

## Cabinet

19 April 2018

### Leamington Town Vision

#### Recommendation

That Cabinet endorses the Leamington Town Vision.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Leamington Town Vision (attached as an appendix) has been developed over the last 18 months between Warwick District Council (WDC), Leamington Town Council, Leamington Business Improvement District, Warwickshire Police, Royal Priors Shopping Centre, Regent Court pedestrianised shopping street, Royal Leamington Spa Chamber of Trade, Purple Monster, Wareing & Company, The University of Warwick, The Leamington Society and Warwickshire County Council.
- 1.2 Warwickshire County Council has been represented at the regular Leamington Town Forum partnership meetings and has provided detailed input into the Vision and provided officer support facilitating stakeholder workshops. Four stakeholder workshops were held between 2<sup>nd</sup> March -16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and were used to engage a range of Leamington Spa stakeholders, key organisations and individuals who live, work, visit and invest in Leamington Spa, to seek contributions and help shape the Vision.
- 1.3 The Vision also underwent public consultation during September 2017, both online and in person at the pump room gardens. Notification of the public engagement was supported by an advertising and awareness campaign including an advertisement in the Leamington Courier and through social media via Twitter and Facebook, led by WDC. In addition an exhibition was held as part of the Leamington Food and Drink festival 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in the pump room gardens. Members of the public commented on a postcard style questionnaire, as well as speaking to volunteers; from this event 65 responses were obtained. The online survey and website was available for one month and 67 responses were received. Following the engagement and consultation amendments were made to the Vision.
- 1.4 Local Members have met and inputted to the Vision document during its preparation over the last 18 months.

## **2.0 Key Issues**

- 2.1 The Vision is a strategic, partnership led document which can help to protect Leamington's key assets, ensuring future investment plays to the Town's strengths. The partnership approach ensured a broad spectrum of issues were considered, these issues are critical to the Vision and ensured the Vision meets the needs of the diverse population living and using the Town Centre.
- 2.2 The Vision has been summarised into 6 'Big Ideas', each of which has its own objectives and actions. The Vision includes key sites in Leamington Spa such as Covent Garden Car Park, Chandos Street Car Park, Town Hall and the Proposed Creative Quarter. ie Big idea A – A Thriving Town Centre includes Covent Garden Car Park which has recently received planning permission for a 620 space car park, office space and private housing, the development of which will run in parallel with the implementation of Vision.
- 2.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is being prepared by WCC.

## **3.0 Proposal**

- 3.1 By endorsing the Vision the Council is acknowledging the work of the Leamington Town Forum partnership and confirming the Council's continued support of a vibrant, innovative and attractive Town Centre.

## **4.0 Next steps**

- 4.1 Having helped produce the Vision, the Council will work with Partners to deliver the actions associated with its corporate work streams and priorities; taking a committed and proactive role, where resources allow and where activity dovetails with existing services eg cycle provision and supporting the 'Digital High Street', to name just two. In addition, the Council will support WDC with monitoring and if appropriate, review of the Vision.
- 4.2 The Council will commit to regularly monitor WCC specific actions and maintain member engagement as part of the process.
- 4.3 Warwick District Council submitted the Vision to the Executive on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The recommendation that WDC Executive supports the "Vision & Strategy for Leamington Spa" and support officers to continue their work to deliver the actions within the Vision was agreed.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.1 This document shows how WCC's activities complement the shared Vision for the town centre, highlighting the Council's support and continued commitment to Partners.

## 6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Short term there are no financial implications as the Vision contains existing work streams. Resources will be examined to consider how ongoing work complements the actions.
- 6.2 Medium term and longer term there could be financial implications and where these arise they will be the subject of consideration within the capital programme and or separate reports to Cabinet.
- 6.3 The County Council will continue to work with Warwick District Council and partners to maximise external funding opportunities which could help to deliver actions within the Vision.

