

Item 7: Creative Quarter Masterplan and Next Steps

As part of the consultation on the draft Creative Quarter Masterplan Officers were emailed one response where the consultee requested anonymity and that their response should not be published. Following a dialogue with the consultee a revised response has been provided. This was received following the publication of the Executive Report and responses.

It is considered the Big Picture document positively responds to the concerns raised.

The revised response and comments is provided below.

Ref	Name	Response
39	Member of the public	<p>General Comments on Proposals</p> <p>Thank you for your response. We note your support for a number of 'good ideas' and also your concerns regarding the viability of other ideas, collaboration between the County and District and the relationship between Creative Quarter Projects and other Council initiatives i.e. the proposed HQ. Please note that these are just ideas. If the Council approves The Big Picture document these ideas will be worked through in more detail to provide a high level business plan. If this is approved individual projects will be worked up in more detail and will require approval from the Council's Executive. We will address your concerns in more detail at these stages. Thank you for highlighting these issues in advance.</p> <p>The Vision & The Pump Rooms and Town Hall</p> <p>Thank you for your suggestion to broaden the vision for the Creative Quarter to include the whole town. We hope that the revised Big Picture document gives greater clarity on who the Creative Quarter is for (p5) and that this will enable more people to engage with it. In addition, we hope that the Big Picture more clearly articulates the vision for the Creative Quarter.</p> <p>The draft masterplan included a reference to relocating the library. We recognise that it has an important social and cultural function, which is well used. Thank you for your suggestion to work with the Warwick Uni Student Centre. We will look at this in more detail should the Big Picture be approved by the Council's Executive.</p> <p>We also welcome your suggestions around the Health and Wellbeing role for the Royal Pump Rooms. This has not previously emerged as an idea, and we will look at this in more detail in the next phase of the programme.</p> <p>Feedback and Strategic Areas to Address</p> <p>Thank you for your reflections on working with the local community and the need to balance ambition with reality. We hope that the new Big Picture helps address these</p>

		<p>challenges with a clearer articulation of the aims of the document and process going forwards (p9). Please note that it is proposed that the Clublands area is removed from the red line area.</p> <p>We anticipate that the detail work you identify is undertaken as part of the next phases of the programme, this may include opportunities for further engagement.</p> <p>The document has also been renamed as The Big Picture to more accurately reflect its role as a high level vision document, in line with your comments. It also includes a narrative on completed engagement work (p7). The Council does consider that the document will stand as Supplementary Planning Guidance, with particular reference to policy T12 in the Local Plan (change of use to property in the Althorpe St area).</p> <p>Support Going Forwards</p> <p>Thank you for your offer of support as we progress. It is anticipated that there will be future opportunities for people to engage with the Creative Quarter. Your full response is attached to give reassurance that your comments aren't 'cherry picked'.</p>
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Revised Response, emailed 25th February, 2019

Saturday 19th January 2019

Re: Leamington Spa Cultural Quarter Masterplan Feedback

General Comments on Proposals

I value fresh efforts to reimagine this area, including your efforts to engage the community and I would like to see the positive change you are proposing realised.

On balance I feel there are a number of good ideas. Leamington needs additional high-quality hotel accommodation and the post office packing office does not need to be in a beautiful riverside location (provided there is a viable alternative location for this to go). Rethinking car parking on Court St is necessary, as is the likelihood of needed to put something above it to realise additional value from the land. The buildings around Spencer's Yard (Dole Office, URChurch) are an obvious priority. They are owned by WDC and improvement would represent a visible statement of intent.

I am less sure about the viability of the 'outdoor ideas' on the Bath Place car park or even in Spencer's Yard without significant investment from elsewhere or a larger future population however, the ambition is nice. Also, sadly I don't see a time in the near future when car parking will not be an issue in this town and I see little evidence of collaboration between the County and District to invest in more visionary, greener, sustainable solutions for the region. For this reason, the timing of any scheme will need to fit in with the completion of the WDC HQ project, as both car parks are central to the displacement plan.

The 'high line' railway park would be amazing if it is possible. My only thought is given this ambition, why not 'push the boat out' further and make it go somewhere (e.g. Spencer Yard)? When this community is mobilised, it achieves great things.

The Vision & The Pump Rooms and Town Hall

On the question of the Pump Rooms and Town Hall, I wish to address the 'the vision' for the Cultural Quarter. If it is to include these much-loved public assets, it needs to be broadened to have wider relevance to the whole town. The 'red line' now encompasses a significant area of the town centre so the vision should excite the whole town and be seen to resonate strongly with a wider range of values (cultural, commercial as well as environmental and social). Ideally, it should make people in other places wish they had it, if only they could! In this way, it needs to reflect the town's unique qualities and ideally, there needs to be an 'attractor'.

