

Appendix A

Brief – Town Centre Strategy Professional Team Procurement

Maidstone Council is producing a town centre strategy the purpose of which is to establish and provide clarity on the long-term vision for the town centre, complemented by a comprehensive delivery plan to achieve this and an inward investment plan to enable the council to engage with current land and property owners and potential new investors.

This work will be underpinned by a set of core principles which reflect

- the vision for the county town at the heart of Kent
- a borough with vibrant and prosperous urban and rural communities
- the appetite of the council's decision makers and stakeholders for change

The aim is for the strategy to

- Strengthen the economic base of the town centre
- Bring about the re-invention and renaissance of Maidstone town centre as an exemplar of sustainability and design
- Have a strong focus around heritage, arts, culture, leisure, and the visitor economy including the evening economy
- Create a place where people want to live and feel safe including in the public realm
- Have an equal emphasis upon the town centre as the County Town including as a district/regional destination for those visiting it from within the borough and beyond and its role as a local centre for those who live in the town centre or in the surrounding area.

It will

- Guide regeneration, investment (including directly by MBC) and development
- Guide infrastructure provision
- In the short / medium term enable the provision of support to town centre communities and businesses in continuing to recover from, and respond to, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a post-Brexit economy
- Enable proactive management of potential change resulting from the relaxation of planning rules
- Be complemented in the short term by investment of resources via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (around £1m) and Safer Streets Fund (£.56m)

The strategy will be used to

- Complement the current Local Plan (at examination in September 2022) and inform the next plan potentially being developed into a Development Plan Document
- Deliver actions of the Economic Development strategy (adopted 2021) particularly Priority 5 "Destination Maidstone Town Centre".
- Inform actions and projects undertaken to achieve the future vision
- Inform future bids for funding including through Levelling Up
- Promote inward investment into the town centre

Infrastructure that will need to be assessed and tested includes

- Improved access to Lockmeadow area
- Improved access to Archbishop's Palace and the associated heritage quarter
- Simplification of transport circulation arrangements on the north side of the town centre to enable opportunity site at Haynes garage to be achieved
- Improvements for public transport interchange at Maidstone East
- Improved connectivity to riverside activities
- Public realm improvements including at Earl Street, in the vicinity of Sessions House/Maidstone East
- Smart technology throughout the town centre
- Improvements to lighting
- Improvements to open space and green infrastructure

To achieve this MBC is looking to engage a professional team which will work collaboratively with the council's project team and assist in producing

- A "masterplan" of what goes where, connectivity within the town centre and of the town centre to surrounding residential areas and transport systems
- Urban design principles for the town centre including for exemplar quality public realm, environmental sustainability and smart connectivity
- An infrastructure plan to include identification and assessment of transport and public realm improvements
- A community infrastructure plan to include identification of facilities for the residential community in consultation with providers including health, education, and community leaders
- Review of current development guidelines for 3 opportunity sites (nb the council produced guidelines for 5 opportunity sites of which 2 have progressed to planning application/development stages)

- Production of development policy guidelines for additional opportunity sites identified through the vision and master plan work
- Specific proposals relating to lighting including short- and longer-term improvements
- Specific proposals with respect to green and blue infrastructure including short- and longer-term improvements

How the spaces in the town centre are used and business support are outside the scope of the commission.