

Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Framework



Delivery Strategy

October 2025

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Tonbridge Town Centre east of High Street Masterplan Framework Delivery Strategy expands on the information contained within sections 4 (Masterplan Framework) & 5 (Delivery) of the East of High Street Masterplan Framework report, providing more detail on the proposed delivery options and timescales and taking into account the results of the Masterplan Framework public engagement survey and proposing the preferred phasing of delivery within the context of Local Government Reorganisation timescales.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan work was 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Following completion of the masterplan, a public engagement exercise was undertaken between 14th July and 31st August 2025 on the Masterplan Framework document. Although the survey was hosted digitally to allow responses to be efficiently collated, the Council was committed to working with the community in Tonbridge to ensure that everyone could access the information. Local Members were a key conduit to sharing information and key town centre sites including the Angel Centre, and the Castle had information available.

3 Context

3.1 Local Government Reorganisation

- 3.1.1 On 16th December 2024, shortly after the start of the masterplan exercise the Government published its English Devolution White Paper that set out the Government's current thinking on their priorities for Local Government. The Government's preferred model for local government as Strategic Combined Authorities with an elected mayor, and sitting underneath that, a number of Principal Unitary Authorities.
- 3.1.2 In early February 2025, Kent and Medway heard that they had not been included in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme meaning they would not be part of the fast-track programme for the creation of the new Mayoral Strategic Combined Authority and the new Unitary Councils.
- 3.1.3 In July 2025, the Government published the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. The Bill re-asserts the Government's intentions and paves the way for the legislation necessary for them to deliver Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution as quickly and as smoothly as possible.
- 3.1.4 Currently the existing Councils in Kent, including Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council are still on track to come together to form new Unitary Councils in April 2028. However, the delivery of this timetable is still dependent on central Government.

- 3.1.5 This means, that if timescales for Local Government Reorganisation are in line with current projections Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council will be part of a larger Unitary Council from April 2028 and can therefore no longer be responsible after this date, for solely delivering the developments within the masterplan area.
- 3.1.6 While Devolution is different from Local Government Reorganisation, the majority of Councils in Kent are still keen that this happens at the same time as it promises more funding, powers and influence for local government through the creation of a new Strategic Combined Authority and elected Mayor sitting above the new Unitary Councils in Kent.
- 3.1.7 While the Government's Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill puts an even greater emphasis on the role of elected Mayors and Strategic Combined Authorities, the timetable for Devolution in the Kent region has yet to be confirmed. Devolution cannot happen in advance of Local Government Reorganisation. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council will therefore continue to make the case to Government for this to happen as soon as possible, ideally from April 2028, to align with the creation of the new Unitary Councils.

4 Masterplan Framework Survey Results

- 4.1.1 The Masterplan Framework survey was based on the delivery options put forward within section 5 of the Masterplan Framework Report. The survey contained questions relating to community status (resident, business owner, employee, visitor), age, frequency and reasons for visiting Tonbridge along with development options for specific sites within the east of High Street masterplan area and wider masterplan area.
- 4.1.2 The Masterplan webpage on the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council website was viewed more than 17,370 times over the duration of the survey period and there were over 100,000 views on the Council's social media feeds. The survey itself received 1458 responses. Key responses to the survey were as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A new GP surgery, to provide more capacity for an existing GP practice	64%	27%	6%	3%
Is Sovereign Way North car park the most appropriate for residential development	13%	38%	23%	25%
Create a riverside park along the south bank of the river tributary	48%	42%	6%	4%
The regeneration proposals will be good for Tonbridge	38%	41%	11%	9%

	Residential	New GP Surgery
Part of Sovereign Way East car park has been identified for either residential development or a new GP surgery. What do you feel would be most beneficial in this location?	8%	92%

	Residential	Hotel
Vale Road car park has been identified for either residential development or an 80-bed hotel. What do you feel would be most beneficial in this location?	60%	40%

	Residential/Mixed-use	Remain as parking
Should the Angel West car park be developed for residential/mixed-use or should this remain as parking?	16%	84%

	Residential	Mixed-use development	Other
Once the new Angel Centre is completed, what should the old Angel Centre site be used for?	15%	59%	26%

4.1.3 382 responses were received for 'Other' in relation to the use for the old Angel Centre site. The highest number of responses can be categorised in order as follows:

Once the new Angel Centre is completed, what should the old Angel Centre site be used for?	Number of Responses
Parking	82
Retention of the existing Angel Centre	56
Entertainment complex (cinema/bowling)	45
Retail	30
Commercial	19
Community	19
Leisure	18
Green / Open Space	17
No development	11
No Residential	10
Youth Hub	10
Residential	8

- 4.1.4 Written responses to the survey were also provided from Tonbridge Historical Society and Tonbridge Civic Society following meetings held with them on 27th August 2025. TMBC officers will continue to work with both the Historical Society and Civic Society within the tight timescales for the Angel Centre and on future sites where there may be more opportunities.
- 4.1.5 The results of the public engagement survey means that there are minimal changes required to the Masterplan Framework. However, an Addendum will be included with the Masterplan Framework to provide more clarity on parking within the east of High Street masterplan area and the proposed use(s) for Angel West car park.

