



Report to Growth Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

Date:	15th December 2022
Title:	Programme Update Aylesbury Garden Town and Aylesbury town centre activity
Author and/or contact officer:	Lisa Michelson
Area/Place affected:	Aylesbury and surrounding villages
Recommendations:	To note the progress and current activities as a part of the Garden Town programme. To note the programme of activities being delivered to support the town centre.
Reason for decision:	To ensure that the Committee is kept up to date on the progress of the programme. To ensure that the Committee is kept up to date on the programme of activities taking place to support the town centre.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides the committee with an update on the various workstreams currently being undertaken through the Aylesbury Garden Town programme. These workstreams help to support the delivery of the masterplan principles for a successful and vibrant garden town.
- 1.2 The report also highlights the programme of activities being delivered in support of Aylesbury town centre.

2. Background

- 2.1 Aylesbury is recognised as an area of growth with plans for 16,000 homes to be delivered by 2033. It was awarded Garden Town status in 2017 as part of the government's garden communities programme. Garden Towns are expected to ensure future development is delivered in a cohesive manner which encompasses high-quality spaces to benefit the whole town including existing and new residents.
- 2.2 Garden Town status promotes growth to be focused on enhancing the existing area through sensitive development. It recognises Aylesbury's connection to the areas of outstanding natural beauty as well as benefits of developing new neighbourhoods that celebrate green and open space and sustainable development.
- 2.3 The Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan was approved by Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet in July 2020. It sets out the aims and ambitions to transform into an innovative, vibrant and healthy town, building on Aylesbury's heritage and strengths.

3. Garden Town Funding

- 3.1 Homes England awards capacity funding annually for garden communities' programmes. We have been successful in bidding for this funding in recent years and received £250,000 in 22/23. The funding is used for delivering workstreams that support the principles for a garden town as discussed in the Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan. Homes England funding is gradually declining, so we are working to ensure our programme of activity is integrated with programmes being delivered across council services.

4. Masterplan Action Plan - Refresh

- 4.1 The current Action Plan was developed as part of the Masterplan and included actions to support delivery of the principles across partners. Given the changes of the past two years a review of the action plan was identified and considered timely to ensure that the projects are still current and up to date.
- 4.2 An exercise has begun to refresh the Aylesbury Masterplan action plan with stakeholders.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1 The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) was adopted in September 2021 and covers the period to 2033. The VALP contains a section on Aylesbury Garden Town which identifies the delivery of 16,000 new homes within Aylesbury and the requirements for the individual site allocations including the key requirement to create green and blue infrastructure to support a growing garden town.

- 5.2 In order to provide further guidance for delivery of the Aylesbury Garden Town, the Plan sets out the potential for three supplementary planning documents. These documents will aid developers in submitting policy compliant planning applications and deliver the Garden Town vision.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

Aylesbury Vale Design

- 5.3 Homes England have been keen for us to promote high quality design as a part of the Garden Town Programme which this SPD seeks to ensure.
- 5.4 The focus of design SPD is to ensure that new development across Aylesbury Vale is of highest quality and that it responds appropriately to its context to create sustainable, successful and well used places.
- 5.5 One of the key aims of this Design SPD is to help deliver a low carbon and climate resilient future for the area through well-designed sustainable buildings and high-quality local environments suitable for low-carbon living while respecting the heritage, character and ecology of the plan area. This supplementary planning document includes strategic Garden Town design guidance. It takes forward, replaces and expands existing guidance for the north and central planning areas.

Aylesbury Garden Town - AGT 1 (Stoke Mandeville)

- 5.6 This site has been identified as key site within Aylesbury delivering circa 1000 homes. In addition the site will also contain a provision to provide a new primary school, local centre and will accommodate provision for a Gypsy and travellers' site.
- 5.7 This is a site-specific masterplan supplementary planning document. The purpose of this document is to ensure that comprehensive development is delivered in accordance with the policy site requirements together with the Garden Town Principles.

Affordable Housing Supplementary Document

- 5.8 This document provides planning guidance on how affordable housing policy should be applied to proposals for residential development within Aylesbury Vale local plan area. The guidance expands upon policies that are current contained with the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP).
- 5.9 This supplementary planning document covers the north and central planning areas and provides guidance on how to deliver the affordable housing policies.

