DRAFT ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

1. Purpose of Decision

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet agreement to publish, for consultation purposes, the draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as attached in Annex 1.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has undertaken work over many years to help support and regenerate Aldershot town centre. A number of studies and strategies have been produced to guide development opportunities. The Council adopted its Core Strategy for the Borough in October 2011. This sets out an overarching strategy for the regeneration of Aldershot town centre (policy SP3). The Aldershot Town Centre SPD (adopted January 2009) sets out a detailed vision for the environmental and physical improvement of Aldershot town centre, including the identification of development opportunity sites. However, a more proactive approach is now required through partnership working to secure investment and deliver development. improvements and capitalising on the Westgate development and the Aldershot Urban Extension (Wellesley).
- 2.2 In recognition of this, Allies and Morrison has been commissioned to work with the Council to deliver a strategy for regeneration based on viable investment and development options to attract investment into Aldershot Town Centre.
- 2.3 Aldershot's identification as a 'Step Up Town' by the Enterprise M3 LEP gives rise to the possibility to access funding from the local growth fund. The Council is keen to explore how this funding could be used to address viability and delivery issues in the implementation of development schemes in Aldershot. In this context, the Council has already identified six key sites with development potential:
 - The Galleries
 - Union Street East
 - High Street (Kings Centre/Gala Bingo)
 - Hippodrome House area
 - Westgate Phase 2 (Princes Hall and Police Station)
 - Aldershot Railway Station

2.4 These sites were included as potential site allocations within the Rushmoor Local Plan Preferred Approach consultation that took place between June and July 2015.

3 The Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD

- 3.1 Allies and Morrison has been tasked with developing an Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus. The purpose of this document is to set out a regeneration strategy, an updated vision and objectives and a focus on key development opportunities. This document will serve a dual purpose, operating as a marketing document aimed at potential investors whilst also setting out a development framework to provide more detail to support existing planning policies.
- 3.2 The Prospectus sets out development options for all the key sites in Aldershot Town Centre (listed at paragraph 2.3). This includes two options for the redevelopment of The Galleries, including potential for the creation of a public square. It also sets out how the area known as Union Street East could be developed including the potential redevelopment of the building soon to be vacated by Marks and Spencer.

4 Policy Framework

3.1 Following consultation and any subsequent amendments, the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD will be adopted by Cabinet, and will support the policies contained in the Council's Local Plan, in addition to having a corporate role in promoting the town centre to prospective investors. SPDs provide detail on the interpretation and delivery of national and local policies. This SPD relates specifically to policy SP3 (Aldershot Town Centre) of the adopted Core Strategy (2011) and policies TC1 (Aldershot & Farnborough Town Centres), TC2 (Shopping Core) and TC3 (Residential uses above the ground floor within the shopping cores) of the Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Saved Policies).

5. Consultation

5.1 To date, Allies and Morrison has engaged with the local community through a Community Workshop. This has informed the draft version of the SPD. It is proposed to undertake formal public consultation on the draft SPD for a period of 6 weeks. Consultation is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 30 September and end on Wednesday 11 November and will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2013).

5.2 Public consultation will include publishing information on the Council's website, which will be promoted via traditional and social media, with the opportunity to complete response forms. Exhibition boards summarising the proposals will also be on display in Aldershot Town Centre. In addition, Allies and Morrison will support the Council at two staffed public exhibitions setting out the proposals, and will attend a number of stakeholder meetings.

6. What happens next?

6.1 Following completion of public consultation, all the comments received will be evaluated and the SPD updated, as appropriate. A further report to Cabinet will summarise the outcome of public consultation, outline subsequent changes to the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus and seek approval to adopt it as SPD. Once adopted it will be used as a regeneration strategy to guide investment and development proposals by developers, the Council and other stakeholders.

7. Recommendation

7.1 It is recommended that the draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD be approved for consultation for a period of 6 weeks.

Keith Holland Head of Planning

Annex

Annex 1: Draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD for public consultation

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ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE PROSPECTUS

Supplementary Planning Document DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION September 2015



The draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD has been prepared following input from local stakeholders and the community.

We are now consulting more widely on the prospectus and would like your feedback on the document. The consultation period will run from Wednesday 30 September 2015 until Wednesday 11 November 2015.

During the consultation period, the draft prospectus will be available to view on the Rushmoor Borough Council website at: www.rushmoor.gov.uk/ improvingaldershot

An exhibition setting out the key proposals within the draft prospectus will be on display in Aldershot and two staffed sessions will be held so that the visitors can ask questions to the project team.

A feedback form will be provided both online and at the exhibition.

For further information, please contact: plan@rushmoor.gov.uk

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INTRODUCTION

The Aldershot Prospectus sets out a strategy for regeneration based on viable investment and development options to attract and support investment in Aldershot Town Centre.

The prospectus has been developed as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and will be a material planning consideration for future planning applications in the town centre. The SPD will replace the Aldershot Town Centre SPD (2009) and further develops the Council's strategic approach to regeneration.

Drawing on Aldershot's key assets and addressing challenges faced by the town, the prospectus sets out a high level approach to the town's future identity whilst drawing out specific development and investment projects at key sites in the town.

The prospectus is designed to identify investment and development priorities and to supplement planning guidance in the Rushmoor Plan Core Strategy that exists for development in the town.

Rushmoor Borough Council is not in a position deliver the proposals set out in the prospectus alone but will use its powers and resources in a proactive way to enable development and investment in the town.

A CLEAR POLICY CONTEXT

National policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines that planning should promote the vitality of our main urban areas (para 17). Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period (para 23).

Where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity and recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites (para 23).

Rushmoor Borough Council is developing its Local Plan in line with these key policies, to plan positively for Aldershot's future and provide clarity on investment priorities.

