

STRATEGIC STATEMENT ON ECONOMY AND PLACE

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Urgent Decision?(yes/no) no

If yes, reason urgent decision required:

Annexes/Appendices (attached):

Other available papers (not attached):

Report summary

This strategic statement sets out the Council's strategic priorities for economy and place in the context of the Council's new long-term vision for the borough, and in advance of the new Corporate Plan and the forthcoming detailed strategies that will emerge over the Autumn through the Council's Local Plan process.

Recommendation

(1) To agree the Strategic Statement on Economy and Place.

1. Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 This contributes directly to the delivery of the Council's new long-term vision for the borough including each of its five strategic themes. It also contributes directly to the four priorities in the Council's current Corporate Plan, including "Supporting Businesses and our Local Economy", and "Supporting our Community".

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has an important community leadership role in shaping the future success of the borough in the broadest terms. This arises from the Council's clear democratic mandate and is underpinned in legislation, starting with the Local Government Act 2000, which gave local authorities the power to act to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area. This power was updated and further extended by the Localism Act 2011, which introduced a general power of competence, ie "a local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do"
- 2.2 The Council has taken its community leadership role very seriously, delivering more for the borough than the minimum statutory requirements through a range of highly valued discretionary services and using its role to influence wider strategic outcomes for the borough. This includes the Council's contribution to economic development, health and wellbeing, community safety, leisure and cultural provision, support of the voluntary sector, and services for more vulnerable people, such as meals at home and telecare to name a few.

3 Future40 Long term vision for the borough

- 3.1 The borough's new long-term vision has been developed out of the largest engagement exercise ever undertaken in the borough. It draws on the feedback of thousands of residents, businesses, workers, students and visitors and those organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors with a stake in the future success of the borough.
- 3.2 The resulting draft vision for Epsom and Ewell identifies five key priorities as set out below.



- 3.3 The borough's vision will have an important role in shaping and informing the Council's future decisions, particularly in relation to the positive outcomes that can be achieved for the economy, place and local communities. This is illustrated below under each of the five themes of the vision.

Green and Vibrant

- 3.4 Enhances the quality of the public realm, making it more open, attractive, welcoming, comfortable and connected. Seeks opportunities to add to or enhance green infrastructure (including facilitating greater access), and achieves high levels of environment sustainability

Opportunity and Prosperity

- 3.5 Contributes to enterprise, jobs and employment skills by protecting and enhancing strategically important business (eg creative, retail, digital and equine industries), education and employment sites, protecting the vitality of the high street, secures more affordable housing for local workers, students and families, more affordable work spaces for new and embryonic businesses, particularly linked to the University and NESOT.

Safe and Well

- 3.6 Contributes to a safer environment, with increased footfall and activity rates in urban areas, protecting local employment opportunities, investing in areas that have become run down, and creating a place where people want to visit and dwell. This includes transforming the environment in less affluent areas, bringing in more investment and local community infrastructure, promoting physical and mental wellbeing, tackling social isolation, and encouraging healthy behaviours such as walking and cycling and access to fresh food.

Cultural and Creative

- 3.7 Contributes to the cultural and creative life of the borough, ensuring that there are spaces for people to gather and meet, including vibrant high streets, high quality shopping and leisure experiences and a strong evening economy and good design that enhances the character and identity of a place and celebrates its cultural and creative assets, its cultural institutions and its rich history.

Smart and Connected

- 3.8 Contributes to connectivity in all its guises, making use of smarter thinking and technology to reduce the friction associated with navigating between spaces and making it easier for people to access what they need. Recognising and utilising complementary uses and activities as part of a more holistic joined up approach.

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4 Surrey Place Ambition 2050

- 4.1 The Council has contributed to the development of the Place Ambition 2050, a strategy for growth and ambition across Surrey, which has been shaped by the work of the two Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) that cover the Surrey area, Boroughs and Districts in Surrey, the County Council and other local infrastructure providers.
- 4.2 The Surrey Place Ambition seeks to secure “good growth” by taking a place based approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental priorities. It identifies three Strategic Themes that will be set the context for delivery over the next 30 years.
- The first is to significantly increase the opportunities to support “good growth” arising from our unique position as the most connected place in the UK in terms of both transport and digital connectivity.
 - The second priority is to enhance the overall quality of our towns and urban areas, recognising that these are the places where most people will continue to want to live and work.
 - The third priority is to maximise the economic potential of the area, making sure that strategic investment is focused on the strategic places, one of which encompasses Epsom and Ewell, that offer the greatest opportunities to deliver the right infrastructure and skills to support growth in productivity and jobs.
- 4.3 This wider Place Ambition recognises Epsom and Ewell as an important economy within the wider sub region with excellent connectivity and a focus for delivering good growth over the next 30 years.
- 4.4 The Place Ambition also promotes the view that Councils, such as Epsom and Ewell, should make active use of their own local assets and their own developments to facilitate the achievement of the wider place ambitions for their area.

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5 Plan E

- 5.1 The Council's Town Centre Area Action Plan (Plan E) was developed in 2011 by the Council and its strategic partners to provide an ambitious plan for the future of the Town Centre that continues to be relevant today. The focus has been on improving and effectively managing what already exists, while making the most of the opportunities ahead.
- 5.2 Over the past eight years the Council has been able to progress a number of important elements of Plan E, including the significant programme of highways and public realm works which incorporates the transformation of the Market Place which is currently underway. Alongside informing the work and decision making of the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee and the Planning Committee, Plan E continues to help drive the work of other Committees and the Council as a whole. Recent examples include the creation of the Business Improvement District (BID), the Council's approach to community Safety and Enforcement which was approved by this Committee last year, the local CIL programme, and the work of Future40 to help shape the future identity of the borough as a creative and enterprising place.
- 5.3 Plan E identified a range of strategic objectives under the following four key themes:

5.3.1 Land use

This includes retaining the focus on employment by protecting employment land uses and ensuring the town remains attractive for existing and potential businesses

5.3.2 Movement & accessibility

This includes reducing the impact of traffic through the Town Centre and improving pedestrian access and access to public transport and taking a proactive approach to car parking management.

5.3.3 Public realm & public spaces

This includes creating a high quality, attractive, safe and uncluttered street scene and ensuring that there is effective overall management of the public realm

5.3.4 Identity, character & management

This includes strengthening the role of the Market as a central feature of the Town Centre, recognition and enhancement of Epsom's unique identity including its historic associations, effective management of the town centre and its promotion as a safe high quality destination.

