

Guildford Economic Regeneration Programme

Stage 1 Executive Summary Report

17th May 2021

Contents

Introduction	3
Economic research and Market Assessment	8
Planning Policy and Development Strategy	13
Strategic Transportation	16
Flood	26
Infrastructure and Ground Evaluation	28
Spatial Matters and Vision	35
Property	36
Programme	37
Next Steps	38

Introduction

Stage 1 of the Guildford Economic Regeneration Programme covers the review of constraints and opportunities to address the strategic objectives set out by the Council in July 2020.

This report summaries the considerations of the Councils team for Stage 1 and is supplemented with more detailed subject based studies in separate appendices.

It is intended that a comprehensive programme of consultation with the community and all stakeholders will be undertaken in stage 2 as part of the evolution from the studies to date into a plan for deliverable economic regeneration for the town.

This report covers considerations for regeneration along the riverside through the town centre and currently excludes Guildford's historic core. An additional report will consider and propose a separate study with its own funding for the historic core.

Background

Guildford is a highly desirable and successful town but over time there has been decline which needs to be addressed to re-establish its standing. With changing economic patterns in retail and the increasing demands for affordable housing Guildford needs a “resilience and growth” plan to defend against further decline and economic seepage to competitor towns. This is the primary objective of the Guildford Economic Regeneration programme

High level economic research has been undertaken to determine the drivers for both employment space and the requirements for attracting and retaining employees. Core to these needs is housing in all forms and the provision of an attractive town that provides quality amenity to its communities as set out in the Councils Strategic Objectives.

Deliverability is key to any plans for economic regeneration. Identifying a plan that addresses the reality of the constraints to development and thereby making regeneration fundable is critical to both the planning and delivery stages.

The satisfactory development of a strategy for the alleviation of the flooding issues in the town centre is key to making land for regeneration available and for it to be considered as deliverable in the context of planning policy.

Traffic congestion and pollution are two of the key negative forces on the current town centre economy. The predominance of the car, its contribution to poor environmental conditions as well as the conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists in the town centre are all challenges that need to be overcome to create an attractive infrastructure base for economic resilience and revival.

The spatial masterplan in this report is a framework designed to capture the towns opportunities for areas of potential development aligned with the objectives of the economic regeneration plan. It identifies potential capacities for built form and environment informed by strategic infrastructure constraint considerations.

Developed on a holistic basis the plan provides for opening the riverside, cycle and pedestrian routes, public spaces, greening and other community assets in a series of phased development zones.

Regeneration is a desire within the current local plan, but policy is subject to addressing a wide range of infrastructure and use tests. It is proposed that the Guildford Economic Regeneration Programme develop sustainable solutions that overcome the planning challenges in order to inform the evidence base for the next update of the Local Plan in respect of the town centre.

Stage 1 Objectives

The Council followed a compliant procurement process to appoint a best class in professional team to deliver studies to achieve the Strategic Objectives which formed the basis of its brief. The brief has been developed into the following themes for issues to be considered and addressed.

Economy

Guildford's position in the hierarchy of towns has been slipping for in recent times (Guildford is now outside the Lambert Smith Vitality Index top 10 from a high of 6th) but the town is at risk of further slippage if steps to address the drivers for this slippage are not undertaken.

The town is a popular destination but not achieving its full potential especially in the light of changing retail pattern and emerging consideration of good quality urban town environment. To maintain its economic position and grow upon this resilience needs to be built into the economic model for the town.

Employment patterns are good however, the composition of employment is and will continue to change as new economic sectors mature and develop.

Guildford need to recognise these changes and provide a physical and social infrastructure for the town to meet the needs of the transforming workforce being both the existing and expanded communities.

The nature of the emerging employment uses in the town and the changes in work life balance which have started to be experienced by the COVID-19 pandemic make it essential that Guildford has an effective digital platform to function upon.

There is a wide mix of retail space that is now progressively underperforming and needs to be supplemented by other related uses to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the town as a location and destination in the geography of Surrey, the South East and Europe.

Guildford's attraction as a town for leisure and tourism is not reflective of the historic assets and attraction of the town and its location. Enhancement of the towns cultural and leisure offer, and setting could help stimulate more vigour and cultural activity.

Transport

Issues related to the volume of traffic moving through the gyratory system are widely considered detrimental to vitality of the economy of the town centre

Arrival by public transport and car is a mixed experience but generally considered as negative and a significant issue in respect of attractiveness of the town to users. There is a desire from GBC for a more balanced transport solution with more opportunity for cycling / walking, better public transport and improved inter modal links and across town connectivity.

The scale and volume of the gyratory is considered a significant contributor to the negative perspective of transportation within Guildford but strategies to change the current situation must not come at the detriment of other parts of the town.

Housing

Guildford has relatively low levels of truly affordable housing which is considered a negative influence on retaining and attracting future workforce for employment and service activities of the economy. Further the location of new settlements is mainly at the edge of town exacerbating the pressure on transport to the town centre, GBC have defined an objective for the prioritisation of affordable housing in the Corporate Plan

Environment

The historic town centre is effectively separated from its most significant environmental asset – The Wey Navigation – by highways infrastructure which prevents its utilisation as natural interface as part of a green / blue contribution to the environment of the town. This lack of connectivity also prevents the historic north south routing of the Wey Navigation from being used and a green movement corridor for outlying areas of the town.

The pedestrian environment is poor - marginalised by car with significant issues in respect of air quality, noise and safety due to the nature of the limited points of effective car / pedestrian / cycle interface.

Although the Wey Navigation is an underutilised asset it is also the source of the most significant constraint to regeneration – the strategic flood scenario in the town centre. Developing a flood protection and strategic flood plan that enables urbanisation including housing is a key consideration for the economic regeneration programme.