Aylesbury Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- 5.10 The intention in the VALP was to include a framework and infrastructure supplementary planning document to ensure that the future infrastructure needs for Aylesbury were documented and embedded in policy.

- 5.11 Given the current economic climate and increasing costs officers reviewed the use of a supplementary planning document however it became evident that the requirement to publish costs and methods of funding would make the document quickly out of date.
- 5.12 Given the nature of infrastructure, the variables of delivery bodies and ever altering finance streams, the council concluded that this should not be a formal Supplementary Planning Document but instead be published as an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan can be updated as often as required without the need for formal consultation.

6. Aylesbury Town Centre programme of activity

Aylesbury Town Centre Service Delivery Review Project

- 6.1 Following the launch of the new unitary Council, a new Economic Development Team in the Economic Growth and Regeneration Service was developed. This team are the lead for Town Centre local economic development, business support, and a lead for ensuring the right coordination of council services in Aylesbury. In addition to the lead role that the Council plays as the key point of contact for town centre businesses and residents, other significant stakeholder groups support the town centre including the Aylesbury Community Board, the Town Council, and the Aylesbury Garden Town Board.
- 6.2 The council is undertaking a review of the current town centre service delivery in Aylesbury including the current offer, who is delivering it, what businesses and residents would like to see delivered, and what additionality could achieve in terms of improving the success and vibrancy of our County Town.
- 6.3 The Review is a two-phase project:
- Phase 1 – review of current delivery, identification of further needs and a recommendation on the models to achieve any identified additionality to meet the future needs of Aylesbury.
 - Phase 2 – implementation of agreed model, dependent upon the outcome of phase 1.
- 6.4 Work on Phase 1 of the project is nearing completion with a discussion on the outcomes and options scheduled for early next year.

Visit Aylesbury website

- 6.5 The Economic Development Team continues to play a lead role in developing and maintaining the Visit Aylesbury website, a consumer facing site seeking to promote what Aylesbury has to offer to residents, workers and visitors.

- 6.6 Recent improvements to the website include the events module which has been upgraded to allow third-party organisations to submit their own events for listing on the site. Additional contributors can help demonstrate the breadth of activity taking place in Aylesbury as well as providing an additional marketing tool for contributing organisations.
- 6.7 A series of “focus on” stories and promotions are planned for the coming months providing a showcase for businesses across the town centre. There will be a focus on both place and sectors, e.g. The Exchange as a place and eating out as a sector. These stories and promotions will provide an opportunity to directly engage with businesses as we develop each “focus on” story, collecting up to date imagery and information on businesses.
- 6.8 The social media channels associated with Visit Aylesbury are not owned and managed solely by Buckinghamshire Council. A partnership approach was agreed over 8 years ago to enable multiple stakeholders to post content on these ‘Visit Aylesbury’ social media channels. This approach, while positive for generating a higher volume of content, has the potential for messaging to ‘drift’ into unrelated content and dilute ‘visitor’ content. Conversations are underway to realign this web presence for Aylesbury to make it most effective.

Markets and entertainment

- 6.9 The Christmas Craft and Gift Fair took place on Sunday 4 December in Market Square; twenty-five plus artisans and traders were in attendance. Alongside traders were family fun activities including go karting, face painting and balloon modelling, and musical entertainment.
- 6.10 In addition to the specialty market being held in December, the Economic Development Team continues to manage the weekly general markets in Aylesbury which take place each Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.
- 6.11 Saturday musical entertainment and family fun activities were delivered during August and the October half term.

Outreach to Town Centre Businesses

- 6.12 The Council is the key point of contact for services and support for town centre businesses and residents. A ‘Season’s Greetings’ card (see appendix) has been delivered to businesses in Aylesbury town centre. The card highlights the council’s Business Support Directory, Visit Aylesbury website, Kingsbury and Market Square public realm improvements, introducing the Economic Development Team and early notification of the planned February Business Forum.
- 6.13 The Economic Growth & Regeneration Team will be holding a Business Forum meeting for town centre businesses in Aylesbury in February 2023. The forum will focus on current and planned Council investment activities and service delivery, as well as

provide a key opportunity for the Council to hear directly from the local business community.

7. Town Centre Regeneration

7.1 The Council has been working with consultants over the past year to identify regeneration opportunities in Aylesbury town centre. This phase of the work is now completed.