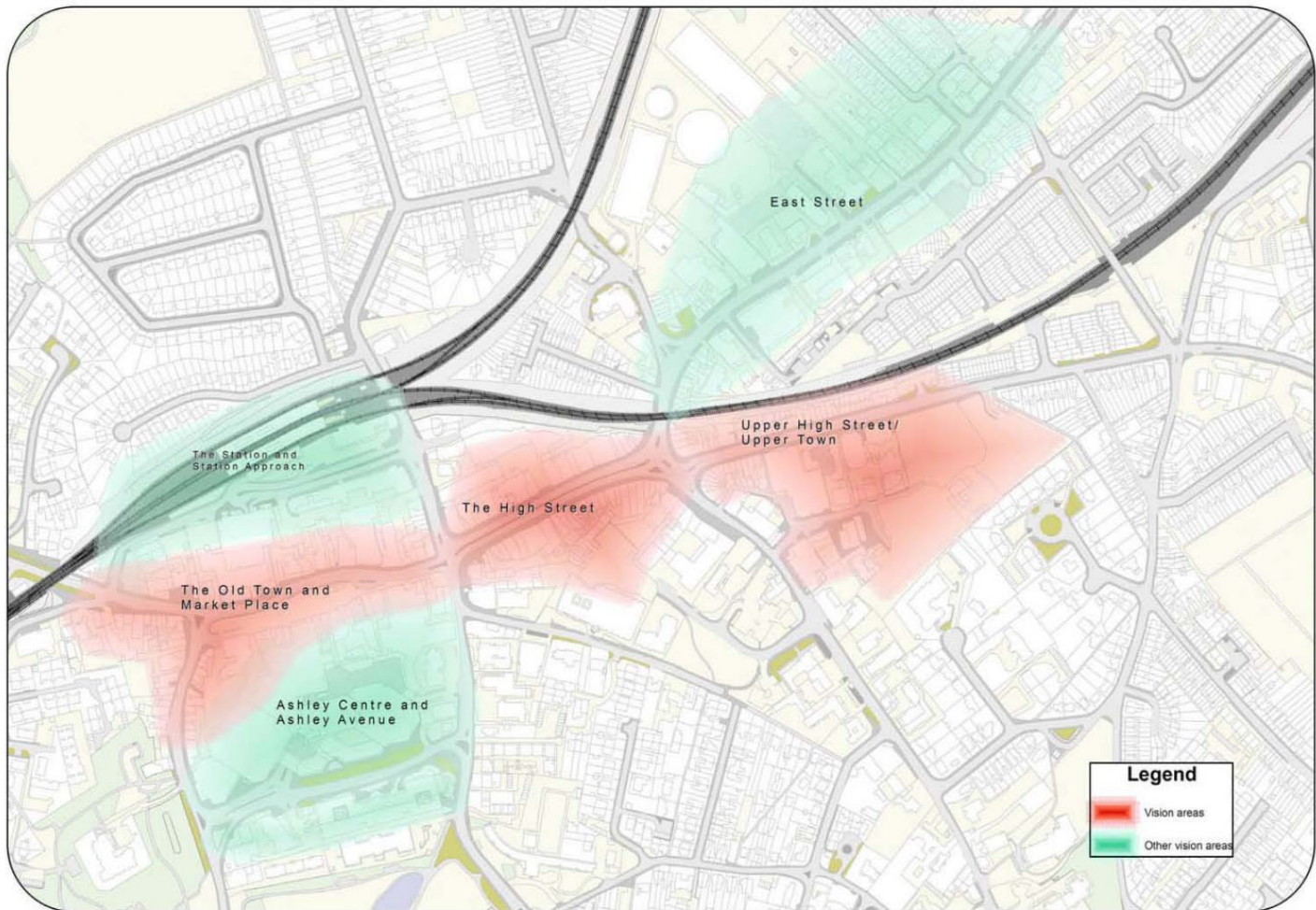
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5.4 Plan E also identified 6 distinct and strategically important areas within the Town Centre where more focused attention is needed. These are:

- East Street
- High Street (East) Including Epsom Square
- Upper High Street and Upper Town
- The Old Town and Market Place
- Ashley Centre and Ashley Avenue

These are illustrated in the map below.



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The Plan E The Town Centre Area Action Plan (Plan E) also identified a number of specific opportunity sites within the Town Centre where there was scope to address current issues and achieve greater economic, social and environmental outcomes. These areas are illustrated on the following map.

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Approved Plan E opportunity sites

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6 Article 4 Direction

- 6.1 In 2015, the Council served Article 4 Directions in response to the Government's decision to extend and expand the national permitted development regime to allow the conversion of office buildings to residential use without the need for a planning application.
- 6.2 The Council focused on those key office sites in the borough that are particularly valued for their employment status and may be lost without the additional protection provided by the Article 4 Directions which in effect removes the permitted development right to change the use of an office building (Class B1) into residential accommodation (Class C3).
- 6.3 The following office accommodation sites are provided with some protection through the Council's Article 4 Directions:
- Adelphi Court, East Street Article 4 Direction
 - A-Plan House, 30-38 High Street Article 4 Direction
 - Bradford House, 39a East Street Article 4 Direction
 - Eastleigh House, East Street Article 4 Direction
 - Emerald House, East Street Article 4 Direction
 - Epsom Chase, 1 Hook Road Article 4 Direction
 - Epsom Gateway, Ashley Avenue Article 4 Direction
 - Global House, Ashley Avenue Article 4 Direction
 - Horizon House, Upper High Street Article 4 Direction
 - Newplan House, 41 East Street Article 4 Direction
 - Nightingale House, East Street Article 4 Direction
 - Oaks House, West Street Article 4 Direction
 - Parkside House, Ashley Avenue Article 4 Direction
 - Sollis House, 20 Hook Road Article 4 Direction
 - The Kirkgate, Church Street Article 4 Direction
 - The Wells, Church Street Article 4 Direction