The project team have been challenged to address all of the above objectives through firstly identifying the extent and magnitude of the town's constraints for regeneration and then by developing strategic options for development opportunities that can collectively be addressed and delivered to create a viable regeneration plan.

The team have developed their thoughts through a series of coordinated studies within a structure of themed workstreams. The summaries below provide an overview of considerations at stage 1.

1. Economic Research and Market Assessment

Establishing the economic outlook and opportunity for Guildford is a key consideration in determining the needs and opportunities for various forms of built environment within the regeneration programme. This evidence base needs to be informed by research that considers the existing scenario, looks at weaknesses and strengths then establishes what the range of deliverable opportunity is.

This work has been undertaken by the University of Surrey and Jones Lang LaSalle

Economic Research

The University of Surrey have undertaken research which summaries the current and future considerations for the town with summary observations as follows.

Guildford is at cross-roads. In many ways, Guildford is a fantastic place to live, boasting all the key ingredients to be a hugely successful town. In others, complacency regarding opportunities and innovation in the town, and more broadly across the county, have permitted and produced decline and contraction (University of Surrey 2020). Spurred on by various opportunities, from national and local governmental agendas to post-Brexit, post-Covid rebuilding, neighbouring towns and cities in and beyond Surrey are carving out new and ambitious visions. Guildford can and must compete.

In order to establish its own path, to invest innovatively, and build sustainably, Guildford needs to swiftly consider both the key constraints that have historically hindered development whilst grasping clear opportunities that now present themselves. The University of Surrey report aims to support the various decisions facing Guildford Borough Council (GBC) in their plans for local regeneration.

As consequence of the coronavirus there have been areas in which decline, contraction and redundancies have fundamentally altered current and future working and living trends. Taken together, the pandemic has accelerated unforeseen opportunities in terms of growth, as well as acting as something of a catalyst for medium and long-term planning. From radical shifts in working spaces to new attitudes regarding transport, Covid has produced major (and possibly

irreversible) changes. These include ‘working from home’ (WFH) and ‘de-urbanisation’ from densely populated cities including London, with individuals, families and businesses relocating to quieter, more rural and village/town locales including Guildford.

Both families and businesses however need to remain fundamentally connected, both in terms of local infrastructure, and digital connectivity. In addition, an enhanced focus on wellbeing, ‘green growth’ (including climate-friendly planning) and sustainability, means that place-based growth is a key part of the special, unique ways in which a location like Guildford, becomes and remains home. From areas of significant strength that illustrate Guildford’s current crop of opportunities, to the very real constraints that represent its challenges, the insights below highlight the central areas of planning, investment, change, and collaboration required to transform Guildford in the short, medium, and long-term plans.

Guildford faces several severe housing issues, from low overall housing stock, constrained planning and building rates for new housing, to above-average prices and demographic pressures. Guildford is one of the most expensive locations to live in the UK (Zoopla, 2020). Coupled with high value land rates and a high cost of living, this makes Guildford a difficult prospect for newcomers, especially young individuals, families and new companies. The current housing deficit, driven by its intrinsic unaffordability has produced an observable ‘brain-drain’, in which Guildford’s various skills and talents are steadily relocating to other towns and cities, including London, but also to the Midlands and the North. This plight will likely further accelerate as working from home becomes the norm through hybrid working patterns.

Other research available from the M3 LEP – “Economic Strategy 2013 -31” provides good indication of the potential for growth within Guildford in respect of existing established and emerging uses but notes the need for the Town to be able to attract young urban residents with the challenge of affordable housing.

The most recent vitality index from Lambert Smith Hampton (Feb 21) indicates that Guildford, which historically ranked as high as 6, has now dropped outside of the top 10 list of towns.

Competitive Positioning

Jones Lang LaSalle have undertaken competitive positioning review analysing strength weaknesses and opportunities for the Town with the following headline findings.

Life Satisfaction

Guildford rates 7.62 /10 compared to a Surrey score of 7.73 and a UK average of 7.66. This represents a 0.14 decrease since in life satisfaction since 2015.

Guildford's Strengths include its relative affluence and employment opportunities but there is a significant weakness – in the lack of affordable housing and in town amenity space.

As a consequence of the above a threat of migration to more affordable locations exist which it is considered could be addressed by increase in quantum and quality of affordable housing, a widened retail experience, and an increase in useable quality open space within the town centre spatial masterplan area

Population

A significant proportion of Guildford's community are at working age (approximately 50%), with a lower than average older population and an above average younger age population (5-24yrs)

The forecast population expectation for short term 2030 is.

- Continued growth in the younger age population
- Decline in the working population.
- Increase in the older population.

Currently Guildford has a strong working population which is attractive to corporates and retains talent within the town however the town tends to cater for affluence and needs to diversify to avoid migration which could occur if opportunities for living, study and work not created.

Town Gap – Peripheral Affluence

Across almost all real estate sectors Guildford performs better at its periphery than it does at its centre, it has above average affluence but does suffer from leakage to other locations that are more accessible and have better amenities, culture and experiences. Migration to towns attracting residents and businesses is a threat but provision of opportunity for all socio-economic groups through high quality development in the town to encourage people to live more central could mitigate this situation.

Town Gap - Urban Living

Shifts in demographics and macro trends are making all forms of residential accommodation important to towns/cities who are looking to secure diversity at a scale. Guildford has an under supply of affordable housing but also demand for Care, Retirement and Private Rented sectors

Education provision is good at school and higher education levels.

Town Centre commercial space has an anticipated demand for new accommodation for growing gaming and associated business sectors.

Town Gap - Retail

Guildford is characterized by its reputation for mid-high-end retailers, suited to an older and affluent population. There is a lack of quality independent local retailers and pop-ups which are attractive to younger population.