## Background papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Members:

Leamington Milverton – Bill Gifford  
Leamington North – Sarah Boad  
Leamington Clarendon – Nicola Davies  
Leamington Willes – Matt Western  
Leamington Brunswick – Jonathan Chilvers

Other members:

Councillors Peter Butlin, Sarah Boad, Izzi Seccombe, Parminder Singh Birdi, Heather Timms and Maggie O'Rourke

## Cabinet: 19th April 2018

### Appendix

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*Please note that a published version of this document is in preparation and will be available.*

## A Vision for Leamington town centre Leamington Town Centre Forum December 2017

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## Welcome to Royal Leamington Spa

### Introduction

The Leamington Town Centre Forum has been set up by a number of local organisations to help develop a vision and strategy for Leamington town centre.

Together we have been considering the opportunities and challenges facing Leamington town centre. What do we love about our town centre? What are the key things that make it successful, and how can we best support these? In what ways may our town centre not be working as well as it may, and how can we address these?

In this document we set out our vision for Leamington town centre and a number of key things we would like to see happen in the town centre. Finally, we set out how we would like to see this work taken forward and an action plan for how this may be done.

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## **Who is the Leamington Town Centre Forum?**

The Leamington Town Centre Forum brings together a number of key organisations who are active in the management of Leamington town centre or in delivering services within it. It also includes representatives of the business community, local residents and the University of Warwick (including the Students Union). The members of the Leamington Town Centre Forum are:-

- BID Leamington
  - Leamington Society
  - Purple Monster
  - Royal Leamington Spa Chamber of Trade
  - Royal Leamington Spa Town Council
  - Royal Priors & Regent Court
  - University of Warwick
  - University of Warwick Students Union
  - Wareing & Company
  - Warwick District Council
  - Warwickshire County Council
  - Warwickshire Police
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## **Where is Leamington town centre?**

In creating a Vision & Strategy for Leamington town centre, the Forum did not wish to be prescriptive about the boundaries of Leamington town centre. There was, however, general agreement that the town centre covers broadly the area on this plan; From Christchurch Gardens in the north to the canal in the south, and from Adelaide Road and the Bowling Greens in the west to Willes Road and the Jephson Gardens in the east. It does not mean that our vision, big ideas or detailed actions are restricted to within this area.

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## **How we developed a Vision & Strategy for Leamington town centre**

The Town Centre Forum was created at the suggestion of Warwick District Council to explore whether local organisations with a key role in managing or delivering services within the town centre, as well as key representatives of the business community and University of Warwick, could develop a shared vision and strategy for Leamington town centre.

The Forum first met in the summer of 2016 and then several times over the following months to put together a draft vision and a strategy for the town centre. In our discussions, a number of key priority themes emerged, and we have gathered these together as the “big ideas” that you can see in this document.

We felt that it was important to test these ideas with a wider audience. We did this first through a series of stakeholder workshops in the early part of 2017 to which key organisations and individuals who live, work, visit and invest in Leamington town centre were invited. We then reviewed the comments made at these workshops before preparing a draft vision & strategy which we were ready to put before the public.

We consulted with local people in the autumn of 2017 including at a public exhibition which we ran during the Leamington Food & Drink Festival in early September. We also created a website ([www.leamingtonvision.co.uk](http://www.leamingtonvision.co.uk)) and invited comments to be made online.

This final document is the culmination of this work.

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## **What you said**

This is a small selection of the wide range of comments made during the public engagement exercise that we undertook in the autumn of 2017.

“Please protect the integrity of our beautiful town.”

“The canals seem a lost opportunity and could be a vital asset for Old Town.”

“Old Town needs upgrading to encourage people to visit it.”

“Important to have connections that cater for cyclists, disabled people and those that don’t drive.”

“It's a great place to live.”

“The bit beside the train station feels like a ghetto.”

“Keep it indie and not like all the other town centres.”

“Pedestrianise the Parade.”

“Pedestrianisation should be resisted.”

“Encourage visitors into the Centre – make walkways clearer from the train station.”

“It’s important that Leamington is a safe place to live for everyone.”

“Too many coffee shops.”

“Parking charges put off many people from working and shopping in the town.”

“Tour of Britain – excellent.”

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## **Our vision for Leamington town centre**

Royal Leamington Spa is a diverse and vibrant town, popular with visitors and residents alike. It has a distinctive and unique character and appeal which stems in large part from its history of innovation and creativity flowing back to the 1780’s when the village of Leamington Priors began to build bath houses around its recently discovered saline springs. Today the town still taps a rich seam of creativity and innovation with specialisms in engineering, creative and digital industries and the arts.

