

 <b>Executive</b> <b>1 July 2015</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b> <b>9</b>
<b>Title</b>	Warwick Town Centre Action Plan	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Lorna Coldicott <a href="mailto:lorna.coldicott@warwickdc.gov.uk">lorna.coldicott@warwickdc.gov.uk</a> T. 01926 456505	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	Saltisford, Woodloes, Aylesford, Myton & Heathcote, Emscote	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	Executive meeting 10 July 2013 Minute no: 32	
<b>Background Papers</b>	None	
<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No	
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	No	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No	
Not required for this decision		
<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	08.06.15	Chris Elliott
Head of Service	08.06.15	Tracy Darke
CMT	08.06.15	Andy Jones, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	08.06.15	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	08.06.15	Andy Jones
Finance	08.06.15	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)		Cllr Stephen Cross
<b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>		
The last consultation to be carried out was the Options and Preferred Options which finished on 14 December 2012		
<b>Final Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b>		

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 Work on the Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan has been held in abeyance since it cannot proceed until the Warwick District Local Plan has been adopted.
- 1.2 This work ceased in 2013 and events have overtaken the proposals put forward through the Plan process, including the development of many of the sites which were considered through the Plan
- 1.3 The remaining work to complete the Plan would be in writing policies. The Local Plan which is at an advanced stage, contains all the policies needed for the town centres within the district. In spite of a setback to the programme for the Local Plan, these policies will be taken into account when planning applications are considered, along with those saved in the previous Plan.
- 1.4 Additional work and resources spent on a Plan which is clearly now outdated would seem wasteful, especially when an application for a Neighbourhood Plan Area designation is expected from Warwick Town Council in the near future; this now being a more appropriate vehicle to carry town centre proposals through and meets the objectives of the Localism Act 2011.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Executive notes the results of the 'Options and Preferred Options' Consultation
- 2.2 That Executive approves the cessation of work on the Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan

## **3. Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 Area Action Plans were introduced in 2004 as part of the Local Development Framework by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. The Framework replaced Structure Plans, Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans in an attempt to speed up the adoption of development plans across all local authority areas. Area action plans are an optional development plan document aimed at establishing a set of proposals and policies for the development of a specific area (such as a town centre or an area of new development) of a district authority.
- 3.2 Work commenced on the Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan in 2009. The plan was considered initially to be the best vehicle to carry out work on securing the future use of a number of sites within the town centre, the majority of which were to become surplus to the requirements of public bodies as a result of rationalisation. There were also a number of buildings, some of which are Listed Buildings, which were vacant or about to become so and in need of revitalisation and renovation

- 3.3 The work was undertaken by a partnership comprising members of Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council, Warwick Town Council, the Warwick Society and Warwick Chamber of Trade, assisted by district council officers and chaired latterly by Deputy Chief Executive (AJ), Warwick DC. As a large number of people constituted the Partnership, a Core Group of members; one from each organisation, was set up to undertake research and submit ideas to the Partnership as a whole with officer support. This work was then presented and agreed by consensus of the Partnership before moving forward to the next stage.
- 3.4 The first exhibition was held in March 2010 to raise awareness of the plan and to identify the issues needing to be addressed within the town centre. Following that, work was undertaken on Options and Preferred Options and the Sustainability Appraisal with the accompanying public consultation stage on both taking place in October, November and December 2012. The results of this most recent consultation can be found by following this link to the website  
[http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/downloads/download/730/warwick\\_town\\_centre\\_plan](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/downloads/download/730/warwick_town_centre_plan)
- 3.5 Inevitably and as recognised as a potential outcome by the partnership, the development of sites has run in tandem with the work on the Plan. Indeed, to a major extent, development has overtaken the proposals in the Plan and schemes are under way or have gained planning permission whilst work on the Plan has been proceeding. This demonstrates that Plan preparation has been a catalyst to solving some of the outstanding issues within the town centre.
- 3.6 In addition, work on the Local Plan to review the policies relating to the town centres of the district, now reflect current national policies and have been updated in line with a review of the retail reports. It is difficult to see how new policies relating to Warwick town centre alone would add to these revisions. The Local Plan provides policies for individual town centres where they apply. The adoption of the Local Plan is necessary to allow further work to take place on the town centre plan and since that is now subject to delay, work on a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to supersede any further work on this Plan.
- 3.7 Work undertaken as part of the town centre plan will provide an excellent basis and an evidence base for the commencement of work on a Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, although money has been spent on the Plan, it will not have been wasted, especially when identified sites have come forward for development as a result of this work. Further expenditure however will not be required from this budget.

