westhoughton - with shops that stay open into the evening, day time cafes transforming into evening restaurants

### **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 Westhoughton district 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: Remodelling of Market Street
- KDP Two: Upgrading key pedestrian links
- KDP Three: Redevelopment of Westhoughton Town Hall
- KDP Four: Promotion of housing development
- KDP Five: Improving access to Westhoughton Library and Carnegie Hall
- KDP Six: Car parking strategy

3.8.2 The period of public consultation ran from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January to Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. 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 Westhoughton Library on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February (afternoon/early evening) and Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February (morning/afternoon) so that residents and businesses could view the proposals 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 159 residents/business representatives visited the drop-in events to give their views and 160 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 Westhoughton Town Centre Steering Group meeting in August 2020:

- *KDP 1: Remodelling of Market Street*

The proposal sought to retain two-way traffic along Market Street but include selective road narrowing to create larger areas of public realm (pedestrian areas) particularly on town hall/market side which would enable businesses to take advantage of the sunny aspect and spill onto the street.

The proposal was met with a mixed response. Some were in favour of full pedestrianisation; some preferred partial pedestrianisation at certain times of the day; others believed pedestrianisation would be detrimental to passing trade and had concerns around parking and deliveries.

In response to the comments received it was agreed to retain the proposal and, working alongside the council's Highways team to develop a number of options for testing and consideration before progressing to implementation. The proposal will also take into consideration the Mayor of Greater Manchester's cycling and walking initiatives including the Bee networks.

- *KDP 2: Upgrading key pedestrian links*

The proposal would involve improving the pedestrian areas of Library Street, Marsden Street and the pedestrian links to the town centre from the market car park at Ditchfield Gardens, and from Library Street to Central Park. These routes would be made pedestrian friendly through improvements to the paving, street lighting and potential improvements to shop frontages. The proposal seeks to reduce or eliminate barriers to the permeability of the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists and install clear directional signage to the main retail and leisure destinations.

There was strong agreement with this proposal with many believing that safer pedestrian routes and enhanced lighting were much needed. Those disagreeing were mainly concerned about safety and potential anti-social behaviour aspects particularly the route between Library Street and Central Park.

In response to comments received it was agreed that this proposal be retained but amended to remove the link from Library Street to Central Park.

- *KDP 3: Redevelopment of Westhoughton Town Hall*

Now that all council services have been relocated and Westhoughton Town Hall remains vacant this proposal would involve the conversion of the Town Hall into a managed workspace development providing space for small business and 'start-up' space for new businesses. A ground floor commercial café would serve businesses and would also be open to the public. Some works have already been undertaken to the roof of the building to maintain its fabric and this proposal would secure the long-term future of this much-loved building.

The majority of people supported this proposal and felt it was a good use of space. Those who answered either partly agreed or disagreed felt that there are enough cafés in Westhoughton already and an additional one could potentially divert trade from existing businesses.

In response to the comments received It was agreed to retain this proposal with an amendment to the narrative containing a reference to the retention of community/civic use within the Town Hall.

- *KDP 4: Promotion of housing development*

The proposal would have seen the privately owned Gaiety site and the Former Mill Street car park site as well as the Council owned land adjacent to Sainsburys, promoted as new housing sites for a range of different housing types and tenure.

This proposal was only supported by 24% of respondents, partly supported by a further 33% with 43% of respondents not in support. Those who partly agreed felt that homes for elderly people were needed and were pleased that the proposed locations were all brownfield sites. On the other hand those against the proposal were concerned about the increased traffic and parking requirements that come with more housing and the general lack of infrastructure (schools, doctors etc.) to support the number of new homes built in Westhoughton over recent decades.

In response to the comments received and the Steering Group's own reservations towards additional housing it was agreed to remove this KDP from the masterplan with the sites being identified as generic potential future development sites within the masterplan.

- *KDP 5: Refurbishment of Carnegie Hall and improvements to the access with the Library*

Current access to Carnegie Hall is shared with the library. Under this proposal separate access to the upstairs of the library would be created to improve safety, security and the overall visitor experience. Improvements to access arrangements at both the library and Carnegie Hall, together with simpler booking requirements, will ultimately increase the use of the hall.

The majority of respondents, 65%, agreed with the proposal, and that the building should be used more. Conversely, some felt that it was unnecessary and not a priority. Some respondents also commented that the cost of hiring Carnegie Hall was too high.

In response to the comments received it was agreed to retain this proposal. However, the Steering Group believed that dealing with Carnegie Hall in isolation would not be the best solution and this proposal should be looked at alongside KDP 3 and the future for Westhoughton Town Hall. The masterplan has therefore been amended to reflect this and to keep both priorities together it has been renumbered KDP 4.