Town Gap - Hotel

Few quality hotels in the Town however JLL have indicated that there is demand for this type of accommodation. Potential that hotels will emerge as local 'hot desk' / 'collaborate' places for colleagues to meet outside of the traditional office as an alternative to commuting to the usual office.

Sustainable Regeneration

Sustainability and Net Zero Carbon is a significant consideration for the talent of tomorrow.

Ensuring climate resilience and accelerating the net zero carbon transition, enabling healthy people and environment's and creating a fair, inclusive and resilient society will be key regeneration consideration.

Similarly, the opportunity exists for new development and buildings to exceed minimum sustainability standards and set higher standards. Net Zero Carbon should be the backbone of decision criteria.

Guildford Town Centre suffers from few good quality, open public spaces and green spaces. Dapdune Wharf the National Trust estate fronting the River Wey is a valuable asset, providing green space but does not provide free unrestricted access to the public. The provision of good quality public and green space will be a significant requirement within regeneration proposals.

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2. Planning Policy and Development Strategy

Carter Jonas have been appointed to provide independent Planning Consultancy advice to the regeneration project. Their scope for Stage 1 covers consideration of existing Planning Policy and proposals for a planning strategy to enable the masterplan and the envisaged infrastructure enabling works to come forward.

Planning Background

This report outlines a strategy for Guildford Borough Council (GBC) to achieve comprehensive regeneration of Guildford Town Centre based on the results of the Guildford Town Centre Masterplan (GTCM) produced by Leonard Design Architects (LDA). The GTCM spatially illustrates the potential for the development of upto 4,000 homes in the GTCM subject to technical assessment, evidence base and studies, planning policy and viability. In order to achieve this, GBC will have selected the most appropriate flood defence measures to protect a regenerated town centre from flooding of the River Wey.

Specifically, the report considers two matters, namely the extent to which the ambitions of the emerging GTCM is consistent with:

- (i) all relevant planning policy guidance in the recently adopted Guildford Borough Local Plan 2019 (GLP 2019), specifically, policies S3, D1 and P4, and
- (ii) all relevant national planning policy guidance relating to development in the floodplain, noting that a significant area within Guildford Town Centre is in the floodplain.

The Carter Jonas report offers guidance on options available to provide planning policy support for GTCM and to enable planning applications to be determined, including highlighting how GLP2019 might be revised to allow for this, potential timescales to achieve this and the evidence base that would be needed to support this. It is important to note that this report focuses on policy guidance relating to flooding, both nationally and locally, and does not address other policy considerations, such as heritage and transport. These will be considered separately.

This report is based on a review of background material provided by GBC and Arup's draft Flood Stage 1 Study and the latest iteration of LDA's GTCM.

Outline Strategy

The objective is for the GTCM to be used to inform the replacement development plan that updates GLP2019.

For this to happen, a flood alleviation strategy for GTC needs to be agreed with the Environment Agency (EA). The current programme assumes that agreement could be reached by Q2 2022.

With the benefit of the detail of the river defences in GTC being agreed with the EA, a Concept Stage of the GTCM can be concluded and the number of units that could be delivered from key sites would be confirmed. Once completed, the GTCM would be used to inform the preparation of an updated GLP2019 based on the net housing yield from sites in the town centre would have been confirmed. The intention is that the GTCM would be completed by Q2 2022 which aligns with completion of the feasibility stage of work on the flood alleviation strategy, although completion of all elements of the design of the flood alleviation strategy may not be completed by the end of Q2 2022.

GBC would submit a bid for grant funding (HIF or its replacement) in Q3 2022 A successful decision would be required by Q1 2023. Stakeholder engagement and planning policy changes would be completed by Q2 2025. The flood defences would be completed in phases from Q3 2026 dependant on phasing to be agreed with the EA.

It is assumed that the Development Management DPD would continue to adoption, probably by Q3 2022. It would sit alongside the GLP2019 as part of “the development plan for Guildford”. If the Government’s planned revisions to the development plan system come into force later in 2021 or the start of 2022, this may require GBC to update GLP2019. It is anticipated that GBC may not be required to start on its replacement plan until a provisional start of 2024 and may take around 30 months to complete the review i.e., Q3 2026. It is acknowledged that the start date and end date of this process are estimates.

The draft plan could be prepared during 2024 and potentially rely on a significant evidence base, although the Government has promised a streamlined process so some of the material needed to prepare GLP2019 may not be required again.

Under the proposals for the new style of plans, Guildford TC would be designated as a combination of Growth and Renewal areas. Existing land in the Green Belt would be designated as a Protected Area.

If the provisional timetable is to be met, it is critical that the design, approval and funding of the flood defences will have been approved at the start of the process of plan-making i.e., start of 2024. This will provide the certainty of delivery of the flood defences and thus the ability of the draft plan to progress with the sites proposed in the GTCM for residential development.

3. Strategic Transportation

Guildford's defined objectives to overcome issue of movement and traffic congestion are highly relevant as part of its Economic Regeneration programme and high on the agenda of National and International objectives to deliver a response to the climate challenge.

Markides Associates have been appointed to provide this advice to cover in Stage 1. A review of existing and identification of potential strategies for transport including highways, parking, pedestrian, cycle with the aim of achieving better connectivity within the town, minimising the impact of the highway infrastructure and improvement to inter modal balance.

The report prepared by Markides summarises:

Guildford, like so many other towns around the world, is at a crossroads. It wants (and has the potential) to grow and continue to be a successful place, but traffic congestion continues to thwart its efforts to do so. In particular, the gyratory imposes itself on the character and environment of the town and it crucially separates the town centre from both the river and the railway station.

