

# **Interim Aldershot Town Centre Strategy**

**2020 – 2025+**

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## Introduction

The regeneration of Aldershot Town Centre is a key priority for Rushmoor Borough Council and identified in its business plan. Our commitment to achieving this objective is outlined in the 'Rushmoor Local Plan' which details the Council's long-term vision for the Borough.

It is important that progress towards this vision is clearly tracked, monitored and evaluated so we can properly realise our transformational ambitions. As such, this document identifies five themes which can be used to understand both what has been achieved in recent years, but also, what needs to be completed moving forward.

The strategy sets out how we will both communicate and implement the vision from 2020 – 2025 and beyond. It is an interim strategy recognising that the Covid-19 pandemic is accelerating change and potential creating very different trends moving forward. Therefore, the Council believes that it will need to review this plan within a relatively few years to test whether the plan needs modification. It is therefore a work in progress which will be developed further.

Aldershot was one of the initial 14 Towns invited to participate with the Future High Street Task Force. A Place Potential visit was undertaken in February 2020 and a final report including feedback received in May 2020. The report recognised the work underway to restructure the Town, and in through that, the repositioning of the Town was being enabled. It identified the key delivery challenges for Aldershot were around reinventing and particularly rebranding the Town. Covid-19 has delayed the work with the High Street Task Force Expert, now expected to take place in early 2021, to develop further the work the Council has already undertaken in these areas.

This document builds upon the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus and the recent community consultation held by the Civic Society and recommendations of the Aldershot Task Force that have fed into this document. The Interim Strategy summarises what has been achieved since the SPD was adopted but also what still needs to be done.

This interim document takes account of changing market conditions that occurred prior to the Covid-19 pandemic such as the consolidation of bricks and mortar stores by retailer that have accelerated since restrictions were imposed such as the shift to online retailing.

There is a need to diversify the town centre and continue the momentum with regenerating sites as they become available.

## Vision

Our borough, our town centres, our businesses, how we work and use our leisure facilities all continue to change. The way we respond to these changes will shape the borough for future generations and below is our vision that will inform how we do that.

- We want to see the heart back in Aldershot a place where people feel at home and have their home.
- The town will be a place where everyone is welcome and where families want to be, focused around a thriving town centre that provides a range of services to meet the needs of residents that is accessible to all and offers an experience across all generations and demographics for both the local community and visitors.
- Businesses, old and new, will enable residents to shop in a unique mix of independent and high street shops, providing places to work and the space to start a business.
- Aldershot's Victorian, military and diverse community heritage will be celebrated, maintained and developed.

## Communicating and developing the Vision

There has been extensive consultation over many years with the community concerning the regeneration of Aldershot. This has included work with Thinking Place regarding the branding of Aldershot, the development of the Aldershot Prospectus and recently the extensive work by the Civic Society to create their vision. This interim strategy seeks to synthesise all this work together, drawing heavily on the vision and ideas in the Civic Society document.

What is most important is that the vision and plans in this interim strategy are owned by the people of Aldershot who form a remarkable community. This community is already active in shaping and regenerating the town. In addition to the convening role of the Civic Society, the work of Aldershot Together in helping to deliver the events programme, Aldershot Churches Together which focuses the work of local churches to support the place or individual community businesses such as Karuna Coffee and many others demonstrate the power of the community. Building on this foundation and ensuring all these organisations and groups are engaged is fundamental to successfully turning vision into reality. An important element of this is supporting the continued development of community initiatives to meet the needs of residents so that the community is not just consulted and engaged, but an active part of transforming Aldershot Town Centre. We want the community to feel that they can shape their town.

That this has not fully happened was recognised by the High Street Task Force as one the most significant barrier to the regeneration of Rushmoor. They identified that rebranding was the most important area that had yet to be effectively addressed. The work undertaken by Thinking Place has never been fully implemented although it has been used across the Wellesley development.

