

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Executive – 21 December 2022**

### **Wellington Place Plan – Approval for Public Consultation**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby**

**Report Author: Sarah Povall, Principal Planning Policy Officer**

#### **1 Executive Summary/Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the draft Wellington Place Plan to go out for public consultation for a period of 4 weeks, from 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- 1.2 Somerset West and Taunton Council has commissioned consultants Allies and Morrison, Avison Young, and LUC to prepare the Place Plan for Wellington, including: a Vision, Spatial Framework, and Infrastructure and Implementation Plan. The Place Plan will inform decisions about the development, regeneration and conservation of the town and be a long-term strategy for the future of Wellington that will inform the future Somerset wide Local Plan.
- 1.3 The public consultation is a statutory requirement to enable the document to be adopted as planning guidance and to be considered a material consideration in decision-making activities. Following a review of the document, considering any comments and observations made during the consultation process, the intention is to take the Plan to Full Council for adoption as planning guidance.
- 1.4 It is not appropriate to adopt the Place Plan as part of the Local Development Scheme, at this moment in time, as a Local Plan for the new unitary authority is under consideration. However, this work will be fundamental in informing and supporting the development of the new Local Plan, which will then be formally adopted as policy.
- 1.5 Once adopted, the Place Plan will be referred to in determining planning applications and considering regeneration and conservation activities to ensure we are protecting and enhancing the quality of place in Wellington.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- (1) To approve the Draft Wellington Place Plan for public consultation for a four-week period and that the Assistant Director Strategic Place and

Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Draft Place Plan prior to the public consultation.

(2) To note that, following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the documents, it is intended that the final Wellington Place Plan will be considered by the Executive for endorsement as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the area of the Plan.

### **3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

- 3.1 The main risk is not managing to reach a representative proportion of all groups in Wellington, meaning that these voices are not heard in this consultation exercise. This will be mitigated against through our Consultation Strategy (Appendix A), which considers a breadth of consultation material and forms of engagement to meet a variety of needs; including those who find it difficult to engage.
- 3.2 There is also a significant risk, given the very tight timetable, that the Place Plan might not get adopted by Full Council by vesting day.

### **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council are producing a Place Plan for Wellington comprising a Vision, Spatial Framework and Implementation Plan. Allies and Morrison, Avison Young and Land Use Consultants have been commissioned to support the Council in preparing the document. The Place Plan will aid the council in its decisions around the development, regeneration and conservation of Wellington moving forward. The Place Plan will feed into the future Somerset Wide Local Plan evidence base.
- 4.2 Wellington is a town with a rich history, impressive landscape setting and strong retail, leisure and employment offer. The town has a market town function for the Somerset West and Taunton District alongside its extensive offer of independent shops and restaurants. The town is subject to unique challenges such as demands on infrastructure and heritage-at-risk, but is also subject to nation-wide challenges such as climate change and shifting retail patterns.
- 4.3 With the delivery of the new railway station, anticipated in May 2025, and the associated push on development opportunities, Wellington needs a holistic framework to guide future growth to support housing and employment needs.
- 4.4 The draft Place Plan follows the development of the Baseline Report and Vision Document. The Baseline Report sets out the main characteristics of Wellington, including the main highlights and challenges with reference to the planning, urban design, landscape, economic and social context. This was

used to inform the visioning exercise, which took place in October 2022, which in turn sets the context for the Place Plan itself.

#### 4.5 The Draft Wellington Place Plan does the following:

- i. Sets the scene in establishing baseline information related to the physical, social and economic context of the town and surrounding area
- ii. Sets out **land-use, design and management principles/guidelines** and development priorities for different sections of Wellington and Tonedale
- iii. Identifies areas of search for growth opportunities, identifying potential appropriate uses and clarity about the form and function of these areas in connecting with the town and the vision
- iv. Various elements or functions that could act as catalysts for change
- v. **Image, neighbourhood character and heritage** – showing the integration of contextual features, including topography, water and distinctive landscape and heritage features; and identifies character areas and appropriate development and management strategies within those areas
- vi. Shows the existing network of **open space and public realm**, and opportunities to protect, enhance and expand this. This takes into account active and passive uses for the design and layout considerations
- vii. The location of significant **biodiversity** values and how to protect, enhance and manage these
- viii. Consideration of **integrated water management and utilities**, particularly waterways and catchment areas and **phosphate mitigation solutions**
- ix. Transport – the hierarchy of streets, **pedestrian and cycle paths, and public transport** and freight routes, including rail; with priority given to public transport, walking and cycling
- x. Sets out a sustainable transport strategy for the area, including implementing “first mile last mile” objectives associated with the delivery of a new railway station for Wellington; and promotes active travel links to bring the town together
- xi. Identifies development opportunities, including early-stage projects for immediate delivery, which could unlock the development potential, including future employment site allocations or extensions
- xii. Includes an **Infrastructure and Implementation Plan**, which sets out the key steps necessary to implement the major projects identified, including the requirements for and likelihood of external funding
- xiii. Includes **Monitoring Indicators**, which will enable officers to annually assess progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the Plan.

#### 4.6 The Draft Wellington Place Plan can be found in Appendix B (to follow).

### 5 Links to Corporate Strategy

#### 5.1 The Draft Wellington Place Plan is an important document which will help

articulate and translate the Council's strategic objectives into planning policy. This decision is linked to delivering the following Corporate Strategy themes:

- *“A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles”*
- *“A district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it”*

## **6 Finance/Resource Implications**

6.1 The estimated cost for delivering the Wellington Place Plan consultation in this paper will be £2,000, to be spent on publicity and consultation during the 2022-2023 financial year. The estimated cost for delivering the full and completed Wellington Place Plan is estimated to be £91,962 – this includes: the SA/SEA Scoping Report; the Baseline Report; Vision Report; Implementation Plan and Monitoring Indicators.

6.2 The costs associated with developing the Wellington Place Plan, including the public consultation exercise, is being met through officer time and existing budgets.

## **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 The Council's Constitution describes how Somerset West and Taunton will discharge its responsibilities, including responsibilities for the preparation and adoption of the planning policy and guidance, which must be considered and endorsed by Full Council, prior to adoption.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

8.1 The Draft Wellington Place Plan seeks to bring together the CNCR, Ecological Emergency Action Plan and climate positive planning for Wellington; together with a vision for development, conservation and regeneration of the town.

8.2 The climate emergency, and our response to it, is a strong theme running throughout the document. The Plan aims to mitigate the climate emergency and adapt to its effects. It covers issues including reducing carbon emissions through walking, cycling and public transport, the location of development in sustainable locations, the energy efficiency of buildings, renewable energy, biodiversity enhancements, tree planting and flood risk.

## **9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

9.1 None identified.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

10.1 None at this stage. In order to comply with the public sector equality duty: an

Impact Assessments (IA) will be prepared as part of the plan making process. Further, details of the process are also available from:  
<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/>

## 11 Social Value Implications

11.1 This project is intended to have a high social value, by promoting community engagement to embrace a shared vision for the town; as well as aspirations as the town continues to grow.

## 12 Partnership Implications

12.1 SWT has been working collaboratively with Wellington Town Council and Somerset County Council in the development of this document.

## 13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 None identified.

## 14 Asset Management Implications

14.1 None identified

## 15 Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s)

15.1 To follow.

### Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny/Audit and Governance Committee – No
- Executive – 21 December 2022
- Full Council – No

**Reporting Frequency: Once only**

**List of Appendices (background papers to the report) (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix A	Wellington Place Plan – Consultation Strategy
Appendix B	Consultation Draft Wellington Place Plan

### Contact Officers

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