The town centre has problems caused by the convergence of several busy radial routes approaching the centre, and particularly on the central gyratory system. This has resulted in a focus on the greatest provision of highway capacity and traffic volumes right in the heart of the centre, where they conflict the most with pedestrian and cycle movements. Congestion, traffic accidents and traffic pollution (both air and noise) are issues created by this. In 2019, Guildford was the 26th most congested town/city in the UK. (INRICS 2019) and last mile inner average speeds are as low as 14 mph.

There is a broadly equal split of traffic approaching the centre from Farnham Road, Portsmouth Road and Millbrook, there is more traffic from Onslow Street where there is more road capacity but despite growth in the population of Guildford over the last decade, traffic levels approaching the centre have not really grown over time – the town centre approach roads are effectively at capacity; and increasing this capacity in any way would just encourage more traffic.

The scale of the gyratory, the volumes it carries and its configuration leads to congestion, serious accidents, and air quality issues which also affects the attractiveness of the town itself and the health of its citizens.

Finding a solution to this unhealthy position is affected by various factors. Increases in traffic, more online shopping and deliveries, the arrival of battery-powered bicycles, electric scooters and inevitably, automated vehicles will all provide some solutions but may cause other issues. COVID has affected the way we use transport, with less public transport use and more walking and cycling, and different travel patterns.

The primary importance of citizens' health (both physical and mental) has at long last been recognised, with the result that Health is now becoming a central plank to the strategy of many towns aiming to revitalise themselves.

International treaties and legal obligations regarding carbon emissions, as well as the need for more energy efficiency will soon leave most of us without any choice but to follow a more sustainable way of living. Additionally, new policies¹ are steadily coming in to promote better place making and to encourage measures that reduce the dominance of cars.

In addition to these important considerations, and in order to ensure that a future town centre environment that prioritises health and placemaking is delivered in a sustainable way, the reuse of existing infrastructure where possible will reduce the masterplans carbon footprint.

Central Government policy, through its 'Construction Playbook'² and 'Decarbonising Transport'³ strategies place an emphasis on reducing carbon emissions through the construction of new places and infrastructure.

New infrastructure brings with it 'embodied carbon', i.e., there are negative environmental impacts throughout construction in the form of carbon emissions and other pollutants generated. By avoiding the need to build new bridges or underpasses, the consequential embodied carbon is also avoided, reducing the schemes impact on the environment.

¹ Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge, Department for Transport, 2020

² The Construction Playbook, Government Guidance on sourcing and contracting public works projects and programmes, HM Government, 2020

³ Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge, Department for Transport, 2020

Health and wellbeing have been proven to directly relate to the quality of both the environment and places that we create. These terms are intrinsically related but there is yet one more term that is completely dependent on Place and that is the Economy.

For a long time, the conventional wisdom used to be that creating a strong economy came first and that a higher quality of life would follow. The reverse is now true: creating a better place and a higher quality of life is the first step to attracting new residents and jobs (thereby growing the economy).

Therefore, Markides recommend that the question facing Guildford is not so much “how do we manage the traffic?” but more “what place do we want Guildford to be?” Adopting the 3 key pillars of Health, Sustainability and Quality, will not only provide the platform for the correct transport strategy to be followed, it will also enable Guildford to retain its place as one of the most successful towns in the UK.

Guildford has a high car mode share. However, its size and characteristics are similar to other towns and cities who have achieved much lower car use over a sustained period by (1) restricting vehicle use and (2) investing in sustainable modes of travel. These changes take time, but once started, they begin a ‘virtuous circle’ of more and more walking, cycling and bus use. Such an approach would not mean an anti-car strategy (as many people will still rely on their car for many different trips). Instead, it points to a more balanced strategy, and one that will have several different components.

Transformation will take time – not only to change and create infrastructure but changing people’s behaviour and their movement culture. In order to achieve real change, a multi-faceted approach will be needed to encourage use of more sustainable modes including active measures to reduce traffic numbers coming into the town, provision of dedicated, separated routes for pedestrians and cyclists, more efficient parking, park & ride and bus solutions and potentially financial disincentives such as an environmental charge for crossing the river in the town centre.

A transport strategy based on the 3 key words of Health, Placemaking and Sustainability has the potential to transform the town. In doing so, it will also meet important national and Council

commitments to the environment as well as embracing new technologies that a turbulent world is ushering upon us.

The strategy will not produce immediate results; it is a long-term strategy that will require both commitment and leadership. We believe that the result will be healthy citizens and a successful town.

Key Issues

Pedestrian Environment & Urban Form

In terms of pedestrians the current environment is poor in the Town Centre. These poor pedestrian conditions are a significant reason why so many people choose to travel by car instead. It is also the reason why there are so many accidents.

- A much more ‘humanised’ town centre road infrastructure is needed.
- Good Pedestrian Connectivity Requirements would include
 Sufficiently wide pavements
 Many more road crossing opportunities with minimal delays for pedestrians
 Minimising the need to traverse bridges, underpasses and street clutter
- Urban form is more important as is illustrated by this next figure.



Guildford gyratory – Onslow Street
 30,000 vehicles / day
 One-way traffic on four lanes
 Difficult to cross and narrow pavements
 Highway clutter
 (Many) unattractive frontages



High Street Kensington
 25,000 vehicles / day
 Two-way traffic on four lanes
 Easy to cross and spacious pavements
 Minimal highway clutter
 Attractive frontages

The comparison of these two locations highlights the importance of considering both urban form and connectivity, when determining how to make a town centre environment feel more pedestrian friendly.

Cycling

In terms of cycling, it is notable that a significant part of Guildford is within a 20-minute cycle of the town centre and yet cycling accounts for a negligible share of travel; this is due mainly to a real lack of cycling infrastructure.

Evidence from the UK and abroad is clear. Physically segregated bike tracks on main roads, including at junctions, are the most important thing we can do to promote cycle use. They give people the confidence to cycle and dramatically increase the numbers of people cycling.

