1.0  EXPECTED OUTCOME

1.1 To put in place a comprehensive planning policy and master planning framework for development, management and infrastructure provision of Kendal Town Centre.

2.0  RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

(1) Approve the overall approach to the master planning of Kendal Town Centre set out in Paras 3.8-3.9; and

(2) Approve the procurement of consultants to prepare a Kendal Town Centre and Canal Head Master Plan in line with the key study requirements attached as Appendix 2.
3.0 BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

The importance of Kendal Town Centre to South Lakeland

3.1 The character, vitality and cultural importance of Kendal Town Centre is central to the identity and ‘brand’ of South Lakeland District as well as to the quality of life that it offers to residents and the experience that it offers to visitors. It is where people in south Cumbria and North Lancashire choose to go to work, shop and enjoy themselves. It is also central to the economic prosperity of the District because of the economic activity within the town by businesses of all sizes and because of its importance as part of the District’s offer to potential investors.

3.2 The Town Centre has some major challenges including an increasingly challenging environment for its traditional retail function with competition from on-line shopping, from out-of-centre retailing and from centres outside the District. This requires the diversification of the town’s offer and an attractive and easily accessible town centre environment. The second major challenge is the management of transport and parking and the environmental impact of traffic in the context of a growing town with increasing demands on its infrastructure. The third challenge is to achieve all of this in a way which complements Kendal’s built heritage and natural and landscape assets.

The existing strategic policy framework

3.2 The overall vision for Kendal Town Centre and Canal Head in 2025 is set out in the South Lakeland Core Strategy and includes the following elements -

- A Principal Service Centre which provides a wide range of services and employment opportunities serving local residents, the wider district and beyond and makes a positive contribution to Cumbria’s economy.
- A town centre with enhanced vitality and viability with new retail and commercial developments within the town centre and the development of Kirkland and Highgate for art and craft businesses.
- A resolution to traffic issues in the town centre with active take up of travel plans, improvements to public transport within Kendal and development of pedestrian and cycling linkages.
- A regenerated Kendal Canal Head, delivering a new commercial sector, with a cluster of knowledge-based industries and other canal-based developments complementing and linking with the town centre.

3.3 The Core Strategy also defines a Kendal Canal Head Action Area. The Land Allocations document provides a spatial framework, defining the Town Centre boundary as well as primary and secondary retail areas.

3.4 Other plans and strategies exist including the recently updated KEGAP (Kendal Economic Growth Action Plan) prepared by Kendal Futures and the action plan prepared by Kendal Town Council.
The need for a Master Plan

3.5 Now that critical decisions have been taken on land allocations and the distribution of new housing development, there is a need to refocus attention on town centres and on Kendal Town Centre in particular. There are a wide variety of actors with an interest in the Town Centre including:

- **SLDC** as local planning authority, as owner and manager of most town centre car parks, as air quality management body, as licencing authority, as owner of the market and regulator of market trading, as owner and manager of parks and open spaces, streetscape management and litter collection.
- **Cumbria County Council** as local highways and transport authority, managing on-street parking, providing street lighting and as the owner of significant town centre property
- **Kendal Town Council**
- **Kendal Business Improvement District Partnership**
- **Kendal Civic Society**
- **Kendal Futures**
- **Town Centre Businesses**
- **Major land and property owners** (including SLDC and CCC)
- **Infrastructure Providers**
- **Public Transport providers**
- **Government agencies**
- **Town centre users including residents and visitors**

3.6 All of these bodies have their own interests, plans and strategies which vary in terms of their scope, ambition and focus. Kendal does not currently have an overall strategy which looks at the Town Centre in the round, looks at how all the various actors in the town could co-ordinate and most importantly, identifies deliverable solutions.

There is a need

- to develop a shared vision of what **Kendal Town Centre** could be and co-ordinate action for the benefit of the town centre as a whole;
- to develop a more detailed spatial framework for the town, identifying the different characteristics and roles of different areas and how management, planning policy, development and infrastructure provision might be co-ordinated to strengthen these;
- to develop a co-ordinated approach to the management of transport and parking which will support the needs of a prosperous and growing town centre whilst significantly reducing the environmental impact of traffic.
- to identify major infrastructure and development interventions which could have a transformational impact on the town.
- To detail the means by which these could be delivered;

3.7 The preparation of a master plan is a major undertaking requiring expertise in urban design, transport planning, highways engineering, retail issues and an understanding of town centre economies, the delivery of major development and infrastructure projects including land assembly and development economics and achieving all of this in a historic town centre at the gateway to
a national park. No less important is the ability to engage with and inspire the local community and stakeholders in the town centre who will ultimately have to deliver any vision. It is your officers view that an undertaking of this importance requires the engagement of high calibre outside expertise.

Proposal

3.8 It is therefore proposed that consultants be engaged to prepare a Kendal Town Centre Master Plan. A brief for the work is attached. This will be a major piece of work and is likely to take some time to complete. The proposed timetable is as follows.

- **Procurement and Appointment of Consultants** - completed by September 2015
- **Evidence base re-inforcement and preliminary consultation** – October-November 2015
- **Draft Master Plan** by end of 2015
- **Wider consultation** January-March 2016
- **Refinement of Master Plan and development of Action Plan** March-May 2016
- **Final Master Plan and Action Plan** – to Council, June 2016

*Relationship with the Local Plan*

3.9 It is proposed that the Master Plan cover both Kendal Town Centre and the Canal Head area which links the centre with Castle and also contains the main pedestrian and cycle routes into the town. There is already a commitment to prepare a strategy for the Canal Head as part of the development of Part 3 of the Local Plan. The Master Plan will complement and provide a delivery mechanism for the current Local Plan and will also form the foundation for the approach to Kendal Town Centre in the next round of strategic plan making – the Single Local Plan.

*Other Town Centres in South Lakeland*

3.10 The issues facing Kendal Town Centre are uniquely complex within the District and necessitates a comprehensive strategic approach which brings together urban design, major development and infrastructure intervention and town centre management. In most other town centres within the District, change is of a scale which can be managed locally and led by local stakeholders.

*Conclusions*

3.11 There is a need for radical and visionary action to develop a shared and holistic vision for Kendal Town Centre identify and deliver the major interventions necessary to secure the future prosperity of Kendal Town Centre. A robust Master Plan and Action Plan will provide the justification for major development and infrastructure interventions and the Action Plans necessary to deliver them. It will generate the investor confidence necessary to achieve major change and provide the foundation for bids for external funding for major projects. It will provide deliverable solutions to the major
infrastructure issues facing the town and form the basis for the planning, development and management of the town centre for many years to come.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Two phases of consultation are proposed as part of the brief, preliminary consultation, primarily with stakeholders at the beginning of the process in the autumn and consultation on a draft master plan in the spring of 2016.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The Council could decide that a town centre master plan is unnecessary and that the strategic framework provided by the Local Plan and the various visions and strategies produced by other bodies are sufficient. Whilst in the short term, this would represent a significant resource saving, there is a danger of ‘drift’. There is also a risk that the existing framework may not provide a robust enough framework to justify major development and infrastructure interventions, particularly if land acquisition is required, if development proposals which may not support the vitality of the town centre are to be successfully resisted, if a climate of investor confidence is to be created and if external funding is to be successfully sourced.

5.2 The Council could prepare a master plan in house. Again there would be some short term cost saving here. However the existing development plans resource is fully committed to the completion of the Local Plan, the completion of the programme of Development Briefs, the development of infrastructure planning and CIL and the rollout of Neighbourhood Planning all of which will lay the foundations for the preparation of the replacement Local Plan between 2017 and 2021. A town centre master plan would be a major resource commitment which would occupy much of the staff resource and result in other important work being delayed. An alternative might be the engagement of additional staff specifically to work on the town centre project on a salary which reflected the demanding skill set required. Secondly, the preparation of the town centre master plan requires skills and expertise such as urban design, highways and transport engineering and the project management and development economics issues associated with major, complex development proposals which would still need to be sourced from elsewhere;