7 Housing Delivery Action Plan

- 7.1 The Council has a Housing Delivery Action Plan that was agreed by Licencing and Planning Policy Committee at its meeting on the 12 September 2019. This recognises the physical constraints on housing development in the borough set against the context of significant and growing levels of housing need in Epsom and Ewell.

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- 7.2 The Housing Delivery Action Plan seeks to identify ways to facilitate an increase in the delivery of new housing to address local housing need, including the development of more affordable homes for local people. The Council will need to continue to look for ways to facilitate the development of new homes using its own assets including through new acquisitions and unlocking opportunities through partnership working and wider site assembly.

8 Strategic Priorities and informing future decision making

- 8.1 This Strategic Statement provides a context to inform future Council decision making, including acquisition, disposal or development of its own land and property assets, the nature and type of partnerships the Council may wish to enter in to and the actions the Council may wish to take to facilitate longer-term land assembly linked to larger strategic development.
- 8.2 To assist the Council in maximising the social, economic and environmental outcomes it can achieve, alongside core considerations of financial viability, future decisions relating to the Council's own asset management (purchase, disposal, use and development) will need to demonstrate their clear contribution to one or more of the following strategic priorities:
- A) Contribution to the delivery of the Council's Long-term vision and the delivery of the strategic priorities set out in its Corporate Plan
 - B) Provides an opportunity to facilitate "Good Growth" as set out in the Surrey-wide Place Ambition
 - C) Within the Town Centre - contribution to priorities set out in the Council's Plan E – Area Action Plan, including the defined opportunity areas.
 - D) The scope for the protection of key employment sites, further strengthening the protection provided by the Council's Article 4 Directions
 - E) Contributes to the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- 8.3 The above will be further informed over time by the Council's strategic policies and evidence that are being developed for the Council's New Local Plan including the work on the Transformation Master Plan and the new Economic Strategy and Retail Survey.

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9 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial or staffing implications arising from this strategic statement. However, the Council's income is dependent in part on rental values from over £49 million of assets it owns in the borough. This means that a strong and confident economy in the borough, where existing businesses want to stay and new businesses want to come to invest, and where people want to work, will bring many external and internal benefits, including strengthening the Council's income base and therefore reducing the proportion of Council services that need to be funded from local Council Tax.
- 9.2 The Strategic Statement on Economy and Place will also have an important role in informing the Council's future asset (property and land) strategy as part of its important economic and place shaping role. This includes informing decisions relating to the purchase, use, development and disposal of Council assets.
- 9.3 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** none for the purposes of this report.

10 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 10.1 None arising from the report's recommendations.
- 10.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents of this report.

11 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Sustainability and Community Safety ambitions are strongly articulated in the Council's new long term vision and will be expressed in a more detailed way through the Council's forthcoming Community Safety and Enforcement Plan and the Council's Climate Change Action Plan which are both due to come forward in the Autumn.

12 Partnerships

- 12.1 The Council will continue to seek the engagement and support of partners in the delivery of its wider place ambitions including how it achieves the best outcomes from its assets. A recent example of this is the decision by Strategy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in July, to explore the opportunity of a partnership arrangement for improving outcomes at Ewell Court House which builds on a track record of effective partnership working in other areas such as Leisure provision.

13 Risk Assessment

- 13.1 This report is seeking to maximise the opportunity for the Council's own asset management decisions to contribute positively to the wider economic and place ambitions for the borough and reduce the risk of any miss alignment.

14 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 14.1 Members are asked to support the approach set out in this report to ensure that the Council's future decision making relating to its own assets, contributes directly to the delivery of the Council's wider place ambitions.

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);