



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

to
**COUNCIL (EXTRAORDINARY)
23 FEBRUARY 2021**

**HIGH STREET RESET AND RECOVERY - MALDON HIGH STREET
CONSULTATION**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the headline results of the Maldon High Street Consultation as part of the Member-led High Street Reset and Recovery Group's response to necessary restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 response and the funding opportunity to widen Maldon's High Street.
- 1.2 To highlight the existing work programmes within the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2017 (CAMP SPD) and Air Quality Management Area Action Plan 2020-2025 (AQMA AP) that align with the findings of the Maldon High Street Consultation results and the working partnership with Essex County Council's Strategic Highways and Transportation Team.
- 1.3 To set out the working partnership with Essex County Council's Sustainable Transport Team to move forward with a sustainable future for Maldon's High Street and connectivity to the wider area including opportunities through behavioural change, a changing High Street and funding for investment in sustainable transport infrastructure.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Members note the significant work that has been undertaken to support Maldon High Street, including the survey undertaken and to note that this work will now be taken forward as part of business as usual and with the already agreed policies within the Local Development Plan.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Maldon High Street Consultation (The Consultation) took place between 5 October – 16 November 2020 as part of the wider High Street Recovery Strategy in consultation with the Council's Interim Measures Group to respond to Covid-19 restrictions and restart. The nature of Maldon's historic High Street does not lend itself to simply reallocate road space to people walking and cycling, accessing essential shops, queuing outside shops and supporting businesses to recover and apply strict social distancing measures. Maldon's High Street is multi-functional for 2-way

traffic, deliveries to retail premises, six bus route operations, with only one lay-by, plus areas of narrow pavement and pinch points. However, in considering the response and recovery to the Covid-19 crisis the High Street could adapt to meet new, existing and previous challenges.

- 3.2 The Consultation considered earlier engagement with Members at a workshop on 3 June 2020, a High Street business survey in August 2020, Year 6 and Year 7 school children in July 2020 and through the draft AQMA AP public consultation to take forward opportunities for a one-way traffic system, pavement widening for walking and cycling, improved air quality and public realm enhancements to encourage walking and cycling, ensure social distancing and to deliver longer term transformation and improvement.
- 3.3 The AQMA AP was approved by the Council on 2 July 2020 (Minute No. 1040 refers). Work has begun with Essex County Council, transport providers and businesses to improve air quality for residents and raise health awareness. The plan includes actions to improve air quality such as cleaner transport and clean air walking and cycling routes. This work is taken through the Member-led Air Quality Management (Market Hill) Working Group.
- 3.4 The Consultation also considered the CAMP SPD adopted by the Council in November 2017 supplementing Strategic Policy S5 *Maldon and Heybridge Central Area* in the Local Development Plan (LDP). CAMP is economically driven with 18 projects to grow the local economy by regenerating the Causeway, the District's largest employment allocation in the LDP (Policy E1 Employment), retaining the retail function of Maldon's High Street (Policy E2 Retail Provision, LDP) and promoting tourism (Policy E5 Tourism, LDP) within the Leisure Quarter centred on Promenade Park and Hythe Quay. Delivery of the LDP and supporting Supplementary Documents (SPDs) is a Corporate Priority taken through policy, projects, actions, communication and partnerships within the Strategic Themes of Place, Prosperity and Community. As an SPD, CAMP was prepared collaboratively with statutory consultees, including Essex County Council Highways and Transportation Team, and stakeholder engagement with a 6-week public consultation that included residents, businesses and the community.
- 3.5 Two resulting CAMP projects focus directly on Maldon's High Street: Project 1 *Upper High Street Improvements* and Project 2 *Lower High Street Improvements*.
- 3.6 Project 1 CAMP seeks to remove the dominance of the motor vehicle on Maldon's High Street through a shared space scheme to give priority to the pedestrian and cyclist with wider pavements and decluttering of unnecessary transport infrastructure. Project 1 CAMP is active and aligns with the AQMA AP and partnership working with Essex County Council Highways and Transportation Team and Sustainable Transport Team to promote sustainable transport options (public transport, walking and cycling). CAMP Project 1 is considered through the Member-led Air Quality Management (Market Hill) Working Group.
- 3.7 The Council endorsed the 'Lower High Street Action Plan and Town Centre Strategy' to implement Project 2 CAMP on 16 July 2020 (Minute No. 1080 refers). Project 2 seeks to change the dynamic on Maldon's High Street with a point of arrival in Promenade Park's car park via Limebrook Way (Southern Bypass) with 'park and

stride' and 'park and ride' options to access the High Street via the Lower End. This would relieve some capacity in the main town centre car parks and encourage footfall via the Lower High Street to the middle and upper sections of the High Street that would, in turn, improve the retail offer. Implementation of the Lower High Street Action Plan and Town Centre Strategy will be taken through the Member-led Maldon High Street Focus Group. However, because of the current restrictions affecting 'increased footfall' and 'improved retail offer', the work of this Group is delayed.

