

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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<b>Report Originator</b>	Alex Jelley Economic Regeneration Manager	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A13/042	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All	16 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	
<b>Title</b>	<b>TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION</b>		

**Portfolio Holders: Cllr Derek Zanger and Cllr Mark Dearing**

<b>1</b>	<b><u>PURPOSE OF REPORT</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) To report on the delivery of a new Traffic Regulation Order and Rising Bollard scheme for Kettering town centre</li><li>b) To provide information on the improvements planned to be made to Newlands Street</li><li>c) To highlight the proposed Northampton Road/Sheep Street Junction Improvements</li></ul>

## **2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Kettering Borough lies within the South East Midlands, which is predominantly a growth area, and is expected to facilitate growth of some 13,100 homes and 16,200 new jobs by 2021.
- 2.2 Members have made their priorities for infrastructure and jobs-led growth clear – these are the prerequisites of growth. Members have indicated they wish to use the growth agenda to leverage three key and interrelated ambitions for the borough; namely:-
- ◆ A better offer for our town centres
  - ◆ A better education and training offer
  - ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs
- 2.3 The mutually supportive role of these three aspirations cannot be over-stated. The town centres and the skills base will be persuasive to inward investors. Similarly, high grade employment supports vibrant town centres.
- 2.4 The Council has a vision to create town centres that are **Characterful, Distinctive, and Fun**. This vision has been externally validated by an independent planning inspector, and now sits firmly within our planning policy for Kettering Town Centre.
- 2.5 This report sets out three specific projects that are all due to be delivered in the Summer of 2014 – and which are all funded by the private sector through s106 Obligations attached to planning permissions. This shows the significant benefits to existing communities that can be delivered through planned, responsible growth.

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### **3 Town Centre Pedestrianisation**

3.1 Since early 2013 we have been working with Northamptonshire Highways on a new design for the 'pedestrianised' part of Kettering town centre; High Street, Meadow Road, Lower Street and Gold Street.

3.2 The aim of this project is to

- ◆ Create a pedestrian friendly area;
- ◆ Provide easy access for everyone;
- ◆ Provide a greener space;
- ◆ Create a large area for events and smaller, more flexible areas for street traders and other uses;
- ◆ Enhance the town's burgeoning café culture;
- ◆ Restrict vehicle access to reduce traffic and parking;
- ◆ Improve street furniture;
- ◆ Use high quality materials;
- ◆ Drive further private sector investment.