5 Linking with the Local Plan

- 5.1.1 Reference to the Masterplan Framework is being made within the Spatial Strategy section of the Reg 18(2) of the emerging Local Plan. This will be finalised at the Regulation 19 stage.
- 5.1.2 Following adoption of the Masterplan Framework all development sites within the east of High Street Masterplan area will be submitted during the next available round of Call for Sites.

6 Phasing Strategy & Timetable

6.1 Phasing

- 6.1.1 It is important to recognise that the delivery of development sites within the masterplan area will be carried out in a phased approach. The delivery of sites is likely to be dependent on many factors including viability, market conditions, developer/funder appetite, opportunities, risks, and completion of other sites. This could take numerous years in total, with sites brought forward at different points in time.
- 6.1.2 One advantage of a phased delivery is that the availability of parking will be rationalised incrementally in the east of High Street masterplan area over a longer period. While there will be a reduction of overall public parking ultimately in the east of High Street masterplan area, this can be managed and consideration can be given to alternative parking options as the scheme develops.
- 6.1.3 The current parking provision in the east of High Street area is as follows:

Car Park	Standard Bays	Disabled Bays	Motorcycle Bays	EV Charging Points	Total Bays
Angel East	371	20	2	0	393
Angel West	197	3	2	0	202
Sovereign Way Mid	112	0	0	0	112
Sovereign Way East	67	0	2	0	69
Sovereign Way North	164	4	0	12	180
Vale Road	31	0	0	0	31

6.1.4 Car parking usage 7am to 7pm (based on December 2022 data):

Car Park	Average Occupancy (Wed)	Maximum Occupancy (Wed)	Average Occupancy (Sat)	Maximum Occupancy (Sat)
Angel East	26%	48%	31%	55%
Angel West	49%	93%	50%	85%
Sovereign Way Mid	42%	69%	28%	39%
Sovereign Way East	No data available at the time			
Sovereign Way North	22%	29%	20%	28%
Vale Road	No vehicles	No vehicles	1%	3%

6.1.5 The parking post development is likely to be as follows:

Development Location	Post Development
Angel East car park	All bays retained
Angel West car park	All bays retained for the medium term
Sovereign Way Mid car park	Some bays likely to be retained for DDA parking
Sovereign Way East car park	Some bays to be retained for surgery & leisure centre customers
Sovereign Way North car park	Parking for development will be kept within the site
Existing Angel Centre site	Parking for development will be kept within the site
Vale Road car park	Parking may be kept within the site depending on the development

6.1.6 This will mean that over 60% of the current parking provision within the east of High Street masterplan area will be retained. The Council will look to enhance parking opportunities in this location to support future demand and economic growth in line with feedback from the survey. Further car parking surveys will also be undertaken as the developments progress.

6.2 Sovereign Way Mid Car Park

- 6.2.1 Initial survey & design work is already underway for the new leisure centre with completion of RIBA 4 (technical design) currently planned for Summer 2026.
- 6.2.2 It is anticipated that the RIBA stage 4 review will then be carried out by the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board, followed by Lead Cabinet Members, then Cabinet and then Full Council in Summer/Autumn 2026. If approval to proceed to RIBA 5 (Construction) is recommended, and approved at the final stage at Full Council, the Construction Contract can then be entered into by Autumn 2026. This will be subject to a spending freeze not being implemented by Central Government before this time as a result of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 6.2.3 If approval to proceed to construction is granted, the current construction period is currently planned to be between Autumn 2026 and Summer 2028.

6.3 Sovereign Way East Car Park

- 6.3.1 In relation to the development on Sovereign Way East discussion will continue with Warders Medical Centre and their chosen development partner, PHP Group and the NHS Integrated Care Board in relation to the relocated GP Surgery.
- 6.3.2 Members will determine if the GP Surgery development moves forward from a landowner perspective, however this will be dependent on the viability of the development which is directly reliant on the cost of the development versus the funding the NHS/ICB can provide. The GP Surgery should only be progressed if the new facility provides additionality in services and capacity for the benefit of the town.
- 6.3.3 The Council will need to ensure it achieves best value in all property transactions and options for ensuring that is the case for each site/development will be explored.