Local policy

The key objective for Aldershot town centre is to improve its vitality and viability. The policy approach set out in policy SP3 of the Core Strategy is to permit development that contributes to this objective. Aldershot town centre is in a vulnerable state following the withdrawal of a number of 'High Street' retailers and therefore a proactive approach to the regeneration of the town centre is required.

Development proposals will be permitted which maintain the vitality and viability of Aldershot Town Centre and contribute to the strategy of regenerating the town centre.

Policy TC1 of the Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Saved Policies) seeks to maintain and enhance the diversity, vitality and viability of Aldershot town centre. The Council will seek to protect, and where possible strengthen, the retail function of the centre whilst facilitating or maintaining an appropriate level of diversification.

Policy TC2 of the Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Saved Policies) identifies the 'shopping core' of Aldershot Town Centre and seeks to protect the retail function of these areas. In each frontage, the number of non-A1 units will not exceed 30% and visually prominent sites with an A1 use will be protected.

Policy TC3 of the Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Saved Policies) outlines that the Council will support proposals for residential uses above the ground floor within the shopping cores, subject to other policies of the plan.

In addition to these town centre specific policies the Rushmoor Core Strategy and Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Saved Policies) set out a comprehensive range of policies against which planning applications will be assessed.

PROUD PAST



6-19-20-21-22-23 JUNE 193-

APPLY HIRE PEPARTMENT

Aldershot Tattoo poster 1934

Aldershot has a strong tradition of independent shops and services, with market town status dating back until at least 1607. The buzz of activity was focused on Union Street and Wellington Street, with shops below, homes above, and advertising hoardings decorating buildings' upper storeys.

> By 1900, Aldershot was already 'home of the British military', and had benefited from a rail station for 30 years. Both of these developments led to the rapid growth of the town. The garrison town was located to the north of Aldershot town centre, though Victorian villas on generous plots still existed close to this.



Flyer for Beatles Concert

Aldershot's military Tattoo dates back to 1894 and, in its heyday of the 1920s and 1930s, attracted 500,000 visitors to see formation performances lit by flame torches. Aldershot's military history and Victorian heritage continue to be celebrated through regular events, including the Military Festival and Victoria Day.



Aldershot map from 1909

CONFIDENT FUTURE

Aldershot has evolved throughout its history and the town's evolution continues with the Wellesley development to the north of the centre, providing 3,850 homes and two new primary schools. These family homes will bring new life to the town and help to support additional uses and activities in the centre.

Improvements in the town centre are already under way with new trees and paving in Union Street, funded in part through the Local Economic Partnership.

Aldershot is a diverse and growing town and the prospectus sets out the key investment priorities for the town's future evolution - drawing on its strengths and addressing challenges. It is now time to consider revitalisation of the town centre with homes above shops.

Development and investment opportunities have been identified at a number of key locations in the town centre which are set out from page 40 onwards.



Refurbished Cambridge Military Hospital



Artist's impression of new homes at Wellesley



Artist's impression of refurbished Princes Hall



A GOOD PLACE FOR INVESTMENT

Enterprise M3 LEP step-up status

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Enterprise M3, covers the area from the M25 down to Southampton and has identified Aldershot as a Step-up Town for the sub-region.

A growth package has been developed, with investment of £54-63 million in the town up until 2021, of which, £7.3-£8.3 million will be funded by the LEP¹. The package includes new town centre homes, transformation of the rail station area, £3 million investment in streets, spaces and shop fronts and development at four key sites in Aldershot town centre.

The programme of investment will create an estimated 1,200-1,460 jobs in construction, service jobs and other employment directly related to development.

¹ Working for a Smarter Future: The Enterprise M3 Delivery Plan - 2014-2020

A changing demographic

The Borough of Rushmoor has a relatively young population and great demand from young professionals who want to move to the area. In addition, Aldershot currently has a price differential with surrounding areas that makes properties relatively affordable for a desirable part of the country. These characteristics result in an increasingly healthy market, with new twobedroom properties recently selling very quickly.

The development of 3,850 homes at Wellesley will add 10,000 new residents to Aldershot over the next few years, who fall into MOSAIC categories 'new homemakers' and 'careers and kids', both with solid incomes and spending power.

Rushmoor Borough Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has identified a significant requirement for new homes in the town beyond this, which presents opportunities for town centre living.



Aldershot is located central to the Enterprise M3 Local Economic Partnership

A pro-active town centre approach

Like many towns across the UK, Aldershot has struggled recently to maintain healthy town centre retail provision in the face of stiff competition from online retailers and retail parks. Closures have been due to retailers' national strategies in many cases but the Council is committed to taking a pro-active approach to address vacancies and bring life into the town centre through new homes and activity, so that existing and new businesses are supported.

Sites identified through the prospectus study demonstrate potential capacity for new homes in the centre, along with office space, leisure uses and retail space.

The Council will promote these development opportunities and explore all delivery options for bringing forward key sites in the town centre, including seeking delivery partners and acquisition of sites through compulsory purchase if alternative delivery options do not prove possible.





Rushmoor Borough has a relatively young population with a particularly high proportion of 30-44 year olds (Source ONS)

Well connected

Aldershot is well connected to both the rail and road networks. The town is close to the A3 and M3, both of which connect easily with the M25, and the M4 is also easily accessed.

The town is on the South West Trains network which connects Aldershot to London Waterloo and Guildford and nearby stations connect to North Camp, Reading, and Gatwick.

14 minutes

17 minutes

23 minutes

London Waterloo: 53 minutes

Camberley:

Guildford:

Reading:

A beautiful landscape setting

In addition to its parks - Manor Park, Municipal Gardens, Princes Gardens and Aldershot Park -Aldershot occupies an attractive location surrounded by green and open space. Basingstoke Canal is nearby; the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Down's National Park are to the south; and the Blackwater Valley runs through the area from the north. The Council will seek to strengthen links to these natural assets, and to routes such as the North Downs Way, through better signage and path widening and maintenance as funding permits.