The Aldershot Taskforce has been established as the key stakeholder group to help lead the regeneration of Aldershot. This includes residents, community organisations, businesses, developers and the Local Authorities. The strategic place leadership group and its establishment and role was recognised as a

strength by the High Street Task Force. As one of its workstreams this group has reviewed the Thinking Place work and while recognising its value considered that time had moved on and that there was a need to develop the branding further. Initial work to review and develop the branding was undertaken prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. However significant work remains to fully develop the rebranding including fresh engagement with stakeholders and residents. Rebranding will only be successful if it is owned by the residents, businesses and other stakeholders in Aldershot. This will need to be supported by a structured communications programme and adoption of the branding across partners.

The process will be developed using the approach set out in Rebranding the High Street (2016) is based on five activities:

1. Research
2. Deliberation (working with a core group of stakeholders to create a proposition for a vision using the research findings)
3. Consultation (to initiate a discussion about the proposition to refine the vision and strategy)
4. Action (demonstrate some early wins, change the focus of longer-term initiatives in the light of the research and stakeholder engagement)
5. Communication (tell residents, businesses, the wider catchment, investors and others what you are doing)

As several elements of the process have already been undertaken to some degree, a more tailored approach to ensure that every element has been fully addressed will be developed.

- Aldershot Task Force to continue to provide the strategic place leadership
- The Aldershot Task Force will work with the High Street Task Force, key developers / property owners & the Civic Society to engage the community fully in the vision and further develop branding
- Develop a shared communication plan and ongoing campaign to tell the story of the “new Aldershot” to achieve widescale adoption of branding by businesses and community organisations
- A coalition of the community organisations supported to develop and implement initiatives in and around the Town Centre

## Themes of the Vision

### Theme 1 - A revitalised and diverse town centre offer

*The town centre facilitates access to local services and provides places for communities to come together. A range of services and facilities in the town centre adds to the vibrancy and usefulness and encourages different people to come to the town centre and spend time there for a broad variety of reasons.*

*We want to work with partners to deliver a town centre that feels unique and welcoming with an independent retail offer and a variety of high-quality cafes and restaurants to socialise in.*

#### Family friendly town centre

Aldershot is appreciated by residents as a safe and family-friendly town centre that serves its community well. It has an impressive range of sports facilities and activities, including the football club, dry ski slope, gymnastics centre and swimming pool. The council is continuing to explore the potential for establishing leisure facilities in the town centre to complement these and improve accessibility. With the Wellesley development under construction, alongside the development of the Union Street and Galleries town centre schemes, the Council is seeking to further enhance this offer.

#### Focus for services

The Council will encourage the relocation of services into the Town Centre and support partners in providing the relevant space.

#### Digital Aldershot

Re-orienting Aldershot away from being a retail town provides it with an opportunity to capitalise on its other strengths, in particular its emerging importance to the digital technology sector. There is a strong and growing digital economy in the Guildford - Aldershot axis with digital tech density significantly higher than the national average. The Council is seeking to capitalise on this connection between the towns / cities in the area and sees it as integral to promoting growth. A large proportion of these tech companies are start-ups operating as micro businesses on a very small scale. Investing and supporting these emerging businesses is vital to the sector's continued growth.

## What has and is being achieved?

#### Union Street Regeneration

The Council successfully acquired vacant possession of the entire Union Street site through purchase of buildings along Union Street and High Street enabling the delivery of the Union Street East regeneration

scheme. The Council successfully bid for £6.2m of external funding towards the Union Street project better enabling the scheme to meet its transformational potential.

The Council achieved planning consent for its ambitious regeneration scheme for Union Street and the High Street in Aldershot town centre. Members of the council's development management committee approved the scheme at a meeting on 24 June 2020.

The consented scheme offers a mixture of high-quality retail / commercial space. At the heart of it is the new Union Yard, a public square around which will be flexible space designed to attract small, independent and local businesses and people wanting creative studio space.

A move away from big-brand retail provides an exciting opportunity for Aldershot to develop its independent offer, with the Council fully supporting the provision of a Makers' Yard. This would be a space, formed of a cluster of units, that would provide affordable accommodation for small scale local businesses and young creatives, brought into the town and supported by the introduction of student accommodation for the UCA. This will stimulate town centre diversity by providing a chance for these start-up businesses to test trade ideas. It is a model to encourage Small and Medium Enterprises to establish in and around the town and will provide a vibrant hub of independent retail activity boosting footfall.

