



AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL Democratic Services

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ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee will be held at **6.30 pm** on **Tuesday 13 March 2018** in **The Olympic Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF**, when your attendance is requested.

Membership: Councillor P Strachan (Chairman); Councillors C Branston (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, J Bloom, A Christensen, M Collins, M Hawckett, T Hunter-Watts, P Irwin, C Poll and W Whyte

Contact Officer for meeting arrangements: Chris Ward, cward@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Any changes will be reported at the meeting.

3. MINUTES (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2018.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interests.

5. AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE PLAN UPDATE (Pages 7 - 22)

For Members to consider the attached report.

Contact Officer: Teresa Lane 01296 585006
Diana Fawcett 01296 585082

6. WORK PROGRAMME

To consider the future work programme. Meetings are scheduled as follows:-

23 May 2018: Aylesbury Vale Estates Business Plan 2018/19
Car Parking Strategy

12 September 2018: No items as yet

13 November 2018 No items as yet

Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee

17 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillor P Strachan (Chairman); Councillors C Branston (Vice-Chairman), J Bloom, M Collins, M Hawkett, T Hunter-Watts, P Irwin, C Poll and W Whyte

APOLOGIES: Councillors B Adams and A Christensen

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

2. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SKILLS STRATEGY

Aylesbury Vale was covered by two different Local Enterprise Partnerships: South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) which included the following councils; Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Cherwell, Corby, Daventry, Kettering, Luton, Milton Keynes, Northampton and South Northants, and Bucks Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) which consisted of the following other Councils; Wycombe, Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire and Bucks County Council. Representatives from SEMLEP had attended Scrutiny on 31 October 2017 to provide an update on the pending Strategic Economic Plan and Skills Plan which was subsequently launched on 8 November 2017.

The item was attended by Jackie Campbell, Skills Development Manager at BTVLEP and Ian Barham, Partnership Manager at BTVLEP who introduced Members to the Buckinghamshire Skills Plan. The intention of BTVLEP was to build conditions for the sustainable economic growth in the entrepreneurial heart of Britain and this would be achieved through a strategy that provided a framework and focus for joint commitment to developing skills across the county. There were four key themes in the strategy:

- Developing future workforce: ensure young people are prepared for work and make informed career choices.
- Develop robust supply of skilled ambitious talent for growth sectors and Enterprise Zones with a focus on creative, digital high performance engineering, life sciences, food and drink manufacture and space industries.
- Support lifelong learning by addressing skills gaps.
- Support skill development and recruitment in the health and social care, construction, tourism, service and public sector.

BTVLEP itself was the second smallest LEP in the UK and had three arms of delivering its services:

Buckinghamshire Skills Board – focussed on promoting and optimising links between employers and educators in order to enable young people to become more work ready through employer involvement and ensure they gain the right skills for the local growth sectors.

Buckinghamshire Business First – business led and business focussed community for new, established and growing business in the County. Community members were provided knowledge, support and opportunities for growth and benefited from

connections, facilities, products and services. Currently 10,500 businesses were members of BBF.

Buckinghamshire Advantage – operational element of BTVLEP’s delivery of funded capital schemes to ensure local growth funds were invested to maximum effect.

The BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan was originally produced in 2014 and had been refreshed in 2016. The plan had provided the framework for Local Growth Deals for Buckinghamshire. Since 2012, over £100m had been secured which had been utilised for new road and rail connections (such as Stoke Mandeville relief road), town centre investment, skills and business incubation facilities, business investment funds and digital infrastructure. The BTVLEP Skills Capital Projects in the Vale included Westcott and Silverstone, as well as a business incubation centre based on cycle technology and a centre of Entrepreneurship at University of Buckingham which was under construction and due to open in September as part of wider plans to double its intake in the next ten years. Meanwhile, University Campus Aylesbury Vale sought to create an exciting Digital Innovation Hub to support business incubation.

Members heard of the challenges that BTVLEP faced with skills issues in Buckinghamshire which they were working to resolve in collaboration with SEMLEP as crucial elements to promote economic growth. The first was that employers stated that 17-18 year olds recruited were not prepared for the work place. Secondly was the ‘brain drain’ of educated young adults leaving Buckinghamshire for further education and not returning which resulted in a comparatively small proportion of people aged 24 – 30. There was also the daily loss of skilled people which commuted to London for higher salaries. It had been found that the skills shortage was more apparent in Thames Valley compared to the rest of the UK with 30% of vacancies unfilled compared to the national average of 25% and the key challenge was to retain and attract talent.