Nowhere is this character seen more clearly than in its beautiful historic town centre.

**Our vision is to build a welcoming town centre; that celebrates its entrepreneurial past, embraces its cultural and creative present and looks forward to innovative future developments. A town centre where visitors and residents alike are offered a rich experience, whether working, shopping, eating and drinking or enjoying the town’s cultural and social activities.**

To do this, we will need to:-

- 1. Protect and make best use of the town centres key assets;** its high quality built environment and range of historic buildings, its waterways including its riverside setting and canal, its award winning parks and gardens, its good and diverse range of shops, its excellent range of cafes and restaurants and its cultural and leisure offer.
- 2. Ensure that new investment recognises these assets and “plays to the town centres strengths”.** Investment should be focussed on improving that experience, encouraging people to dwell longer in the town centre and offering them a range of activities while they do so. We must protect and enhance our existing shops and ensure that any new shops complement those already in the town.
- 3. Meet the needs of the diverse population living in and using our town centre.** This includes those who live and work in the town centre, the local community of Warwick District, business and leisure visitors and, of increasing importance, students.
- 4. Address any issues that are critical to delivering this vision.** This includes:-
  - Ensuring that people can get into, and around the town centre.
  - Identifying and planning for developments that are key to underpinning our vision
  - Addressing areas of weakness where the town centre is not working as it should.
  - Supporting our evening and night-time economy.
  - Ensuring that the town centre remains a safe place to live and visit at all times.
  - Promoting our town centre and providing information to visitors

- Flexibility, to reflect our fast changing world.

Key within (4) above is addressing areas of weakness where the town centre is not working as it should. In particular these are as follows:-

- Those areas on the edge of the main shopping area struggling to find an identity and role.**  
There are higher vacancy rates and a greater turnover of businesses in certain areas including the northern and southern ends of the Parade and the western end of Regent Street. Could more be done to support landlords and tenants in this area?
- Securing a future for Old Town.** The area south of the river has always been part of our town centre, albeit one with a distinctive character. There are areas within Old Town that are run down and would benefit from regeneration, particularly along the canal and around the railway station. Are there development and other opportunities that should be promoted here?
- Maintaining and improving access and movement into and through the town centre.** There is pressure from competing land uses for space, and a need to make sure that we maintain and improve access into and around the town centre. Particular issues include ensuring that car parking levels are adequate and properly managed, promoting walking and cycling, and resolving areas where there is a particular conflict between different modes of transport.
- Space for public events.** Although the Pump Rooms Gardens provides a space for some large public events there is no other public “square” or other space for large or small events, including opportunities for informal activities such as street theatre.
- Digital connectivity.** As part of any wider theme of “access” the issue of broadband and guaranteeing high quality digital connectivity throughout the town centre is important. The town centre has varied accessibility to high quality broadband connections and would benefit from more integrated and better digital connectivity for different user groups.

## The “Big Ideas”

Title	<b>A) A thriving town centre</b>
	<p>Success is critical to an economically viable town centre. Leamington Spa is open to investment and our aspiration is to create an iconic town centre which is adaptable to 21st century change. Now, more than ever, we need a flexible approach to how we manage the evolution of our town centre. We will sponsor and support quality investments that ensure Leamington remains a destination of choice for residents and visitors alike. By carefully evolving the mix of retail, residential and working spaces, alongside food, drink, night-time and leisure activities; we will maintain a modern forward-looking Leamington that also values and protects its rich Regency Heritage.</p> <p>Furthermore, we must recognise that this growth this will not happen everywhere and as some areas become more intensively used, others will become less so. Whilst we need to protect our town centre, we need to be able to assess and respond to new</p>