Moving the Library into the Town Hall to make space in the Pump Rooms could be an idea (though the Library must be retained and invested in as it is currently a beautiful and well used space). Should the Warwick Uni Student Centre stay in the Town Hall, perhaps there is an opportunity to improve the library in collaboration? Students appreciate the value of physical off-site library service.

It is hard to speak about other ideas in there without knowing the costs associated with this property.

A possible vision for the Pump Rooms is to use it as a catalyst to bring the 'essence' of 'Spa' back to Leamington. There is a tangible sadness in the community and amongst visitors who come to the 'Spa Centre' in search of 'the Spa', that we are a 'Spa town' with no Spa. I know we can't go back in time and 'Spas' as we now know them, need much investment. In this sense, the idea is to tap into the 'Health and Well-being' DNA of the town and make better use of the assets that are there.

Health and Wellbeing (especially mental health, loneliness, exercise, diet, mindfulness etc) is a huge issue nationally and the resonance with the town's past is clear. People used to come here to get well and that included the wider experience of 'taking fresh air in the gardens' and 'Parading' on the Parade etc. Imagine bringing this idea back in a new form? Space for people to attend classes (yoga, palates, tai-chi etc) that could spill out onto the gardens in summer, a healthy café / eatery, the associated cultural offer to support inclusion, even perhaps a private salon for treatments or other spaces where smaller businesses in this sector could operate from. In this sense, the Pump Rooms could have a new focus, one that looks forward and back. This is the UNESCO view: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5928/>.

Feedback and Strategic Areas to Address

This leads me to my concerns, which is my assessment of where things are at, based on my experience as a planner, resident and current realities. There is a lot to balance in this process. The positioning of 'ambition' without people dismissing it as 'dreaming'. The need to give the community something 'to hang their hat on' and get excited about, alongside a stark commercial reality. You must balance uncertainty relating to the timing as well as the strategy and presentation of these ideas. This gives an impression of how 'fixed' it is and the associated opportunity to influence it. The present local and national political climate is salient. Of course, you must also recognise history and take our close-knit community on the journey, which typically requires a different approach to working in cities.

The inclusion of much-loved public buildings is always going to make some people bristle when in the past they have fought to stop them being sold off to developers. History is a powerful driver, and you are also struggling with the recent history of town centre developments. Of course, the distant past also needs to be managed carefully and passive nostalgia is unhelpful too. The 'red line' has also been drawn around a group of charities and the document does not provide enough certainty for them to support it.

Many of the wider questions I can see being asked are related to outstanding strategic work (strategy, vision, parking, highways etc) that needs to be done by the development partner, WDC. Overall there is some good work that can be built on, but it needs to be completed. Given CDP are in this for 10-15 years, I would urge WDC to invest properly in progressing these things or strategic issues may continue to frustrate ideas.

My concern is that without these things the work is 'on an island' and we know that places don't function like that. The ideas in the plan relating to 'uses' are not tested in terms of their wider fit with the town centre. Three restaurants (Pump Rooms, Town Hall & Jephson's) are unlikely to be viable. I realise they will not 'all' eventuate, but the lack of narrative demonstrates the 'plan' does not yet hang together. Also, these ideas have not been tested in terms of economic viability. For this reason, I don't consider the document as it stands to be a 'Masterplan'. To me, it is more like a draft vision and illustrative plan. A good start, no less.

In respect to my view that this is not yet a Masterplan, I know they vary in content and quality. However, the CABE guidance 'Creating Successful Masterplans' though older now, broadly represents where I stand on this. I am also unclear about the planning policy intention for this document but would question if it is robust enough (in content or process) to be adopted as a statutory document. This is problematic given the existing planning permissions on the table.

(<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118111818/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/creating-successful-masterplans.pdf>)

Notwithstanding this, the reason that repositioning the 'wording' may be helpful is strategic, rather than academic. A 'vision' or 'illustrative plan' appears less 'final' and could demonstrate a willingness to listen. As I understand, this work needs approval from the existing administration, but you also need the new one to embrace it after the May election. Secondly, it would allow space to develop this into a Masterplan and give CDP and WDC time to resolve clear issues within the 'red-line' (e.g. highways, the charity land/flood plain?).

There are other simple things you can do to improve how you take the community on the journey. For example, evidence the engagement you have done in the documents and online at every stage and demonstrate the link between people's input and your ideas. Right now, people can't see where these ideas came from. Also, relative flexibility in the process is key, so build it into your delivery strategy. Extending consultation for 2 weeks is not about getting new ideas, it's about demonstrating you are listening, and you can always work on next steps in the background. I have other comments about presentation and narrative if you are interested.

Support Going Forwards

I am happy to provide further comments or support, however the approach you take is important. I also have to ask that any comments are not 'cherry-picked' for subsequent material as they are provided to you in context.

Thank you for your consideration and best wishes going forward.

"It's people and businesses that make a place creative, we just provide the canvas"

Ian Harriban, Jan 2018, Creative Quarter Launch Presentation