



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

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**to  
COUNCIL  
16 JULY 2020**

**DRAFT LOWER HIGH STREET ACTION PLAN - ENDORSEMENT BY THE  
COUNCIL FOLLOWING BUSINESS AND STAKEHOLDER REVIEW AND COVID-  
19 RE-SET AND RECOVERY RESPONSE**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present the findings of the comments received through business and stakeholder review.
- 1.2 To outline the proposed amendment to the draft Lower High Street Action Plan following business and stakeholder review.
- 1.3 To outline a further amendment based on the Covid-19 Reset and Recovery Response.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That the Council approves the proposed amendment to the draft Lower High Street Action Plan following business and stakeholder review and the Covid-19 Reset and Recovery Response;
- (ii) That the Council endorses of the Lower High Street Action Plan;
- (iii) That two Council Members be appointed to sit on the Maldon High Street Focus Group.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 Project 2 Lower High Street Improvements is one of eighteen projects in the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (the Masterplan), supplementing Policy S5, Local Development Plan (LDP). Policy S5 seeks to sustain the market town focus of Maldon's High Street and support 'regeneration and diversification in the town centre (including the evening economy), encourage sustainable travel and to 'improve the retail offer' and 'increase footfall' at the Lower High Street (Wantz Road / Butt Lane to Church Street). The Covid-19 Reset and Recovery Response for the High Street, echoes the overarching Masterplan approach to support businesses to re-open safely; to minimise travel and shop locally and encourage the public to walk or cycle to the High Street, by making it safe to do so.

- 3.2 All Masterplan projects are managed through Project Management Organisation (PMO) and the Masterplan Priority Programme. Project 2 Lower High Street Improvements is Priority 1 in the Masterplan Priority Programme. Progress on the draft Lower High Street Action Plan (**APPENDIX 1**) has been reported to the Planning and Licensing Committee on 7 March 2019 (Minute No. 933 refers) and 5 September 2019 (Minute No. 366 refers) via six-monthly Masterplan updates on 'active' Masterplan projects. This report was deferred from the 2 April 2020 Strategy and Resources Committee until there could be a better understanding of the economic impact of Covid-19 on the High Street and that Members were fully engaged in discussions where the Lower High Street (LHS) Action Plan (AP) may need further amendment.
- 3.3 The Masterplan Project 2 Lower High Street Improvements is a short-term project (1-5 years) to prepare an Action Plan to encourage investment in the quality of the environment; the type and quality of retail activity; a food and drink offer and improving the evening economy. The Lower High Street is identified in the Masterplan as the pivotal link from the Upper (West Square to Market Hill) and Middle (Market Hill to Wantz Road) retail sections of the High Street, linking the High Street with the events and visitor attractions at Hythe Quay and Promenade Park. The draft Lower High Street Action Plan has been prepared by Strategy Theme Lead - Place, in accordance with LDP Policy S5 and the overarching Masterplan objectives. Since the Masterplan was adopted by the Council in November 2017, there has been a national downturn in retail premises on High Streets.
- 3.4 Business engagement commenced in November 2018 with presentations and meetings with local business groups, individual businesses and employers and local groups and societies. A specific workshop was held with local businesses, local groups and stakeholders through the 'Maldon Business Hub', an established local business group, at their meeting on 27 February 2019 to propose 'actions' that the business community, the Council and its partners could take forward to improve and enhance the Lower High Street. The ideas, suggestions and comments are at Section 5, **APPENDIX 1**. The presentations, meetings and workshops were informed of the wider town centre challenges, including declaration of an Air Quality Management Area on Market Hill and the national picture for declining retail through the Future High Streets Fund Guidance and the Government's Future High Street Task Force. The Future High Street Task Force has extensive resources focussed on making town centres more vital and viable and are supporting towns respond to Covid-19.
- 3.5 The draft Lower High Street Action Plan is at Section 9, **APPENDIX 1** and has seven Actions (LHS1 – LHS7) to realise the potential of the Lower High Street to contribute to the Masterplan objectives to sustain the vitality and vibrancy of the whole High Street, supporting the Market Town focus of Maldon and encouraging a diverse town centre economy, including the evening economy and promotion of visitor attractions and the visitor economy. Whilst the visitor economy has been suspended, the Covid-19 Reset and Recovery Response instil the same 'actions' with the added considerations for safety and maintaining a 'town centre' offer for the community.
- 3.6 The seven Actions within the draft Lower High Street Action Plan (draft LHS AP) were reviewed by businesses and stakeholders via a digital survey prepared by Strategy Theme Lead, Prosperity during 13 November 2019 and 20 December 2019. Five responses were received from anonymous individuals (to the digital survey),

named individuals and local groups via e-mailed responses. The respondents are set out in **APPENDIX 2**.

