



Working in partnership
Central Bedfordshire Council

DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE

MASTERPLAN EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

FEBRUARY 2011





Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Title of the Assessment:	Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan	Date of Assessment	14/02/11
Responsible Officer:	Andy Lewis	Extension Number	75526
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Relevance Test: Is an equality impact assessment required?

Relevant?	Yes	No
Does the strategy, policy, service, project, contract or decision impact on people?	√	
Will it benefit some people and communities & not others (community cohesion)?	√	
Does it involve making decisions based on people's characteristics or circumstances?	√	
Will it have a significant impact on someone's life or wellbeing?	√	
If you have answered yes to any of the above an impact assessment must be completed		
Not Sure?	Yes	No
The service is a support function or administrative		√
There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement		√
If you have answered yes to the above please contact Clare Harding for further advice		
Not Relevant?	Yes	No
There is no discernable impact on people		√

Stage One – Aims and Objectives

1.1) What are the objectives of the strategy, policy or service being assessed?

The Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan sets out a vision for the town centre and development objectives and key principles to help guide emerging proposals. The Masterplan proposes an indicative scheme based on these principles to help articulate how the vision, objectives and principles could come forward.

The Vision for Dunstable; “Dunstable will become a connected 21st century town centre. Building on its heritage and green space, it will become an affordable, attractive and accessible option for residents, employees, investors and visitors alike. The town will bring more to a wider range of people, offering an experience that will make it stand out from the crowd.”

The Masterplan sets out how the town centre can be developed to fulfil its potential and enhanced role within the context of strategic housing growth and recent local regeneration efforts for the benefit of both the existing and future community of Dunstable.

The masterplan is based on four overall objectives to help deliver the vision, which underpin the proposals stated in the masterplan document;

1. A diverse mix of activities to attract people throughout the day and evening;
2. A connected network of public streets, spaces and parks;
3. A series of inviting landmarks, views and building;
4. An accessible location by all available sustainable transport modes.

1.2) What needs is it designed to meet?

The existing town centre faces a number of issues, including traffic congestion, air quality, high vacancy rates and a declining retail offer. Analysis of where people shop in the area show that those living within Dunstable and its catchment area, only 18% choose to shop in Dunstable itself, with the majority choosing Luton (28%), Milton Keynes (15%) and Hemel Hempstead (10%). Dunstable town centre therefore needs to evolve and requires major rejuvenation if it is to remain competitive and serve the local community.

These issues, together with a variety of needs will be met by the Masterplan which will be identified through consultation with the local community and local stakeholders.

1.3) What outcomes will be delivered?

The Masterplan will be a framework to guide and promote renewal, redevelopment and improvements within the town centre, however, it is important to emphasize that the Masterplan is not a blueprint. It sets out important guiding principles and policies, but retains flexibility to enable market led solutions to come forward and be considered. The proposals included within the Masterplan are illustrative only and it may be that the eventual development that comes forward is different from that which has been indicated.

1.4) Which other strategies or policies support this?

Luton and South Bedfordshire Draft Core Strategy.

1.5) In which ways does this support Central Bedfordshire's intention to tackle inequalities and deliver services to vulnerable people?

The aim is to improve the quality and offer of Dunstable Town Centre by locating appropriate town centre uses in specific locations which will increase accessibility for all sections of the community, including a new library, a larger medical centre with enhanced facilities, new public toilets and housing for families and older people.

1.6) Is it possible that this could damage relations amongst different communities or contribute to inequality by treating some members of the community less favourably such as people from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, women, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities?

No. The proposed new medical centre, library, public toilets and increased retail provision are all to be located in close proximity to each other and within easy access of the proposed Luton-Dunstable Busway.



Stage 2: Consideration of Relevant Data & Research		
	Awareness	Accessibility
	Take Up levels	Staff Training Needs
	Appropriateness	Partnership - working
	Adverse Outcomes	Contracts & monitoring

2) What sources of evidence and key facts will be used to inform the assessment?

