

**SUBJECT: USK (& WOODSIDE) IMPROVEMENT MASTER PLAN**

**MEETING: CABINET**

**DATE: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: USK & LLANBADOC**

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To formally receive and adopt the Usk (& Woodside) Improvement Masterplan (appendix 1).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the draft Usk (& Woodside) Improvement Masterplan (attached) be approved, and that the action plan be subsequently amended by the Steering Group as appropriate.
- 2.2 That the process to deliver the Action Plan set out in the Next Steps section (page 114) is approved, subject to the amendment that the Partnership Group recommendation is not taken forward (see paragraph 3.7).
- 2.3 That a Steering Committee is established and that the Steering Committee agrees a terms of reference, including the ability to revise and amend the Action Plan.
- 2.4 That the Chief Officer for Enterprise and the relevant Cabinet members be regularly briefed on the actions of the Steering group and refinement of the Action Plan.
- 2.5 To facilitate early occupation, that options for the use of the vacant HWRC site In Maryport Street car park be developed and implemented in advance of the wider masterplan action plan revision and any such proposals be approved by the deputy chief executive in consultation with the relevant cabinet member

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1 The Usk (& Woodside) Improvement Master Plan was jointly commissioned by MCC and Usk Town Council (UTC) in 2018. Consultants ARUP were successful with their tender and were awarded the commission. A working group consisting of MCC Members and officers along with UTC and Llanbadoc Community Council Members and officers was set up to oversee the commission.
- 3.2 The final document contains a strategic framework and action plan which collectively forms the masterplan. The strategic framework directs change and is based on extensive engagements with key stakeholders and the wider community. The subsequent actions grouped into short, medium and long term contribute to achieving these objectives.
- 3.3 The objectives of the strategy are

- improved public realm,
- retain, support and attract independent businesses,
- support and expand the visitor economy
- a healthier, happier Usk
- enhance Usk's green capital
- support the agricultural community
- a thriving community and sense of identity
- a resilient and sustainable Usk
- partnership working

#### 3.4 The key areas for change include:

- Shopping experience and challenges taking into account the impact of online shopping on 'High Streets' as well as the local environment in Usk. Bridge Street is impacted by high traffic volumes.
- Positive benefits to the town by increasing the number of events held throughout the year
- Enhanced public spaces recognising the change of focus from car to pedestrian
- Improved communication links e.g. active travel
- Improved recreational offer at the Island and opportunities presented by the riverside
- Co-working space and affordable housing

3.5 The Masterplan was completed in March 2019 but has not yet been adopted by Monmouthshire County Council as attention and resources have been diverted on short term Covid measures implemented in the town. It is now timely to reconsider the future direction of the Masterplan and seek adoption by MCC. Both Usk Town Council and Llanbadoc Community Council have adopted the plan.

3.6 The Masterplan should be the driver for guiding future regeneration activity in the town in a coherent and consistent manner rather than on a piecemeal basis. This coordinated approach is preferred by funders such as Welsh Government and offers an opportunity to identify 'pipeline' projects which can be designed in anticipation of the availability of future funding.

3.7 ARUP proposed that a high-level Partnership Group is set up with strategic partners such as Natural Resources Wales, Sustrans, Dwr Cymru and NFU. Further discussions on the implementation of the Masterplan with UTC and MCC have resulted in this proposal being considered unsustainable. Organisations do not have the resources to send representatives to meetings which risk becoming a talking shop and have no clear purpose. As a result, it is proposed that a Steering Committee formed of MCC, UTC and Llanbadoc Community Council is to be set up with an option of inviting additional participants as appropriate or setting up task and finish groups to report back into the Steering group.

#### 4.0 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The assessment of Equality and Future Generations Evaluation (Appendix B) is summarised below for Members' consideration:

This proposal seeks to adopt a strategic framework for the future regeneration of Usk with an emphasis on improving active travel, reducing the reliance on private cars and ensuring that Usk has a sustainable future offering a mix of retail, employment, leisure and housing opportunities.