Aldershot is also just an hour from the coast, with Hayling Island, the Witterings and port towns within easy reach.





A growing community

The new Wellesley development on part of the former Aldershot Garrison site north of the town centre will provide a mix of home sizes and tenures along with two new primary schools, 110 ha of managed green space, including Wellesley Woods, and the refurbishment of six listed buildings. The first 228 homes are now under construction.

Pedestrian and cycle links between the new homes and the town centre will be very important and the routes on Hospital Hill, Middle Hill, Gun Hill and Ordnance Road will be improved with greening and signage.



A new home at Wellesley



Links to the Aldershot Town Centre from Wellesley

THE VISION FOR ALDERSHOT

We want to see the heart back in Aldershot.

The town will be a place where everyone is welcome and where families want to be, focused around a thriving leisure and retail hub. Easy to get to, park and get around, the town will become increasingly vibrant with new residents from Wellesley joining Aldershot's community and new high quality urban homes in the town centre.

Businesses, old and new, will thrive and support the town, and residents will shop in a unique mix of independent and high street shops. Aldershot's Victorian and military heritage will be celebrated and protected. Families and friends of all ages will meet up in a choice of coffee shops, cafés and restaurants, be active or relax in quality open spaces. Aldershot will come alive with the buzz from Westgate and a revitalised Princes Hall, new leisure facilities and the concerts, shows, arts and family events taking place across the town.

Aldershot town centre will be a place local people want to be.

THEMES OF THE VISION

A revitalised town centre offer

Aldershot's retail core faces challenges and is not expected to compete with regional towns nearby. However, the town centre has an important role to play in meeting the convenience and local shopping needs of a growing and affluent population. The Council will welcome new retailers, support the specialist retailers that provide an alternative offer to other centres, and seek to bring homes, leisure and office uses into the centre to support shops.

Town centre living

Aldershot has a significant requirement for new homes in the area and demand from young professionals who wish to move to the area. Combined with the relatively affordable but increasing values of homes, the area is 'up and coming'. To meet this need, town centre living will be promoted, with homes to cater for young people starting out, families and older people wishing to downsize.





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A family-friendly town centre

Aldershot is appreciated by residents as a safe and family-friendly town centre that serves its community well. With the Wellesley development under construction, the Council will seek to enhance this offer with additional activities such as town centre leisure facilities and new public spaces. An afternoon in the centre can appeal to all the family.









An improved cultural offer

Westgate brought a new multiplex cinema to Aldershot town centre, along with a number of high street restaurant names. The Council is reviewing opportunities to add to this offer, such as the transformation of Princes Hall Theatre and the extension of the successful events programme in the town.

Investing in streets and spaces

The Activation Aldershot programme has brought a series of improvements to the town's streets and spaces that help to connect Westgate back to Union Street and to better connect early phases of the Wellesley development into the town centre at Court Road. Further investment priorities are identified to create a central public space for Aldershot and improve entrances into the town centre.

Affirming the Victorian heritage

One of Aldershot's frequently overlooked assets is the quality of the Victorian buildings which remain throughout the town centre. As many towns across the UK begin to look similar in terms of character and shops, Aldershot can maintain a distinctiveness and attractiveness that reflects its heritage. The Council is committed to maintaining and enhancing this heritage, to complement new buildings in the town centre.

1 A REVITALISED TOWN CENTRE OFFER

Whilst the retail environment has been challenging for Aldershot in recent years, significant potential exists for the town to provide the convenience and local shopping offer that a growing young community with decent income levels will require.

Aldershot has a catchment area of close to 500,000 people, with 28% of these coming from the most affluent MOSAIC demographic groups (www. aldershotretail.co.uk) - people with substantial wealth and experienced professionals with financial comfort.

Rushmoor Borough Council recognises the need to take action to support shops in the town centre. A clear strategy is set out in local policy for consolidating new retail in the centre of the town as part of the primary retail frontage. The masterplan sets out opportunities for providing new homes and bringing leisure uses into the centre, both of which will support the town's shops and add to the vitality and viability of the area. The Council has recently taken the management of Aldershot Market in-house, with the intention of improving the offer and layout to maximise the market's appeal and success and to reflect the town's diverse community.

The Activation Aldershot programme has secured LEP funding for a shop front improvement scheme which is enabling retailers to improve the profile and appearance of their shops. Opportunity is being explored for this to be expanded to include building facade improvements for historic buildings in the town with shops at ground floor.

With a growing community that will have solid incomes and spending power, the potential for future retail provision has been considered for Aldershot and the masterplan demonstrates that retail space could be accommodated, should it be required.



Current land uses plan with retail in red. New retail will be focused in the core town centre, to consolidate the retail offer.

Example of shop front improvements







Supporting independent businesses

Aldershot has a decent range of independent businesses that will play an important role in meeting the convenience needs of a growing population. LEP funding has supported a shop-front improvement scheme to help local businesses improve the appearance and profile of their shops.



A thriving market

Rushmoor Borough Council has recently taken the management of the market in-house to improve the offer and optimise the spatial layout so that the stalls have maximum appeal to the local community and beyond.



A clear retail hierarchy

Local policy sets out clear town centre and shopping core boundaries designed to concentrate retailers in the core of the town centre. Smaller and independent shops in less central areas such as Station Road will support the core retail.





2 TOWN CENTRE LIVING

Homes for all ages

The role of town centres is changing, with shopping habits diversifying and other uses filling the space left behind by vacated shops. This shift is happening at the same time as the need for new homes has increased sharply, particularly in the south of England.

Aldershot has a number of suitable town centre sites that can provide homes, ranging from those for young people starting out to older people wishing to downsize. In each case, high quality apartments and mews houses in the town centre can provide shops and services in easy reach, proximity to the rail station and a sociable environment.