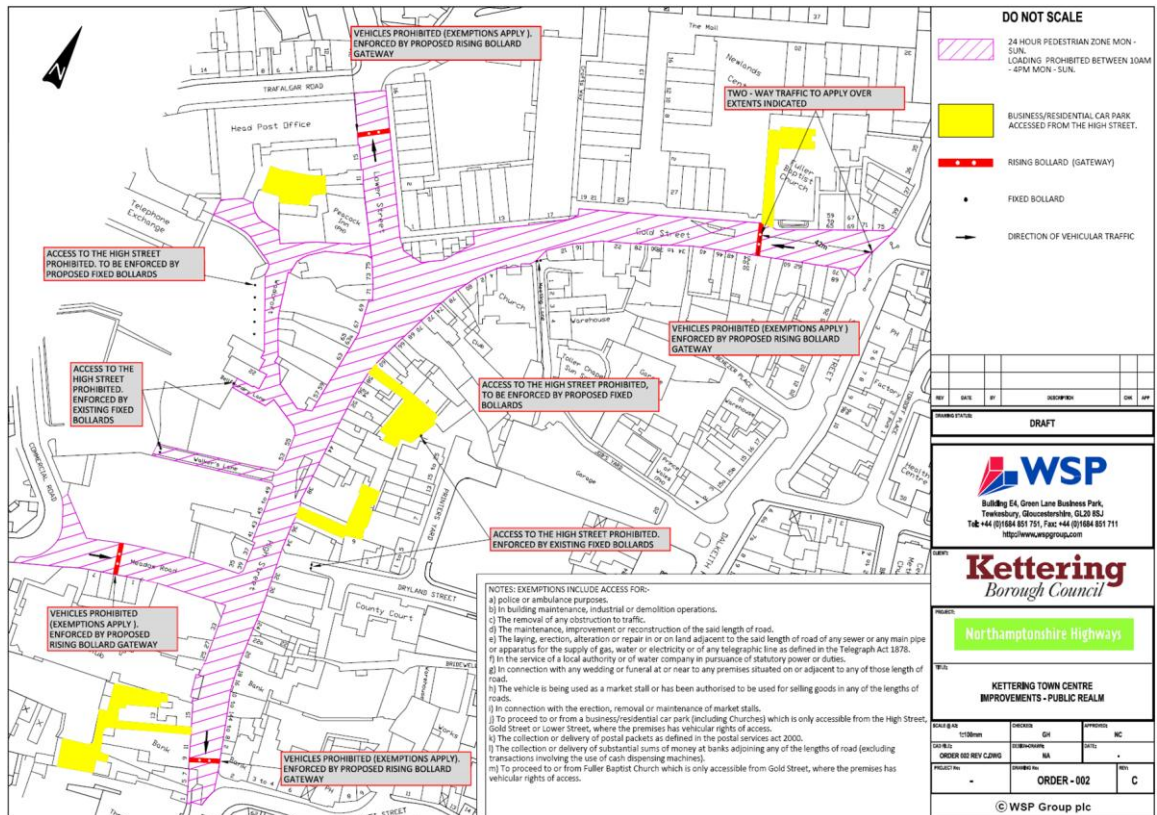
3.3 Design concepts were consulted on publicly in May 2013 and comments received have been incorporated in the current drafts of these designs. The final version of this design will be completed this year. The delivery of the public realm improvements – the new materials, street furniture, town square, etc – is dependent on s106 money being received by the Council. The East of Kettering SUE will play a significant part in our ability to deliver this part of the project.

3.4 However, funding is available now to enable the pedestrianisation element of the project to proceed – that is, to alter the existing Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and bring about the bollards, etc. To control vehicular movements within the town centre, and to structurally enforce the new TRO, the following is proposed:

- ◆ Installation of rising bollards at each of the 4 gateway locations;
- ◆ Installation of fixed bollards at adjoining streets;
- ◆ A new 24 hour pedestrian zone Monday to Sunday Traffic Regulation Order;
- ◆ Swipe card system for access;
- ◆ CCTV coverage and control of each gateway;
- ◆ New street furniture at gateways.

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- 3.5 Businesses, residents and other key stakeholders in the zone were invited to attend two drop-in sessions on 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March at the Council offices, so as to ensure that we fully understood their access requirements in terms of deliveries and so on. These two events were well attended, and the feedback we received was largely positive in nature. This will be fed into the TRO, which is will undergo a statutory process undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council.
- 3.6 The drop-in sessions enabled us to better understand the access rights and requirements in the zone, and we have been able to slightly modify the plans to enable concerns to be met. There are a limited number of private car parks (both business and residential in nature) that will retain the ability to access the zone.
- 3.7 The current proposals are to restrict access into the zone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There will be a core period between 10am - 4pm Sunday to Thursday and 8am - 4pm Friday and Saturday. During this period we will restrict all access, including deliveries to the various businesses, to the zone so as to create a safe environment for pedestrians. Outside of the core period deliveries to businesses, etc will be enabled – this will be through controlled access. The rising bollard system, along with CCTV control, will prevent egress by anyone without a legal right of access to the zone.
- 3.8 There is a minimal list of exemptions to this restriction – based on legal requirements.

