

# North Yorkshire Council

## Skipton & Ripon Area Committee

5<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Heritage, People & Place: A Placemaking Strategy for Bolton Abbey (The Masterplan)

#### Report of the Corporate Director of Community Development.

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Heritage, People & Place: A Placemaking Strategy for Bolton Abbey (the Masterplan), which has been created in response to the need for new tourism related development in the Core Visitor Area associated with Bolton Abbey and to requirements set out in Policy EC4A: Tourism Led Development at Bolton Abbey, of the adopted Craven District Council Local Plan 2012 to 2032.
- 1.2 To set out how the Masterplan has been prepared and to explore whether it meets the requirements of adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A.

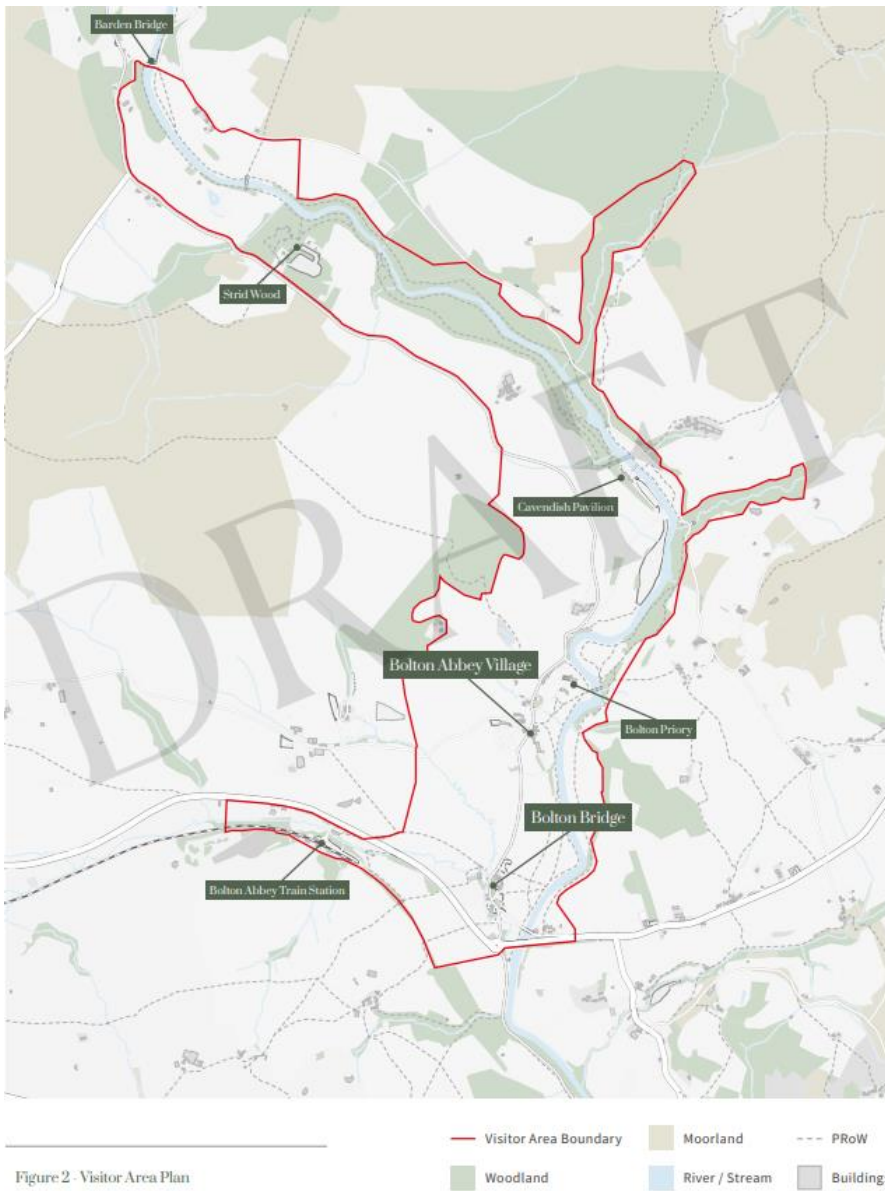
#### 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The preparation of the Heritage, People & Place: A Placemaking Strategy for Bolton Abbey (the Masterplan) is a requirement of adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A: Tourism Led Development at Bolton Abbey. Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A relates to the part of the Core Visitor Area where the Council is the Local Planning Authority i.e., the area that falls outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Policy EC4A sets out that development proposals that come forward within the North Yorkshire Council Local Planning Authority area will be expected to accord with the principles of the masterplan and that proposals that would prejudice its delivery will not be permitted.
- 2.2 The Masterplan is set out at Appendix A to this report and has been prepared by Rural Solutions on behalf of the Bolton Abbey Estate. It has been prepared collaboratively with significant input from the two local planning authorities - North Yorkshire Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. There has also been public consultation during preparation of the Masterplan. During the meeting, Rural Solutions will give a presentation setting out the aims and purpose of the Masterplan, and detailing how it has been prepared.
- 2.2 This report sets out the context and role of the Masterplan, how it has been prepared and explores whether it meets the requirements of adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A. Members of this committee are asked to note the Masterplan and if appropriate to submit comments for Executive to consider.