The Town Centre Prospectus study has identified potential for new homes in the town centre from the key sites set out on page 41. The Council is not able to bring all of these homes forward itself but is committed to working with developers to deliver new homes through an approach that responds to Aldershot's historic character and Victorian market town scale.

The Council would expect a number of car parking spaces to be provided to match the scale of residential development*. We also recognise the accessibility of residential development in town centres within a short walking distance to local facilities and public transport. Car ownership will still be required by most residents and there is a high vacancy of town centre car parking in the town, in particular the High Street multi-storey car park (built in association with the development of The Galleries) which could provide the capacity needed to serve the new residential development within the central part of the town. An assessment of the parking needs for the retail capacity of the town alongside an analysis of the parking needs for the residential development will determine the allocation from the existing town centre off street parking stock.

*Rushmoor Car and Cycle Parking Standard SPD



Highbury Square, Arsenal



St Andrew's, Bow



New town centre family homes in Barking Riverside

Homes above shops and new town centre residential development can support Aldershot's shops and services

ALDERSHOT TOWN PROSPECTUS

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3 A FAMILY FRIENDLY TOWN CENTRE



The Council is keen to encourage a focus for family activities in the north of the town centre, focusing on Westgate. and the Empire (former Kings Centre), the former petrol station site and the Gala Bingo building.

The Kings Centre is being refurbished as a centre for community events and activities. The former petrol station site could be re-designed as an urban sports park with climbing, parkour (free running, ground based acrobatics) and other activities. In the longer term, the Gala building could be a trampoline activity centre or similar.

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It would also be possible to re-establish the historic connection from the High Street to Union Street here, with replacement smaller footprint shops and homes above.

Aldershot has an impressive range of sports facilities and activities, including the football club, dry skislope, gymnastics centre and swimming pool. These are valuable assets for the town and the council will explore the potential for establishing leisure facilities in the town centre, to improve accessibility.

Connections to the walking routes that surround the town are to be improved in the longer term, with better signage and communication to raise the profile of these resources and path maintenance and enhancement, as funding becomes available. The Wellesley Heritage Trail is one examples of this initiative.



The Council will seek to improve linkages to natural assets in and around Aldershot through wayfinding, and enhancement and maintenance of pathways











The great outdoors

Aldershot is surrounded by walking and cycling routes, including those in the Blackwater Valley and along the Basingstoke Canal; and trails out to the Surrey Hills AONB. Popular cycle routes such as the Hogs Back are close to hand.



Sports on the doorstep

Aldershot has an array of sports and activities including Aldershot Football Club, the ski slope, gymnastics training and facilities and the bowling alley. In addition to this, the army sports pitches mean that families are spoilt for choice for weekend activities and opportunities to learn new skills.









4 AN IMPROVED CULTURAL OFFER











New restaurants and cafes

Westgate brought a multiplex cinema to Aldershot town centre, along with a number of high street name restaurants. Potential also exists for new cafes - at Princes Hall as part of a refurbishment, and at key sites on Union Street and Wellington Street.



A refurbished Princes Hall

Princes Hall theatre has served Aldershot well for the last 40 years, with popular shows appealing to a range of audiences.

With the anticipated closure of the Police Station and potential for new homes, the council is exploring the opportunity for refurbishing the theatre so that is can serve audiences for another 40 years.



Expanding the events programme

Aldershot has a full programme of events that celebrate the town's heritage, its diversity and its talent and creativity. The Council will continue to support and promote events in the town centre that animate public spaces and reflect the town's growing community.





PRINCES HALL: POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFORMATION

With surrounding development in the pipeline, opportunity exists to refurbish and extend Princes Hall at the front, to provide a stronger relationship with Princes Gardens and Westgate.

A single-storey front development at ground floor could establish active frontage and a 'front door' to the street, leading to the box office. Steps would be re-provided leading up from Princes Way, with an accessible ramp from Westgate. A new first floor terrace would provide space for events and ceremonies overlooking Princes Gardens and a cafe could be incorporated at ground or first floor.





AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Aldershot has an active and engaged community that is responsible for a range of cultural activities and events in the town and also participates in visioning the future of the town centre.

The Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus has been informed by well attended events that generated a range of ideas for improving the town centre and surrounds.



"Aldershot's culture and community are what makes its identity"



"We need to improve the shop fronts - and to look up beyond the shop fronts - it's surprisingly good!"



"We should have a





Nepalese food festival or Gurkha Day"



"Get rid of the unattractive buildings in the town centre!"



Photos from an early consultation event held to inform the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus



5 INVESTING IN STREETS AND SPACES

Some of Aldershot's streets and spaces have been enhanced during 2015 through the Activation Aldershot programme following a successful LEP funding bid. Union Street has been re-paved and trees replaced with species more suitable for the space available. Landscaping has also improved in the areas between Westgate and Union Street, linking these two important centres for Aldershot more effectively. Lastly, interactive wayfinding totems have been put up in the town centre, to help people find their way around more easily.

Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD sets out further improvements for streets and public spaces. These will be planned, designed and delivered over the coming years as funding becomes available. Projects include:

- Enhanced landscaping, rationalisation of the road layout and a new multi-storey car park to improve the experience of arriving in Aldershot by train and to avoid conflict between cars, buses and pedestrians in the area.
- Improvements to connections to and from the new Wellesley development, with pedestrian crossings on the High Street and potential new and improved links between the High Street and Union Street.
- The active review of possibilities for establishing a public square in Aldershot town centre, through the sites that have been identified in the masterplan.

In the longer term, the Council will also explore opportunities such as:

- Enhanced landscaping at key locations such as in front of the library to provide a stronger visual marker of the town centre from Wellington Avenue.
- Landscape enhancements to improve the setting of Aldershot's most attractive historic buildings, many of which are at crossroads on Victoria Road.