For 2018, the activities and focus of BTVLEP was to consolidate and build on the impact of its Skills Programme for Under 19s. Work in secondary schools was ongoing and the intention was to expand into other schools including Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Pupil Referral Units (PRU). The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub had successfully created ‘Opps in Bucks’ and ‘Wannabe’ both of which acted as a communication portal between employers and young people. Work experience, internships, apprenticeships and jobs were advertised on this portal and it was intended to expand the pool of companies that used this. Opps in Bucks had various success stories including pupil ventures into filming at the National Film & Television School, app development, engineering in Chesham and sales experience in Hemel Hempstead. LEP funding was available to these businesses on the condition that they participated in school and education encounters. Student – Employer encounters were seen as vital in youth engagement. BTVLEP had been responsible for 52,000 such encounters in 2016/17 with 70,000 projected for 2017/18. Additionally, the Bucks Skills Show for 2018 was booked at The Gateway for 12 & 13 October, and the intention was to grow on the 100 businesses that had attended in 2017. Feedback from the Bucks Skills Show was positive as it was a ‘hands on’ experience for young people to engage with businesses and provide them the opportunity to make career choices based on inspiration rather than school subject preference. A video of interviews and insights from the 2017 was available via this link: <https://wannabebucks.org/gravity-landing/bucks-skills-show-2017/>

A collaboration which included Bucks New Universities and UCAV were submitting a bid for funding from the Institute of Technology by the deadline of 1 March 2018. There would be competition for the funding from other LEPs and it was hoped that this bid would have advantages owing to the location in the growth corridor and the investment into the buildings, the town centre and wider area. A decision on the funding bid was expected in the summer of 2018.

Members sought more information from the BTVLEP representatives and were advised that:-

- i. Future funding was secured until August 2020 with additional LEP reserves available. Sponsorship from businesses to hold events, such as the Skills Show, were being explored so that events would break even. Once BTVLEP had grown its reputation further then a subscription based model for additional services to businesses was a possibility.
- ii. Brain drain and appealing to youth was achievable through the reputation of business and of place. An example was the attraction of the Dyson apprenticeship program which was oversubscribed despite its location in Malmesbury which was a relatively quiet area. BTVLEP therefore wanted young people to be aware of the opportunities that were local in terms of key businesses in this part of the country and the benefits of living in the area and discussion was had around how to make the Vale even more attractive such as through more affordable housing and housing of the right mix and town centre regeneration. All of this had been planned for in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.
- iii. The influence parents had on their children's career was acknowledged and BTVLEP welcomed and encouraged parental attendance at events so that they were also informed on career path options.
- iv. The impact of Carillion's activities on apprenticeships and Bucks SMEs was being investigated. BTVLEP had a relationship with Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) which would assist on this.
- v. Whilst youth resilience was an important skill to be learnt in education, employers had a role to play in nurturing young people when they transitioned into employment to help young people be 'work ready'.
- vi. There was an acknowledgement that affordability of the area had a role in retaining young talent and that Local Authority schemes, such as Help to Buy, would help.
- vii. The performance of Career Leads in schools was monitored and they receiving training for the role.

RESOLVED –

1. That the BTVLEP representatives be thanked for their presentation and that their work for the Vale was greatly appreciated by the Committee.
2. Cabinet be requested to support and advertise the schemes operated by BTVLEP, such as Opps in Bucks and Wannabe, and suggested that the work being done be promoted in AV Times.

3. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered their work programme as per the agenda. It was possible that an LEP Review would be ready for the next meeting in March. The Industrial Strategy would also be presented to Committee when it was ready.

In addition to this, Members saw the benefit of the following coming to Committee:

- Invite Rupert Walters, Head of Economic Research at Buckinghamshire Business First, to guest speak on current and future skills in the local area.
- An overall update on broadband provision within the Vale with a focus on connecting areas without it.

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AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Diana Fawcett

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To give the committee, supported by a presentation, an overview of the work of the Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership over the last sixteen months and to highlight key elements for delivery for the next twelve months.
- 1.2 To give the committee an overview of the changing face of retail in the UK and its' impact on Aylesbury town centre.

2 Recommendations

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| 2.1 | Members note from the presentation the work of the Partnership and plans for the next twelve months including the impact on the town centre of the shrinking retail market. |
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3 Supporting information

Role of the Town Centre Partnership

- 3.1 The Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership (ATCP) is a thriving organisation which supports the town centre business community and helps improve and promote the town to encourage more footfall and investment.
- 3.2 The Partnership's annual business plan has five key headings:
 - i Partnership and Communications
 - ii A clean and attractive town
 - iii A safe place
 - iv Marketing and promoting the town
 - v Support for independent businesses
- 3.3 The Partnership business plan is closely aligned to (but not replaced by) the Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan. This is the overarching plan which sets out the:
 - The Vision for the town centre
 - The challenges the town is facing Guiding principles for future development
 - Actions for the different areas of the town centre and across the town centre
- 3.4 These elements of the Improvement Plan are included in the Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the Town Centre Manager is on the Board for the Garden Town to ensure that any appropriate emerging projects are fed in to both the Partnership business plan and the Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan.
- 3.5 The Partnership is currently Chaired by the Managing Director of Mix 96. Cllr Julie Ward and Cllr Barbara Russel are the AVDC member representatives on the Partnership.
- 3.6 Below is an overview of the work of the Partnership under the five key headings of the business plan. These will be expanded on during the presentation at the meeting. (A separate report on the progress of delivering the other actions in Town Centre Improvement Plan will be provided to a

future committee - date to be agreed.

