

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018**

**Present:** Councillor Michael Tebbutt (Chair)  
Councillor Linda Adams, Duncan Bain, Michael Brown,  
Ash Davies, Mark Rowley, Greg Titcombe and Jan Smith

**17.PP.22 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Jelley and Ruth Groome. It was noted that Councillors Michael Brown and Greg Titcombe would be acting as substitutes.

**17.PP.23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**17.PP.24 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**17.PP.25 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN – MONITORING UPDATE**

A report was submitted to inform Members of the results of the sixth Monitoring Report of the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) which was adopted by the Council on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The report evaluated the progress that had been made in delivering the Plan's objectives and also updated the Kettering Town Centre Health Check.

The following points were noted

**AAP Objective 1: Create a zoned, vibrant town centre which makes best use of available land and existing buildings and maximises potential for regeneration**

A footfall count was conducted in the town in September and December 2017. Results showed that footfall had increased on

both non-market and market day in September 2017, however, non-market and market day in December showed a decline. One contributory factor that could explain this was the exceptionally cold weather that was experienced on this particular Friday. Another explanation for a decline in footfall could be the competition provided this year by the newly opened Rushden Lakes out-of-town shopping centre.

There had been no gain in office floorspace. The focus for new office development in the plan area is the Station Quarter. The Council was engaged in discussions with Network Rail and the current operator, East Midlands Trains, about their aspirations for the rail service in terms of the new franchise, electrification of the service, and the potential for development in the vicinity of the station. The new franchise proposed to separate services, instead creating a peak-time intercity service for the cities north, and a commuter service stopping at towns south of Corby/Kettering. Kettering was identified as the hub station benefiting from some intercity services for passengers to change. This brings with it the potential for Kettering's station to be more attractive for those likely to be travelling more frequently, and as a meeting place for business with the potential to be a catalyst for development in the Station Quarter.

The AAP has a target for delivering 957 new dwellings in the plan area by 2021. 27 dwellings had been completed in the last 12 months bringing the total number of dwellings to be delivered in the six years since the plan was adopted to 231.

#### Cultural Quarter

The Registrars had recently moved to Kettering Library, which meant the vacated area could be used by the Police for interview purposes.

#### Restaurant Quarter

Wildwood, an established and highly regarded restaurant chain opened in summer 2017. This enhances the night time economy further and would help assist the town centre in fulfilling the criteria for the Purple Flag award, which was re-awarded in June 2017. In addition to this, the Royal Hotel situated in the Restaurant Quarter was now recorded as occupied and in A4 use.

The award winning Market Place at the heart of the Restaurant Quarter was again the venue for the 'Kettering by the Sea' event during July and August. The event was again very popular and provided a 'distinctive and fun' family experience in accordance with the vision of the AAP. It was also the focus for Christmas events during November and December, including the Christmas Lights Switch On and the Christmas Market held on 30<sup>th</sup>

November, which comprised of 17 stalls. The UK Women's Cycle Tour finished at the Market Place on 7th June, attracting a large number of visitors to enjoy a carnival atmosphere along the route and in the town, and especially the town centre.

KettFest, and Ctrl Alt Del, were hosted in Kettering town centre. As well as this, The Yards host regular live music events which enhance the appeal of Kettering Town Centre as an attractive destination during the evening.

**AAP Objective 2: To implement a step change in quality retail offer incorporating 20,500sqm**

The AAP has a target of providing at least 20,500m<sup>2</sup> new retail floorspace by 2021. It was noted that the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, adopted in July 2016 has reduced the requirement for net comparison shopping floorspace to 12,500m<sup>2</sup>.

The AAP included a policy to ensure that no less than 75% of the Primary Shopping Frontage (PSF) was in A1 use (retail). This was to ensure the vitality and viability of the town centre and retain a strong retail focus. In the last year the retail frontages decreased by 0.11%, and now stand at 71%. Vacancy rates in the PSF are calculated to currently be at 4.35%. This is a decrease of 3.98% in a year. The overall vacancy rate in the plan area was 9.85%, compared to a national average of 11.1%

The plan has a policy to ensure that A4 and A5 uses do not become excessive and erode the retail function of the Secondary Shopping Frontages.

**AAP Objective 3: To deliver a new residential community and utilise residential uses to support and complement the quarters**

The plan had a target of 957 new dwellings on the allocated sites, 540 to be within the New Residential Quarter. This year, 27 residential units were completed.

**AAP Objective 4: To create a town centre characterised by the high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm and respect for heritage**

The plan seeks the provision of new high quality public realm as part of the Wadcroft/Newlands retail development and the development of The Yards. In addition, public realm improvements in the form of a Station Plaza are also sought in the Station Quarter. Discussions are taking place with Network Rail about the best way of achieving this. In the New Residential

Quarter, new public realm is to be delivered on the Meadow Road site. The Council was currently preparing a Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which would provide a project plan for new public realm, including at the Meadow Road Park. This would be brought back to the Committee in March 2017. Provision exists within the Section 106 Agreement for the developers of East Kettering to fund public realm improvements in due course. In addition, some S106 funding was already secured from other development for this purpose.

