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**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
16 NOVEMBER 2021**

**SUBJECT: ELGIN CITY CENTRE FINAL MASTERPLAN**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND  
FINANCE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of comments received on the draft Elgin City Centre Masterplan following consultation and to ask Committee to agree the final Masterplan and that a Steering Group is set up to co-ordinate and progress delivery of the Masterplan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E)(1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as a Planning Authority.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:**

- (i) notes the comments received during the consultation and agrees the proposed responses and changes arising from consultation set out in Appendix 2;**
- (ii) notes progress on a number of projects as set out in para 4.4;**
- (iii) agrees the final Masterplan in Appendix 3;**
- (iv) agrees the Delivery Programme in Appendix 4;**
- (v) delegates authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to add CGI images to the final Masterplan;**
- (vi) agrees that the Masterplan is treated as a material consideration in the development management process;**
- (vii) agrees that a Steering Group of key partners and stakeholders is set up to progress and co-ordinate delivery of the Masterplan; and**

(viii) notes that Improvement Plans for other Town Centres will be reported to the meeting of this Committee in early 2022.

### 3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The draft Masterplan was approved at the 26 January 2021 meeting of this Committee (para 13 of minute refers). The draft was then made available for public consultation between 22 March and 30 July 2021. The consultation was extended from the original deadline to allow for an “in-person” consultation event to take place in Cooper Park on 28 August 2021, with the rest of the consultation on-line.
- 3.2 The online consultation involved developing new ways of working and visual presentations, with an interactive virtual town hall resource developed and a drone regeneration trail, design competition for children, the offer of online 1-2-1 appointments with planning officers and meetings with organisations such as Elgin Community Council, Elgin Museum, Elgin BID and the Chamber of Commerce. **Appendices 1 and 2** summarise the consultation and demonstrates the reach of the engagement.

### 4. **PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The draft Masterplan received 114 online responses, with a further 468 comments received on the day of the Cooper Park consultation event. Views of the Transformation trail drone footage and virtual town hall exhibition proved to be very popular with 5,800 and 3,514 views respectively.
- 4.2 **Appendix 2** summarises the comments received and the proposed Council responses. Some key comments expressed include;
- Strong support for regeneration of South Street and Thunderton Place
  - No support expressed for a high quality hotel site at Lossie Green Car Park
  - Strong support for better active travel infrastructure and connectivity between Cooper Park and the High Street
  - Support for improvements to Northport
  - Support for more greening of the Centre
  - Support for proposals within Cooper Park, with many suggested uses, including re-instatement of mini golf and boating
  - No support for proposed angel’s share themed artwork within the pond
  - Need to improve St Giles Centre
  - Strong support for proposals to refurbish Grant Lodge, with suggestions that this would be a better hotel site
  - Strong proposals for refurbishment of Elgin Town Hall and wider proposals around the evening economy.
  - Support for inclusion of Elgin Museum within the Masterplan.
- 4.3 As a result of the consultation a number of property owners have come forward regarding proposals around the Centre and these are being considered and supported by Council officers. There has been considerable interest in developing the evening economy in the Centre. A number of key

changes have been made to the Masterplan as a result of the consultation, including;

- The hotel site proposed at Lossie Green has been reworded and amended to allow for a number of possible options to be explored. A number of potential emerging opportunities have been highlighted during the consultation, which are commercially sensitive at this stage. The hotel, along with Grant Lodge, Cooper Park and Elgin Town Hall are part of the Moray Growth Deal Cultural Quarter project and the Outline Business Case for that is still under review.
- The proposed surface level crossing at Northport has been changed to explore the feasibility of a new active travel bridge between Northport and Cooper Park which will become a key route between the refurbished Grant Lodge and the High Street. This would be supported by improvements to Northport with signage and art being used to encourage visitors to Grant Lodge to visit the High Street. The proposed surface level crossing between Grant Lodge and Elgin Museum is retained for further investigation.
- The proposed angel artwork in Cooper Park pond is no longer being proposed. Proposals for art throughout the Centre will be progressed under the Strategy in consultation with the community.
- St Giles shopping centre has been included as a project, aiming to work with the owners and managers to explore opportunities to support the viability of the Centre.
- Elgin Museum has been included as a project, supporting enhanced visitor facilities and potential residential uses.
- Comments relating to Cooper Park are being used to inform the design work currently ongoing for the Park.