Improvements already under way

The Activation Aldershot programme has seen the transformation of Union Street, with re-paving and re-planting of trees. The area between Westgate and Union Street has been re-landscaped and wayfinding totems have been installed throughout the town centre.





An enhanced setting for the rail station

The station approach and car park area are identified for enhanced landscaping and improvements, so that pedestrians can access the station more easily and the attractive historic building is given a more appropriate setting.



A new public space for Aldershot

Opportunity exists to establish a central public space for Aldershot, through the development of key sites that have been identified including the former Galleries shopping centre and vacant buildings on Union Street. This will provide more space for people to sit outside and to host events.





PUBLIC REALM INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



The plan below sets out the improvements to Aldershot Town Centre's public realm which are complete or under way as part of the LEP-funded Activation Aldershot programme or highways works, along with further opportunities that have been identified through the development of the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD


6 AFFIRMING THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE

With the role of UK town centres shifting away from a retail focus towards a leisure focus, the character and environment within towns and cities is becoming increasingly important. People are naturally drawn to places which are attractive and provide a comfortable environment in which to spend free time.

Aldershot is well placed for this trend, with a collection of often overlooked historic buildings, including a clutch of Grade II Listed buildings and the Grade II* Listed Wesley Chambers church building. Many others are locally listed, however, other still-intact historic buildings are not and the Council intends to provide protection to additional key buildings such as the Natwest Bank building on Victoria Road. Many of the finer historic buildings in the town centre are located at crossroads and the Council will seek to improve the public realm at these points in the future to reveal the attractive heritage, with improvements being made as funding becomes available. Key locations for this are illustrated indicatively in the plan below.

Shop front improvements are planned for historic buildings on key streets such as Station Road and Union Street, with funding having been successfully secured from the Enterprise M3 LEP through the Activation Aldershot programme. Many of these buildings would also benefit from up-lighting in the evenings to highlight their architectural qualities.



Clusters of historically significant buildings at crossroads



A composite photo showing building facades along Wellington Street





Aldershot's rapid growth as a Victorian Military town has left the town with a legacy of gridded streets populated by confident and striking Victorian buildings. These use a mix of materials including stone and yellow stock brick among the more common soft reds. This confident character continued into the early twentieth century in Edwardian and early interwar buildings, maintaining a consistent attractive character. Many of the best buildings occupy corner sites and are visible as landmarks, making them especially important.













RAISING THE PROFILE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Aldershot has a number of listed and locally listed buildings, identified in red and orange in the plan below. In addition to these, the town has other buildings of importance that are non-designated heritage assets. These are identified in yellow.



Plan indicating Aldershot town centre's conservation areas, statutorily listed buildings, locally listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets























PRESERVING VIEWS

Aldershot has retained a strong relationship between the town centre and the surrounding landscape, so that from a number of key points within the town centre, framed views exist of green space in the distance. Within the town centre there are also a number of views to key buildings such as the view along Victoria Road to Wesley Chambers former church building. Some views of importance are shown below. The Council will seek to retain these views when considering future development opportunities.



Plan indicating some of Aldershot town centre's significant views

Key views

- 1. Alexandra Road looking west to landscape
- 2. Barrack Road looking north to landscape
- 3. Queen's Road looking west to St Joseph's Church
- 4. Grosvenor Road looking south to landscape
- 5. Victoria Road looking west to Wesley Chambers
- 6. Wellington Street looking north to the Gala building
- 7. Gordon Road looking south to landscape
- 8. Station Road looking north to the Post office and landscape
- 9. Victoria Road looking east to landscape



View of Wesley Chambers east along Victoria Road

THE MASTERPLAN FOR ALDERSHOT

Princes Hall area:

Remodelling of the Princes Hall with infill residential development to establish new street frontage

Former Kings Centre: established as The Empire community and events venue

Union Street: Regeneration of the Union Street block

Marks and Spencer building: Potential re-use or redevelopment of the former Marks & Spencer building

Victoria Road: Corner infill development opportunity

Birchett Road: Redevelopment of the former warehouse as a residential site



Potential refurbished existing buildings



The plan below sets out development and refurbishment opportunities identified through the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD. These vary in scale and the timeframe in which they are likely to come forward. However, Rushmoor Borough Council has identified a number of priority sites, which are:

- 1. The Galleries site linking Wellington Street with the High Street car park
- 2. The Union Street group of building that also front Wellington Street and the High Street
- 3. The Rail Station area, including improved access and parking
- 4. The area around Princes Hall, including refurbishment of the theatre



The Galleries

The Galleries has remained almost vacant for many years now and its redevelopment is a high priority for the Council. The centre was built in the 1990s, but a major redevelopment project being planned in 2007 was a victim of the recession and so the site has remained unoccupied.

The site is unusual as the main internal arcade is at an upper level, connected to the Wellington Centre via a bridge over Wellington Street and with a cascade of escalators required to return shoppers to street level on to the High Street. This configuration makes it difficult to redevelop as a gradual, organic process and is likely to require a more comprehensive approach.

The bridge itself is a major imposition on Wellington Street. It blocks views to the Art Deco cinema building at the northern end of the street and to the late Victorian bank on the corner of Victoria Road. The street level is also artificially lowered to create headroom on the street, creating a gloomy space. The opportunity created by the removal of the bridge would be a new street-level entrance into the Wellington Centre facing across Wellington Street to new shops around a public space created on the site of the Galleries. This would create a street-level route through to the High Street car park and deliver new town centre housing above shops.

The eastern part of the site provides the opportunity for a larger use fronting onto the new square. This could provide a suitable location for new retail development and new residential development. It also offers a site which could accommodate new leisure facilities for Aldershot. Visitors would be able to make use of the existing car parking capacity in the High Street car park and the facility itself would act as an important anchor for the town centre, drawing people in from a wide area throughout the day, seven days a week.