Cycling measures need to address both those wanting to take trips into town for leisure and retail as well as commuters, who will have different needs to attract them from car to bike.

Many reasons are given as to why cycling modal shift is not possible in Guildford, but case studies show that shifts in mode share to active modes are real and achievable with the support of local authorities.

Yet with a concerted effort to improve cycle infrastructure there can be a transformation! A comprehensive cycle route assessment study for Guildford in May 2020 recommended:

- E-bikes and bike share scheme
- Coherent cycle network
- Way finding
- Increased cycle parking provision
- This, together with e-scooters could give us pictures such as this from Copenhagen.

The examples presented below are all less undulated than Guildford. However, the 'National Propensity to Cycle Tool' produced for the Department for Transport, which includes the impact of topography as a factor, demonstrates with 'Go Dutch' style infrastructure and e bikes common place, commuter cycling levels could reach 22% in Guildford Town Centre. Research for the tool found that hilliness was not a main deterrent compared to other factors such as safety and segregation and can be thought of in a similar way to distance. Therefore, the potential for change is high.

Comparison of UK and European Mode Share						
City	Year	Population	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport	Private Car
Oxford	2011	150,200	19%	19%	21%	41%
Cambridge	2017	123,900	5%	39%	10%	37%
Freiburg, Germany	2016	227,000	29%	34%	16%	24%
Odense, Denmark	2008	178,210	19%	27%	26%	28%
Delft, Netherlands	2013	99,737	27%	34%	8%	31%
Guildford	2011	137,183	13%	3%	16.3%	62%

Parking and Park & Ride

The Council commissioned a report by Systra in relation to car parking in the town centre which presents various scenarios for future parking.

In line with the strategic direction described above, we recommend the council move towards implementing the ‘Climate Emergency’ options in that report, which seek to gradually reduce central parking in favour of more and better park and ride and management of central parking.

Guildford’s town centre parking accounts for about 70% of its total parking stock, with 30% in park and ride. This is contrast to a city such as Oxford with similar constraints on road space, congestion in a where they have redesigned their town centre to be weighted heavily in favour of Park & Ride (P&R) spaces, with approximately 70% of the parking provision at P&R locations. This has been hugely successful in reducing traffic levels in the town centre.

The following table is telling:

	Town Centre Parking	P&R
Guildford	4,536 spaces	1,884 spaces
Oxford	484 spaces	3,241 spaces

We believe that park and ride is a significant component in reducing vehicle movement into the town which is one of the key planks of the strategy we propose, and over time moving to a situation where more than 50% of the parking is in park and ride sites would be a reasonable target to aim for.

To achieve this strategy the quality of Park and Ride also needs to be improved and this will need to be done in association with Surrey County Council

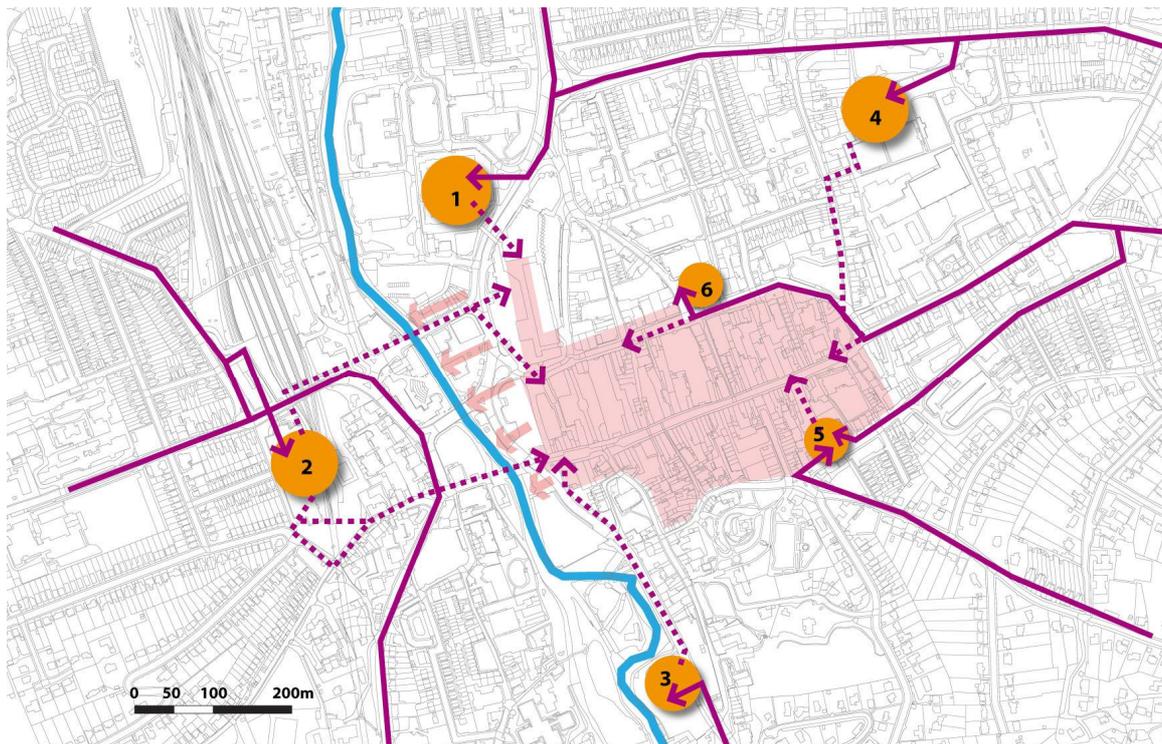
At the same time, changes in town centre parking can also encourage greater use of Park & Ride. Such changes would include:

- Easier access to the car parks.
- Improved facilities at each car park.
- Review of parking charges; and
- Better information on parking availability/choices.