- *KDP 6: Car Parking Strategy*

This proposal seeks to improve car parking provision within the town centre by attempting to balance the number of long and short stay parking spaces so that all town centre workers and shoppers are able to find spaces. Prior to the public consultation anecdotal evidence suggested those travelling to Westhoughton by car were having difficulty in finding a space.

Along with new housing development this proposal proved emotive with many people believing this was key to a successful Westhoughton town centre. Most

people agreed that a car parking strategy would be a good idea, however, many felt there was not enough parking anyway, irrespective of a strategy. It was also suggested that more on-street parking was needed and stronger enforcement.

In response to comments received it was agreed to retain this proposal. The strategy will be a comprehensive piece of work and include engagement with businesses and town centre users. The engagement and survey work of where people park, and for how long will in turn provide the evidence base for how the issue of car parking is taken forward. The strategy will also assess the need for new additional spaces and charging points for electric vehicles.

- *New KDP 5: Central Park*

As mentioned previously the proposal to promote additional housing was not supported and has been removed from the masterplan. It is to be replaced by a new Key Development Priority focussing on Central Park. The importance of the park was highlighted throughout the public consultation process and its inclusion is supported and welcomed by the majority of Steering Group Members.

Its location, close to Market Street, makes it a highly accessible town centre asset. It provides Westhoughton with a sense of place and belonging as well as offering opportunities for recreation, health and fitness. It is also a space for contemplation and relaxation and allows for social interaction which enhances social inclusion and cohesion.

Its position, size and good accessibility can encourage linked visits to town centre assets, shops and services and thereby contribute to increasing footfall within the town centre. Officers from Growth and Regeneration will progress plans for Central Park in conjunction with colleagues from Neighbourhood Services.

3.8.5 The outcome of the public consultation was discussed with Westhoughton Steering Group on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020. All proposed amendments listed above were agreed by the Steering Group and have been incorporated within the attached Westhoughton Town Centre Masterplan.

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 Westhoughton town centre and will be a key consideration in progressing KDP 1.

#### **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 this approach in Bolton town centre with events such as the 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 Westhoughton 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 Westhoughton 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 and Wellbeing

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 in Westhoughton district centre;
- Tackle social isolation, in particular focussing on the 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 to services;
- Develop a 'green' environment that makes the best use of the existing Central Park. This could include cycle and walking routes to promote healthy living; and
- Investigate opportunities for increased access to health services in Westhoughton 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 Market Street 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 the larger events such as the Food and Drink festival by hosting smaller local events on the lead up to these. Housing providers as well as other community networks would be able to work with communities to develop proposals.

4.5 Digital

4.5.1 Developing digital infrastructure in Westhoughton to facilitate changing working patterns i.e. working from home and business incubation.

4.6 Connectivity

- 4.6.1 To reduce reliance on vehicles across the town centre in the future 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 Next steps

- 4.7.1 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.
- 4.7.2 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 Westhoughton Town Centre Steering Group, whose membership has been drawn down from ward members, education providers, landowners, businesses, community and faith groups and housing providers. As plans are developed, the community will be consulted through the Steering Group.
- 4.7.3 Please find attached at Appendix 5 an indicative action plan for delivery of the six development proposals as detailed in this report.

## **5 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 FINANCIAL**

- 5.1.1 On the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 Cabinet approved a £12m allocation of funding from the £100m 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 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019 Full Council approved an additional £4m 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 Westhoughton 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 and totals £2.897 million, 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.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Cost</b>
1. Remodelling of Market Street	£540,000.00
2. Upgrading key pedestrian links	£230,000.00
3. Redevelopment of the Town Hall	£1,120,000.00
4. Refurbishment of Carnegie Hall and improvements to the access with Library	£500,000.00
5. Central Park*	£500,000.00*
6. Car parking strategy	£7,000.00

\* Figure provided by Neighbourhood Services as additional Key Development Proposal. All other figures are provided by BE Group.

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/ 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 partnerships
  - Private limited companies

5.2.2 The Director of Place will work with the Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer 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 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 implications will be fully considered by the Director of Place and Borough Solicitor.

5.2.4 The masterplan identifies 2 key town centre development sites that are in private ownership, the Gaiety site and the former Mill Street car park. The development and regeneration of land not in Council ownership will be encouraged through ongoing engagement with landowners. Within the masterplan area, where appropriate the Council will also make strategic acquisitions of land as part of the proposals 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 Order (CPO) 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 to do so and the use of CPO powers will only be used as a last resort

### **5.3 HR**

5.3.1 The implementation of the Westhoughton Town Centre Masterplan will be supported by the council's town centres and major developments team led by the Growth & Regeneration team.

### **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. The remodelling of Market Street together with investment in Central 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 (EIA)**

- 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 Westhoughton 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 Westhoughton 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 the report;
  - iii) authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities where required.