The Arcade block to the south of the Galleries could be usefully redeveloped or remodelled to take advantage of the new public space and create additional active frontage. If this option is not pursued then a new slim block of development should be provided to ensure that active frontages are created onto the square.



Proposed development

Top: Option for the Galleries site incorporating a large footprint block to accommodate new leisure facilities for Aldershot

Bottom: A retail and residential led scheme for the Galleries

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Project Description	Redevelopment of vacant Galleries shopping mall for either: Option 1: As mixed use retail/active town centre uses/residential scheme Option 2: or mixed use retail/leisure/residential scheme, including new leisure facilities
Potential uses	Option 1 – 3,815 sqm retail, 12,581 sqm residential (est. 121 units). Option 2 – 2,356 sqm leisure, 2,618 sqm retail; 5,562 sqm gross residential (est. 54).
Current Uses	Vacant shopping mall.
Ownership	Private ownership (Threadneedle)
Delivery Approach	Option 1: Private sector led delivery Option 2: Public sector led developer procurement
Delivery Timeframes Phasing	Option 1: 0-5 years Option 2: 0-10 years



Emberso

Existing view of Wellington Street towards the Gala Bingo building





the development of a new entrance to the Wellington Centre fronting onto the new square

directions, revealing historic buildings

include a mix of shops, active town centre uses and homes, and could also provide a site for new leisure facilities

Union Street and former Marks and Spencer building

The eastern end of Union Street contains a number of large buildings which have proved difficult to adapt and have gradually fallen into low value use or vacancy over the last few years. The sloping site and the need to have frontages onto both Union Street and the High Street means that they are not best suited to modern retail requirements.

Another important aspect of the Union Street block is that it contains several attractive historic buildings. Retaining and refurbishing these to bring them back into active use is an important part of the Council's preferred strategy for Aldershot's future.

Marks & Spencer's former building is a large modern structure which is located in the middle of the block. In the shorter term it is hoped that the building will be re-occupied. In the longer term it would be difficult to re-model for residential use in its current form, but its scale does provide an opportunity to open up a new pedestrian route through the block, providing a direct link from High Street to the Wellington Centre and creating the kinds of buildings which would be better suited to smaller scale retail or business and town centre living.

Active ground floor town centre uses would be expected at these sites. Potential might exist to create a town square as part of redevelopment plans.

The buildings of the Union Street / High Street block include elements of high quality historic fabric, particularly above the shop fronts







Proposed development

Refurbish existing building

Project Description	Two significant development/refurbishment opportunities for mixed retail, active town centre uses, leisure and residential purposes. Retail, leisure, service, cafe, restaurant or other active town centre use at ground floor with residential on upper floors. Union Street East (54-62). Mixed retail/other active town centre uses/leisure with residential above. Former Marks & Spencer. Two options considered: Re-configuration/reuse of retail space Redevelopment of former Marks & Spencer building with a ground floor active town centre use and residential above.
Potential uses	Union Street East – 4,983 sqm residential (est. 48 units); 1,785 sqm retail/ leisure space refurbished. Former M&S: 4,490 sqm reconfigured retail and 4,490 office 3,474 sqm residential (est. 33 units); retail/active town centre use/leisure service
Current Uses	Union Street East – Unit retail, with significant vacancies Former M&S – Retail/cafe (Department/Variety Store)
Ownership	Union Street East - complex privately owned multi-owned block with sub interests. Marks & Spencer: private ownership.
Delivery Approach	Site A: Public sector led developer partner procurement Site B: Private sector developer
Delivery Timeframes / Phasing	Union Street East – 0-5 years Marks & Spencer – 0-2 years (assuming reuse of building)

The Rail Station

Aldershot station is an attractive Victorian building, strongly symmetrical except for later additions and canopies. The area around the station, including the parking, bus stands and highways does little to enhance the setting of the building, presenting the opportunity for sensitive infill and remodelled road structure to create a high quality environment.

The existing access and movement in the area is complex, including buses, taxis, pick up and set down for private cars, and access to the station for parking. The aim of the proposals is to create a simpler, clearer environment to minimise the impact of vehicle movements and to establish a more legible and comfortable approach to the station for pedestrians.

A funding bid has been submitted to the Enterprise M3 Local Economic Partnership (LEP) by Rushmoor Council in partnership with Network Rail, South West Trains, Stagecoach, Hampshire County Council plus private landowners.

The proposals within the bid include a new area for taxis and buses directly in front of the station, framed by new buildings on either side. This will help to provide clear pedestrian connections to the station with the minimum of crossing points. A new decked car park on part of the existing parking area would allow for that short-stay parking for set down and pick up can be provided to the east of the station, close to the forecourt, but away from the buses and taxis. The development of the decked car park could also be integrated with improvements to the pedestrian bridge over the tracks, helping to deliver an accessible connection through a shared stair and lift for both projects. There is an active Network Rail proposal to deliver this element.



Refurbish existing building

Top: Proposals for a new station square, including revised bus and taxi provision and new decked car park

Bottom: The existing Victorian Station building



Project Description	A number of projects focussing on improvements to the train and bus station, comprising: Refurbishment of the train station and associated facilities. Decked car park Reconfigure bus station and raise pick up/drop off area.
Project Outputs	9,260 sqm car park (est. 320 cps) 5,366 sqm gross residential (est. 52 units); small scale/ancillary retail or service uses
Current Uses	Train and bus stations and associated facilities
Ownership	Principally in ownership of Network Rail (station and car park) and Stagecoach (bus station)
Delivery Approach	Public Sector led (Network Rail/Train Operating Company/South West Trains) contractor procurement Public Sector led (Network Rail/Train Operating Company/South West Trains) contractor procurement Private sector developer
Delivery Timeframes / Phasing	Assumes to be delivered as separate phases: Train station refurbishment: 0-5 years Decked car park: 0-5 years Reconfigured bus station/drop off: 5-10 years

Princes Hall and Police Station

The Princes Hall, Police Station and Magistrates Court were part of a suite of civic buildings all developed in the early 1970s. The Hall is an important part of Aldershot's community and cultural life. With development coming forwarded, potential exists to invest in the existing building to refurbish it, creating an impressive new entrance terrace overlooking Princes Gardens and to improve the ground floor of the building. The new entrance approach will also help the building to integrate better with the Westgate development as part of Aldershot's growing evening economy.

