

News

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St Helens Borough Council approves ECF's draft plans for St Helens and Earlestown town centre transformation

St Helens Borough Council's Cabinet has approved draft masterplan development frameworks that set out the vision to transform the town centres of St Helens and Earlestown.

Councillors welcomed the plans, which will help drive change, complementing existing assets to deliver high-quality, sustainable regeneration that makes St Helens and Earlestown town centres vibrant places that families and people of all ages can enjoy.

Cabinet also approved an extensive consultation period to give as many people, young and old, residents and business owners, partners and people from outside of the borough the chance to have their say on the plans which will see the repurposing of these two town centres.

Both town centres are the subject of separate draft masterplan development frameworks, which set out multi-million-pound vision and principles for each. The masterplans have been prepared by the council along with regeneration partnership, The English Cities Fund (ECF) - a strategic joint venture between national urban regenerator, Muse Developments, Legal & General and Homes England.

Delivery of the ambitions for St Helens town centre are expected to span the next 20 years, with an initial phase one planning application anticipated to be submitted early next year that will see a new mixed-use destination including a new market, a hotel, cutting edge flexible commercial Grade A office space, a redesigned bus station and improved connectivity delivered in the first five years of the programme. It also includes space for new high quality homes for families to live and grow.

The longer-term proposals for St Helens town centre divide the town centre into four zones, each of which will each play a role in the wider transformation of the town centre. These zones are; the Central Retail Zone; the Civic and Heritage Zone; the Discovery Zone; and the Education and Entertainment Zone.

In Earlestown the vision is to bring the town centre back to its former glory as a historic market town by creating a thriving and vibrant high street and marketplace. To do this the proposals include the reopening of the Town Hall and re-defining the Market Square as a place for people, with a multi-use offer. In addition, the ambitious plans include accessibility improvements at Earlestown rail station and consideration of a new transport hub adjacent - it is hoped this will promote multi-modal journeys which is key to boosting the economic vitality in the area and enabling commuters to travel and interchange more conveniently. An initial phase one planning application for Earlestown town centre is also anticipated in early 2022.

Both of the masterplan development frameworks also propose extensive new green spaces and public realm that will provide more sustainable town centres, helping them adapt to the impact of climate change. The new developments will support the borough's declared climate emergency, aiming to minimise and mitigate carbon at all stages in the process.

Leon Guyett, development director at The English Cities Fund, said: "We're proud to receive confirmation from the cabinet on our draft masterplans. This signals the shift in focus to the

delivery stage of our borough-wide partnership, starting with the regeneration of both St Helens and Earlestown town centre.

“We’ll look forward to speaking to the community very soon, as we work together to bring these exciting proposals to life. We’re committed to bringing truly transformative regeneration to the borough, driving investment into the heart of the area, bringing jobs, new homes, along with a revitalised retail offer and public spaces.”

To see the plans visit www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk and www.earlestown.co.uk.

Councillor David Baines, leader of St Helens Borough Council, said: “We know how keen people are to see our town centres develop and the demand to view the plans when they were launched last week was evident.

“These plans will make our town centres child and family-friendly, safe and sustainable places thriving with local businesses, shoppers, visitors and residents, something we have committed to delivering for residents.

“Now that people have had the chance to view the plans we want you to have your say on them through our extensive consultation programme, which will run for six weeks from Monday 1 November. There will be opportunities to speak to the team behind the plans, at sessions in person across the borough or virtually online. This is your opportunity to help shape the future for our borough’s town centres so please do not miss out.”

The consultation into the draft masterplan frameworks includes pop-up shops in each town centre, stalls at various community locations.