We would recommend that above measures are adopted to lead to an outer and an inner ring of car parks, aimed at capturing capture a significant amount of the town-centre-bound car traffic.

In order to make this strategy work effectively there will need to be additional movement links introduced in the form of good and safe pedestrian routes between the inner ring car parks and the heart of the town centre.

Car Parking Ring



Buses

“A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars but where the rich use public transport”.

In terms of buses, government policy has very recently changed⁴ and proposes that local transport authorities become more involved in bus provision, either through a franchising or Enhanced Partnership model. This work will be led by Surrey County Council as the Local Transport Authority, but GBC can engage with this process to ensure future town centre access by bus is improved.

One significant matter for the future of buses will be the location of the bus station which has been the subject of separate studies in relation to the proposed North Street development. Our strategy is that extensive bus priority measures are introduced in order to extricate the buses from traffic congestion.

⁴ Bus Back Better, National Bus Strategy, DfT, 2021

Environment Led Traffic Charging

Another initiative that will have a major effect on traffic numbers and particularly air quality in the town centre would be the introduction of some form of congestion (or at the very least environmental) charging, possibly in the form of a Low Emission Zone. Guildford would not be the first town to do so as Birmingham will be enforcing a clean air zone in June, followed by Bristol in October and Portsmouth in November. Greater Manchester is due to follow next Spring. Oxford will introduce a zero-emission zone in August. These towns will have different rules, but the common thread is that diesel cars will be charged.

Guildford could design and implement a pilot scheme which charged a nominal fee for cross river traffic.

Guildford could consider traffic charging to encourage more sustainable travel, reduce town centre traffic and to provide funding that can be used to support other sustainable transport, such as buses and park and ride.

Effect of proposed strategic changes

All of the above measures will enable a complete re-appraisal of the gyratory and in particular Onslow Street. Better linkages need to be provided and the detail of the strategic transport report has started to explore some possible options, even though substantially more work is required in order to identify the optimum solution.

These options are preliminarily modelled on historic traffic data which will need to be validated as we come out of the covid lockdown period, will need to be agreed with Surrey County Council as the highway authority. They target traffic reduction from the strategic measures outlined above and enable a range of the strategic spatial objectives to be met in respect of movement, access to the Wey Navigation and linking the historic town centre.

Whichever approach is taken forward, a gradual modal shift away from the car will be required to (at the very least) meet broader Council climate change policies and 'humanise' the road system.

Once a town has managed to reduce the traffic and reconfigure its flow then the opportunity to re balance exists - shared surfaces, less lanes, two-way roads, much better pedestrian, bus and cycle priority.

Movement Strategy key elements

The key elements of the Movement Strategy are therefore:

- A Town for Walking - designed around people walking, with reallocation of highway space from vehicles to pedestrians, and a 'humanised' road network.
- A Town for Cycling with safe and direct cycle routes
- A Town with Good Public Transport with more frequent and reliable bus services
- A Fit for Purpose Parking Strategy including an improved park and ride system promoting a 'park and walk' ring of car parks around the centre and very low parking standards for new central development,
- Reduction in cross-river and through traffic in the centre.

4. Flood

Arup have been appointed to undertake high level technical assessment of the issues relating to flood defences and alleviation strategies to enable riverside sites within the spatial masterplan to be brought forward and coordination on strategies for sustainable drainage. Their work has also included initial engagement with the Environment Agency.

The Study from Arup summaries:

Guildford town centre has suffered from significant flooding in recent years and flood protection of existing and proposed development is a key consideration for the regeneration masterplan.

Most of the potential development area alongside the river falls in Flood Zone 3 – Functional Floodplain and current national and local policy would suggest development in this zone is difficult but achievable. A flood alleviation scheme will provide an opportunity to protect existing properties and enable development along the river.

Several options have been identified for how a flood alleviation scheme could be achieved in the town centre, with opportunities identified to incorporate both town centre, and catchment wide interventions to lessen the impact within the town centre.

In collaboration with the Environment Agency, options for flood defences within the town centre are being explored with the aim that, when implemented, the town centre's flood zone will be altered to enable development to be permitted more easily. The defensive line within the town centre will take multiple forms to ensure it can be integrated within the proposed spatial masterplan, delivering benefits not only in the form of built development, but enhanced biodiversity, sustainability and carbon sequestration.

As a key stakeholder, collaboration with the Environment Agency is ongoing. The EA have undertaken an initial modelling exercise to establish an alignment of the defensive line within the town centre that would provide suitable protection within the town centre without causing detrimental impacts either upstream or downstream.

The initial alignment will be reviewed and developed with the design team to incorporate the flood defences within the proposed spatial masterplan, undertaking iterations until a preferred solution is found. Once all parties have settled on a preferred alignment, the EA will develop the outline business case to progress the Flood Alleviation Scheme through detailed design and planning in order to secure government funding.

Delivery of the flood alleviation scheme is expected to be through a partnership approach primarily between GBC and the EA, with plot developers responsible for delivery of the defensive line as appropriate.

For interventions beyond the town centre, such as flood plain storage compensation and natural flood management techniques, engagement and collaboration with local stakeholders will be promoted.

The key next step is to examine the initial defensive line developed by the EA and establish how it can be incorporated into the masterplan to bring the quantum of development aimed for.

5. Infrastructure and Ground Evaluation

Aecom have been appointed to advise the spatial masterplan in respect of constraints that the infrastructure of the town may impose on regeneration objectives. Their scope of consideration includes Utility Networks, Drainage, Data, Ground Conditions and Contamination

The Aecom Report summarises key findings from their study and the likely impact on the emerging masterplan are outlined below:

Electricity

The electrical supply to Guildford Town Centre is provided from the UKPN owned Guildford Primary substation, located on Woodbridge Road (A322). UKPN have advised in initial engagement that there is minimal capacity available at the Guildford Primary Substation for any early developments in the Town Centre

UKPN have advised that they have accepted an application from a developer for a significant electrical demand to supply a new datacentre, which will require extensive reinforcement works to Guildford Primary substation and their 'upstream' network. AECOM are liaising with UKPN to understand the impact that the datacentre and the future development of the Town Centre may have on their network, assets and any cost implications.

The key impact on the Masterplan is a cost / time risk that sufficient electrical supply capacity is not available from UKPN without extensive and costly reinforcement of their network. Any requirement for reinforcement may need to be forward funded and could also require extensive lead-in times to deliver.

The Masterplan will also need to allow for sufficient space within the development buildings / public realm area, to locate new secondary substations and the associated cable routes.

Clean (Potable) Water

Clean water is supplied to Guildford Town Centre by Thames Water. Thames Water have confirmed that they can supply potable water to the first 50 residential units for a number of the development opportunity sites however, they will need to undertake a capacity modelling study to confirm the available potable water supply within Guildford to support the full developments. This modelling could take up to 6 months to complete, and the costs to undertake this assessment will need to be covered by the promoter. Should reinforcement be required, the design and construction could take up to 18 months.

The key potable water impact on the Masterplan is a risk that sufficient supply is not available from Thames Water without extensive and costly reinforcement of their network. Any requirement for reinforcement may also require extensive lead-in times to deliver.

Thames Water acknowledge that their existing potable water supply infrastructure may require diverting within or adjacent to the development opportunity sites to facilitate the masterplan proposals. Costs for this work will be imposed in line with their charging arrangements, current at the time of application.

Changes in the water demand for firefighting purposes arising from the planned redevelopment have not be considered as part of this assessment, as this will require a specialist company to undertake hydrant testing.

Foul Water

Two main foul sewers are located within the Guildford Town Centre, the largest of these flows in a northerly direction to the west of the River Wey. The second is to the east of the River Wey and connects to the larger sewer.

The main foul sewer to the west of the River Wey is a 1050mmØ pipe, located at depth below the Walnut Tree Close highway however, when routing through the Woodbridge Meadows site, it is understood to be located below the existing industrial buildings and Travel Lodge hotel. This foul sewer will form a constraint to the future re-development.

of Woodbridge Meadows. Avoidance of over-building the sewer will be required, or alternatively, a build-over agreement will need to be secured with Thames Water.

The foul sewer to the east of the River Wey will pose less of a constraint however, it does route through the Bedford Wharf site, which the Masterplan will need to consider, or discussions held with Thames Water over diversion.

Surface Water

Most of the Guildford Town Centre discharges surface water to the River Wey, through a network of outfalls along the river edge. These outfalls will be surcharged during periods with high water levels within the river, potentially causing flooding to occur within the town centre.

There are opportunities to ensure the development opportunity sites maximise the full suite of SuDS features available, such as roof-based rainwater harvesting and reuse, above ground basins and ponds, and below ground retention systems.

Depending on the location of the development in relation to flooding from the River Wey, some features may be more appropriate than others, and further coordination with the river flooding consultant will be required to confirm the nature and extent of river flood defence schemes to determine the appropriateness of development ground-based SuDS features.

Surface water retention and discharge rates will need to be carefully managed, and the masterplan will need to ensure sufficient space is allowed within the development sites for a range of appropriate SuDS features.

Other Utilities

Several other utility providers have assets within the town centre, such as telecommunications and gas infrastructure. None of these are considered to form significant constraints to the masterplan.

The masterplan will need to allow space within the public realm areas to route utilities however, this is not expected to pose a key challenge and is considered standard within the design of new developments.

Sustainability - Heat Sources

Guildford Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency on 23 July 2019. The resolution requires the Council to evaluate and determine how and when Guildford Borough can become carbon neutral and work towards making the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030.

This study has explored the local low carbon energy resource technology that may be available in supporting the sustainable redevelopment of the Guildford Town Centre opportunity sites:

- Sewer heat recovery from the strategic main foul sewers routing through the town centre.
- Heat Sources
- Low carbon heat recovery from the River Wey;
- Open loop ground source energy systems, using extracted underground water from reserves, such as aquifers.
- Closed loop ground source thermal energy systems.
- Air source heat pumps.
- Industrial waste heat recovery; and
- Solar thermal systems.
- Renewable Electrical Sources – Solar Photovoltaics; and Wind turbine.
- Further investigation to verify the feasibility of low carbon technologies and the anticipated energy that could be obtained from these sources will need to be undertaken as the masterplan evolves however, the masterplan should start to consider the allocation of space within the development sites to allow for these technologies.
- There is likely to be competition for roof space from several uses, such as green / brown roofs, MEP plant and amenity space and therefore a balance will need to be struck to ensure the most efficient use of available space is delivered.
- Digital Technical Solutions

- Full Fibre

The default provision for new developments is a full fibre solution. This statement is based on a mixture of technical and political factors, summarised in the following key findings:

Broadband technologies are continually evolving to meet the ever-increasing user demands for performance. Traditional copper and hybrid fibre / copper solutions are no longer fit for purpose to meet these needs, as such Full Fibre solutions are the only viable means to achieve this.

The Government realise the importance of good digital connectivity to meet their ambition of having in place a world class digital infrastructure that would support current and future transport, business and lifestyle needs. To facilitate this ambition, Government initiatives and investment are available to assist in the rollout and delivery of full fibre networks.

For residential developments exceeding 20 properties, Openreach will currently install FFTP free of charge, including any reinforcement of their network that this will require. This technology currently supports speeds up to 1Gbps. For commercial developments, Openreach will currently install FTTP subject to availability in the area. This technology supports speeds up to 1Gbps.