2.1) Existing Data and Consultation Findings:

Service Monitoring / Performance Information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demographic Profiles – Census & ONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Place survey / Customer satisfaction data	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Needs Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>
National / Regional Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Best Practice / Guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Benchmarking with other organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analysis of service outcomes for different groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Inspection Reports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data about the physical environment e.g. housing market, employment, education and training provision, transport, spatial planning and public spaces			<input type="checkbox"/>
*Consultation with Service Users		*Consultation with Community / Voluntary Sector	
*Consultation with Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Feedback / Complaints	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Expert views of stakeholders representing diverse groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elected Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specialist staff / service expertise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Please give details below of data and consultation findings relating to:

- Age:

Older people require access to a range of facilities and services within their local area. Older people also have a higher incidence of long-term ill health. It is important therefore that they are able to gain better access to healthcare facilities and preventive health and wellbeing services by public transport or within walking distance.

The design of the public realm can impact on the ability of older people to use it. It is important that public spaces are designed to be as accessible as possible, because older people are more likely to experience physical impairments – such as frailty, instability, impaired vision and hearing.

The Masterplan has identified the provision of a new medical centre within the town centre which would concentrate the services of a number of existing town centre doctor’s practices into one facility which would enable for the provision of additional facilities and services to be provided in one location, some of which are currently carried out by the Luton & Dunstable Hospital, which is located in Luton. The recommended site for the new medical centre is located on the route of the Luton-Dunstable Busway with a bus-stop in close proximity to this proposed facility.

The Masterplan has been updated to ensure that the document emphasises that changes to the streets would need to be appropriate for disabled and older users.

Children and young people have a need to access social facilities such as education, healthcare and recreation activities.

At the 'Statutory Consultation' stage of the Masterplan, every school and every care home in Dunstable was formally consulted regarding the Masterplan proposals.

'All Saints Academy' considered that there should be a greater mention of the role that education and young people can play in the masterplan. The proposed redevelopment/refurbishment of the existing Central Bedfordshire College has been made clear in the Masterplan document together with the importance of actively involving young people in the realisation of the masterplan vision.

The masterplan also acknowledges that Dunstable Town Council has recently carried out refurbishment works to the existing youth facility (The Place) to make it more attractive to young people. There is a longer aspiration to completely redevelop this site to for youth facilities and the masterplan includes the aspiration of the Town Council to deliver this aspiration.

The Findings of the statutory consultation process carried out in respect of the Draft Masterplan indicated a good spread of the ages of the consultation questionnaire responses received, including equal levels from both under 16 years and over 75 years of age.

- Disability:

Inaccessible facilities limit disabled people from accessing education, training, social, health and other opportunities. Councils are required to examine the accessibility of social infrastructure and community facilities as part of their assessments of community need. The design of public realm can also impact on disabled people.

One of the Masterplan's principles is to create a connected network of public streets, spaces and parks. This would be achieved by making the town centre more pedestrian and cyclist friendly and this could be achieved in a variety of ways, including the utilising the 'shared space' concept, where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the same spaces.

The consultation findings following the 'statutory consultation' stage of the Masterplan identified that a significant number of respondents were support of plans to make the town more pedestrian friendly, although some were concerned about 'shared spaces' due to potential safety issues, particularly for blind or disabled people. The Masterplan has been updated to ensure that as detailed schemes come forward to implement the proposals; shared spaces will need to ensure that they are appropriate for disabled and older users.

The emerging Local Transport Plan and the Local Area Transport Plan for Dunstable will address some of these issues.

- Gender:

Women have complicated lives and often multi-task, carrying out a variety of chores throughout the day and access to good local services is vital to them. This might include healthcare, education facilities (for themselves and/or children), leisure, education and

cultural services. Women are also highly represented as users of and volunteers at community and voluntary facilities. These provide small-scale services that are important to them – such as play groups, hobby and support groups and exercise classes. The need for affordable accommodation for these facilities should be recognised and provided for in development plans and in regeneration schemes, especially where no such facilities are currently provided.

The Householder Travel Survey undertaken in April 2010 demonstrated that the majority of local people found it easy or very easy to access employment and local services. No variation was highlighted by gender. Other findings from the survey included:

Female respondents reported travelling a shorter distance to work more frequently than male respondents, with 28% of female respondents travelling 0 - 2 miles compared to 14% of male respondents over the same distance. More than a third of male respondents travelled 20 miles or more to work whereas only 15% of female respondents did so.

Some 15% of females tend to walk to work.