- 3.8 In summary, the aim of the Consultation was to re-affirm and re-assert the adopted LDP Policy, supporting SPDs, strategies and action plans whilst taking funding opportunities through the Covid-19 response and recovery to support Maldon High Street's sustainable future. High Streets must adapt to changing consumer habits (on-line shopping), behavioural change to reduce the environmental impacts of pollution on our health and wellbeing (promoting walking, cycling and public transport) and adapting to climate change through decarbonisation and sustainable transport options.
- 3.9 The Consultation results were positive. The headlines from the Consultation are:
- Majority would like improvements to the High Street and support a pavement widening scheme;
 - Majority would like to see the High Street prioritised for people.
- 3.10 Sustainable transport options and investment in transport infrastructure have been and are being actively sought through funding opportunities in partnership with Essex County Council (ECC) for Maldon's High Street and the wider area. Sustainable transport options and investment in transport infrastructure are required to reduce reliance on the motor vehicle by residents, businesses and visitors by improving public transport options to reduce pollution, reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- 3.11 Widening the pavements on Maldon's High Street will encourage walking and cycling to the High Street and prioritise pedestrians. Taking the dominance of the motor vehicle from the High Street and creating more pavement space will allow public realm enhancements for an attractive and inviting High Street to experience. An attractive and inviting High Street will attract visitors, support the community and business community and grow the local economy.
- 3.12 Access to the High Street will be considered through actions with the AQMA AP and ECC's preparation of a Sustainable Transport Strategy for Maldon to review existing public transport options and analyse vehicle origin and destination to ultimately relieve queuing and congestion on Market Hill. Local connectivity is addressed through the CAMP Movement and Connectivity Framework to connect Maldon and Heybridge via safe off-road walking and cycling routes supported by ECC's Maldon Cycle Action Plan and CAMP Project 7 Heybridge Creek Connection and Project 8 The Causeway Corridor and the projects described in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 above.
- 3.13 Reconnecting Maldon as a 'main settlement' (Policy S8, LDP) to the National Rail Service at Witham could have wider sustainable transport options to level up the District's connectivity within the County and Eastern Region. ECC has published their Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy, 2020 and Transport East are preparing their Strategy to 2050. The short, direct connection between Maldon and Witham

could remove commuter vehicles from the road network, address anti-social parking in neighbouring settlements to access rail services in Hatfield Peverel and Witham, reduce congestion on local B-roads and reduce pollution. Alternative sustainable transport options connect those living, working and learning in the District. Good sustainable transport options will reap socio economic benefits to regenerate the District's largest employment area (that grew around the former Maldon East Railway Station) maintain the retail focus of Maldon's High Street and promote tourism to the District's coast and countryside that are detailed in Strategic Policy S5, LDP.

- 3.14 Seeking sustainable transport options addresses the environmental impacts of climate change to reduce pollution from motor vehicles and move to cleaner, greener, healthier modes of sustainable transport.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In response to the Covid-19 restrictions and work to restart and recover the local economy, the opportunity was taken to apply for funding to adapt Maldon's High Street and in so doing, also address existing challenges and progress projects set out in the adopted LDP, adopted SPDs and approved Strategies and Action Plans.
- 4.2 The Consultation results re-assert LDP policy and strategy, CAMP SPD projects and AQMA AP actions which, in turn, are a basis for funding applications to be prepared.
- 4.3 Partnerships and internal Council Working Groups are aligned and are progressing and addressing the challenges Maldon's High Street faces to deliver a sustainable future.
- 4.4 The results of the High Street Consultation and its alignment with LDP Policy, SPDs, Strategies and Action Plans supports the emerging Maldon District Climate Change Statement to address the environmental impacts of Climate Change.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The adopted LDP, Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan SPD and Air Quality Management Area Action Plan support the Strategic Theme of Place as set out in the Corporate Plan for sustainable growth and new infrastructure and address the environmental impacts of climate change.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The adopted LDP, Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan and Air Quality Management Area Action Plan support the Strategic Theme of Community as set out in the Corporate Plan to support strong and resilient communities.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Consultation has reaffirmed LDP Policy, Strategy and Actions to deliver tangible results and includes the community to influence change.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – The Consultation is aligned with LDP Policy and has been managed effectively and reported to Members via CLT and Interim Measures Group
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial and human)** – The Consultation was programmed to internal work streams. The Consultation underpins adopted LDP Policy, Strategy and Actions and consequent opportunities for funding.
- (v) **Impact on the Environment** – The Consultation promotes sustainable transport and environmental improvement.
- (vi) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – The High Street Consultation has galvanised support for change in the resident and business communities and local community groups.

Background Papers:

Local Development Plan 2014-2029 adopted 2017

https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20048/planning_policy/9311/approved_local_development_plan_21_july_2017

Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan SPD Nov 2017:

https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20048/planning_policy/9226/urban_design/3

Market Hill Air Quality Management Area Action Plan 2020-2025, MDC, July 2020

https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20099/pollution/9148/air_quality

Maldon Cycle Strategy, ECC Highways, January 2018 www.essexhighways.org

Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy, ECC, 2020 <https://www.essex.gov.uk/sustainable-travel>

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