3.7 i Partnership and Communications

- 3.8 The Partnership interacts with a wide range of local groups and organisations. The size and breadth of the membership continues to expand and now stands at over 110. Most towns of our size have membership around 20/30. All town centre businesses/stakeholders are encouraged to join the Partnership and many have done so including residential and commercial estate agents, the Aylesbury Old Town Residents' Society, local Churches and transport providers.
- 3.9 Members can chose from three levels of membership (£3,000, £300 and £30).
- 3.10 One of the most valued benefits of being a member of the Partnership is the regular flow of communication the Town Centre Manager provides on town centre issues, including weekly and monthly updates as well as quarterly meetings.
- 3.11 All members are welcome to attend the quarterly Partnership meeting where time is set aside at the start of the meeting for networking and for non-Board members to ask questions/raise issues. All members can attend and take part in the quarterly meetings and it is well attended.
- 3.12 One of the aims of the Partnership is to facilitate (and sometimes broker) discussions with different council services e.g. planning, licensing, waste disposal, parking, transport and other organisations e.g. letting agents.
- 3.13 In 2017, all members of the Partnership have continued to benefit from targeted updates about theatre shows, events and activity in the town. This is so that they can plan and maximise their opportunity to attract pre and post theatre diners and get involved in the town centre events.

ii A clean and attractive town

- 3.14 As the use of town centres change and socialising becomes a more important requirement, the cleanliness and attractiveness of the town has become an increasingly significant part of the business plan. Improvements to these aspects require ownership by everyone so work is very much a partnership and on-going effort with the Town Centre Manager liaising closely with others to coordinated a range of improvements including:
- cleaning of seating
 - identifying and arranging the removal of rubbish from grot spots
 - removal of posters, illegal notices
 - repainting street furniture
 - encouraging outside street trading
 - managing and regulating buskers and charity collectors
 - working with AVDC on Christmas lights look and location
 - coordinating the snow clearance

iii A safe place

- 3.15 In 2011, Aylesbury was the first of only 25 places to secure the much coveted Purple Flag signalling that it was judged through a rigorous, independent assessment to be a safe and welcoming place in the evening. We have been

successful in renewing the Purple Flag each year and the current renewal is now in process. In 2017 the Night Time Moves Group was reformed. The purpose of the Group is to:

- produce and distribute Night Moves guide
- co-ordinate and identify ways of partnership working
- promote the evening economy
- identify issues and develop strategies to help address these
- focus on Purple Flag renewal

- 3.16 The Group is Chaired by the Town Centre Manager and membership of the Group includes the Aylesbury Town Council, the Taxi Association, Thames Valley Police, the Aylesbury Chaplaincy, restaurants/pubs, nightclubs, pool bar and AVDC services such as licensing and community safety. The work of the Group is gaining momentum and makes an important contribution to the Purple Flag assessment which is just taking place.
- 3.17 The Town Centre Manager is also a Board member and Treasurer of Aylesbury Business Against Crime scheme. This scheme manages crime reduction in the shops through a radio system and exclusion album of key offenders. It plays a vital role in supporting the work of the police and reducing crime in the town.
- 3.18 The Town Centre Manager plays a key role in improving the upper High Street through the enforcement of the pedestrianisation scheme and is currently working with Bucks CC to introduce bollards in to Market Square
- 3.19 Market Square and Kingsbury have suffered with illegal parking on the paving/cobbles and the Town Centre Manager has worked with Bucks CC to pass over parking enforcement for these areas with the legals being processed now.

iv Marketing and Promoting the town

- 3.20 The marketing and promotion of Aylesbury works on a number of levels. Overall responsibility for the strategic marketing and positioning of the town is led by AVDC, but the Town Centre Manager is helping to deliver a dynamic marketing and promotional plan locally.
- 3.21 In excess of 450 events are held in the town centre and they are planned and coordinated through one of the Partnership sub-groups, currently Chaired by the Town Centre Manager. Any town centre organisation that hosts events is invited to join the group. The group comprises of AVDC Community Fulfilment, Bucks CC, Town Council, library, museum, Queens Park Arts Centre, St Marys Church, Mix 96, Bucks TV, and Waterside theatre. The programme grows year on year thanks to the efforts of many contributing partners who fund a number of the events in cash or in kind. The breadth of the events programme ranges from large scale events such as Christmas light switch on (13,000 people), Santa Sunday (12,000), Christmas gift fair (9,000) to smaller events such as Wear it Pink.
- 3.22 The town centre team are currently extending the programme to include a canal festival in September and gin and jazz event in August. They are an active event producer at the WhizzFizzFest and are also responsible for business engagement in the event. The overall event programme provides essential credibility and support for the town's Vision to develop its unique selling point as a town of performance and the arts.