6.4 Sovereign Way North Car Park

- 6.4.1 TMBC to consider undertaking site surveys to de-risk the site but only with external funding if available.
- 6.4.2 The Council will look to promote a residential led scheme subject to development viability and preferable market conditions.

6.5 Existing Angel Centre

- 6.5.1 Due to delivery timescales of the new leisure facility, development of the existing Angel Centre will be after Summer/Autumn 2028.
- 6.5.2 The Council should arrange demolition of the existing building as soon as reasonably practicable once the new leisure centre is in operation, and look to recover the cost from either developments within the masterplan area or other external funding opportunities if possible, whilst giving consideration to any temporary viable short term use. This will remove the need for significant hoarding and costs, associated with securing and maintaining the building, and prevent the site from being left for a lengthy period of time prior to any future development.

- 6.5.3 TMBC to consider undertaking site surveys to de-risk the site but only with external funding if available.

6.6 Vale Road Car Park

- 6.6.1 The results from the masterplan framework survey indicated a preference for a residential development on Vale Road car park rather than a hotel (60%/40%). Although both options have viability challenges, based on the results of the survey, the preference is for residential.
- 6.6.2 Any development on the site will need to ensure access to the adjacent Angel Indoor Bowls Club.
- 6.6.3 TMBC to consider undertaking site surveys to de-risk the site but only with external funding if available.

6.7 Angel West Car Park

- 6.7.1 The survey showed clear public support to retain this area for parking. The Council will look to enhance parking opportunities in this location to support future demand and economic growth in the medium term.

6.8 Linear Riverside Park

- 6.8.1 The linear riverside park to the north of the east of High Street masterplan area and adjacent to the south bank of the river tributary will be delivered in stages, paid from S106 funding from developments within the masterplan area.
- 6.8.2 It is anticipated that the section between Angel Lane and Sovereign Way will be delivered first with the section adjacent to the Sovereign Way North car park being delivered alongside the residential development on that site.
- 6.8.3 TMBC will commission and adopt a design framework for the linear park to ensure if delivery is in phases, there will be a consistent approach to design and finishes. The linear park is to be delivered with the availability of S106 funding from developments within the east of High Street masterplan area or with other external funding opportunities.

6.9 Proposed Phasing Timetable

Site	Proposed Development	Proposed Delivery Timescales	Additional Comments
Angel East car park	No current development planned		Retained as car parking
Angel West car park	No current development planned in the short/medium term		Retained as car parking
Sovereign Way Mid car park	New Angel Leisure Centre	Autumn/Winter 2026 – Summer 2028	Delivery subject to any spending restrictions ahead of Local

			Government Reorganisation
Sovereign Way East car park	GP Surgery/Residential	Delivery subject to viability & NHS approval to proceed.	Subject to TMBC Member approval
Sovereign Way North	Site Surveys	2026/2027	Delivery of initial site surveys to be carried out subject to external funding
Sovereign Way North car park	Residential development	Delivery subject to viability	Subject to TMBC Member approval
Existing Angel Centre site	Explore viable temporary use/Demolition/Site surveys	June 2028 onwards	Temporary viable use and/or demolition of the existing building following completion of the new facility Delivery of initial site surveys subject to external funding
Existing Angel Centre site	Commercial/Residential	Delivery subject to viability	Delivery subject to completion of the new leisure centre & TMBC Member approval
Vale Road car park	Site Surveys	2026/2027	Delivery of initial site surveys to be carried out subject to external funding
Vale Road car park	Residential	Delivery subject to viability	Subject to TMBC Member approval
Linear Park	Design framework	2026	Development of design framework
Linear Park	Creation of linear park	When funding is available	Progression subject to availability of S106 funding from developments within the masterplan area or other external

			funding opportunities
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7 Governance and Review

- 7.1.1 Member recommendations and approvals will be required prior to any development activities detailed in this Delivery Strategy, including any agreements/sales being entered into, in line with the Council's constitution.
- 7.1.2 All development activities will first be discussed at the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board who will make recommendations to Cabinet/Cabinet Members. Cabinet Members will be able to take Non-Key Decisions relating to their portfolios, in line with the Council's Constitution. Any recommendations on non-executive matters will be referred to the full Council.
- 7.1.3 This delivery strategy shall be reviewed by the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board on an annual basis.

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Serving our community

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