### **Progress made within the Town Centre:**

- 3.6 A total of 20 sites were examined for their development potential. These were then considered as part of the public consultation with suggestions for

each put forward for comment. A table showing the progress made is attached at **Appendix 1**

- 3.7 In addition to this, Warwickshire County Council has rationalised its workforce into the larger Warwick based buildings in its ownership, releasing some buildings in the town centre and satellite locations within the rest of the County. Progress made on all Warwickshire County Council land holdings in the town centre is attached at **Appendix 1**

#### 4. **Policy Framework**

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – Formal policies will be best met with a Neighbourhood Plan approach. This means that the Town Centre Plan in its current form will be superseded by this process, but since its objectives have been largely met, it has satisfied these policies up to the point at which it will end.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The objectives of this strategy would best be met with an up to date approach through the opportunities raised through a Neighbourhood Plan and in accord with the Localism Act.
- 4.3 **Impact Assessments** – There are no impacts on new or significant policy changes proposed in respect of Equalities.

#### 5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 Work to date has been undertaken within the Council's budgetary framework with a dedicated town centre budget and some small contributions from others within the Partnership to assist with consultation events. Much work undertaken by the Partnership has been achieved by volunteers, particularly with regard to the research on which the Plan has been evidenced. The cessation of work on this Plan would negate the need for further financial commitment from this particular dedicated budget.

#### 6. **Risks**

- 6.1 The main risk would be if work on a Neighbourhood Plan did not commence, however the production of such appears as part of the job description for the post of Warwick Town Clerk; a vacancy currently advertised and is therefore a firm proposal. It is understood that there is strong support for such a plan locally. Additionally, the Town Centre Plan has already contributed much to the future of sites within Warwick and has largely therefore fulfilled its initial objectives. The outstanding policy element will be effectively covered through the Local Plan. Much of the research carried out for the Town Centre Plan could be drawn upon by the authors of a Neighbourhood Plan.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 The Council could carry on with the production of the Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan but this would not seem to present a sustainable use of time and resources given the stage reached by proposals for the majority of the sites and the progress at examination of the Local Plan. Additionally, there are indications that Warwick Town Council are preparing to submit the area for designation for Neighbourhood Plan status. If this is the case, the Neighbourhood Plan would quickly outdate the Area Action Plan and although it would not have the same status, the Local Plan assures that town centre policies are put in place to control and develop that area. A Neighbourhood Plan is therefore considered to be the preferable approach at this stage, supporting the objectives of the Localism Act 2011.

## **Appendix 1**

### Progress on Proposed Sites

Site	Suggestion	Progress
<b>Market Street/Theatre Street</b>	Residential on Theatre Street and above Market Street retail units	Planning permission granted for the demolition of the former print works, garage and one retail unit and replacement with an apartment block of 37 flats with parking (September 2014)
<b>Linen Street/Lammas Court</b>	Residential with car park beneath	WDC has plans to upgrade and update the existing car park. Local residents have parking permits and other businesses have purchased season tickets. The new flats opposite will also have access to the car park, therefore the continued use of the existing car park is considered to be the best option
<b>Barrack Street</b>	Car park beneath a mixed use scheme	WCC has moved a proportion of its personnel and operations into this building and is not currently considering the sale of the site
<b>Northgate Street</b>	Restore town houses including archaeology store and former court buildings to the rear, for residential use and demolition of 1930's additions to rear of town houses to provide gardens/parking	Scheme to provide 18 residential units by conversion and alteration with gardens and parking granted planning permission (January 2013)
<b>Former Police Station</b>	Health facility	Current planning application for the demolition of the existing building
<b>Cape Road</b>	Residential and car park	Needs to be co-ordinated with plans for former police station proposal above as part of bigger scheme
<b>Gas Works/Fire Station</b>	Residential	Planning permission was granted to alter and refurbish the Gas Works (listed building) to provide 11 apartments in July 2013. Scheme to provide 9 affordable houses and 2 apartments on

		the site of the former fire station, granted planning permission (December 2013)
<b>St Michael's Chapel and Master's House (the Leper Hospital)</b>	Renovate for heritage centre or residential if not viable	A grant from Historic England has been secured to procure expert services and establish the full cost of repairing and refurbishing the Master's House. In tandem with this work a soft-market exercise is being undertaken to determine interest in the site for extra-care housing provision.
<b>St John's retail parade</b>	Redevelop with commercial at ground floor and residential above and parking to rear	Too many land owners involved to enable a co-ordinated redevelopment of the whole site as necessary. Some owners keen, others not
<b>St John's House</b>	Retain and add other museum collections	WCC plans to replace temporary storage buildings with more substantial structures on land which would have been required to expand the existing building to house the additional collections. The Court House has also been refurbished to accommodate one such collection. It is therefore not considered possible to implement this plan
<b>Court House</b>	Finance in place for work to refurbish in place with new museum rooms and disabled access	Refurbishment complete
<b>The Butts car park</b>	Retain parking but improve streetscape and highlight existence of footpath to St Mary's church	Signage in place for footpath. Streetscape improvements out of WDC hands
<b>Small car parks on Castle Street and Castle Lane</b>	Development of one car park and improve public realm. Make 'gateway' to town centre opposite	Car parking space loss deemed too controversial. No public support for the scheme in spite of proposed improvements to the Castle gate area and formation of a more inviting town access