4.4 Having projects within a plan which have been subject to public consultation is a key requirement for strategic level funding submissions and officers have been progressing a number of projects towards being shovel ready for inclusion in a possible submission to the UK Levelling Up Fund (subject to further report to Council) second round, which is anticipated to be announced shortly. This includes;

- Supporting property owners to progress feasibility studies for vacant and derelict properties.
- Feasibility study for an active travel bridge connecting over the railway line and options appraisal for the replacement of the existing pedestrian bridge over the A96 at Northport.
- Key road junction improvements to address traffic issues and facilitate development on constrained sites
- Streetscape design work considering options for improvements to a number of streets within the Centre with the introduction of traffic control measures.
- Ongoing design work at Cooper Park, focussing on the outdoor amphitheatre, pond and play area.

4.5 It is proposed to set up a Steering Group in Quarter 1 2022 to co-ordinate and communicate the delivery of projects within the Masterplan. Representation will be invited from Elgin Community Council, Elgin BID, Moray Chamber of

Commerce, Elgin Museum, Parentable, Elgin members, other interested parties and Council officers from Transportation, Economic Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Planning and Development.

- 4.6 The Delivery Plan (**Appendix 4**) for the Masterplan is a starting point, which will evolve and develop as costings and further details of projects become available. Details of possible funding need to be added and officers are currently looking at wider issues and possible funding for vacant and derelict sites and empty properties across Moray.
- 4.7 Delegated authority is requested to add CGI visualisations into the Masterplan when these are become available from ongoing studies.
- 4.8 Climate Change and Biodiversity implications will soon be incorporated into the Council's Committee reporting process. The Masterplan is considered to contribute positively and from the outset has sought to embed carbon conscious thinking into the projects. A number of proposals to reduce carbon and promote biodiversity are worth highlighting;
- A focus on new active travel connections and a more pedestrian friendly environment to promote walking, cycling and wheeling and reduce car journeys
  - Reuse of vacant and derelict buildings and sites
  - Aspiration to achieve net zero emissions at key development opportunities
  - Greening of the Centre, including tree and wildflower planting
  - More facilities and attractions within the centre supporting "localism" and local businesses
  - Green walling to absorb carbon
  - Proposed studies to explore renewable energy opportunities at Cooper Park and the River Lossie

## **5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The proposals are intended to support the economic recovery and diversification of Elgin City Centre as well as support healthy living and climate change mitigation.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

Progressing a Masterplan for Elgin City Centre is an action within the Moray Local Development Plan Delivery Programme. Once approved the Masterplan will be a material consideration for development management purposes.

**(c) Financial implications**

The Masterplan includes a Delivery Plan with potential funding sources identified, including external funding such as Town Centre Funds and Capital Regeneration funding. Some of the projects identified are likely to form part of the Council's submission to the UK Levelling Up Fund and some projects will be funded through the Moray Growth Deal Cultural Quarter and Housing Mix Delivery projects.

Improvement Plans are being developed for other Town Centres in Moray and a future report to this Committee will identify potential funding requirements for Town Centre regeneration. The Economic Recovery Plan agreed by the Council includes £200k for Town Centre Improvements 22-23 and 23-24, with 50% contribution from HIE.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There is a risk that not having an agreed Plan and shovel ready projects will negatively impact upon applications for external funding.

There is a risk of further loss of town centre vitality if a proactive, partnership approach to regeneration is not taken. Vibrant Centres and evening economy are key aspects of economic growth.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

Progressing delivery of the Masterplan will be challenging within the current staffing resources, particularly for Strategic Planning and Development, Transportation and Legal Services. A review of staffing within Economic Growth and Development is currently ongoing at present.

**(f) Property**

A number of properties referred to within the Masterplan are owned by the Council.

**(g) Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out. Although the impacts are expected to be positive, more detailed equality impact assessments will be carried out during the design phase to ensure that the benefits are shared fairly.

**(h) Consultations**

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Corporate Management Team, the Legal Services Manager, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Consultancy Manager, the Senior Engineer Transportation, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted, and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

**6. CONCLUSION**

**6.1 This report asks Committee to approve the final Elgin City Centre Masterplan following an extensive consultation process which has resulted in a number of changes.**

**6.2 The Masterplan sets out a range of proposals including redevelopment opportunities, refurbishment of buildings, streetscape works, active travel connections, new facilities within Cooper Park and greening of the**

**City Centre. It is proposed to set up a Steering Group of key partners to co-ordinate delivery of the Masterplan.**

Author of Report: Gary Templeton, Strategic Planning and Development  
Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: