

Town Centre Strategies

Between 15 January and 26 February 2018 (6 weeks), public consultation and engagement exercises were carried out with local residents, community groups, local businesses, Equality Engagement Forum members and Community Planning Partnership members. This included 11 drop-in sessions across East Dunbartonshire, meetings with community groups, town centre visits, press coverage and extensive social media promotion and mailshots to the Land Planning Policy mailing list (over 800 recipients).

The Consultation events were designed to encourage both formal response in the form of questionnaires and informal responses where members of the public noted down any comments or issues they felt were important within their town centre. Consultation was designed to ensure that it was as fully inclusive and accessible as possible. The venues included both supermarkets and public buildings and events timings were arranged to maximise footfall and differing demographic, to engage with the broadest range of people who may not otherwise have been involved in the consultation. In addition, officers targeted shops and businesses within each town centre to talk through the strategies and encourage their promotion with customers and other interested parties. Posters were provided to local secondary schools to display information about the strategies where appropriate, with the aim of generating interest throughout younger age groups.

The aim was to gather feedback on the proposed actions and objectives set out within each draft strategy, enabling officers to refine and amend the strategies where appropriate. A total of 31 responses were received, together comprising 225 separate comments. This included submissions from groups and organisations such as community councils, local churches, resident's associations, traders associations, sports clubs, key agencies and community development trusts.

Key Outcomes from Consultation

Full details of the consultation process are provided in the accompanying 'Report of Consultation' (Appendix 5 located in the members lounge). This includes a summary of each comment, an initial officer response and an explanation of whether and how the draft strategies have been modified to address comments. The Report also identifies what specific modification is required for each strategy. Key themes that emerged are outlined below.

Bearsden

As with the pre-draft initial engagement stage, feedback from participants and those commenting took the view that Bearsden is a well performing town centre, and the vision set out in the draft strategy was positively received overall. However, a number of key areas of concern emerged from consultation. Accessibility to and from the town centre in particular was

regarded as a key priority for improvement, together with pedestrian movement throughout different parts of the centre, including access to the Community Hub. It was also felt that the strategy could more clearly define the role of Bearsden town centre and better explain what it is primarily used for. This, it was suggested, would make it easier to establish what is needed to make the town centre more of a destination, rather than a stopping point en-route to Glasgow.

It was also considered that the strategy provides a good opportunity to provide a framework to enhance the environmental quality of the town centre, for example by providing the basis for action to improve the public realm and strengthen 'green infrastructure' elements such as links to local habitats, path networks and open space. Finally, the availability of indoor space for local community groups and services, including nursery and healthcare facilities, was seen as an important element of the strategy. In this respect, a number of responses stated that the strategy should support the protection, enhancement and appropriate use of key community buildings, namely New Kilpatrick Old Hall and Bearsden North Church, as well as those just outwith the town centre, specifically Brookwood Villa and the Baptist Church.

Bishopbriggs

Responses to the Bishopbriggs strategy were largely focused on the future of the former High School site. Overall, there was strong support for the future development of this site for mixed uses, as outlined in the Local Development Plan. It should be noted that since consultation for the town centre strategy closed, the landowner (Morrison's) has submitted a Proposal of Application Notice TP/ED/18/0406 to the Council. They have undertaken public consultation to discuss options for the former high school site. The consultation documents recognised the role of the Bishopbriggs Town Centre Strategy and it is anticipated detailed discussions will be taken forward through the development management process with the Strategy as a material consideration.

Similarly, there was widespread recognition that improvements to the Kirkintilloch Road (A803) – including improved air quality - are essential if the town centre is to become more attractive and accessible. It was felt that Bishopbriggs lacks a 'draw' and that people need more of a reason to visit the town centre, including the provision of new facilities and attractions for young children and families. Another key issue for the strategy was the need to provide more specialist housing for older people. It was felt that the development of the vacant former High School site is an ideal opportunity to encourage smaller high quality housing for people to downsize into, which could be integrated with other forms of housing. Finally, the importance of surrounding green spaces came through quite strongly, including a number of specific recommendations for future enhancements to local parks.

Milngavie

The strategy for Milngavie was generally well received, and responses tended to focus on refining or enhancing the proposed actions, with a number of clear themes emerging. Firstly, the need to upgrade the precinct came through prominently. In particular, there were some concerns about cycling within the pedestrianised area, accessibility of underpasses and the quality of street furniture. The proposed Community Hub was also seen as a key issue, with many responses emphasising the importance of further consultation with community groups and local residents on any future decisions – including potential uses – in addition to the early engagement exercise carried out by the Council in December 2017. In general terms it was felt that the views of all local residents (not just specific groups) should be taken into account for any town centre related activity.

Another key theme was the potential to create a better quality tourist and visitor environment. It was suggested that the strategy should do more to promote local heritage and assets such as Milngavie Reservoirs and walking routes, and enable the development of essential facilities such as an information centre, toilets and accommodation. Parking also came through as an important issue for the strategy to address, particularly availability at the train station – concerns were again raised at the impact of parking on surrounding residential streets. Finally, a number of comments welcomed future improvements to Lennox Park, but there were mixed views on the need for food growing space there. Some concerns were raised in relation to the perceived lack of sports and recreation space in the local area, and a number of responses highlighted the importance of ensuring continued provision within Lennox Park.

Conclusion

Overall, the level of participation and enthusiasm demonstrated throughout the consultation was encouraging. Officers spoke to approximately 207 members of the public across all of the events (61 in Bearsden, 57 in Bishopbriggs and 89 in Milngavie), alongside separate meetings with businesses, groups and organisations with an interest in the relevant documents. This highlights the strong desire within each community to work collaboratively and enhance each respective town centre. The vast majority of comments and submissions were constructive, allowing officers to gain a thorough picture of the outstanding issues and key priorities going forward. Many of these issues are relatively long-standing and will be addressed via the Local Development Plan. Others have emerged during the consultation and as a result, the draft versions of each strategy have been modified where appropriate to address comments received.