The Police Station is anticipated to close as part of a wider strategy for policing. However, the Magistrates Court is expected to remain in use, with the addition of the County Court. A phased approach is proposed to the development of the site. The initial scheme would create new frontage onto Wellington Avenue and Princes Way including establishing an attractive corner presence at the junction – one of the key gateways into the town centre. The plans leave an opportunity for later residential development to infill the remainder of the block in the event that the Magistrates Court is ever relocated.





Top: Initial approach to development including remodelling of the Princes Hall, new infill residential development to create street frontages and retention of the Magistrates Court

Bottom: Potential later phases of development to replace the Magistrates Court

Left: Proposals for the remodelling of the Princes Hall

Project Description	Redevelopment of the vacant police station site, with refurbishment and investment in Princes Hall theatre following this. Separate redevelopment of the Magistrates Court in the longer term.
Potential uses	Princes Hall – 3,897 sqm refurbished theatre. Police Station – 3,764 sqm gross residential (est. 36 units) Magistrates – 5,276 sqm gross residential (est. 51 units)
Current Uses	Theatre, police station and magistrates court.
Ownership	All sites in public ownership (Council, Police, Magistrates)
Overarching Delivery Approach	Princes Hall – Public Sector led contractor procurement Police – Private Sector developer Magistrates – Private Sector developer Each development plot is expected to be delivered separately
Delivery Time frames / Phasing	Princes Hall: 0-5 years Police Station: 0-5 years Magistrates: 10-15 years+



Proposed development

Refurbish existing building

Birchett Road

The former warehouse on the north side of Birchett Road between Frederick Street and Heathland Street provides the opportunity for town centre living, and planning permission has previously been granted on this site. Development would restore active frontage to the street, which is particularly important given the site's prominent location on a slight bend in the road, making it prominent in views from both east and west. The four-storey listed terrace of Culdrose House to the west provides some guidance on scale, but buildings to the south and east are lower. For example, frequent front doors onto the street will be an important part of helping a new building to integrate with the prevailing Victorian character of the area.



Proposed development

Top: Proposals for new development on Birchett Road Middle: The existing warehouse building Bottom: How new homes could look at the site

Project Description	Development opportunity with strong residential potential on the north side of Birchett Road. Planning permission has been granted previously for a scheme but so far no development has been progressed.
Potential uses	5,168 sqm gross residential (est. 50 units)
Current Uses	Vacant warehouse
Ownership	Private ownership
Delivery Approach	Private sector developer
Delivery Time frames / Phasing	Short term 0-5 years

High Street

The old cinemas on the High Street, now the King's Centre and Gala Bingo are two of Aldershot's largest and most distinctive buildings, each with their own unique character. The Council would encourage schemes which promote retention and re-use of these, given their important contribution to the character of Aldershot town centre, provided suitable uses can be identified.

The King's Centre has recently been acquired by a private investor and is proposed to be refurbished and given a new lease of life as an events venue. Its accessible location and large internal space makes it ideal for this use and retains the spirit of the original design for the building as a place of assembly.

The Gala Bingo building remains in current use, and forms an important leisure use as part of Aldershot's leisure economy. If the building is vacated in the longer term the Council would be keen to see it retained in its current form or some other leisure use. The large volumes of the building mean that it could be suitable for a number of indoor sports or leisure activities, particular modern pursuits such as free running / parkour or skateboarding or alternatively as a soft play centre.

The space between the buildings is an important site in itself. There are opportunities to create elements of infill development which could support the use of the adjoining buildings. The area could also provide useful outdoor activity/play space including elements such as bouldering/climbing walls using a lightweight roof to provide shelter from the elements.







Bottom: Proposals for the new use of the former Empire Cinema as a community events space

Left: Options for urban sports which could feature in the project

Project Description	Site comprising three separate plots: King's Centre - Reuse and refurbishment for events Car Wash – A leisure use will be sought in the first instance. If this proves unviable then residential infill will be considered Gala Bingo - Longer term alternative leisure uses.
Potential uses	King's Centre – 3,932 sqm refurbished space (estimate 983 sqm over 4 floors) Car Wash – 780 sqm leisure Gala Bingo – 5188 sqm refurbished space (estimate 1297 sqm over 4 floors)
Current Uses	King's Centre – community/events space Other plot uses as per description
Ownership	All sites in private ownership. King's Centre has recently been sold.
Delivery Approach	All sites expected to be private sector led delivery, with each site delivered separately.
Delivery Time frames / Phasing	King's Centre (A) – 0-1 years Car Wash (B) – 0-5 years Gala Bingo (C) – 10-15 years +



Proposed development

Refurbish existing building

Hippodrome House area

The Victoria Road block bounded by Gordon Road, Birchett Road and Station Road has several distinct aspects to its character. Along the Victoria Road frontage there are good historic buildings, separated by a postwar infill development occupied by the Cooperative. Gordon House on the south-west corner of the block is being refurbished and is to be converted to residential development. Hippodrome House on the south eastern corner of the block was identified in the consultation workshops as one of the buildings which people most wish to see improved, although the ground floor frontage forms part of the vibrant retail scene on Station Road.