- 3.23 In 2017, 40,000 biannual Live Guides were produced and distributed across the town and to Vale villages. This is a tourism guide providing information on transport, events, things to do, shopping and places to eat.
- 3.24 A significant element of the AVDC funding contributes towards the events programme and we have been moving away from free events and we now charge the public for events or income is raised from letting space at the events.
- 3.25 The Town Centre Manager has developed relationships with local landlords and letting agents to attract the right tenant mix. Understanding the investment which has taken place or is planned is vital to influencing perceptions of Aylesbury particularly when the landlord is not local, which is very often the case. Plans are in place through the Improvement Plan to increase this area of work and build relationships with 'remote' landlords.

v Support for independent businesses

- 3.26 The importance of retaining and attracting independent town centre businesses is appreciated by all stakeholders including the multiple retailers.
- 3.27 The Town Centre Manager increased efforts in this area and many more have now joined the Partnership and can now enjoy a range of membership benefits for just £30 a year including:
- the opportunity to attend events
 - quarterly network meetings
 - Discounted theatre tickets
 - the monthly update about town centre information
 - personal visits to traders affected by development /works outside their premises
 - one stop shop advice and assistance when applying for street trading licences etc.
 - free advertising
- 3.28 We are introducing events this year to further support the independents; these include an Easter egg trail and Halloween trail taking visitors in to the business premises.

The Town Centre Team

- 3.29 Following the business review in 2016/2017, approval was given for the capacity of the Town Centre team to be increased to enable it to deliver an increasingly demanding work programme. The previously part-time Town Centre Manager and Events and Promotion Officer's hours were increased to full-time and a new part-time administrative officer and business development officer for the markets were introduced. These changes are now in place with the exception of the business development officer post which is still vacant.
- 3.30 The role of the team is to deliver the business plan on behalf of and working with the Partnership members.

Funding of the Partnership

- 3.29 The work of the ATCP is funded via a number of sources – AVDC, membership of the Partnership, lettings income from public space and events and contributions in kind. The total working budget of the Partnership is

£185,600 which is offset by £46,500 income. AVDC pays the remaining balance.

4 Markets

- 4.1 The management of the Aylesbury markets and the Winslow general market is undertaken by the Town Centre Manager with the support of a part-time Markets' Manager. The key tasks focus around managing the trader relationship, improving the customer experience and generating income from the markets to at least break even.
- 4.2 The market expenditure is £108,000 with income at £99,700. Work has been undertaken with business rates to reduce the liability and the team continues to work hard at attracting and retaining market traders, with initiatives and collaborative working.
- 4.3 Nationally, markets are facing tough challenges and many continue to be subsidised, or are experiencing falling numbers or closure. Even much esteemed markets such as the covered market at Oxford are facing difficulties and are under threat. Aylesbury in particular has its own challenges and opportunities which are identified through a business plan and are taking affect.
- 4.4 Since the town centre team took over their initial focus was reviewing and improving the basic operation of the markets both in Aylesbury and Winslow. New terms and conditions were developed, new stalls purchased with an ongoing maintenance programme, new processes put in place including cash less rent collection, social media sites and the communication between traders and AVDC market staff enhanced and improved. Several markets have been developed with the introduction of two new markets – the Vintage and Craft bazaar and the weekly Foodie Friday.
- 4.5 The promotion of the markets continues to be an important part of the business plans for both markets. Love your market is celebrated and market dates promoted in publications. The town centre team has won three national awards for the work they are undertaking to improve the markets.
- 4.6 Whilst there is undoubtedly a long way to go, the work so far is paying off and during the summer there is no capacity on the Aylesbury Foodie Friday market and the number of traders in Winslow has dramatically increased.

5. Challenges facing the town centre

- 5.1 The challenges facing the town centre are set out in Appendix 1 which is the extract from the VALP. Whilst most of the challenges have remained constant, in recent years, the shrinking demand for retail space has become more evident and the Town Centre Manager will provide more information in her presentation in the impact this is having on the town centre and action being taken to help address it.

6. Resource implications

The presentation will summarise how the funds for the Partnership are used. No increase in AVDC funding is requested.

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Background Documents

Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan
Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership Business Plan
Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

Aylesbury town centre

- 4.191 Aylesbury is the county town of Buckinghamshire and has long been the focus of new development in the district and will continue to be the main location for growth in its role as a Garden Town. Investment and development both inside and beyond the town centre boundary will be necessary to meet the needs of the growing population of the Garden Town. Part of the vision for Aylesbury Garden Town is that by 2033, Aylesbury will have a thriving and revitalised town centre. It will have an enhanced environment, with shops, leisure facilities, open space, homes, businesses and services, built and designed to high standards, bringing renewal to the town and enhancing the attraction of the historic core.
- 4.192 Aylesbury is fortunate in having successfully retained its historic centre whilst accommodating significant modern developments. A major part of its attraction is the proximity of the "Old Town", centred around St. Mary's Church, to the main shopping area. Within the shopping area a number of historic buildings and frontages add to its distinctiveness and character.
- 4.193 Recent years have seen significant local authority investment in the town with the development of Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, Waitrose, Travelodge, a university campus and new parking. Further regeneration is planned as part of The Exchange scheme. The town is reasonably well represented by national retailers and has a major department store. The owners of the two shopping centres continue to invest in improving the interior environment and Friars Square, the larger centre has been particularly successful in attracting new brands and strengthening the town's fashion offer. However, in order to compete successfully within the sub-region, Aylesbury needs to overcome the current challenges it faces.