### **Galleries Redevelopment**

A major step in regenerating Aldershot town centre was reached with the submission of a planning application for the redevelopment of The Galleries shopping centre in July that was subsequently approved by the Council's planning committee in November 2020.

The consented scheme will see the High Street multi storey car park, The Arcade and The Galleries redeveloped in phases to provide 596 one and two bedroomed town centre homes, flexible commercial space for shops, cafes and restaurants; medical and civic space, public and residents' car and cycle parking.

### **Town Centre Uses Study (Part 1)**

The Council commissioned Lambert Smith Hampton to prepare a Town Centre Uses Study to assess the quantitative need for town centre uses for the Borough as a whole, but consider in more detail how need can be met in Aldershot Town Centre and the potential to diversify the town centre's uses. The study takes account of major planned and proposed investment for the town centre, which if delivered, has the potential to revitalise Aldershot Town Centre.

The study is to be undertaken in two parts:

- Part 1 updating the evidence base (complete)
- Part 2 setting out a strategy for managing future change and growth in the Town Centre (postponed until 2021)

Part 1 of the study has identified that the development of Union Street and the Galleries/ Arcade sites will have a transformative effect on the town centre and provides the opportunity to close many of the gaps in retail and leisure offer that the health check assessment has identified, whilst strengthening the town centre's position within the regional hierarchy. The two regeneration schemes have the potential to revitalise Aldershot Town Centre, particularly through the diversification of its retail and service offer. This in turn will help to claw back expenditure leakage from the catchment and strengthen Aldershot's position in the sub-region's shopping hierarchy.

The study notes a key challenge in the short term is to retain existing retail occupiers and explore options to diversify retail offer over the short term; a challenge that is further compounded by the current Covid-19 pandemic and associated social distancing measures.

Opportunities to enhance Aldershot's commercial leisure offer will be dependent on market demand and changing consumer tastes and trends, but more crucially how the sector recovers from the closure of attractions from the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Digital Hub Complete**

The Council has worked with its partners to deliver a Digital Hub at the historic Old Town Hall to provide a 60-place collaborative workspace for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, micro, small and developing businesses, and others working in the Gaming/Digital Sector.

The hub provides a physical space for a supportive and collaborative shared working environment offering state of the art facilities and flexible working arrangements together with support services. The hub will support the growing digital economy in the Guildford-Aldershot axis.

### **5g Coverage rolled out by a network operator (EE)**

Aldershot is one of 12 towns in the UK where the network operator EE has introduced 5G mobile communication technology which offers data speeds several times that of 4G and allows for larger amounts of data to be transferred at once. The introduction of 5G complements the Games Hub and wider aspirations to drive digital growth in the town.

## **What do we need to do next?**

### **Transition and Recovery Plan**

Continue to work with our partners to implement the Transition and Recovery Plan to support existing business in the town centre during the construction phases of the Union Street East and Galleries Regeneration Schemes and attract new businesses to the town. The Transition and Recovery Plan identifies the following 7 priorities:

- A – Managing Safety, Distancing & Cleaning
- B – Gathering Data & Monitoring Footfall



- C – Telling the Story & Communication
- D – Encouraging Town Centre Use
- E – Supporting Businesses
- F – Attracting & Monitor External Funding
- G – Engaging with High Street Task Force

The Transition and Recovery plan focuses on methods of increasing footfall through events, activities and engagement.

### **Town Centre Uses Study (Part 2)**

The second part of the Lambert Smith Hampton Town Centre Uses Study will set out a strategy for managing future growth and change in the Town Centre. The study will make recommendations on how to diversify the town centre considering the consolidation of ‘bricks and mortar’ retailing by the national chains and a degree of consolidation with chain restaurant operators.

### **Attracting and creating a mix of uses to new commercial floorspace**

The Council and its partners will work to develop a plan for attracting and creating a mix of uses within the commercial floorspace provided as part of the Galleries and Union Street sites. This will include leisure, services and retail recognising that the retail approach of the past is no longer viable.

