

## **NEWBURY TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q Why does Newbury need a Town Centre Masterplan?**

**A** Newbury is a great place to live, work and do business and in many ways, the town centre is thriving. Footfall in the town centre has returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels thanks to some great initiatives led by Newbury BID and local business partners. However, shopping and leisure habits across the country have been changing for some time and the Covid pandemic has brought about a fundamental shift in working habits. We need to position our town centres to meet the changing needs of residents, visitors and businesses so that we remain competitive in the years to come.

**Q Who has been involved in its development?**

**A** When we appointed a multi-disciplinary team of consultants to develop the Masterplan in late 2020, we were very clear that it must be done in partnership with local people and key stakeholders. Over 4,000 people responded to the first online survey in early 2021 and this led to the development of a draft Vision and Spatial Framework for the town centre. This was endorsed and refined by the consultants after a second round of public consultation in July 2021, during which over 1,000 responses were received. In addition, the consultants talked to local businesses, landowners, Newbury Town Council and Newbury BID among others to get their input.

**Q What is included in the Masterplan?**

**A** The Masterplan outlines a range of 'quick wins' and short, medium and longer term proposals to create more activity and improve connections between six key areas. These are The Wharf; the Canal; Victoria Park & Parkway; Northbrook St, Bartholomew St and Market Place; the Lanes & Yards; and Broadway, Cheap St and Bartholomew St (south). In addition, it looks at ways to increase 'dwell time', draw in young people and encourage innovative uses and creative and cultural activities in underused space. All of these proposals will need to be worked up in detail and costed before they can be taken forward for consideration.

**Q What does it say about pedestrianisation in the town centre?**

**A** The Masterplan proposes a 'pedestrianised core' which reduces but does not prohibit vehicular access and restricts traffic to one-way in order to release space on the highway for other uses such as pavement cafes. This is an aspiration for the medium to longer term (3 years +), recognising that further technical work and public engagement is required to see if it can be taken forward. It also recognises that it needs to tie in with wider initiatives including a review of post-Covid traffic modelling and the promotion of alternative modes of travel in line with our carbon net zero ambitions.

**Q How can the Masterplan be delivered, given that the Council does not own all the land and some of the schemes look very costly?**

**A** The Masterplan can only be delivered in partnership with other public bodies and the private sector. The Delivery Strategy sets out how each proposal can be delivered and funded and the timescales for doing so. It makes reference to partners such as the Town Council, Newbury BID and the private sector, subject to their agreement. It also lists potential external funding sources and there may be more funding available as more details emerge about the Government's recently published [Levelling Up White Paper](#).

**Q How does the Masterplan fit with the Local Plan Review and the emerging Newbury Neighbourhood Development Plan?**

**A** The Masterplan carries little weight in the statutory planning process but it can attract more weight if it is turned into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and adopted following public consultation. The timescale for production of an SPD for Newbury Town Centre will be considered as part of the [Local Plan Review](#), which is looking at new policies to support town centres. In addition, a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Newbury is being developed by the local community. You can find out more about Neighbourhood Planning on our website at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>

**Q What about other high streets and town centres in West Berkshire?**

**A** During the Covid pandemic, we have paid out millions of pounds in grants to local businesses across the district, and we have worked with town centres to access the Government's Welcome Back Fund aimed at increasing footfall. This Masterplan is one of a number of place-shaping initiatives being developed by the Council across the district in line with our Council Strategy. £150,000 has been set aside for economic development focussed town centre studies for Thatcham and Hungerford, in addition to the visioning work for Thatcham and Newbury being carried out to support the Local Plan Review. These combined will become part of a wider Place Infrastructure Programme being developed to allow the Council to consider its priorities for infrastructure funding and delivery across the District as a whole.