The challenges

- 4.194 Increase in economic and political uncertainty – Nationally consumers have proved remarkably resilient since the Brexit vote and, despite the unprecedented backdrop, consumer spending has generally remained robust. However, with the prospect of rising inflation, the increasing reliance on consumer debt to support spending, and the lack of detail about the impact of Brexit, there is concern about consumer confidence and how this will affect spending patterns.

The outlook for retailers is also challenging. With rising costs, but consumer confidence uncertain, retailers are having to consider how much they can pass on to consumers. Retailers are likely to hold back on capital expenditure and employment particularly in towns of Aylesbury's size which are still working to establish themselves as a destination in their own right. This inevitably means that future aspirations for the town centre need to recognise that phased development within a vision framework will be the favoured approach.

- 4.195 Attractiveness and identity – like all town centres, there are areas of Aylesbury which haven't been improved for some time and consequently reflect negatively on the town. This affects both visitors' perception and those of potential new investors. The Aylesbury Town Centre Plan makes clear that future plans need to pay equal attention to these areas as well as the opportunities for new development.
- 4.196 A growing population – with Aylesbury remaining the main focus and a significant area for housing and employment growth in the district, further infrastructure including outer link roads to help reduce town centre congestion, as well as retail within and beyond the town centre, will need to continue to develop, simply to meet the needs of a growing and working population. However, timescales for new infrastructure can be long and Aylesbury will need to work hard to retain its consumer base.
- 4.197 Protecting existing investment – the success of existing assets and investments, whether private or public, depend on the whole visitor experience. Plans to deliver new shops, catering outlets and public realm improvements to support, for example, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, have not

come forward as quickly as originally anticipated, largely due to the economic downturn and developers holding back on capital expenditure.

- 4.198 Competition and changing expectations – as well as people's changing expectations of their town centres, other growing trends are posing a threat to the traditional high street:
- 4.199 Out of town retailing – key retailers moving out of Aylesbury's town centre when their leases come up for renewal to capitalise on more modern units tailored to their requirements, and often cheaper rents and business rates, could have a major impact.
- 4.200 Competition from major supermarkets – that have made themselves more appealing to people with busy lifestyles by broadening their non-food retail offer and raising their game in sectors such as fashion by using leading designers.
- 4.201 Omnichannel shopping – this continues to be the single biggest impact on the shape of town centre retailing. The speed at which retailing has shifted online is putting strain on traditional business models, many of which are no longer fit for purpose. Many retailers are responding by rationalising their portfolio but also by developing a seamless omnichannel offer which includes a convenient click and collect offer for the consumer, and an opportunity for the retailer to capture secondary purchases through the collect visit.
- 4.202 Consumers making fewer, shorter trips to towns – preferring to make longer trips, less frequently, to bigger regional centres which offer the total day experience. Here shopping can be combined with a variety of leisure activities, whether dining or visiting the cinema. A two-hour drive is not considered unreasonable by today's consumers. The exception to this is food shopping, where the main shop trip size is getting smaller and the top-up trip size is getting bigger. This change is a result of the competition and people wanting to shop around from the big four supermarkets and the increase in the number of small convenience stores.
- 4.203 Leisure time is becoming more important – to people leading busy lives and as people make use of digital technology to make their purchases. This has resulted in a notable shift in consumerism towards the pursuit of experience over material goods. Shopping will no longer be the primary reason to visit a town centre. The opportunity to socialise in Aylesbury town centre will be key to its future success.
- 4.204 The proposed East-West Rail route – could attract visitors from the villages in between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. However, it will also make it easier and more attractive for them to go to MK from Winslow (a new station is due to open in the early 2020s) if Aylesbury does not succeed in improving its offer.
- 4.205 The rising popularity and enhancement – of other competing centres such as High Wycombe and Bicester town.

Failure to capitalise on our catchment

- 4.206 Aylesbury has a large potential catchment of 259,000 people within a 25 minute drive time²³. Three-quarters of this catchment – well above the national average have a high quality lifestyle profile and are in the top three Acorn groups - affluent achievers, rising prosperity, and comfortable communities. The majority of Aylesbury's catchment are consumers with good levels of disposable income seeking good quality products and good quality shopping/leisure experiences. It's also a high spending catchment over-indexing vs GB average on almost all categories. Yet the town is failing to capitalise fully on its catchment profile because, while some are visiting the town centre for employment reasons or to use services such as banks, they

²³ Aylesbury Town Centre Retail Capacity Update, December 2016

are not necessarily visiting in the numbers that could be achieved in terms of retail and other activities. Of those who are visiting, an insufficient number are spending their money in the town. So, unless Aylesbury improves its offer to give its catchment market what it is increasingly looking for, current leakage to neighbouring towns will continue.

Guiding principles and strategic aims for future development

4.207 In seeking to enhance Aylesbury's role as county town and sub-regional shopping centre, the Council has developed and approved the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan (2014) which was prepared working closely with Aylesbury Town Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and other key stakeholders ranging from local community organisations to owners of the shopping centres and independent operators. The Town Centre Plan sets out seven guiding principles for the future development of Aylesbury town centre:

Principle 1: Positioning the town centre correctly by providing a complementary, credible experience to nearby centres such as Milton Keynes and Watford and being a 'best in class' sub-regional centre.

