



Report to Cabinet

Date:	10 October 2023 Cabinet
Title:	Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework and Place Based Strategies
Relevant councillor(s):	Portfolio Holders: Peter Strachan and Rachael Matthews
Author and/or contact officer:	Richard Ambrose
Ward(s) affected:	All and town centre wards for Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe
Recommendations:	Adopt the Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework and the town centre regeneration strategies for Aylesbury, High Wycombe and for Chesham as key corporate documents of Buckinghamshire Council
Reason for decision:	Adoption of these four documents will set out the emerging Council approach and ambitions for our places, in particular regeneration in Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe, that will provide opportunities for growth and meaningful regeneration projects.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework and a series of town centre strategies have been developed to set out a coherent approach to regeneration across the whole of the county.
- 1.2 The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework provides the framework for how communities can organise themselves to determine their local ambitions and set out the regeneration vision for their local area. Three town centre regeneration strategies provide the local vision and place-based ambitions for Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe.

2. Summary of the regeneration framework and strategies

- 2.1 Buckinghamshire is not dominated by a single town/city but is instead made up of a thriving network of large and medium sized towns, and large villages. Regeneration in these important towns and villages is essential to ensure long-term survival and prosperity as well as to achieve the economic ambitions for Buckinghamshire.
- 2.2 The Council is supporting communities to develop ambitions for their place and set out local strategies to stimulate and coordinate regeneration investment. Regeneration in Buckinghamshire is community led and delivered through partnerships. Working with key public and private sector partners, the Council provides local leadership and clarity for practical, long-term vision which is essential to achieve consensus for strategic and local regeneration.
- 2.3 Working across Buckinghamshire partners, the Council plays a key role in spotting opportunities for investment and building momentum for that through a compelling narrative for communities.
- 2.4 The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework 'Regeneration Bucks - Transforming for the Future' (appendix a) provides a framework for action including a vision and a set of principles for how communities can organise themselves to determine their local ambitions and set out the regeneration aspirations for their local area.
- 2.5 Regeneration Bucks also sets out two guiding aims for regeneration activities for our towns to consider:
 - a) To create vibrant and characterful town centres which celebrate local culture and heritage and offer high quality inclusive public realm where people will want to live, work, visit, shop and relax.
 - b) To create fertile conditions for enterprise and skills to support the launch of new businesses and create the conditions for them to succeed.
- 2.6 Following on from the Framework, the largest towns of Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe have been developing their own town centre regeneration strategies which articulate the growth potential and set out the vision and ambition of these towns. This includes the Aylesbury Regeneration Strategy (appendix b), Chesham Regeneration Strategy (Appendix c) and the High Wycombe Regeneration Strategy (Appendix d).
- 2.7 **Aylesbury**
- 2.8 The Aylesbury Regeneration Strategy sets out new town centre ambitions as well as following through with the good work that has already been achieved through its Garden Town programme.

- 2.9 Aylesbury is seeing significant population growth leading to the Local Plan ambitions for 16,027 new homes to be built by 2033 as well as significant new employment space.
- 2.10 Although the town centre faces competition from larger nearby towns such as Milton Keynes and Bicester, it is well placed to provide a more distinct, specific proposition as a modern market town centre with vibrant independent shops.
- 2.11 The Aylesbury Strategy supports the town centre in becoming a thriving community with greener streets, more outdoor spaces, improved accessibility and greater biodiversity. It aims for a place where people want to live, work and visit.
- 2.12 The Aylesbury Garden Town Board Strategic Oversight Board and its partners have informed the Aylesbury Regeneration strategy and will continue to support the delivery of regeneration activities within the town centre.
- 2.13 **Chesham**
- 2.14 Chesham is an ambitious town. It is already recognised as a strong creative and community town, represented by many artists, musicians and other creatives. This strategy looks to capture this momentum and explore opportunities to see how culture and the creative sectors can be leveraged to drive regeneration forward.
- 2.15 The town has several vibrant independent retailers and hospitality businesses, bringing the best of urban/rural living together with the countryside on its doorstep. Excellent rail connection to London's underground network provides lots of potential and opportunities to Chesham including expanding its tourism capability and expanding its economic activity.
- 2.16 The strategy seeks to build upon, learn from and progress work already undertaken by local partners, including Chesham Town Council, the Chesham Community Board and local community groups. Together with the Chesham Regeneration Group, these stakeholders will continue to play a key role in bringing this strategy to life and realising the anticipated regeneration.
- 2.17 **High Wycombe**
- 2.18 High Wycombe has been a firm pillar of the Buckinghamshire economy, generating inward investment and leading in research and development. However, despite its many strengths, High Wycombe has challenges it must look to respond to in order to remain successful, including supporting business growth, improving public realm and planning for increased demand for urban living. This Strategy acknowledges these challenges and seeks to ensure the town centre adapts to ensure it remains relevant, lively and a vibrant place that is well used and delivers for local people and businesses.