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND

##### Context for the Masterplan

- 3.1 The Masterplan relates to the Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area, which has been identified by the Bolton Abbey Estate in liaison with local and external stakeholders and is illustrated on the following map.



Source: Extract from the Heritage, People & Place: A Placemaking Strategy for Bolton Abbey (July 2024)

- 3.2 The Core Visitor area extends from Bolton Bridge and Bolton Abbey Station to Barden Bridge and is bisected by the boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The part of the Core Visitor Area falling within the Craven Local Plan area is shown on the [Craven Local Plan Policies Map \(Inset Map No. 24\)](#), and includes Bolton Abbey Station, Bolton Bridge and Bolton Abbey Village. The part of the Core Visitor Area falling within the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary includes Bolton Priory and Barden Bridge.
- 3.3 Members should note that this report relates to how the Masterplan has been prepared and whether it meets the requirements of relevant adopted Craven Local Plan Policy. The Craven Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area of North Yorkshire that falls outside the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks. It will be for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to confirm that the Masterplan has been prepared to their satisfaction and that the parts of the Masterplan that concern the areas within the Yorkshire Dales National Park conform to their emerging Local Plan policies.

- 3.4 The adopted Craven Local Plan includes Policy EC4:Tourism, which supports sustainable growth in tourism to improve the economy, environment and quality of life and sets out that this will be achieved in several ways including supporting, in principle, proposals for tourism development in a range of locations including Bolton Abbey. However, it is recognised that this must be achieved without harm to the important and significant historic, ecological and landscape assets of Bolton Abbey.
- 3.5 The Craven Local Plan also includes Policy EC4A, which specifically supports the provision of sensitive and sustainable tourism led, mixed use development within the Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area, restricts larger scale development to three general locations, one within Bolton Abbey Village and two at Bolton Bridge (see Policy EC4A and the [Policies Map - Inset Map 24](#)) and requires a comprehensive strategy and Masterplan for the Core Visitor Area to be produced. A copy of Policies EC4 and EC4A and supporting text is provided at Appendix B.
- 3.6 The rationale for the requirement for a comprehensive strategy and Masterplan to be prepared is twofold:
1. There is a need for a comprehensive strategy and development masterplan to be prepared for the area which takes into account the heritage, ecology and landscape sensitivity of the area; considers the fact that the YDNP boundary runs through Bolton Abbey; involves key stakeholders including both local planning authorities, Historic England, Natural England and The Environment Agency.
  2. There is a need to establish the potential impact of detailed tourism proposals before confirming the use of land for a particular purpose.
- 3.7 It should be noted that the Bolton Abbey Estate worked closely with Craven District Council throughout the preparation of the Craven Local Plan and specifically in the drafting of policy EC4A.
- 3.8 During preparation of the Craven Local Plan, including Policy EC4A, the Bolton Abbey Estate identified several issues within the Core Visitor Area that diminish both the visitor offer concerned and the ability of the Estate to support its ongoing programme of environmental management and architectural conservation. These issues are:
- No play facilities for children of different age groups,
  - No sense of arrival,
  - Vulnerability of visitor operations to bad weather and school holidays,
  - Little secondary spend by visitors,
  - Major planning constraints,
  - High maintenance costs,
  - Increased competition,
  - Services at risk,
  - Staffing problems due to high house prices, and
  - Very limited choice of visitor accommodation in the immediate area.
- 3.9 The Masterplan provides an overall vision and set of objectives for the Core Visitor Area, as well as defining the area, setting out details on its characteristics, its history, the way it has evolved, the role it plays and the way it operates today.
- 3.10 In seeking to address the issues set out in paragraph 3.8 above the Masterplan considers the type of initiatives and associated development that might be introduced in the three general locations, identified within Policy EC4A at Bolton Abbey Village and Bolton Bridge, to deliver the overall vision for the Core Visitor Area. This includes proposals to support and diversify visitor operations at Bolton Abbey by improving cycling and walking infrastructure and providing facilities such as a farm shop and eating/drinking

establishments, which will also benefit the local community. The Estate also wishes to pursue other forms of development, including small scale housing and rural office development.