- 3.7 The salient points from the five responses have been logged and considered against the 7 draft Actions in the draft LHS AP, the objectives of the Masterplan and the overarching Strategic Policy S5 and are set out in **APPENDIX 2**.
- 3.8 One amendment is proposed to Action LHS1 as a tracked change to **APPENDIX 1** (Section 9, Page 16) ensuring the proposed Maldon High Street Focus Group is a partnership group with its own Terms of Reference working for the best interests of the High Street and supported by the Council's adopted LDP Strategic Policy S5, the delivery of Masterplan SPD project and the Corporate Outcome 'to engage efficiently and effectively with businesses'. This group will be wider than businesses and will include representatives of Maldon District Council, Maldon Town Council, businesses and community groups.
- 3.9 A pre-launch of the draft Lower High Street Action Plan was presented to businesses and stakeholders by the Strategy Theme Lead Place at the Maldon Business Hub meeting on Wednesday 19 February 2020. The businesses and stakeholders support the seven Actions in the draft Lower High Street Action Plan with a strong appetite for involvement, change and opportunity for the High Street to achieve the seven Actions as a partnership going forward.
- 3.10 The response to Covid-19 for the High Street re-opening has galvanised the local business and community response working at District and County levels. The draft Lower High Street Action Plan promotes the partnership working to continue to deal with the Covid-19 response, recover the local economy and achieve the overarching Masterplan and Policy S5 objectives to ensure a vibrant and vital town centre moving forward. The Council will lead the Maldon High Street Focus Group as per LHS Action 1.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The seven Actions within the draft Lower High Street Action Plan have been tested against LDP Policy, the Masterplan objectives and the outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2019-2021 followed by business and stakeholder review during 13 November 2019 and 20 December 2019. The response to Covid-19 and re-opening the High Street has engaged business and community groups at a local level to ensure safe social distancing and to encourage safe walking and cycling on the High Street.
- 4.2 The draft Lower High Street Action Plan will galvanise business groups, individual businesses and stakeholders to take ownership of the challenges on the High Street as a collective group. The Maldon High Street Focus Group (Action LHS1) will be led by the District Council and include High Street businesses, business groups, local amenity groups, statutory consultees and Town and District Councils to work together to address the challenges and opportunities identified in the Town Centre and on the High Street.

## 5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The adopted LDP and Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan SPD support the Strategic Theme of Prosperity as set out in the Corporate Plan to engage efficiently and effectively with businesses.
- 5.2 The adopted LDP and Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan SPD support the Strategic Theme of Place as set out in the Corporate Plan for sustainable growth and new infrastructure.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Masterplan Project 2 will deliver tangible results in the Masterplan area. Communication through business and stakeholder review provides effective communication to communities, businesses and stakeholders to be involved and influence change.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Progression of Masterplan Project 2 has been managed effectively and reported to relevant Committees through Corporate Performance.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial and human)** – Delivery of the Masterplan projects is programmed to internal work streams and work plans. The Masterplan SPD underpins adopted strategic policy direction and consequent opportunities for funding.
- (v) **Impact on the Environment** – The Masterplan projects promote sustainable development and environmental enhancement.
- (vi) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – The Masterplan Project 2 has galvanised support in the business community and local community groups.

### Background Papers:

Maldon District Local Development Plan (2014-2029) [www.maldon.gov.uk/ldp](http://www.maldon.gov.uk/ldp)  
Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan SPD 2017 [www.maldon.gov.uk/SPD](http://www.maldon.gov.uk/SPD)  
Report to the Planning and Licensing Committee 5 September 2019

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