7.2 The outputs of this workstream have helped to identify our key priorities for regeneration in the town centre. As a part of the next phase of work officers are working to produce an Aylesbury regeneration plan, this will be key to the developing investment proposals that will allow us to bid for future funding, as well as attracting third party investment in the town centre.

8. Bus Station Interim Works – Great Western Street Tunnel

8.1 We received capital infrastructure funding from Homes England this financial year for improvement works to Great Western Street Tunnel which have been successfully completed.

8.2 A programme of improvement measures was identified, these included:

- Deep cleaning
- Re-painting of ceilings and columns

8.3 Enhancing the bus station environment is part of the Council's work to improve the town centre. It also makes using the bus station a more appealing proposition encouraging more people to use sustainable transport.

9. Aylesbury – Levelling Up Fund – Regeneration and town centre investment

Travel Interchange

9.1 The levelling up agenda is a key funding stream for Government, aimed at delivering regeneration, culture and transport requirements and opportunities in local areas.

9.2 Local authorities were invited to submit bids to a second round of the fund earlier this year. The council submitted a regeneration bid for the relocation of the Aylesbury bus station.

9.3 The travel interchange bid focuses on the opportunity to catalyse regeneration in the town centre through relocation of the existing bus station to create a new transport hub for the town. This is a new bid which flows from the current Aylesbury regeneration work as discussed above.

LUF Transport Bid - Aylesbury Orbital

- 9.4 The Buckinghamshire LUF Transport funding bid will assist in the delivery of the South East Aylesbury link road (SEALR) scheme phase 1 and 2, and one of 12 sections of the Gardenway at Elmhurst. The Gardenway project is discussed later in this update report.
- 9.5 SEALR is in two parts - Phase I and Phase II. Phase I has received planning consent and the council has implemented a CPO to acquire all relevant land. Early site clearance and utility work has started, including place electricity lines underground and preparing to bore underneath the Aylesbury-Marylebone line. Phase II is required to join Phase I to the new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road.

10. Communities workstream

- 10.1 Upon award of garden town status in January 2017, there was a desire to build wider community awareness and support for the new Aylesbury Garden Town, to achieve this a programme of community initiatives was instigated:

Community Food Growing Network

- 10.2 There is now a network of Six Community Food Growing Projects in Aylesbury. Several of the gardens are in some of the most deprived areas of Aylesbury and one of the Opportunity Bucks target wards. The projects have successfully brought local communities of all ages together. They have also offered support to the elderly, as well as to people with learning difficulties, mental health issues and mobility challenges, to help them connect and engage with others and learn new skills. This has been particularly beneficial following the impact of the Covid pandemic.
- 10.3 The Community Food Growing project has evolved due to the success of the scheme with two of the growing projects becoming self-sustaining. The Public Health team are now supporting some of the schemes through their Grow it, Cook it, Eat it programme.

Play Streets

- 10.4 The Play Streets scheme enables residents to apply to temporarily close their road so children can play safely together on their doorstep and adults can chat and interact, bringing communities together.
- 10.5 This project was piloted by the Aylesbury Regeneration team successfully and is now being championed by the Public Health team and available to communities across the county.

Community Tool Kits

- 10.6 Building on the success of both the community food growing project and the play street pilot we are working to create online tool kits to enable residents to initiate

these programmes in their communities whether they are new or existing. We anticipate that these tool kits will be available in 2023.

Aylesbury Station Platform Flowerbeds – Placemaking

- 10.7 Work at the station has focused on making the experience of arriving in Aylesbury by train more vibrant and welcoming for residents and visitors. Past improvements supported by the Garden Town Programme have included restructuring and replanting the main island flower beds outside the station to create an impactful display, this includes planters and murals situated inside and on the main plaza of the station.
- 10.8 The final phase is to refurbish the platform flowerbeds through a multi-partnership community project. This has incorporated a work experience programme with students from Pebble Brook School, who have learning difficulties, as well as a team from Community Payback, who have all worked to clear the beds at no cost.
- 10.9 We are now working in partnership with Chiltern Railways to deliver the re-design of the beds. Chiltern Railways together with the newly formed Friends of Aylesbury Railway station will continue maintenance once the platform beds have been installed.