- 2.19 The council has a strong track record of delivery in High Wycombe. Success with the multimillion pound Future High Street Fund demonstrates this is a place that can deliver regeneration and heritage led developments.
- 2.20 High Wycombe benefits from strong existing partnerships. The Council, through the High Wycombe Regeneration Group, will continue to build on these relationships, including the High Wycombe Town Committee, High Wycombe BidCo, Cressex BID, the High Wycombe Community Board and other active groups in the town to take proposals forward to deliver this strategy.
- 2.21 The 'town centre' focus of the High Wycombe strategy has been widened to encompass the Cressex Business Park, given its economic significance to Buckinghamshire.

3. Other Options considered

- 3.1 The council has the option to not have any town centre strategies – however, without a clear articulation or vision, future partnership working would be more challenging and could hinder any future external funding opportunities.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 There are no direct legal and financial implications in the adoption of this Framework and its strategies. Any future potential schemes that require Council funding will require a key decision in line with financial procedures.

4a. Director of Legal & Democratic Services comment

- 4.2 Monitoring Officer has been consulted and had no further comment

4b. Section 151 officer comment

- 4.3 Section 151 officer has been consulted and had no further comment

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 These documents also directly support the Council's Corporate Plan priorities:

- 5.2 *Increasing prosperity*** – The Regeneration Framework and its strategies will encourage sustainable economic growth, working with our partners to maximise opportunities and boost productivity. It will continue to attract high quality jobs and investment in skills, innovation and connectivity. It will support growth to benefit communities, preserving the character of our environment while delivering everything we need to prosper.

Improving our environment – The Framework and strategies support our town centres in being more accessible to shoppers and pedestrians, they ensure spaces are flood resilient by encouraging more greenery, trees and sustainable drainage schemes and in general, buildings that are environmentally friendly as well as protecting key conservation spaces within the town.

Protecting the vulnerable – town centre regeneration will focus on public realm improvements that contribute to designing out crime and antisocial behaviour so that our town centres can be places where people feel safe and want to spend time in to stay connected to the community and enjoy their High Streets.

Strengthening our communities – Regeneration supports the delivery of more town centre living, including the provision of affordable housing for our communities.

5.3 Further implications:

a) Property Implications – No immediate property implications have been identified at this stage. The Council has significant assets and land ownership within the strategy areas. This strategy may provide regeneration opportunities to acquire, develop and dispose of assets. Each asset will be looked at individually at appropriate times.

(b) Climate Change and Sustainability – Regeneration will seek to create and ensure our town centres are healthy and resilient. It will take measures to protect our natural environment and promote biodiverse environments

(c) Equality and Diversity Issues, Equality Act 2010 – The Regeneration Framework and its strategies are overarching, seeking to help create and enable inclusive and diverse public places and buildings with increased access to transport, but does not have any direct impact upon protected groups itself. Proposals and initiatives which seek to introduce or implement regeneration results will be formulated considering equalities impacts where appropriate and relevant Equalities Impact Assessments will be prepared at the beginning of any proposals or initiatives.

(d) Data – It is not anticipated that a data protection impact assessment is required, however, if any personal data is collected or used in connection with the Regeneration Framework in the future - this will be reviewed.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Local stakeholder engagement takes place through the various groups at the town centre level including High Wycombe Regeneration Group to support the development of the High Wycombe Strategy. In Chesham, the Chesham Regeneration Group supported the development of the Chesham Strategy. For Aylesbury, the Aylesbury Garden Town Board Strategic Oversight Board informed the development of the Aylesbury Strategy.

6.2 The Board's membership includes elected Members, the Town and Parish Councils and other local community groups/business interests.

6.3 Following engagement and agreement of these documents at Cabinet, engagement activities will expand out to a wider group of local members and stakeholders as well as the relevant Community Boards for the Town Strategies.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.2 Initial engagement has taken place with internal and external stakeholders. This will continue with details of any individual schemes and projects coming out of the strategy work shared regularly.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 The current proposed programme going forward is as follows: Once the strategies have been adopted by Cabinet, the intention is to share and engage strategies with the wider stakeholders in the three key town centres as well as across the County such as Buckinghamshire Business First. Furthermore, specific forums and opportunities will be identified to share these strategies as 'prospectus' type documents to funding bodies and developers.

9. Background papers

9.1 Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework with its associated strategy for Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