### **Develop a Strategy to attract a critical mass of employment**

There is a need to attract more employees into the town centre and surrounding areas to increase footfall and support existing and future town centre services (office, flexible workspace, start-ups).

The Council will work with its partners to improve Aldershot’s office market. This should be taken as a long-term goal that seeks to increase the skills base of the catchment and create a labour pool that could attract interest from employers to locate to Aldershot. In the short term to medium term we will look for opportunities to develop new affordable office accommodation aimed at servicing start-ups and smaller businesses and to develop other employment uses.

### **Windsor Way and Victoria Road**

As part of the strategy to bring employment to the Town Centre the Council and its partners will seek to undertake comprehensive master planning of the area to the east of the Town Centre including Windsor Way and Victoria Road to guide the regeneration of this area. We consider this area provides a suitable location for commercial uses such as flexible office accommodation, start-up units near the Town Centre or extension of the provision of small industrial units. The area is considered to be economic focused and any residential development would be incidental and must not compromise the primary economic purpose.



### Wellington Centre

The Council already works closely with the Wellington Centre on attracting people into the Town centre through events. Shopping Centres are particularly challenged in the current Covid-19 situation and due to longer term trends in retail. The Council will support London and Cambridge in seeking to diversify the offer and adapt to the changing environment.

### Westgate Leisure Park

The Council will work with Legal and General to support the recovery of the Westgate Leisure Park following the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in some of the restaurant units closing, the cinema to be temporarily closed and the delayed opening of a new gym facility.

### Other Sites

Car wash site adjacent Empire and Gala Bingo – This site was identified in the Aldershot Prospectus as a potential site for leisure. This remains an aspiration, but other uses would be considered provided the quality of the scheme enhances the two adjacent buildings and provides vibrancy for the ground floor and contributes effectively to the regeneration of the Town centre and its use.

### Enhanced digital connectivity

The Council will work with its partners including the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership to enhance fibre broadband and the mobile 5G offering in the Town Centre.

## Theme 2 - Town Centre Living

*The development of homes within the town centre build the resident base of our community and support a more vibrant future for the town.*

*There is potential for redevelopment of additional town / edge of centre sites and the conversion of existing premises outside of core retail / commercial areas.*

### What has and is being achieved?

#### **Birchett Road scheme**

This site featured in the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus and has since been redeveloped to provide 58 affordable dwellings in the town centre.

#### **52 Victoria Road**

This site wasn't identified in the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus, but consent was granted to redevelop this former commercial site to provide 54 new homes in August 2020. The development is now under construction.

#### **Union Street Redevelopment**

The Union Street development (planning consent granted June 2020) once complete will provide 100 residential units and a 128 bedrooms of student accommodation for students at the University of Creative Arts in Farnham.

By providing high quality student accommodation, this represents a significant opportunity to revitalise the town centre by bringing young, creative and innovative people into the heart of the town and introducing skill sets more attuned to emerging economic markets such as animation, computing and gaming. The energy and vibrancy of these young creatives will persist far outside the regimented shop opening hours of the past and will enthuse the town with much needed activity.

The regeneration of the town centre will also improve the attractiveness of residential development in Wellesley and may result in an accelerated delivery timescale due to improved market conditions.

#### **Galleries Redevelopment**

The consented Galleries redevelopment will, once complete, deliver 598 residential units within the Town Centre.

The scheme will bring about a step change in Aldershot. By providing homes in the town's heart for young professionals and new families it will re-energize and reinvigorate the town's offer, supporting Union Street East with vital consumer lifeblood. As such it will have a transformational effect offering the critical mass to stimulate real change.

## Other Sites

There are a number of new sites that have received planning consent since the adoption of the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus that have delivered new homes within or in close proximity<sup>1</sup> of the town centre which have provided approximately 165 dwellings between April 2015 and March 2020. The majority of which (over 85%) are the result of converting buildings from non-residential uses to residential use.

## What do we need to do next?

The Council will ensure the delivery of Union Street and Galleries schemes is delivered in a timely way and that the implementation is integrated as far as possible.