	Castle gate to encourage visitors into the town	
<b>New Street car park</b>	Retain as car park, or retail, market, employment, mixed use	Well used car parking space loss deemed too controversial in very central location. No public support for the scheme
<b>Adjacent Bus station</b>	Further retail or residential	Excluded as bus station is working well. Car park adjacent to existing retail units is popular and well utilised. Not carried forward
<b>West Rock car park</b>	Low level car park beneath residential	Planning application for 13 dwellings (3 houses and 10 apartments), all affordable housing, refused planning permission (April 2015) on grounds of loss of car parking
<b>Priory Road/Chapel Row car park</b>	Residential with car parking beneath	Loss of car parking spaces, particularly popular for school pick-ups. No public support
<b>Castle Stables</b>	Hotel with two levels of underground car parking	Castle owners pursuing plans for visitor accommodation within the Castle grounds therefore this would not be needed. Would need to be designed carefully to take account of sensitive historic setting and location. Potential for archaeology on site once development commenced. Complicated access. No public support
<b>Market Hall</b>	Covered market forming commercial centre piece to improved Market Place	WCC decided to retain existing museum use. Market Place needs to be clear for Mop Fair. Recent consultation on retention of the fair in this location or removal to location outside town centre was narrowly in favour of retention in current location
<b>Eastgate</b>	Public realm improvements to reduce clutter and improve setting of Landor House and Eastgate	Out of WDC hands
<b>Pedestrian route</b>	Direct route for	Misunderstood by many at public consultation as meaning

	pedestrians from Warwick Castle to town centre	pedestrianisation, the highway works completed on Jury Street/High Street has provided a crossing place which leads directly from Castle Street
--	--	---

## Warwickshire County Council – Warwick Corporate Assets

Update for Warwick District Council June 2015

<b>1</b>	<b>Northgate House</b>	Creation of conference centre complete and in operation
<b>2</b>	<b>Court Office (Northgate South)</b>	Sold as part of Northgate Street and Butts disposal to Ash Mill Northgate LLP in July 13. Redevelopment in progress
<b>3</b>	<b>Warwickshire Museum Store &amp; Offices , The Butts</b>	Sold as part of Northgate Street and Butts disposal to Ash Mill Northgate LLP in July 13. Redevelopment in progress
<b>4</b>	<b>Northgate Street</b>	Sold as part of Northgate Street and Butts disposal to Ash Mill Northgate LLP in July 13. Redevelopment in progress
<b>5</b>	<b>Old Shire Hall &amp; Courts</b>	Currently out to Tender for an operator, tender return due 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2015, anticipate operations commence form April 2016
<b>6</b>	<b>Shire Hall / Council Offices 1930's Block &amp; Members Area</b>	Office refurbished increasing occupancy density completed Sept 14, including adoption of agile working standards
<b>7</b>	<b>Barrack Street</b>	Library relocated to GF of Shire Hall, vacated space being used as office accommodation whilst long term future of asset is considered
<b>8</b>	<b>Saltisford</b>	All in use as corporate office space, increased density in Saltisford 2 completed with Building 1 & 3 to follow
<b>9</b>	<b>Shire Hall Frontage / Facade</b>	Library relocated to GF of Shire Hall including the addition of ramped access to main doors creating one font door for public services. No plans, at this time, to make changes to facade
<b>10</b>	<b>Pageant House / The Old Clink / Swan Street</b>	Pageant House – used by Registrars as wedding venue only, Registrars now

		located in Shire Hall GF The Old Clink – used as base for Coventry & Warwickshire LEP Swan Street – leased surrender Jan 2010, staff relocated to Barrack Street
<b>11</b>	<b>One Stop Shop</b>	One stop Shop – Warwickshire Direct in place on GF of Shire Hall
<b>12</b>	<b>Post Office</b>	Post Office in operation on GF Shire Hall
<b>13</b>	<b>Former Coffee Tavern, 16 Old Square</b>	Currently under offer anticipate disposal / completed in early autumn 15
<b>14</b>	<b>Market Hall Museum</b>	Market Hall Museum to become a "flagship site" for the county's heritage allowing greater access to collections. Supported by a recent Heritage Lottery Fund grant , works will commence shortly and complete in late summer 2016