	opportunities as they come forward. We need a flexible approach to how we manage change in the town centre.
<b>Objective</b>	To develop and maintain a town centre that anyone working, living or visiting Leamington can enjoy; encouraging quality investments which look to the future and reflect our historical spa town heritage.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CREATE and PROMOTE suitable ideas and opportunities for new shops, cafes, restaurants and leisure uses and to improve our public spaces.</li> <li>2. IDENTIFY and SUPPORT investment which delivers appropriate and sustainable development sites within the town centre.</li> <li>3. ACTIVELY SEEK OUT opportunities to capitalise on the town’s heritage as a Spa.</li> <li>4. DELIVER high quality developments on specifically identified sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covent Garden Car Parks site – currently proposed by Warwick District Council for mixed office, residential and car parking use</li> <li>• Chandos Street Car Park site – prime location and opportunity for retail/office/residential/car parking</li> <li>• Town Hall – new uses for this building will be required after it is vacated by the District Council</li> <li>• Creative Quarter - Changing uses of key buildings or development of opportunity sites identified within the Creative Quarter masterplan (see E below)</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. EXPLORE opportunities to improve digital connectivity within the town centre including the potential for adopting a “Smart Cities” approach (where the traditional networks and services are made more efficient with the use of digital and telecommunication technologies for the benefit of residents and businesses).</li> <li>6. ENSURE that we have planning policies to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the continued mix of key town centre uses (shops, cafes and restaurants, offices, leisure uses, etc) whilst also being sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs.</li> <li>• allow us to respond positively to those peripheral areas of the town centre, making it easier to attract investment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>7. ENSURE that our town centre is welcoming to visitors, that our facilities are well managed and that our services and events are promoted and coordinated.</li> <li>8. SUPPORT and MANAGE the needs of the growing student population.</li> </ol>

<b>Title</b>	<b>B) A connected town centre</b>
	<p>The town centre is relatively compact and potentially easily walkable, however Leamington’s history and development has created some challenges if we wish to create a truly accessible and well-connected town centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The River Leam makes it harder to integrate the northern and southern parts of the town centre. More needs to be done to enhance existing river crossings and explore where new ones could be provided.</li> <li>• Areas such as the railway station are not well connected to the rest of the town centre.</li> <li>• More needs to be done to enable people to find their way around the town by car, on foot and by bicycle.</li> </ul> <p>For those arriving by car, we need to make sure that there is enough parking in accessible locations and available at a reasonable cost to users. We must also ensure that the needs of car users are balanced with others (pedestrians, cyclists and those</p>

	<p>who use public transport) and that these needs are taken into account. Ultimately, it is important that car parking works for everyone who lives and works in the town centre, as well as for visitors.</p> <p>Leamington has excellent rail connections to Birmingham and London, and benefits from its railway station being a “hub” station along this route with frequent services. It is important that the station continues to be able to perform this role to support all those who live and work in the town, as well as visitors.</p>
<b>Objective</b>	To ensure that the town centre is both accessible and navigable for everyone, and to ensure that the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, those using public transport and car users are met.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CREATE a strong attractive pedestrian and cycle corridor between key locations, including between the station and the rest of the town centre, and between the north and south parts of the town centre crossing the river.</li> <li>2. IMPROVE pedestrian and cycle signage and way-marking throughout the town centre.</li> <li>3. INCREASE provision of secure cycle storage within the town centre to promote increased cycle usage.</li> <li>4. IMPROVE linkages between the Pump Room Gardens and Spencer Yard including, potentially, through provision of a new footbridge over the river.</li> <li>5. IMPROVE connectivity and permeability when new development proposals come forward.</li> <li>6. INVEST in town centre car parking including replacing the Covent Garden car park with one fit for future use.</li> <li>7. ENSURE that on-street parking management is fair and works for the wider benefit of the town centre including the needs of visitors, businesses and residents.</li> <li>8. IMPROVE signage to and from car parks including VMS (Variable Message Signage).</li> <li>9. ENSURE that the operational needs of the station are met, including for car parking.</li> <li>10. MANAGE the road network to control traffic speeds, reduce congestion and improve safe pedestrian crossings.</li> <li>11. ENCOURAGE modal shift to sustainable/public transport to reduce congestion, improve air quality and encourage active travel</li> </ol>