The Council will seek to identify the opportunities for the provision of residential units as part of commercial / leisure led schemes that may come forward within or adjoining the town centre. Potential sites that could deliver residential units as part of mixed-use schemes include:

## Princes Hall / Police Station and Magistrates Court

The Council and its partners will consider opportunities to redevelop the Princes Hall and police station / magistrates court site that feature in the Rushmoor Local Plan and Town Centre Prospectus through the comprehensive master planning of the site with partners to provide replacement community / arts / entertainment facilities. We consider there will be opportunity for residential dwellings to be provided as part of this scheme.

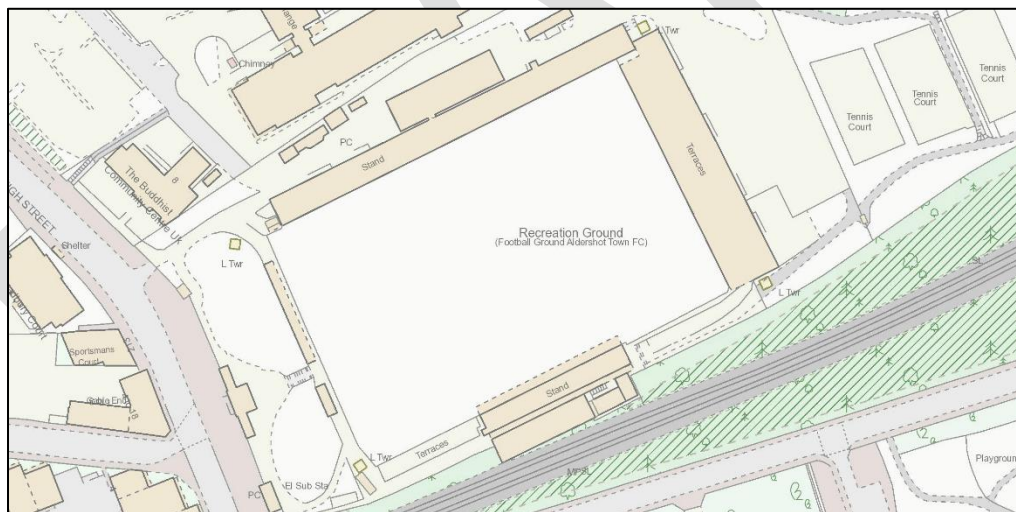
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<sup>1</sup> Within 200m of the Town centre Boundary defined in the Rushmoor Local Plan Policies Map



**Aldershot Town Football Club (Ebb Stadium)**

The Council will continue to work with Aldershot Town Football Club to identify opportunities to improve the stadium and its facilities. We consider that there may be the opportunity for some residential development as part of future proposals for this site. The entire site is identified as recreational land and therefore subject to mitigation for any reduction in recreational land.



## Parsons Barracks Car Park



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## Other Sites

Hippodrome House was identified as a key redevelopment site in the Aldershot Prospectus due to its prominent corner location clearly visible from the station and marking the key access to the Town centre. The aspiration for this to be brought forward remains. However, achieving this aim particularly with regard to parking provision has proved problematic.

Willow House is also another key site. A high-quality scheme whether for residential, community or commercial use is desired which reflects the location close to the conservation area and significant heritage buildings and on a route into Aldershot. The difficulties of achieving adequate parking are also a significant issue on this site.

Edge of centre retail – The Council recognises the changes in the retail market and the reduced demand for such premises. Outside of its core shopping frontages and key linked routes it will encourage the conversion of retail premises to residential subject to the schemes providing appropriate quality of design and accommodation.

## Theme 3 - Accessible and connected town centre with an improved public realm

*An easily accessible town centre promotes its active use. The town centre should be accessible by a range of transport option including walking and cycling to encourage visits whether for a short errand, to meet a friend, or an extended visit making use of the diverse range of businesses and facilities*

*The look, feel, and usability of Aldershot Town Centre is absolutely key to its future success in both economic and social terms. It must be welcoming, accessible to all and encourage visitors to utilise the services and facilities on offer.*

*The way people can use key spaces in the town centre and move between them will be carefully designed so that people can gather around events at focal points whilst others move freely around them.*

*The Council will work with its partners to deliver high quality public realm that use quality materials and is designed to a high standard.*

## What has and is being achieved?

### Parking Study

The Council commissioned a Parking Study that focused on Aldershot Town centre to examine the current parking situation taking account of previous off and on street parking surveys and to look at how supply and demand is likely to change in the future, given the planned regeneration projects and increasing use of sustainable and alternative modes of transport. The report identified several recommendations for the Council to explore and these are detailed in the following section.