An element of active frontage can be created onto Birchett Road with limited infill development, retaining but screening the car park to improve the street scene. This scheme would involve the refurbishment and re-cladding of Hippodrome House to enhance the arrival to the town centre from the station.





Proposed development





Middle: Infill and refurbishment options for the Victoria Road block

Bottom: Example of a recent building remodelling illustrating a potential approach to Hippodrome House



Project Description	Redevelopment/refurbishment of blocks fronting Birchett Road Infill site plus refurbishment of Hippodrome House
Project Outputs	1,870 sqm gross new residential (est. 18 units) plus 4,840 refurbished/ converted space for residential (est. 47 units); 1,206 sqm retail/leisure.
Current Uses	Mixed: parking, retail, offices, leisure
Ownership	Two key private owners, with sub interests
Delivery Approach	Private Sector delivery
Delivery Timeframes / Phasing	Hippodrome House refurbishment (0-2 years); Birchett Road infill (0-5 years)



MAKING IT HAPPEN

Overview

The Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD contains a series of physical (development) projects that will shape the centre over the next 15-20 years and beyond. It is intended to be visionary, yet flexible to ensure that it can meet changes in circumstances, especially economic and property related.

Delivery mechanisms

There is unlikely to be a one size fits all delivery mechanism for projects – the choice should reflect the size, scale and nature of the individual masterplan initiatives. In the description of individual masterplan projects, broad delivery approaches are suggested together with key delivery actions. Delivery mechanisms include:

- Public sector led
- Private Sector led
- Public Private partnerships

The Council's role

There is a strong case (and probably necessity) for considerable strategic intervention by the Council to achieve the aims of the masterplan. Town centres are challenging development environments – and more so with the demise of the High Street retail market. Arguably, many town centres are undergoing a revolution, rather than evolution. This is likely to be far more crucial for Aldershot town centre where some sites are particularly complex – and therefore the role of the Council in facilitating delivery is likely to be greater, in part through de-risking opportunities (e.g. site assembly, securing SANGS and funding).

SANGS is green space that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation within the Thames Basin Heaths Planning Zone. Its role is to provide alternative green space to divert visitors from visiting the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). SANGS are intended to provide mitigation for the potential impact of residential development on the SPA by preventing an increase in visitor pressure on the SPA. Where new residential development is proposed in the masterplan this must be offset by having a sufficient supply of SANGS to provide alternative green space to divert visitors from visiting the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

The Council currently has a supply of SANGS land to offset residential development in the Borough, though the supply will need to be increased if a substantial amount of new residential development is to come forward. Securing more SANGS is a critical delivery action for the masterplan – an action which the Council is already progressing. The Council is committed to identifying SANGS sites to facilitate residential development.

The Rushmoor Core Strategy (adopted 2011) provides detailed policy guidance (policy CP13) on mitigation measures, comprising SANG land and also contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures.

Typically, Council's land ownership has been a driver for change in town centres. A clear example of this is Westgate leisure development. Presently, however, the Council's ownership in the key intervention areas in Aldershot is limited and its ability to influence, drive and accelerate change is therefore more limited too. An overarching strategy the Council could look to employ is the acquisition of strategic interests in the town.

Other delivery agencies

While the Council is expected to play a leading role in delivering the masterplan, the expectation is that it will need the active involvement of developers and other agencies – both public and private. Otherwise, the masterplan will not come to fruition. A range of agencies will need to be involved with enabling, funding and delivering the projects. This could include, among others:

- M3 LEP
- Hampshire County Council
- Landowners
- Developers
- Businesses
- Utility Suppliers
- Historic England
- Higher Education establishments
- Private & Philanthropic Sponsors
- Registered Providers
- Community organisations
- Possible Business Improvement District (BID)
- Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
- Other public sector organisations including the Police and NHS
- Transport bodies such as Network Rail and bus
 operators

Other organisations may also be identified – or be founded during the lifetime of the masterplan – which can assist in the delivery of projects.

Funding the masterplan's delivery

Not all of the proposals contained in the masterplan are commercial in nature. Project delivery is fully expected to be secured using a combination of public and private sector investment, with the balance of need for funding varying depending on the type, nature, cost and commercial viability of the project. Funding pots and mechanisms that might be expected to contribute to financially supporting masterplan project delivery include:

- LEP Funds
- Prudential Borrowing
- S106 Agreements / developer contributions
- Rolling Investment Funds
- Rushmoor and Hampshire Councils' Capital
 Programme
- Lottery Funding
- Transport Funds

Crucially, funding opportunities continue to evolve and will undoubtedly do so over the lifetime of the masterplan. Any funding strategy must be refreshed and reviewed as time progresses.

Viability testing

The Council is testing the viability of the development schemes in the masterplan based on the identified areas of development and types of uses. These will be – cashflowed (and where appropriate phased), residual development appraisals based on the high level schemes.

HOW TO COMMENT

The Draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will be available for comment from:

Wednesday 30 September 2015 to Wednesday 11 November 2015.

The document may be inspected at:

- Aldershot Library, High Street, Aldershot (during opening hours); and
- Rushmoor Borough Council's offices at Farnborough Road, Farnborough, GU14 7JU between the hours of 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am -4.30pm on Fridays.

An exhibition of the proposals will also be on display in Aldershot and two staffed sessions will be held so that visitors can ask questions to the project team. These will be publicised shortly.

Alternatively, you can view the documents on-line at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/improvingaldershot

Comments relating to the Draft SPD should be e-mailed to: plan@rushmoor.gov.uk

Comments may alternatively be sent to: Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus Draft SPD Consultation Planning Rushmoor Borough Council Council Offices Farnborough Road Farnborough GU14 7JU

To arrive by Wednesday 11 November 2015.

Any comments may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specific address of the adoption of the SPD.

For further information please e-mail: plan@rushmoor.gov.uk