Principle 2: Being different, rather than a clone, but basing the town's unique selling point on reality. Aylesbury needs to distinguish itself from other town centres in the area, but in a way that is credible.

Principle 3: Offering what the 'market' is looking for to capitalise on our enviable catchment. Whilst there has been significant investment in the town centre in recent years by both the public and private sector, Aylesbury's retail offer is currently weighted towards the lower/mass market consumer, with a limited choice in terms of product categories, ranges and brands for the mid/upper market, discerning consumer.

When asked what would make people visit Aylesbury Town Centre more often, 'better quality shops' was the most common answer, followed by 'more independents, better department stores and more high street brands'²⁴. An independent food and beverage assessment carried out by Coverpoint in 2014 also concludes that the town centre food and beverage sector needs more choice across all categories, but particularly in the family dining and mid-higher quality categories. This research was used to inform phase one of The Exchange scheme. However, with the continued growth in the food and beverage market, coupled with the housing growth planned for the Aylesbury area and the development of a residential community in the heart of the town itself, there is still significant unmet demand.

Principle 4: Encouraging social interaction. Whilst the retail experience is changing largely as a result of omnichannel retailing, visitors will still value a physical town centre outlet, particularly if it offers them opportunities to browse and spend time in an attractive environment and meet their friends and family. They will see the town centre as a place not just for shopping or business, but for social interaction in its widest sense and as a place in which to meet, relax and spend their leisure time. New improvement schemes need to recognise this by delivering, integrated mixed uses including housing and quality public space throughout the town to help connect the different areas.

Principle 5: Build community spirit. Social interaction is about inclusiveness and using space and facilities to help build a sense of togetherness as one community. We should aim to create a town which shows its community spirit through welcoming events and activities.

²⁴ Postcode Plus Survey. July 2016

Principle 6: Take a connected, 'whole town' approach. The success of one area of the town should not be compromised by development in another and we must take a strategic approach to work such as green infrastructure and signage.

Principle 7: Appeal to all our different town centre users. We must make sure we're appealing to the whole of our potential catchment including families, young professionals, students, college and university leavers who are looking for their first jobs, empty nesters and older people.

4.208 The following strategic aims flow from the guiding principles, our vision for Aylesbury and the studies and strategies which arose from the recommendations from the previous Aylesbury Town Centre Masterplan work carried out by ARUP. They are cross-cutting, which means they have implications for the whole of the town, but the action plans in the Town Centre Plan show how they will apply to specific areas.

4.209 The strategic aims are grouped under two main headings, economic regeneration and physical regeneration:

Economic regeneration

4.210 Provide a more balanced and attractive leisure, retail and food and beverage offer and circuit, which:

- helps transform the day, evening and weekend economy in Aylesbury and puts it on the map as a destination of choice
- matches the needs of all ages and communities and brings them together
- matches the needs of consumers from within our catchment (and beyond), business investors and operators, and
- builds on the legacy of London 2012.

Physical regeneration

4.211 Create a high quality, connected and sustainable built, natural and transport environment which appeals to, and matches the needs of, all consumers and business investors within our catchment market and supports our leisure, retail and housing aspirations.

The vision

4.212 To enable Aylesbury to compete and succeed in the future we need to continue our work to reinvigorate the town centre. The Aylesbury Town Centre Plan contains the following vision for the town:

- To be a high profile, sub-regional centre for entertainment and the arts, which has added a distinctive edge to its market town heritage
- To be a distinctive, 'best in class', modern market town, which is attractive, safe, sustainable and accessible
- To provide a quality, day and evening environment in terms of leisure, retail and food and drink, which attracts and brings together people of all ages and communities from within its enviable catchment
(Aylesbury Town Centre Plan, 2014)

4.213 There are a number of uses and activities that should be accommodated in the town centre including shopping, leisure, entertainment, employment, housing, worship and tourism. It is an objective of this Plan to accommodate these sometimes competing uses in a way which most benefits the whole of the town centre.

4.214 The Aylesbury Town Centre Plan reflects the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) regarding town centres, which states that policies should support their viability and vitality and promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer.

4.215 Action plans for areas in the Town Centre Plan are summarised below:

Area	Action Plan main aim	How VALP will help achieve
Market Square, Walton Street and Friars Square	Make more of the area's presence as a key retail, catering and leisure hub	Town centre policies to support proposals for retail and other main town centre uses, provided they are in accordance with the vision and aims for the town centre
Kingsbury (including George Street and Pebble Lane)	Create a more attractive environment for residents, visitors and businesses and improve it as the gateway to the Old Town	Town centre policies to support public realm improvements and improving the quality of the town centre
Aylesbury Old Town (the historic quarter)	Preserve and enhance this residential area as a key part of the town's heritage and culture offer and improve its links with the rest of the town centre, in keeping with its conservation area status	Heritage assets policy to ensure these are properly considered when assessing development proposals
Gateway South (railway and bus stations)	Improve the railway and bus stations as key arrival points and improve their connection with the rest of the town centre	Allocation of area for comprehensive redevelopment (as shown on the policies map) including co-locating the bus and railway stations to create a public transport interchange
Upper and middle High street	Create a more attractive retail environment (especially in middle High Street), improve connections between upper High Street and Exchange Street, ensure both upper and middle High Street are part of the retail circuit and flow with the rest of the town centre	Town centre policies to support public realm improvements and improving the quality of the town centre, including improvements for pedestrian access
Cambridge Street, Buckingham Street and New Street	Cambridge Street: Improve the quality and attractiveness of the whole area, the continuity of active frontages along Cambridge Street and the appeal of Cambridge Street to independent shops. Buckingham Street and New Street: Improve the physical environment, reduce	Town centre policies to support proposals for retail, public realm improvements and improving the quality of the town centre, including improvements for pedestrian access