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- 3.9 This is the first part of a much wider project that will involve a whole new design for the zone – with a new town square and materials to match the work previously undertaken on Market Place, Market Street, Horsemarket and Sheep Street. It is, however, a crucial step in a plan to get from this:



To this:



- 3.10 NCC are due to undertake the statutory TRO process over the next few months, with the physical works to install the bollards pencilled in for a July 2014 start. This is obviously fantastic news for Kettering town centre in the lead up to what we're sure will be a summer filled with reasons to come into Kettering town centre, and yet more proof that our approach to regeneration (as outlined in the previous Suite 16 Exec Report) is paying dividends.

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**4 Newlands Street Improvements**

4.1 But we're not finished there!

4.2 This summer will also see improvements made the bus shelters on Newlands Street. As reported to previous Executive Committees, the proposals will involve the removal of the existing bus shelter structure, and the replacement of it with 5 no. free standing bus shelters at each of the bus stops



4.3 These will be of a more modern design, but one that fits well with the street furniture we have recently installed in other parts of the town centre. Most importantly, they are much less enclosed than the existing structure – which will result in a cleaner, less cluttered environment. I think everyone agrees that the current state of affairs does not showcase Kettering at its best – the works will certainly improve the view of the Newlands Centre, and we're sure it'll bring in further private sector investment – into the Newlands Centre itself, but also in other parts of Newlands Street.

4.4 These improvements are to be paid for utilising s106 contributions secured on the 'Westhill' housing development in Kettering – though forward funded by the owners of the Newlands Centre, Ellandi. It is worth noting that the improvements to Newlands Street will happen before any houses are occupied on that site – further proof that growth in Kettering is improving the area for existing communities.

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- 4.5 Though not connected to the bus shelters project, we have also trialled a new approach to empty units within the town centre. Though we have very low levels of vacancy, as reported previously to the Committee, sometimes those empty units can be left in a state of disrepair. This has a negative impact on the character of our town centre:



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- 4.6 As such we've been working with the agents and land lords of three properties on Newlands Street to showcase what those empty units could look like if occupied. We're sure that this will help them find tenants – but in the mean time it has certainly improved how they look:



## **5 Town Centre Junction Improvements**

- 5.1 But we're not finished there!
- 5.2 Improvements are due to be made to another junction within the town centre. Following successful works to the Northampton Road/Northfield Avenue junction (the double roundabouts) and some minor alterations to the Northfield Avenue/Rothwell Road junction, Northamptonshire Highways are due to focus on the Northampton Road/Sheep Street/Station Road junction next to the Alfred East Gallery.
- 5.3 This is a key part of Kettering town centre's traffic infrastructure – both in terms of traffic flow and key pedestrian routes (from the south of the town into the centre, and most importantly between the train station and town centre. The

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proposals will improve these key pedestrian routes, while also increasing the capacity of the junction – so as to improve the flow of traffic through it. The experience of Northampton Road/Northfield Avenue suggests that the improvements should have a very positive impact on the town.

- 5.4 Northamptonshire Highways will be discussing the proposals with businesses in the immediate vicinity and other stakeholders shortly. They are also currently looking at whether cycle lanes could be included within the design in a more prominent fashion.
- 5.5 In terms of a timetable for the works, we understand that late summer 2014 looks likely for commencement. We will keep the Committee informed of progress on this exciting project over the next few months.

### **6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND USE OF RESOURCES**

- 6.1 Members have made their priorities for infrastructure and jobs-led growth clear – these are the prerequisites of growth. Members have indicated they wish to use the growth agenda to leverage three key and interrelated ambitions for the borough; namely:-

- ◆ A better offer for our town centres
- ◆ A better education and training offer
- ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs

### **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Committee:

- a) Endorses the proposals for the new Traffic Regulation Order and Rising Bollard scheme as an important step towards delivering a characterful, distinctive and fun town centre;
- b) Welcomes the improvements to Newland Street as evidence of the benefits inherent in delivering responsible growth that benefits existing communities;
- c) Recognises the importance of improving pedestrian access between the train station and town centre, as well as improving traffic flow around the town centre.