5.3 It is already proposed to include some overall principles relating to the Town Centre and Canal Head within Part 3 of the Local Plan (which is mainly concerned with Development Management Policies). This would have the advantage of giving Development Plan weight to the Master Plan in planning decisions. The Development Plan process will not be completed until 2017 however. There is also a risk that the scope for an imaginative and innovative Master Plan which goes beyond land-use planning and addresses management and action planning would be constrained by the regulatory and policy requirements of the statutory planning process. Finally, there is a concern that widening the scope of Part 3 of the Local Plan to include a full town centre master plan would result in an over-elaborate plan which would require a longer and more complex process. It is your officers view that inclusion of a Town Centre Master Plan within Part 3 of the Local Plan would over-complicate, constrain and prolong both processes to the benefit of neither.
5.4 For all of the above reasons, the preparation of a master plan is considered essential and its delivery by external consultants is seen as the optimum option in terms of delivering a robust, comprehensive and deliverable master plan which draws on all the necessary expertise and does within a timescale which will allow for timely commencement of Phase 1 projects.

6.0 LINKS TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES
6.1 The Town Centre Master Plan is critical to the Council’s economic objectives both in terms of supporting the development of higher paid jobs in South Lakeland and in helping towns to thrive commercially whilst retaining their distinctive character.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS
7.1 Financial and Resources
7.1.1 It is estimated that the Master Plan and Action Plan can be delivered at a cost of around £100,000. The Council received £290,000 in 2014/15 from the Cumbria NNDR Pool which was transferred at 31 March 2015 into a new reserve. Under the terms of the NNDR Pooling agreement it is a requirement that the income from the pool is earmarked for economic development. It is likely that a similar amount will be received from the pool in 2015/16. The preparation of the Master Plan and Action Plan is directly related to economic development within the Kendal area. The 2015/16 budget will use £169,000 of this reserve to fund growth and other economic development costs, leaving £121,000 of the reserve unapplied. It is proposed that a revenue budget of £50,000 be approved for 2015/16 and £50,000 for 2016/17 for the costs of the preparation of the plans, funded from the NNDR Pool reserve.

7.1.2 It is expected that the plan will identify projects which will need to be funded by the Council, which are mainly likely to be capital in nature. Revenue growth bids and capital programme bids will be submitted during the 2016/17 and future budget processes.

7.2 Human Resources
7.2.1 This project will be managed through the existing staff resource.

7.3 Legal
7.3.1 None

7.4 Social, Economic and Environmental
7.4.1 The Master Plan will be subject to sustainability appraisal

7.5 Equality and Diversity
7.5.1 The Master Plan will be the subject of Equality and Diversity Assessment and protected category groups will be engaged in its preparation. Access to and around the Town Centre and barriers to people with disabilities are likely to be a particularly important issue.
7.6 Risk

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<th>Consequence</th>
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<td>No Strategy</td>
<td>Risk of town centre decline and lack of co-ordination of town centre activities. Town Centre potential not realised</td>
<td>Master Plan linked to strategic policies in Local Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report does not address critical issues</td>
<td>Resources spent and outcomes not delivered</td>
<td>Clear brief and sufficient time built into timetable for consultation and review. Key skills needed identified in Brief.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report does not provide deliverable solutions</td>
<td>Resources spent and outcomes not delivered</td>
<td>Robust Action Planning built into brief</td>
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**CONTACT OFFICERS**

Report Author – Dan Hudson

**APPENDICES ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix No.</th>
<th>Kendal Town Centre Master Plan – Statement of requirements</th>
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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE**

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<th>Name of Background document</th>
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<tr>
<td>South Lakeland District Council, South Lakeland Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy, October 2010</td>
<td><a href="http://tinyurl.com/on5hcqj">http://tinyurl.com/on5hcqj</a></td>
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## TRACKING INFORMATION

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<td>Human Resource Services Manager Leader</td>
<td>6/7/15</td>
<td>Ward Councillor(s)</td>
<td>07/08/2015</td>
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