11. Gardenway vision

- 11.1 An initial study was commissioned to define the parameters of the Gardenway orbital park and cycleway spanning 20km around Aylesbury. It has brought this key transformative project in the Masterplan to life and is a comprehensive foundation to build on. One of the objectives is to link new and existing communities closer together making the town a healthier, greener and more accessible. This is in alignment with the national Garden Town principles and the Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan.
- 11.2 The intention is to guide the vision for an inclusive and fully accessible future Gardenway in order that officers as well as developers, landowners and designers have a reference point and guidance in developing their sections of Gardenway where appropriate.
- 11.3 There are nine potential phases of the Gardenway, many of which can potentially be delivered by third party development. Discussions with developers are currently underway on the following phases:

Hampden Fields

- 11.4 Aylesbury Regeneration team has been in discussions with the developers Taylor Wimpey regarding the inclusion of the Gardenway in the planning performance agreement. In addition to this, negotiations around design codes ensuring that many of the principles of the vision are incorporated in the future designs proposed on this section of the Gardenway.

AGT2

- 11.5 The initial Planning Performance Agreement has been successfully completed for this site with the developers Gleesons. An updated outline planning application submitted in June 2022. The Gardenway has been incorporated into the revised planning application with proposed delivery through planning.
- 11.6 A key challenge is the section outside the red line boundary which is on council land. Investigations are underway regarding the delivery of this phase.
- 11.7 Discussions with HS2 and other major stakeholders are also currently underway to ensure that the application is supported.



**Appendix - Aylesbury Town Centre Season's Greetings
Card**

AYLESBURY Christmas CRAFT & GIFT FAIR

Sunday 4 December 2022

Location: Market Square

Time: 10:30 to 3pm

For more information visit aylesbury.co.uk

Season's Greetings

To Aylesbury town
centre businesses

As we reach the end of the
year, it's a time to reflect on
what's been happening in
the town centre and to look
forward to what's in store.



Buckinghamshire
Council

MEET OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Buckinghamshire Council's Economic Development Team are here to help - whether you are stuck with knowing how to navigate our regulatory services or need a signpost on to other organisations who offer more specialist advice. Jane Mason in the team is currently supporting a number of Aylesbury town centre workstreams and has a wealth of economic development experience (from being a business advisor to leading more strategic project delivery).

Jane can be reached at: 01296 387819
or email Jane.Mason@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

VISIT AYLESBURY

Work is underway to refresh and update the Visit Aylesbury website. One of the useful features on here is the Business Directory and we will be reaching out to town centre business in the New Year to review and update their entries – or add in a new listing if they haven't taken advantage of this tool. The website is an important platform to promote the town – and you're a key part of this.

Buckinghamshire Council will soon be starting engagement work on a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire. Keep your eyes out on our social media and the Visit Aylesbury website for information about how you can take part. We recognise the distinctiveness of our towns across the county and the difference that tourism can make to boost their vibrancy and vitality – with Aylesbury as our county town being a key asset.

REGENERATION & AYLESBURY GARDEN TOWN

Great Western Street has been decorated to brighten up the tunnel which has enhanced the bus station environment. There are further enhancements planned for the bus station coming forward in 2023.

In 2023 we will also be bringing forward our proposals for a major regeneration project in our two historic squares, Kingsbury and Market Square. This will create a new town centre destination that is lively, attractive and open to all. Business and market trader engagement will be a key part of this work so that you know in advance what is happening where and when and mitigations can be factored in as required.

BUSINESS SUPPORT DIRECTORY

Have you seen our Business Support Directory? This useful resource was created in the spring as part of the Buckinghamshire Council-led 'Welcome Back Fund' work. The guide picks up on the most frequently asked questions we receive from businesses and curates them in one place. Take a look. [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/business/advice-businesses](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/business/advice-businesses)

Scan the QR code for more
information on how we can help you



BUSINESS FORUM – REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW

With so much exciting activity in Aylesbury town centre underway and in the pipeline for the upcoming year, the Council's Economic Growth & Regeneration Team will be holding a Business Forum meeting in February 2023. This will enable us to give you more information on the topics in this update and answer any questions you have.

To register your interest in attending and receiving email updates from us please email: econdev@buckinghamshire.gov.uk and you can also follow us on Twitter [@econdevbucks](https://twitter.com/econdevbucks) for updates too.