	dominance of the car and integrate the area more fully into the rest of the town centre and the retail circuit	
Vale Park and the Grand Union canal (to Circus Fields)	Capitalise on two of the town's key assets and connect them with the rest of the town centre and the wider countryside.	One of the key elements of the Aylesbury Garden Town vision is that the town will have an accessible, sustainable and well managed green infrastructure network including improved linkages from the town to new communities and to the surrounding countryside
Waterside South (from Walton Street junction to Upper Hundreds including Exchange Street and lower High Street)	Break down the concrete barrier of the inner ring road and improve links and accessibility from the rest of the town centre to Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, Aqua Vale Leisure Centre, Vale Park and the retail parks	Part of the site has already been redeveloped. The plan allocates an increased area for mixed-use redevelopment on a site between the Exchange Street car park and the Royal Mail sorting office
Waterside North	Develop the site in phases to enhance the retail, food and beverage and housing offer in the town centre, strengthen links and help rejuvenate neighbouring areas such as Market Square, Walton Street and middle High Street	Development underway. General policies to support appropriate development in the town centre

A place to shop

4.216 In accordance with the NPPF, the principles of the settlement hierarchy, and recognising Aylesbury's role as a Garden Town, new shopping development should be concentrated at Aylesbury, and this development should be concentrated within or at the edge of the town centre. Aylesbury's town centre embraces a multitude of uses and activities including shops, homes, jobs, pubs and clubs, restaurants, leisure, sports and community facilities. The town centre is defined on the Policies Map and includes the area within the inner relief road, along with areas to the south which include Morrison's and the railway station, to the south-east including Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, Waitrose, and Vale Park and Aqua Vale Swimming and Fitness Centre to the east, and to the north-east including Aylesbury Shopping Park, B&Q and the Royal Mail sorting office. The town centre boundary is as identified in the Aylesbury Vale Retail Study 2015 Annex F and is shown on the Policies Map. Proposals for development within this area will be considered having regard to their town centre location.

New floor space requirements

Comparison goods

4.217 As the population grows with the expansion of the town and within the wider district, there is a need for the town's shopping facilities to expand and improve in order to maintain Aylesbury's role as the main retail focus in Aylesbury Vale and as a sub-regional centre in the county. The Aylesbury Town Centre Retail Capacity Update was carried out in 2016. This concludes that

22,587sqm of comparison floor space²⁵ will be required by 2024, increasing to 29,289sqm by 2033.

- 4.218 New comparison retailing will be focused at Aylesbury as the main focus for shopping in the district, recognising its role as a Garden Town. This figure is not seen as a prescriptive target, but rather as an indicative guide to the amount of floor space that will be required in the Plan period.
- 4.219 It is essential to locate comparison shopping in such a way as to extend range and choice. The first priority is therefore to accommodate the additional floor space within the retail core of the town centre. The additional floor space will primarily be delivered by allocating a new site within the town centre for a mixed-use redevelopment.
- 4.220 Waterside North, a town centre site adjacent to Exchange Street, has been identified for a number of years as the location for the next phases of development and is currently under construction. The Phase one scheme will see the construction on part of the site, of up to four restaurants, with 47 apartments on three floors above and a new public square. It is due to be completed in 2018.
- 4.221 The provision of the additional retail floor space is expected to be included in future phases of development which will extend the site beyond Waterside North to the Royal Mail sorting office. This area is shown on the policies map. In addition to retail, these development phases should provide a mix of main town centre uses (and an element of residential) and fulfil the vision and strategic aims for the town centre as set out above. This should include an element of car parking to redress any shortfall from the loss of existing car parks as a result the next phase of town centre regeneration.
- 4.222 An Aylesbury parking strategy, due to be commissioned shortly, will set out the Council's aims regarding parking in the town, identify the amount the town centre needs and conclude where this should be located and in what form.
- 4.223 Within the town centre, the Council will view positively proposals for retail and other main town centre uses provided they contribute positively to improving the quality of the town centre and delivering the vision and aims set out above. The 2015 Retail Study concludes that qualitative improvements and investment will be needed to retain Aylesbury's credibility as a sub-regional centre and ensure that it can increasingly be seen as a place for social interaction. In particular, the development or redevelopment of smaller sites can lead to qualitative improvements in shopping facilities and can readily be accommodated within and enhance the town centre. Other proposals for town centre comparison goods shopping will be assessed against policy D6.