## Improved connectivity between the Town Centre and Wellesley Development

The following improvements have recently been completed that formed part of the Section 106 legal agreement to Wellesley Hybrid Planning Consent:

- Foot/cycle improvements at Gun Hill including crossing improvements to the A323.
- Hospital Hill South Improvements including improvements to A323 Wellington Avenue / Hospital Hill / Princes Way junction
- Foot/cycle improvements to Middle Hill including crossing improvements to the A323.

## Improved public transport interchanges

The current bus station has not been used as a bus hub / transfer location for some time with the bulk of the transfers taking place within the town centre. It was agreed with Stagecoach (the bus operator) and HCC that the core bus service should relocate to a new bus hub within the town centre.

As part of the Aldershot Railway Station improvement scheme agreement was reached with the owner of the Bus Station that it should be redeveloped into residential with convenience retail below. A subsequent planning application was approved in early 2019.

The approach is aimed at serving the needs of shoppers visiting the town, but as importantly the community moving into the new residential properties within the town centre. The implementation shown below will be implemented as part of the town centre redevelopment and in the meantime interim arrangements will be in place.

The proposed new bus hub would be located adjacent to the current multi storey car park and the old Santander building. Stagecoach have advised they would run most of their services from here but maintain the Victoria Road route where the Council is also seeking to make improvements

The Layout (appendix 1) is an outline proposal, but would include green bus shelters with cycle parking, real time bus service updates and some form of soft landscaping all in keeping with the emerging style for the new town centre.

### Station public realm improvements

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. The development proposals will also significantly improve public transport infrastructure in the town and will incorporate improved cycle storage facilities in an effort to encourage sustainable transport modes through improved connections.



## Union Street Redevelopment

Building on the history of passageways and cut throughs across Aldershot, the development seeks to create routes that connect to existing street, opening up opportunities for public space.

Union Yard will provide a new dynamic pedestrian route between Union Street and High Street. Ramped access is provided from Union Street into a central courtyard at the heart of Union Yard. Due to the level change across the site, steps are provided down towards the High Street. A platform lift from the High Street to the courtyard ensures the space remains accessible for all.

A new route is also created connecting Short Street to Union Yard. This allows connectivity between The Trafalgar Public House alongside the new non-residential uses within the proposed shipping containers.

Additional public cycle parking will be provided within the scheme (check) and a car club vehicle will be provided that will be accessible to the wider public.

## Galleries Redevelopment

The consented development once complete will provide a new linkage between High Street and Wellington Street with a public square at its core that will aid connectivity and movement around the town centre. This public square will be required to utilise high quality materials to ensure that this new space will become a focal point of the town centre and able to host a range of events. The public car park that will be provided as part of the scheme is envisaged to provide public charging infrastructure for Electric Vehicles.

The key public realm objectives of the scheme are to:

- Create a strong identity and sense of place, reflecting the town centre location of the site.
- Deliver new public frontages along Wellington Street, Little Wellington Street, The High Street, Court Road and Wellington Avenue.
- Develop a site wide response to the local context and reflect this where possible in the approach to landscape treatments.
- Provide high quality and secure private communal residential gardens.
- Encourage informal play throughout the entire development.
- Provide an uncluttered streetscape that uses high quality, sustainable materials.
- Promote active edges along the ground floor of each building.
- Create new plaza areas along Little Wellington Street, along with extensive semi-mature street tree planting.

## What do we need to do next?

### Connectivity Study

The Council will undertake or commission a study looking at the accessibility / permeability / connectivity of the town centre and its surrounding to identify where targeted improvements could be made.

### Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Council will work with Hampshire County Council and other partners to produce a Local Cycling and Walking and Infrastructure Plan to identify key routes and priorities for improvement.

### Implement the findings of the Aldershot Town Centre Parking Study

The study made a number of recommendations that the Council will continue to explore with its partners:

**Off street parking:** more strategic use of car parks and partnership working by the Council with the Wellington Centre and Westgate, improved use of technology for car parks and provision of electric vehicle charging.

**On street parking:** a strategic review of on-street parking, including reducing the number of spaces to create more public realm for pedestrians and cyclists. The study recommends improved management and digital (cashless) payment options be introduced.

**Non car use:** consider a cycle hub at the station, implement 2012 Town Access Plan Improvements and consider the introduction of Car Share Schemes

### Draft Public Realm Guidance Consultation

The public realm guidance document sets out several strategic objectives which can be used to inform a co-ordinated approach to improving the public realm within our town centres.

It is part of an effort which aims to encourage the delivery and improvement of public realm in our two towns which is consistent, of the highest quality and functional, by providing a co-ordinated approach which helps the borough properly realise this once in a generation opportunity.

It is intended as a guide, steering the developers of key town centre schemes forward under a single co-ordinated vision.

We will undertake public consultation on the draft Public Realm Guidance that has been produced to guide future development within the Town Centre.

### **Targeted Public Realm & Shopfront Improvements**

We will seek to identify opportunities to build upon the previous work that was undertaken to improve shopfronts in the town centre. A particular focus will be on key connecting routes such as the top of the High Street and Station Approach.

### **Toilets**

The redevelopment of the High Street Car Park and Bus Station will mean the loss of the two sets of public toilets. Provision of modern accessible changing and toilet facilities are important for a Town centre. While there is provision within the Wellington Centre these are only available from 8am-6pm. A community toilet is provided at Princes Hall and will be available at Karuna Coffee. However, provision of replacement toilet facilities needs to be considered.

### **Public Art**

We will seek to introduce and enhance public art into the town centre and will focus on installations that complement the rich heritage and culture of the town.

## Theme 4 - An improved cultural offer

*Events, entertainment and activities are the key to creating a town centre that Aldershot residents are proud of and attend regularly. They offer people an additional reason to visit the town centre and increase the footfall which will in turn increase the prosperity of businesses in the town.*

*Aldershot has a strong history of arts and culture, from the town's many early music halls and theatres to performances by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix in the sixties. The West End Centre has served as a creative hub for artists, musicians and performers for more than 45 years and the Princes Hall for nearly 50 years.*

### What has and is being achieved?

#### Union Street Redevelopment

To build on this rich cultural heritage the Council is forging ties with the University of the Creative Arts to properly realise the cultural potential of the Union Street redevelopment. To keep this history alive and to nourish and grow Aldershot's cultural and creative spirit going forward, the Council wants Union Street to be a space where both new and existing residents, young people, local businesses and artistic industries can come together.

#### Expanded Cultural events programme

Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic the Council had broadened its cultural events programme:

- Running a diverse programme of major annual events, including:
  - Victoria Day, June
  - Armed Forces Day, June
  - PlayFest, August
  - Fireworks, October / November
  - Christmas Lights Switch On, November
- Smaller scale footfall building events programme in Farnborough Town Centre
- Expanded range of events at the West End Centre

Princes Hall continued to offer a diverse and exciting range of events to cater for a range of interests

## What do we need to do next?

- Reintroducing a full events programme to the town centre and its performance venues when safe to do so.
- Work with our partners including the Arts Council to develop a Cultural Compact and Strategy for Rushmoor that will support the Town Centres among other aims.
- Work with Hampshire Cultural Trust to build on the offer provided at the West End Centre, including potential studio space.
- Review potential refurbishment of Princes Hall and enhancing its offer.

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## Theme 5 - Affirming Aldershot's Heritage

*To showcase the rich heritage of Aldershot and integrate it into the regeneration of the town centre and the activities and events that take place there.*

### **Victorian heritage**

One of Aldershot's frequently overlooked assets is the quality of the Victorian buildings which remain throughout the town centre

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. Many of the best buildings occupy corner sites and are visible as landmarks, making them especially important.