<b>Title</b>	<b>C) Places to meet in our town centre</b>
	<p>Leamington’s parks, and in particular the Pump Room Gardens, provide a focus for large scale events such as the Food Festival, Peace Festival and carnival. Apart from these areas, Leamington lacks any public spaces for large events, except when the Parade is closed for specific events. There may be a case to consider whether further public spaces are created to provide a focus for (maybe smaller scale) public and community events.</p>
<b>Objective</b>	To create new, and enhance existing, places to meet across the town centre in a range of sizes.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PROTECT and ENHANCE existing public open spaces.</li> <li>2. IDENTIFY new opportunities to provide new public spaces particularly where new development opportunities are created.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. IDENTIFY opportunities for smaller informal public spaces and pocket parks.</li> <li>4. EXPLORE opportunities to close sections of the Parade to allow more events to take place here.</li> </ol>
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<b>Title</b>	<b>D) Revealing Leamington's waterways</b>
	The River Leam and the Grand Union Canal both run through the heart of the town and provide opportunities for public access, recreation and in some cases development. More needs to be done to make use of these important, and sometimes hidden and underutilised assets.
<b>Objective</b>	To ensure that Leamington's waterways can play a full role within the town centre through enhancement, improved public access and, where appropriate, new development and regeneration.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SUPPORT development/enhancement opportunities where these can improve the setting of the river and people's ability to view it</li> <li>2. ENSURE that the river banks are well maintained.</li> <li>3. SUPPORT regeneration along the canal corridor..</li> <li>4. IMPROVE safe and attractive public access along both the river and canal including considering feasibility of providing a new pedestrian footbridge across the river.</li> </ol>

<b>Title</b>	<b>E) A hub for creativity</b>
	Leamington Spa has a rich legacy of creative individuals and companies. A recent report has identified that today the town is one of 47 "creative clusters" in the UK, and the only one in the West Midlands. There are over 1,500 creative businesses in Leamington and many of these are within Leamington town centre. Software and digital companies account for half of this. How can we best support and foster this important part of our local economy?
<b>Objective</b>	To create an environment and opportunities to allow our burgeoning creative and digital industries to flourish.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DEVELOP plans for a "Creative Quarter" in Old Town as a vibrant area with a range of new uses to include new space for digital and creative industries to grow and to consider opportunities for establishing initiatives such as a digital hub and a "makerspace" within this.</li> <li>2. IDENTIFY and BRING FORWARD specific proposals for the area around Spencer Yard and beyond</li> <li>3. PROMOTE the town's place as a "creative cluster" and as a centre for creative industries within the West Midlands and beyond.</li> </ol>

<b>Title</b>	<b>F) Enhancing Old Town</b>
	The Old Town area has a distinctive character however has not always benefitted from the investment and prosperity seen in the area to the north of the river. The area has benefitted from regeneration in the past however more is needed to help secure Old Town's future and strengthen its role and identity in the town centre.

<b>Objective</b>	To support regeneration and enhancement opportunities which help to revitalise Old Town and secure its future.
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DEVELOP new employment opportunities to support creative and digital industries; a “Creative Quarter” in Old Town (see E above).</li> <li>2. REGENERATE key areas within Old Town –e.g. Court Street area/Althorpe Street, Wise Street area</li> <li>3. IDENTIFY and prioritise regeneration opportunities along the canal corridor for employment, housing, tourism and cultural uses, through the preparation of a plan to identify areas to be protected and to be regenerated along the canal corridor.</li> <li>4. REGENERATE and ENHANCE the area around the railway station through new development and environmental enhancements in and around the station (including that currently underway at Station Approach).</li> <li>5. INVESTIGATE opportunities for environmental improvements, including through the use of public art, particularly in the Bath Street, Clemens Street and High Street areas through the wider Creative Quarter masterplan.</li> </ol>

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## What happens next?

Now that this Vision & Strategy has been completed, it is being presented back to all the organisations that are represented on the Forum. They will be asked, where appropriate, to formally support it. This is particularly the case in respect of the three councils; Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council and Leamington Town Council.

The challenge moving forward will be to make this document real; to deliver the actions identified in the Action Plan contained in the appendix. To make this happen:-

- All the organisations with responsibility for delivering the Action Plan will consider how they can work together to better deliver the actions, including by working in different ways and in partnership together.
- A group from the Leamington Town Centre Forum will continue to monitor the Vision & Strategy document and to hold organisations to account for the actions in it. The Forum may also consider, in the future, whether it needs to review and “refresh” the Vision & Strategy.