Convenience stores

- 4.224 Aylesbury is well served by convenience stores²⁶, and the Retail Capacity Study Update 2016 concludes that convenience floorspace capacity in the short term (up to and beyond 2019) is sufficient to accommodate the known pipeline commitments plus some headroom. By 2024 the capacity floorspace moves to 2,970sqm rising to 5,260sqm by 2029 and 6,980sqm by 2033. Within the town centre, a scheme for external enhancements and an extension to the existing Sainsbury's store fronting Buckingham Street has been approved subject to a Section 106 planning obligation agreement. This is linked to the development of the larger, new Sainsbury's store which is proposed at Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury.

²⁵ Comparison goods are defined in full in the glossary, but include items such as clothing and electrical items

²⁶ Convenience stores are defined in full in the glossary but include items such as food, beverages and newspapers

Aylesbury transport hub

- 4.225 As part of the overall vision for the town and to ensure that the town remains accessible, an area known as the Aylesbury transport hub is allocated for comprehensive mixed use redevelopment, including co-locating the bus and railway stations to create a new public transport interchange. New residential units will be provided, along with public realm improvements, connectivity improvements to the rest of the town, new open space and other main town centre uses including a hotel.

D7 Town centre redevelopment

The starting point for identifying sites in the town centre is the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan (2014). The Policies Map identifies a site between the Exchange Street car park and the Royal Mail sorting office (including Hampden House and Upper Hundreds car park) for mixed-use redevelopment based principally on retail uses with an element of residential and other town centre uses at an appropriate scale and location. The redevelopment scheme(s) must make adequate provision for car parking in accordance with the Council's car parking strategy. Development proposals must contribute positively to meeting the vision and strategic aims for the town centre. Details of retail floorspace provision are set out in Policy D6.

Aylesbury town centre and the primary shopping frontages are defined on the Policies Map (see Policy E2). Informed by the aims and objectives of the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan, and the evidence in the retail studies identifying a continuing need to improve and invest in Aylesbury town centre, qualitative redevelopment in the town centre will be supported and encouraged.

The policies map also identifies an area for the Aylesbury transport hub. This area is allocated for comprehensive mixed use redevelopment including co-locating the bus and railway stations to create a new public transport interchange, provision of new residential units, public realm improvements, connectivity improvements to the rest of the town, new open space and other main town centre uses including a new hotel and the relocation of the superstore. Friarage Road may need to be rerouted to accommodate the new development.

D8 Aylesbury town centre

Elsewhere in the town centre, proposals for retail and other main town centre uses will be supported to reflect Aylesbury's status as Garden Town and the opportunities this will bring. Proposals should contribute positively to improving the quality of the town centre and delivering the vision and strategic aims for the town centre set out above and in accordance with the latest published town centre plan. Proposals should have particular regard to enhancements to the built environment, improvements for pedestrian access and environmental enhancements to the public realm.

A place to live

- 4.226 Residential uses in Aylesbury town centre are mainly concentrated in the 'Old Town' area around St. Mary's Church, extending along Church Street and Parsons Fee to Castle Street and Rickfords Hill and north from the church along Nelson Terrace, Granville Street and Ripon Street, and to the south-west of the town in the Friarscroft area.
- 4.227 It is important to ensure that the residential role of the town centre is not lost to ensure that Aylesbury continues and enhances its role as a vibrant and thriving town providing opportunities for social interaction. Providing more housing within and close to the town centre will help meet this aim. More housing in the town centre is sustainable; it will provide greater choice, a better balance of uses, accommodation for those who wish to be less reliant on the car, and increased activity outside peak periods. It will help provide a more attractive and safer

town centre environment and add positively to the quality of the centre's urban fabric. A number of sites within Aylesbury town centre are identified as being suitable or part-suitable for housing development in the Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment, and three of these are to be allocated for housing. These sites are identified on the Policies Map. Two further sites in the town centre are identified as part-suitable for housing (Royal Mail sorting office and Hampden House). These form part of the site for town centre redevelopment identified above and are covered by policy D7.

4.228 Due to the change in permitted development rights, the Council has seen an increase in the number of offices that have been converted to flats. It is anticipated that the recent increase in residential development in Aylesbury town centre will continue, not only by the conversion of employment to residential, but also the use of the upper floors above shops, which can be particularly suitable for conversion to flats.

D9 Housing in Aylesbury town centre

The Council will support proposals for residential development in Aylesbury town centre that are consistent with the above vision and aims, in the following locations:

- a. use of upper floors above shops
- b. conversion of vacant or underused employment buildings
- c. as subsidiary parts of (re)development and other mixed use developments provided that this is of an appropriate scale and is in accordance with other policies in this Plan

A place of leisure and entertainment

4.229 Aylesbury town centre (which includes Vale Park, the canal basin and Aqua Vale Swimming and Fitness Centre) provides the focus for much of the town's leisure needs, and also serves a much wider catchment. The town centre also provides entertainment facilities such as the Waterside Theatre, a cinema complex, parks, restaurants, bars and nightclubs. The Council recognises the essential role of such facilities in the town centre and will resist proposals that would result in the erosion of community facilities and services as set out in policy I3.