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 wishes to showcase the fantastic historic built fabric in the town centre and sets out the Council's intention to enhance and preserve this. Aldershot's Victorian Heritage is celebrated annually on Victoria Day.

### **Gentle use of military connection**

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 Armed Forces Day and Victoria Day.

### **Nepali/International heritage**

Rushmoor is a borough built on community diversity and as such, is the most ethnically diverse in all of Hampshire. In Aldershot, the army's presence has helped grow a vital and vibrant international community which contributes greatly to animating the town. The army's historically strong links with the Commonwealth have expanded over the last 20 years to include ties to Africa, Europe, the Pacific Islands and most significantly Nepal.

The Nepalese community has a particularly strong presence in Rushmoor because of the Gurkha connection with Aldershot Garrison during their service. When the High Court ruled in 2009 to allow Gurkhas, who retired before 1997, the right to settle in the UK, many viewed Aldershot as their natural home and laid down roots which now extend far beyond simply a military connection. The Nepali

community's active participation in events is particularly valuable to the town, with the Food Festival and Victoria Day great examples of local people coming together.

These diverse residents are crucial to the vibrancy of the town and add another dimension to Aldershot's unique blend of heritage and culture. Their importance cannot be understated.

## What has and is being achieved?

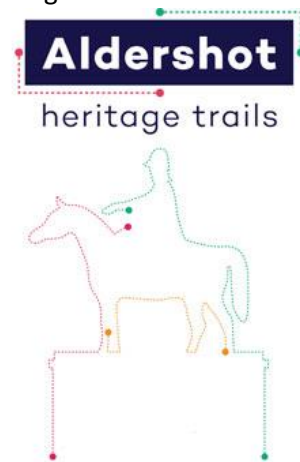
### Heritage Trails

Funding has been secured for two heritage trails one within Aldershot Town centre and the other as part of the Wellesley redevelopment.

Aldershot has a wealth of rich military and civilian history, so we want the heritage trails to tell the story of this to residents and visitors, and to all ages. Each trail will be several miles long with information and navigation provided by a series of way-markers, totem poles, and plaques.

The proposed trails are:

- The Marlborough Trail
- The Stanhope Trail
- The Wellington Trail
- The Redan Trail
- Town Centre Trail



They have been developed by a heritage trails team, made up of representatives from Rushmoor Borough Council, Grainger Plc, the Aldershot Garrison and the Friends of Aldershot Military Museum.

### Heritage Festival

The Council launched the Rushmoor Heritage festival which ran from the 3<sup>rd</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup> October. The festival provided a wide range of activities to enjoy from home., including the Picturing Aldershot audio trail to discover images from Aldershot's past and present and listening to the 'Entertaining Aldershot' audio tour of the old music halls, theatres and cinemas.

### Victoria Day

To celebrate the town's close links with Queen Victoria, the town centre is transformed into a sea of colourful activity for all the family to enjoy, including: Performances from local musicians and dancers and the grand parade through the town centre.

## What do we need to do next?

- Consult on and finalise Public Realm Guidance
- Improving the high street shop frontages to emphasise the Victorian heritage of the town
- Implement Heritage Trials
- Develop approach to integrate Nepali heritage within town

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## A Map of the Vision



### Sites

**Maps of the various sites will be created at some point once lockdown restrictions have been lifted.**

1. Police Station Courts / Princess Hall
2. Winsor Way – comprehensive master planning to guide the regeneration of this area
3. Car wash site (High Street) - visually detracting from neighbouring buildings – cross ref SPD p56
4. Hippodrome House
5. Willow House (60's / 70's building) - high quality development that is sympathetic to surrounding-heritage assets
6. Ebb Stadium
7. Parson Barracks Car park

### Map – key public realm schemes / priorities including frontages

Galleries – continue to work with developer to ensure that the public open space provided is high quality and can accommodate a range of events?

High Street – shopfronts + conversions of upper floors & potential lower ground floors to shop to resi (consolidated retail).

Station Road– shopfronts

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