There had been a marked increase in outdoor seating in the town centre, especially on fine sunny days, since the Seats on Streets Local Development Order (LDO) was adopted. The LDO expired 3 years after its adoption, in September 2016. The Council was currently undertaking work to renew the LDO.

**AAP Objective 5: To create a significant increase in office employment space, along with further regeneration opportunities**

The AAP has a target of at least 38,500sqm new office space in the plan area by 2021. In the past year there had been no gain of office floorspace. However, the Council was working with its Station Quarter partners (Network Rail and East Midlands Trains) to establish the feasibility of bringing forward an office development and other improvements in that area.

A consultation titled 'Future of East Midlands rail franchise' ran from 12<sup>th</sup> July to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to seek the views on priorities for the next East Midlands rail franchise, to ensure that the franchise delivered the best railway for passengers, communities and businesses. Now that the consultation has closed, the responses will be considered. Bidders for the franchise will then be shortlisted, and comments of this consultation will be used to inform the Invitation to Tender. Proposals of the shortlisted bidders will then be received and subsequently considered, before the new train company will begin operating in August 2019. It is important for Kettering that as part of the new franchise, the town and the borough as a whole benefits from a more reliable service, which also has the potential to assist in attracting growth and investment to the area, giving improvements in connectivity to London as well as settlements such as Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield to the north.

The Council was working with Kettering General Hospital to initiate a move of administrative staff to operate at Sheerness House in Meadow Road in 2018. This would add to potential visitors and spend in the town centre.

**AAP Objective 6: To make a safe, welcoming, walkable and well connected town centre**

Plans had been worked up to open Eskdail Street to two-way traffic in the near future.

The Council was working to generally improve car parks in the town and was recently successful in achieving the 'Park Mark', which recognises car parking excellence, for the 12<sup>th</sup> year running.

Kettering successfully retained The Purple Flag award in June 2017. This award recognises the creation of a safe, clean and inviting environment in the town centre after 5pm. A number of improvements/achievements to the town centre have helped maintain this accreditation through 2017

**AAP Objective 7: To deliver a green town centre with an emphasis on provision of green infrastructure, renewable energy initiatives and environmentally efficient buildings to encourage green living**

Several of the allocated sites in the New Residential Quarter are likely to be affected by surface water flooding. To ensure flood risk issues are managed, the provision of urban green space and the enhancement of the Slade Brook corridor were being considered in advance of the proposed developments in this area. The Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) is currently being finalised.

Discussion on the content of the report ensued and Members heard that footfall figures were calculated in person by members of staff and although some footfall figures were down, reports were that spend in the town centre stayed the same. Members acknowledged that evidence pointed towards the provision of markets enhancing footfall levels in the town centre.

Suggestions were made regarding automatic number plate recognition machines in car parks which would encourage shoppers to stay in the town longer. Other suggestions for the town centre included more cycle storage and extra lighting at the Museum and Art Gallery.

An update was given on the Town Centre Delivery Plan. Following the workshop held in September 2017, a report was being taken to the Executive Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018. An update would be brought to the Planning Policy Committee in due course.

**RESOLVED**

that members noted:

- a) Kettering Town Centre achieved Purple Flag status for the second successive occasion.
- b) The opening of Wildwood in the Market Place enhances the existing offer in the Restaurant Quarter and shows that well established chains have a desire to invest in Kettering.
- c) Overall the night time economy is growing significantly in strength
- d) Events including the Women's Tour, Christmas Market and Kettering by the Sea continue to promote Kettering Town Centre as an attractive and vibrant destination.
- e) Festivals such as Kettfest and Ctrl-Alt-Del proved to be popular, incorporating arts, culture and music, for a third successive year at various venues.
- f) Overall vacancy rates have decreased to 9.85%; this is better than the national average of 11.1%.
- g) An increase of footfall on both a non-market and market day in September, despite decreases on both days in December, compared to last year. This decrease can be somewhat attributed to the cold weather conditions on the survey day and the newly opened Rushden Lakes.
- h) During September and December, footfall figures were higher on market days, which show that the markets in the town centre are having a beneficial effect in attracting people onto the High Street.
- i) Success of The Yards, which is adding to the town centre economy.
- j) A total of 231 dwellings have been delivered in the town centre since the plan was adopted.
- k) The Council is working with the town centre stakeholders in preparing a Town Centre Delivery Plan that provides improvements to Kettering town centre.

*(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.27 pm)*

*Signed .....*  
*Chair*

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