- 3.11 The Masterplan also includes a set of Development and Design Principles which explains how the design of any specific proposals, brought forward in the Core Visitor Area in the future, should relate to the overall vision, objectives, and development context and is clear that development proposals will be expected to accord with these principles, in line with adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A and emerging Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan Policy.

### **Preparation of the Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area Masterplan**

- 3.12 A requirement of Policy EC4A is that the Masterplan shall be produced to the satisfaction of the local planning authorities in consultation with key stakeholders, including Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Since adoption of the Craven Local Plan in 2019, Bolton Abbey Estate has worked collaboratively with both local planning authorities, the former Craven District Council and existing North Yorkshire Council, and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to prepare the Masterplan. During this time officers from both authorities have provided significant input and comments on several drafts of the Masterplan, which have influenced and informed subsequent drafts. Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency have also played an important role in its development.
- 3.13 The Masterplan is supported by a comprehensive evidence base (see pages 90 & 91 of the Masterplan), including the Bolton Abbey Development Options Appraisal Study 2017. The preparation of this Study has been informed by extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the local community setting out general potential development options within the Core Visitor Area via presentations and public exhibitions and the distribution of consultation material to residents and commercial properties providing opportunities for stakeholders to submit comments via both feedback forms and a bespoke website.
- 3.14 It is the view of officers that there has been effective collaborative working between the two local planning authorities and Bolton Abbey Estate throughout preparation of the Masterplan, during which time comments and the input of officers have positively informed its preparation. In addition, there has been consultation with stakeholders and the community, providing opportunities for feedback on the Masterplan as it has been prepared.

### **Meeting Requirements of Adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A: Tourism Led Development at Bolton Abbey**

- 3.15 Policy EC4A specifically relates to tourism led development at Bolton Abbey and supports, in principle, a mix of tourism uses (as listed in the policy, see appendix B) subject to their scale, design, location, inter-relationships and cumulative impact on the historic environment, ecology, flood risk and landscape character being acceptable. The policy restricts larger scale development to locations at Bolton Abbey village and Bolton Bridge, as identified on the Craven Local Plan [Policies Map \(Inset Map 24\)](#)
- 3.16 The Bolton Abbey Development Options Appraisal Study 2017 sets out details of an extensive exercise carried out to understand the characteristics, significance and constraints associated with the Core Visitor Area, and to assess the opportunity and capacity for development led change. This work specifically researched and assessed the historic character and significance, landscape character and significance, architectural character, ecology, public access, vehicular access and highways, visitor activity, economic activity, and community. The findings of this work are summarised in Figures 8 & 9 of the Masterplan (pages 52 - 54).

- 3.17 Figure 8, shown in page 52 of the Masterplan shows the outcome of work to identify practical and commercial constraints and opportunities, including flood risk, heritage assets, views etc, as well as identifying opportunities for potential uses. Figure 9, shown on page 54 of the Masterplan, shows the outcome of the work in terms of heritage, landscape, flood risk, ecological, transport and socio-economic factors of the Core Visitor Area. It identifies areas that have capacity for development led change at Bolton Bridge and Bolton Abbey Village, within the Craven Local Plan area, together with areas suitable for enhancement to the visitor experience, within both the Craven Local Plan and Yorkshire Dales National Park areas.
- 3.18 The Masterplan sets out the overall strategy, the broad locations for development and design principles for new tourism related development in the Core Visitor Area that accord with the mix of tourism related uses and general locations for larger scale development identified in Policy EC4A. The background evidence that supports the Masterplan has considered its impact in terms of scale, design, location, inter relationships and cumulative impact upon the historic environment, ecology and flood risk and landscape character, as required by Policy EC4A. It is considered therefore that the Masterplan meets the requirements of adopted Craven Local Plan Policy.