One of the Masterplan's principles is to create an accessible location by all available sustainable transport modes, by maximising the benefit of reduced congestion in the town centre, should proposed transport improvements come forward, including the A5-M1 Link Road, the Woodside Connection and the Luton Dunstable Busway (already under construction).

- Trans Gender / Gender Reassignment:

Personal safety in public spaces and on public transport is often an issue for Trans Gender people.

One of the Masterplan's principles is to create a town centre with a series of inviting landmarks, views and buildings and will where appropriate, propose that the ground floors of new development should encourage activity, such as shops or offices, to make the town feel vibrant and safe.

- Race:

Some people from black and ethnic minority communities can be more dependent on public transport and so can benefit from proposals which cluster services and facilities near a town centre.

The responses received following the statutory consultation process indicated that only 4% of the respondents were from the black and ethnic minority community. This reflects the current profile for Dunstable.

The Householder Travel Survey undertaken in 2010 demonstrated that the majority of local people found it easy or very easy to access employment and local services. No variation was highlighted by ethnicity.

The Masterplan has identified the provision of a number of uses within the town centre i.e. a new library, new public toilets and a new medical centre which would concentrate the services of a number of existing town centre doctor's practices into one larger facility. This

would enable for the provision of additional facilities and services to be provided in one location, some of which are currently carried out by the Luton & Dunstable Hospital, which is located in Luton. It is proposed that the new medical centre would be located on the route of the Luton-Dunstable Busway with a bus-stop in close proximity to this proposed facility.

- Religion or Belief:

Local churches were consulted as part of the statutory consultation process and an issue relating to car parking within the town centre, specifically on Sundays was considered important by a number of the churches congregations. The masterplan document has been amended to ensure that car parking provision throughout the town centre is provided at the current level and that car parking provision is retained within the locality of local churches.

- Sexual Orientation:

Personal safety in public places and on public transport is often an issue for LGB people, particularly those who are open about their sexual orientation.

- Other issues: e.g. *Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion*

Half of all lone parents are in low income households, the overwhelming majority are women. Disabled adults are twice as likely to live in low income households.

The Householder Travel Survey undertaken in 2010 highlighted that 13% of respondents in socio-economic group D/E had no cars or vans available for their use. It is considered that the suggested Masterplan proposals, i.e. providing new and improved services and facilities in the town centre will benefit people within these groups.

2.2) To what extent are vulnerable groups experiencing poorer outcomes compared to the population or workforce as a whole?

The masterplan sets out a vision for the town centre together with development objectives and key principles to help guide emerging proposals. Proposals which come forward will ensure that all groups of the community will benefit from the regeneration of the town centre.

2.3) Are there areas where more information may be needed?

None

2.4) Are there any gaps in data or consultation findings?

None

2.5) What action will be taken to obtain this information?

Not applicable

2.6) To what extent do current procedures and working practices address the above issues and help to promote equality of opportunity?

At all stages of the Dunstable Masterplan exercise, comprehensive community engagement

has taken place.

Stage 1 – Baseline Report

A number of consultation events were carried out during the evidence gathering stage of the masterplan process in order to obtain the views of local residents, landowners and local stakeholders. This information helped to ensure that the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre were fully understood before options to address the identified issues were developed. The consultation events comprised:

- Visioning Workshop attended by elected members and officers from the Council (Feb 2009)
- Baseline Presentation to the Dunstable Town Centre Management Committee (March 2009)
- Manned Public Exhibition (April 2009)
- Stakeholder Visioning Workshop (April 2009)
- Public postcard campaign comprising 16,000 postcards sent out to Dunstable residents (March 2009)
- Dedicated website

Stage 2 – Options Development

Consultation events were undertaken during the options stage to engage with the local community, landowners and local stakeholders to ensure that each of the tabled options were fully considered before the preferred masterplan option was developed. The consultation events comprised:

- Stakeholder Workshop (September 2009)
- Manned Public Exhibition (September 2009)
- Display of Public Exhibition (September - October 2009)
- Presentation of Options to Dunstable Town Centre Management Committee (September 2009)
- Options Consultation Questionnaire was made available at all public events and on-line (September - October 2009) to give all consultees the opportunity to provide views.

