

## Cabinet

30 June 2025

### Part 1 - Public

#### Executive Non-key Decision



Cabinet Member	Adem Mehmet (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure & Tonbridge Regeneration)
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield (Director of Central Services) and Eleanor Hoyle (Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health)
Report Author	Dean Radmore (Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Manager)

#### Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Framework

### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report presents the Masterplan Framework and Viability Reports that are the culmination of the East of High Street (EOHS) Masterplan exercise that has been carried out by consultants Mace, Architects Periscope & Commercial Property Specialist Vail Williams since December 2024. It recommends these reports to Members and proposes that the Framework is subject to a period of public engagement alongside detailed development of a delivery strategy.

### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Investing in our local economic to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth.
- 2.2 Under this theme, the Corporate Strategy identifies 'ways we could use our land and other assets better, especially in Tonbridge town centre'.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the site development and delivery options in the Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan Framework Report at **Annex 1** and that Members are invited to comment on these ahead of a more detailed report in October 2025.
- 3.2 That Cabinet notes the Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan Viability Report at **Annex 2** (Part 2 – Private) and the Masterplan Viability Report Appendix 2 Market Insight & Benchmarking at **Annex 3** (Part 2 - Private).

- 3.3 That Cabinet supports the recommendation of the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board in the meeting on 23rd May 2025 at **Annex 4** (Part 2 - Private) that a public engagement exercise be undertaken on the Masterplan Framework document, based on the views expressed by the Programme Board.

#### **4 Introduction and Background**

- 4.1 The Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan work has been completed by Mace, Architects Periscope and Commercial Property Specialists Vail Williams between December 2024 and June 2025. They were appointed following a competitive procurement process.
- 4.2 The Consultants were responsible for preparing a high-level illustrative masterplan and spatial development proposals, supported by viability and delivery analysis, to support meeting the housing and employment growth requirements for the area.

#### **5 Proposal**

- 5.1 That a public engagement exercise be undertaken on the Masterplan Framework document, based on the views expressed by the Programme Board at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2025. This exercise would run from mid-July for a period of 6 weeks. Although the survey will be hosted digitally to allow responses to be efficiently collated, the Council is committed to working with the community in Tonbridge to ensure that everyone can access the information. Local Members will be a key conduit to share information and it is also proposed that key town centre sites including the Angel Centre, Tonbridge Pool and the Castle have information available. Digital channels will also be utilised to maximum effect via the Council's social media presence.
- 5.2 Work will be undertaken over the summer to provide more detail on the delivery routes proposed in section 5 of the Masterplan Framework report in order that a more detailed programme of work, including any funding bid opportunities, procurement requirements and commercial stakeholder engagement can all be undertaken as required following Member consideration of proposals and of the outcomes of the engagement exercise.
- 5.3 The viability report is included as a confidential annex to this report. This gives Members a point in time assessment of market conditions relating to these development sites against a context of nationally challenging conditions due to factors including rising build costs and the Building Safety Act requirements on development.
- 5.4 Alongside Government announcements in the Spending Review, it is expected that some of these factors will alter and new prevailing factors are likely to emerge. It is therefore important that whilst noting the viability position is challenging at present, conditions may change by the time developments are considered in detail or sites prepared for marketing. In addition to this, challenging

viability, which is a hallmark of town centre schemes, is a factor that may enable Government funding to be sought to support scheme delivery.

## **6 Other Options**

- 6.1 That a public engagement exercise is not carried out on the Masterplan Framework document – Members could move to adopt the Framework without an engagement exercise. However, it is considered good practice to ensure that this work is shared with local stakeholders to allow them both to understand the process and the potentially deliverable options as well as being able to comment on these proposals and raise issues and questions.
- 6.2 That no work is undertaken over the summer to progress delivery options. This would mean that the Council loses a valuable opportunity to gather information and evidence and with the potential for Local Government Reorganisation in the coming years, it is considered of value to ensure that a clear delivery strategy is in place to guide future approaches to these sites.

## **7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 7.1 As noted above, viability of the overall scheme is currently challenging, which it is for all town centre regeneration schemes. As work progresses, opportunities for any external grant funding to support delivery will be explored.
- 7.2 Viability will continue to be reviewed and re-assessed as part of any proposals that come forward for consideration.
- 7.3 Any funding or value for money considerations will be monitored, reviewed and recommended by the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board to ensure that any expenditure on the town centre programme is managed appropriately.
- 7.4 The cost of the engagement exercise is officer time, as the materials are being produced internally and the analysis will also be carried out by officers.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 A project risk register is regularly reviewed and updated for the East of High Street Masterplan project. With regards to the specific recommendations in this report, a key risk is that the engagement process is not successful due to limited publicity or time. This risk will be mitigated via the actions identified in this report and also through the engagement activity lasting 6 weeks, with 2 weeks 'lead in' time following approval, which meets good practice guidance on length of time for engagement exercises.
- 8.2 There are currently two other significant public engagement exercises relating to Tonbridge that are likely to be running concurrently with the Masterplan Framework engagement exercise. These include the public consultation on the creation of a Tonbridge Town Council and a public engagement exercise relating

to the facility mix for the replacement Angel Centre. Consideration is being given to ensure there is clear messaging and how the Masterplan Framework and replacement Angel Centre engagements link.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The project is being progressed through an internal Project Officer Group. Legal Services and the Mid Kent Procurement Partnership have been involved and will continue to be involved to ensure all legal requirements are met.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

- 10.1 A public engagement exercise has previously taken place as part of the masterplan exercise with an online survey for businesses and the public taking place between 30<sup>th</sup> January and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
- 10.2 Engagement with key stakeholders has also taken place during the masterplan exercise including Network Rail, Sainsbury's, KCC, Alliance Leisure, Tonbridge Civic Society, Tonbridge Historical Society and Warders Medical Centre & PHP Group.
- 10.3 Discussions will continue to take place with Sainsbury's, KCC, Warders Medical Centre & PHP Group, Alliance Leisure, Tonbridge Civic Society and Tonbridge Historical Society.

## **11 Implementation**

- 11.1 The proposed timeline for the Masterplan Framework public engagement is between mid-July and the end of August 2025.
- 11.2 Following the public engagement any feedback will be evaluated and the Masterplan Framework updated prior to meeting with the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board in September and then returning to Cabinet in October 2025 with a recommendation from the programme board for adoption of the Masterplan Framework.

## **12 Cross Cutting Issues**

- 12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity
- 12.1.1 Climate change advice has been sought during the masterplan exercise and sustainability is a key aspect to the proposed replacement Angel Centre project which is the catalyst development within the masterplan area.
- 12.2 Equalities and Diversity
- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### 12.3 Other If Relevant

12.3.1 Procurement – Advice and guidance has been, and will continue to be, sought from the Mid Kent Procurement Team to ensure compliance with legislation.

Background Papers	
Annexes	<p>Annex 1 - Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Framework Report</p> <p>Annex 2 – Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Viability Report (Part 2 – Private)</p> <p>Annex 3 – Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Viability Report Appendix 2 Market Insight &amp; Benchmarking (Part 2 – Private)</p> <p>Annex 4 – Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board notes from 23rd May 2025 (Part 2 – Private)</p>