EM3 Digital Fibre Project

Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3) are currently in the early stages of developing a proposal for a “fibre spine” project which seeks to connect Basingstoke and Guildford via several towns and villages in Guildford and neighbouring Boroughs.

The Local Enterprise Partnership Board has agreed that the fibre spine will:

Enable access to fibre and gigabit capable services for many more business and domestic customers helping to close the digital divide across the area.

Encourage commercial operators to build digital infrastructure deeper in the area to improve resilience, stimulate economic growth and further close the digital divide.

Connect public service buildings including hospitals to support upgrading of public service networks, digitisation of public services and the development of smart systems.

Provide wholesale and open access services.

Ground Conditions

Historical Land Uses

Historical mapping shows that land use on-site has comprised predominantly urban development of Guildford since the earliest mapping edition of the 1870s. Gas works are indicated in the central part of the site between at least early 1870s and late 1890s; then a cattle market is shown at this location in 1913.

Summary Constraints – Site Wide

The following site wide constraints have been identified:

The site lies within inner (Zone 1) and outer (Zone II) groundwater SPZs for the protection of potable water supply abstractions. All groundworks should be designed in accordance with the Environment Agency guidance and with due regard to the proposed development setting.

Details on the surface water and aquifers at the site are indicated in the baseline conditions section above. Consideration should be given to Controlled Water (surface water and groundwater) as a receptor to any potential ground contamination.

Radon potential across the site is indicated in the baseline conditions section above.

Protection measures should be required within new buildings across the site.

Unexploded bomb (UXO) risk across the site is indicated in the baseline conditions section above. The commissions a Detailed UXO Threat Assessment Desk Top Study in advance of any future intrusive site works or development is recommended.

Potential geotechnical hazards identified at the site, which could affect land stability, are indicated in the baseline conditions section above. Geotechnical assessment to assist with foundation design required.

Potential for aggressive ground conditions (sulphates) in the London Clay Formation have the potential to impact upon buried structures and services without appropriate design. Refer to Figure 3 (included in Appendix B). 

Opportunity – Site Wide

The following site-wide opportunities have been identified:

Development of strategic master planning and consideration of future land allocations so that less sensitive land use is planned in areas of higher potential ground risk. This may reduce the overall development cost due to less remediation being required.

Redevelopment provides the opportunity to bring unused land back into beneficial use which aligns with policy on use of Brownfield land.

Any remediation of land undertaken as part of the planning approval process will have a net benefit on the environment and communities associated with them through environmental improvement.

6. Spatial Matters and Vision

Leonard Design Architects have been appointed as master planner to undertake a land based spatial masterplan informed by constraints and emerging strategies from the team along with a capacity study that defines quantum of potential development space as part of stage 1 for the regeneration project.

As part of this study Leonard Design Architects have also developed potential character aspirations for the various areas within the plan and identified uses which are aligned with the strategic objectives of the Council and as supported by the high-level positioning research undertaken

Appendix 3 contains the outline considerations of the land based spatial masterplan. The Capacity studies carried out as options for the various sites has established the potential for up to 4000 homes across the study area subject to technical assessment, evidence base, studies, planning policy and viability.

7. Property

The study area for the spatial masterplan covers significant parts of Guildford Town centre where the freehold is owned by the Council.

Regeneration on the Guildford Borough Council freehold sites alone will not enable the Strategic Objectives to be fully met and the property interests of others will need to be considered through development of a Property Strategy as part of the scope for Stage 2 of GERP.

The regeneration strategy presumes that some of the identified sites in the spatial masterplan will be brought forward by the Private Sector if constraints to development such as planning policy, flood and infrastructure are positively addressed.

Trowers & Hamlins have recently been appointed and are undertaking investigation into title and ownerships to be used to develop the Property Strategy in Stage 2

8. Programme

An indicative master programme for the delivery of the Guildford Economic Regeneration Programme has been produced and can be seen in appendix 7. The project programme will need to be agile to adapt to changes in assumptions and issues as they develop through stage 2.

The summary of the target activity for the stage 2 timetable leads to a Grant Funding application in Q3 2022.

The sequence of activities for the Stage 2 programme would be commenced with extensive stakeholder engagement following inception of a communications plan following the Councils decision to commence this stage.

In tandem with the commencement of the stakeholder engagement, surveys and studies in the post covid 19 environment will be procured to support concept design for the masterplan, infrastructure considerations and technical dialogue

During the Stage 2 the considerations of net carbon neutral objectives and climate crisis will be developed as part of an overall sustainable strategy for regeneration to be included within the Concept Masterplan

9. Next Steps

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Communications

Once the council has launched its communications plan then stakeholder engagement will commence. The stakeholder engagement will inform the development of considerations that will then be developed as a concept masterplan to be used as the basis for business case evaluation and preparation of grant funding application(s)

Proposed approach to Sustainability and Climate Crisis

The Strategic Objectives and outcomes for success of the project are clear in the need to create built environment which is sustainable over time and addresses the needs of climate crisis and decarbonisation objectives.

Sustainability objectives also reach further into the needs of the existing social, economic and environmental aspects of the town and the work will bring forward proposals to improve the existing environment within the town holistically.

Business Case

The business Case will be developed on the HMT Green Book model 2020 update with appropriate consideration of the 5 case models to address the needs of an application for funding from the likes of the Housing Infrastructure Fund or its replacement.

Grant Application

It is currently envisaged that the project will have an infrastructure funding deficiency. During the first half of Stage 2 the potential sources for grant funding will be explored and preliminary contact made with providers to establish their objectives and delivery needs in relation to the regeneration project elements.

Governance and Gateways

The programme will be controlled through a Quarterly Portfolio Board and Monthly Programme Board, comprising Councillors and senior officers.

The programme incorporates Full Council sign off and approval at each gateway with milestone reporting into the Executive.