### **Role of the Masterplan**

- 3.19 The Masterplan sets out that its role is not to convey specific design details for or precise site areas where development may occur. It will be implemented by the Estate over future years by bringing forward detailed, appropriate, and sensitive development proposals in the broad locations identified within the Core Visitor Area, in line with the development principles set out in the Masterplan. The Estate will produce a Design Guide for the Core Visitor area which, together with the evidence base that has been prepared to support the Masterplan, listed on page 90 & 91, will inform future development proposals.
- 3.20 The Masterplan does not form a Supplementary Planning Document, nor is part of the Development Plan for either the Yorkshire Dales National Park or North Yorkshire Council. However, it will form a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. Adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A sets out that development proposals that come forward within the Core Visitor Area will be expected to accord with the principles of the Masterplan and proposals which would prejudice the delivery of the related strategy for the Core Visitor Area will not be permitted.
- 3.21 Proposals that require planning permission will be progressed through the pre-application enquiry service provided by the two Local Planning Authorities. Pre-application enquiries relating to proposals for larger scale development within the Craven Local Plan area of the Core Visitor Area will be submitted to North Yorkshire Council, with pre-application advice sought from the YDNPA and the key stakeholders prior to submission of a planning application. The Masterplan sets out that an iterative approach to pre application engagement for larger scale development may be appropriate with consultee feedback sought as part of an iterative design process, to ensure high quality development that enhances the local area, its heritage and landscape. The role of community involvement in this process is an important one and provides opportunities for the local community to set out their views on any draft proposals.

## **4.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE**

- 4.1 See main body of the report above.

## **5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**



5.1 The requirement for the Bolton Abbey Masterplan is set out within adopted Craven Local Plan which forms part of the statutory development plan for North Yorkshire. The Craven Local Plan positively contributes towards all five themes of the Council Plan.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 Officers from both local planning authorities together with key stakeholders have worked collaboratively with Rural Solutions on behalf of Bolton Abbey Estate to prepare the Masterplan over a number of years, providing opportunities for comments to be made which have informed subsequent drafts of the Masterplan. Therefore, a number of iterations or options of the Masterplan have been prepared and considered, which have each informed the Masterplan that is presented.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 If endorsed by Executive, the Bolton Abbey Masterplan will form a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications in the Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area. There are no further legal implications associated with this report.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 All Development Plan Documents are accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that planning policies do not unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristic. The Bolton Abbey Masterplan is not a DPD, however its preparation is a requirement of Policy EC4A of the adopted Craven Local Plan which has been subject to an EIA. The Local Plan Inspector concluded that the Craven Local Plan meets the relevant legal requirements in respect of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The requirement for and the content of the Masterplan has been considered as part of an EIA and it is considered that there would be no adverse impact or potential for discrimination. An Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix C.

## **10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Plan making presents a key opportunity to set out and deliver a county-wide approach to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impact of climate change. The Craven Local Plan includes a range of policies to guide development in the plan area, including Policy EC4A: Tourism Led Development at Bolton Abbey and other policies relating to climate change. The Craven Local Plan has been subject to an independent examination which concluded that subject to a number of recommended modifications the Plan was sound. It is considered therefore, that the Craven Local Plan, which has been found to be sound through the Examination process, considers how the plan can help to deliver the council's climate change ambitions. A Climate Change Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix D.

## **11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 Production of a Masterplan for Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area is a requirement of adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4A. This report considers that the Masterplan has been prepared in a collaborative way allowing sufficient and effective input from both local planning authorities and key stakeholders, including Historic England, Natural England, The Environment Agency and members of the local community, and that it meets the requirements of Craven Local Plan Policies EC4 and EC4A. It is important to note that there

will be opportunities for engagement with these stakeholders at the pre application stage relating to any future detailed development proposals within the Core Visitor Area.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

12.1 Members of the Skipton & Ripon Area Committee to note the Masterplan and if appropriate submit comments for Executive to consider.

### **APPENDICES:**

Appendix A – Bolton Abbey Core Visitor Area Strategy & Masterplan

Appendix B – Adopted Craven Local Plan Policy EC4: Tourism & Policy EC4A: Tourism-Led Development at Bolton Abbey

Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix D – Climate Change Impact Assessment

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Corporate Director – Nic Harne, Corporate Director Community Development

County Hall

Northallerton

5<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Report Author – Ruth Parker, Principal Spatial Planning Officer

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.