Stage 3 – Draft Masterplan (statutory consultation)

The statutory consultation process was carried out in accordance with Regulation 17(1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning Local Development (England) Regulations 2004. This process is normally only required for Supplementary Planning Documents, but was adopted as a thorough approach to documenting the findings of this consultation process.

The following public events were undertaken to help obtain the views of the community, statutory stakeholders, landowners and local stakeholders with the aim of ensuring that any issues relating to the draft Masterplan are fully understood and taken into account before the Final Masterplan was completed. These events included:

- Manned Public Exhibitions (3 No.) (September 2010)
- Display of Public Exhibition (September - October 2010)
- Meetings with specific groups of local residents (August 2010)
- Meetings and presentations to Dunstable Town Council, Dunstable Town Centre Management Committee and the Chiltern Vale Health Consortium (September 2010)
- 4,000 consultation leaflets and questionnaires made available at the public exhibitions and at town centre locations, also to be able to be completed on-line (September - October 2010)

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The public events were advertised in local newspapers and on the Council's and the dedicated website (September - October 2010)

The Findings of the consultations carried out at each stage can be viewed on request.

Stage 3 – Assessing Positive & Negative Impacts	Awareness	Accessibility
	Take Up levels	Staff Training Needs
	Appropriateness	Partnership - working
	Adverse Outcomes	Contracts & monitoring

Analysis of Impacts	Impact Yes	Impact No	Summary of impacts and reasons for this
3.1) Age	√		The proposals set out in the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan will set guiding principles to improve the town centre's quality and offer, which will have positive impacts across all groups of the community.
3.2) Disability	√		
3.3) Gender		√	
3.4) Transgender		√	
3.5) Race		√	
3.6) Religion / Belief	√		
3.7) Sexual Orientation		√	
3.8) Other e.g. . <i>Poverty / Social Class/Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion</i>	√		

Stage 4 – Conclusions, Recommendations and Action Planning

4.1) What are the main conclusions from the assessment?

The Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan will have positive benefits for the local and wider community by improving the town centre by promoting a new retail-led mixed use development to include residential, health and community, and leisure uses together with pedestrian and cyclist improvements.

The improvements to the town centre will benefit the whole community but should particularly benefit those who have difficulty in travelling outside of the town centre such as disabled people and those without access to a car.

4.2) What are the priority recommendations and actions?

It is proposed to endorse the Town Centre Masterplan, which sets out a clear vision for the town centre together with development objectives and key principles, to help guide proposals

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to attract new investment and to deliver its future regeneration for the benefit of all groups in the community.

4.3) What changes will be made to address any adverse impacts that have been identified?

No adverse impacts have been identified.

4.4) Are there any budgetary implications?

None at this stage.

4.5) Actions to be Taken:

Action	Date	Priority (high / medium low)
The Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) has been consulted for comments and decision regarding further scrutiny if necessary.	Feb 2012	Medium

**Stage 5 Quality Assurance & Scrutiny:
Checking that all the relevant issues have been identified**

5.1) What methods have been used to gain feedback on the main issues raised in the assessment?

Checks have been made with:

Step 1:

- The Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) for comment & decision re further scrutiny

Step 2:

- The Equalities Working Group - The Equalities Forum

- Other Please give details e.g. LGBT Network:

5.2) Were any additional actions / amendments identified?

None.

Stage 6 – Monitoring Future Impact

6.1) How will implementation of the actions be monitored?

The implementation of the Masterplan will be regularly monitored by means of a Delivery Plan.

6.2) What sort of data will be collected and how often will it be analysed?

Annual data collection will be undertaken including the Householder Travel Survey which includes travel behaviour, details of which can be drawn out for specific user and minority groups.

6.3) How often will the policy be reviewed?

The Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan vision and development objectives are intended to cover a 10-15 year period, however, the delivery of certain proposals may come forward sooner than is indicated in the Delivery Strategy of the Masterplan. The Masterplan will therefore need to be flexible to enable market led proposals to come forward and be considered as necessary.

6.4) Who will be responsible for this?

The review of the Masterplan will be the responsibility of the Economic Development and Physical Regeneration team of the Council.

Stage 7 – Publication**For further information with regard to this or other Equality Impact Assessments please contact:**

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