

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Officer - Regulatory & Regeneration

Infrastructure, Regeneration & Economic Development Committee

15 September 2021

Subject: Alexandria Town Centre Masterplan

1 Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the new masterplan for Alexandria, to outline its broad content and to seek approval to use it to guide future projects and development.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee:
- approves the masterplan;
 - notes the requirement for cross-Service collaboration to achieve the aspirations of the Masterplan, and
 - authorises the development of projects and commencement of procurement processes relating to the projects contained within it as funding opportunities arise.

3. Background

- 3.1** During 2019 there was a renewed interest from the local community in the regeneration of Alexandria. This was prompted by the results of community consultations organised by the Vale of Leven Trust and by The Clydesider periodical in which local people expressed their concerns about the future of the town and identified the need for collaborative action. The Council re-established the Alexandria Town Centre Forum in June 2019 and, at its meeting in August 2019, there was agreement that a new masterplan was required to secure the successful regeneration of Alexandria town centre and that the community must be at its core.
- 3.2** In October 2019, the Council appointed a consultancy team to prepare a revised masterplan. The last masterplan was completed in 2008. The context for delivery has changed greatly since then. A new masterplan was needed to realistically guide and stimulate the regeneration of Alexandria in light of the changed economic climate and be in line with community aspirations, and also provide the strategic context to deliver future projects and development by the Council and its partners over the next 15 years. The area included is the town centre (as defined in the local development plan), Christie Park and the site of the privately owned Lomond Galleries to its north.
- 3.3** In parallel with the development of a new masterplan, Alexandria Community Action Network (ACAN) has been preparing a neighbourhood plan for the

town as a whole, which will have a wider social and economic scope. There has been regular dialogue with ACAN to ensure that both plans will complement each other. The emerging priorities for the neighbourhood plan were consulted on at the same time as the draft masterplan. Refer paragraph 10 below. The emerging priorities are grouped under five themes - Economic vibrancy, Infrastructure, Green and Sustainable, Health and wellbeing and Heritage. These priorities helped shape the masterplan.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The revised Masterplan is contained in Appendix 1. It has been subject to extensive consultation and been developed in close liaison with the community and other stakeholders.
- 4.2** The aim of the masterplan is that Alexandria town centre regains its role as the Heart of the Vale. This will involve:
- Boosting enterprise and community activity
 - Creating an attractive and comfortable environment
 - Making it easy and safe to move around
 - Celebrating the town's proud heritage
 - Providing new homes for more people to live in the town centre
- 4.2** To achieve these outcomes the masterplan provides a clear and realistic framework to guide land use, development and spatial interventions over the next 15 years. It will be the main tool to transform the image and appeal of the town centre, Christie Park and the site of Lomond Galleries, unlock their potential and maximise opportunities.
- 4.3** It reflects and contributes to the delivery of national policy priorities including 20 minute neighbourhoods, carbon reduction, placemaking and community empowerment. It is compatible with the Local Development Plan and will help guide decision-making in relation to land, buildings, streets, spaces, transport, economic development and planning.
- 4.4.** The masterplan comprises 12 strategic projects which positively respond to community and stakeholder aspirations. These are described in section 3 of the masterplan and relate to:-

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Main Street | 8. Community Education Centre |
| 2. Smollet Fountain | 9. Green Heritage Corridors |
| 3. Property Improvements | 10. Cycling and Walking Network |
| 4. Mitchell Way | 11. Christie Park |
| 5. New Homes | 12. Lomond Galleries |
| 6. Alexandria Library | |
| 7. St Andrews Church | |

It is acknowledged that no single project will turn the town centre around, but taken together they will support the town centre to regain its role as the Heart of the Vale. The consultation on the draft masterplan asked people to score

the projects in terms of importance on a scale of 1 to 5. All projects scored above average, ranging being between 3.5 and 4.6. For each project the masterplan sets out an outline description, the community comments received and the next steps to secure project delivery.

- 4.5** The successful implementation of the Masterplan projects depends on a collaborative approach. Some of the projects will be taken forward by the Council but it will be the cumulative effect of the 12 projects, delivered by various stakeholders, over a number of years, which will cumulatively transform Alexandria town centre. The Masterplan will focus minds, help each partner attract funding, and act as a guide for detailed design and delivery of the projects. To ensure that the aspirations expressed in the Masterplan are delivered, the projects will be developed in collaboration with community groups that give schools, heritage groups and a range of other organisations the opportunity to have their voice heard. Engagement will also continue with Alexandria Town Centre Forum which represents a range of town centre interests. Suggestions have been put forward in the Masterplan to support implementation and potential costs, estimated timescales and lead stakeholder indicated for each project.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** Delivery of the masterplan will require commitment from various Council services utilising existing staff resources. The cross-Service collaboration and partnerships with external partners achieved during the production of the Masterplan will continue into the delivery phase

6. Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Funding for projects will be sourced as opportunities arise. This could be from existing council budgets or from external funding. Projects will not commence until funding has been identified and approved, but where possible and as resources permit, projects will be designed to a shovel-ready stage to take advantage of new funding opportunities.
- 6.2** The Procurement for individual projects will be discussed and agreed with the procurement service. However, at this point committee approval is sought to commence procurement processes to deliver the projects at the appropriate stage.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Failure to implement the masterplan projects could prevent the regeneration of Alexandria being realised and, thereby, contribute to the decline of the town centre, and the needs and aspirations of the community not being addressed . In addition, there is a risk that without detailed project proposals it will be difficult to build a case for future funding bids.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1** An EIA was prepared as part of the masterplan process. No significant issues were identified in relation to equality impact and further screening and impact assessments will be carried out for projects as they are developed.

9. Environmental Sustainability

- 9.1** There will be 'zero carbon' proposals emerging from the Alexandria Masterplan that will make a positive contribution to environmental sustainability. And all projects will be considered in how they contribute to the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

10. Consultation

- 10.1** As indicated above there has been extensive consultation throughout the masterplan process. In late 2019 and early 2020 various engagement activities to explore the future of the town centre were organised before any proposals had been drafted. These included:

- An initial Council stakeholder meeting in Clydebank Town Hall on 26 Nov 2019;
- Council members consulted with primarily through Alexandria Town Centre Forum;
- The setting up of a dedicated website (www.alexandria.town) to capture community and stakeholder comments on the town centre;
- One-to-one discussions with businesses in the town centre ;
- An afternoon/evening 'Bake'n'Blether" community drop-in event in the former Lagavulin bistro on Main Street on 5 February 2020;
- Sessions with school pupils in Vale of Leven Academy, St Marys Primary and Christie Park Primary;
- Council Place and Design Panel Session on 19 February 2020, and
- Regular meetings/ discussions with ACAN (which continued throughout the masterplan process).

From March 2020 the planned consultation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and consultation since then has been online.

- 10.2** There have been various online stakeholder meetings with council officers, ACAN, community groups and the Alexandria Town Centre Forum which have informed the draft masterplan and this was consulted on over a three week period in May and June 2021. The consultation was held via the website www.alexandria.town and attracted over 1,800 responses. It also consulted on the emerging priorities for the town-wide action plan. The outcome of the consultation is available on the website.

- 10.3** Following Committee approval the final masterplan may be subject to minor revision to address additional comments received, particularly in relation to the role of the Council and community in delivering the action plan, next steps

for specific projects and the masterplan's relationship with the Local Development Plan.

11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 The masterplan will support Council's strategic priorities to:

- improve economic growth;
- improve environmentally sustainable infrastructure; and
- improve the wellbeing of communities.

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Appendices: Appendix 1- Alexandria Masterplan 2021

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: 1, Lomond and 2, Leven