#### 5.0 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

| Options   | Benefits  | Risks   | Comments/Mitigation                             |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do nothing  | No impact on resources of MCC or UTC  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment of time and money into producing the Masterplan will not be realised</li> <li>Lack of trust from those involved in the consultation and shaping the Masterplan if nothing is done to implement recommendations</li> </ul>   | Not considered an option that should be pursued |
| MCC and UTC implement actions in isolation                          | Fewer human resources required as Steering Group will not be set up               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duplication of effort by respective councils</li> <li>Implementation fragmented and lacking benefits from pooling human and financial resources</li> <li>Partners do not feel that they are part of a bigger strategy</li> <li>Reduced interest from funders as lack of evidence of partnership working</li> </ul> | Not considered an option that should be pursued |
| Employment of consultants to implement the strategy and action plan | Fewer human resources from MCC as consultants will be managing the implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of buy in from local stakeholders</li> <li>No budget to employ consultants</li> </ul>   | Not considered an option that should be pursued |

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant time and resources by MCC officers will be required to take forward the actions so duplication of effort if consultants and MCC are working on the same projects</li> </ul>  |  |
| MCC to adopt and lead on the delivery of the Masterplan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes partnership working between organisations which can have benefits not identified in the Masterplan</li> <li>• MCC departments have the expertise and powers to be able to implement many of the actions identified in the Masterplan once funding has been secured</li> <li>• Delivery is retained by democratically accountable councils</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding cannot be secured for individual projects, so residents and partners do not see the anticipated changes on the ground</li> <li>• Secretariat function required in addition to resources to implement the specific actions</li> </ul> |  |

## 6.0 EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The success of the masterplan will be evident in the changes on the ground. Regular progress reports will be reported to the Usk Masterplan Steering Group and into the respective Councils meetings:

- Metrics will include amount of funding secured and number of projects implemented.

## 7.0 REASONS:

7.1 The decision to adopt the Masterplan is to be made to enable the County Council to move forward to the implementation stage. Usk Town Council has adopted the plan

and recommendations so following adoption both councils will be in a position to progress the plan together.

- 7.2 A recommendation has been added to the report since the E&D select committee to allow early progress to be made regarding the future use of the HWRC site in Maryport Street. Usk TC has submitted a proposal that the site be used for a market. The feasibility of this is being investigated by officers in conjunction with Usk TC but if the option is considered viable then a temporary agreement will be drafted and agreed. Any such agreement will be temporary in order that it would not frustrate any longer term plans for the site that the Steering Group might develop in the future.

## **8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 8.1 Councillor and officer representation is expected on the Steering Group. MCC will be expected to provide the secretariat to the Steering Group.
- 8.2 It is envisaged that there will be task and finish group looking at specific actions which would involve officers from across MCC.
- 8.3 There is not a specific pot of money ringfenced for taking forward the actions identified in the action plan. It will be for partners to identify and apply for funding as appropriate.
- 8.4 The two initial challenges for the Steering Group will be to identify some quick wins to secure confidence in the masterplan as the framework for change in Usk and to agree a communication strategy so that residents and businesses are kept informed of the activities of the Steering Group and have a point of contact.

## **9.0 CONSULTEES:**

Cabinet Member for Economy

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services

Enterprise DMT

Usk Masterplan joint working group

Economy and Development Select Committee

The report and the action plan was considered by the Economy and Development Select Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021. A full discussion took place on the report and the Committee endorsed the plan and asked that it be considered by the Cabinet. The Select Committee will consider progress on delivering the action plan in due course

Through the consultation exercise, it has been highlighted that there are few references within the report to disability and equality needs. This does not preclude the plan being adopted but this comment will be highlighted to the Steering Group when established in order that it might be given due consideration as delivery of the various elements of the action plan are developed'

**10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

*Usk (& Woodside) Improvement Master Plan*

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