



PRESS RELEASE

Launch of Guildford Vision Group's Revitalising Town Centre Plan

Guildford, Thursday 2 February, 2017: Yesterday evening, at the Millmead Baptist Centre, in front of nearly 400 residents in a packed hall Guildford Vision Group (GVG) launched its Plan to revitalise Guildford town centre. Many others watched the live streaming, carried by Get Surrey on its Facebook page, with nearly 9,000 hits already for the recording.

The detailed Plan, drawn up by David Leonard and his team at internationally-recognised Leonard Design Architects, picks up on the themes of Guildford Borough Council's approved Masterplan. GVG was instrumental in persuading the Council to commission the Masterplan which, interestingly, has not been adopted as planning policy.

Central to GVG's Plan is creating a new east/West crossing linking York Road with Guildford Park Road. The new link is the core of a new road layout that takes traffic away from the town centre allowing much more of the centre, including the riverside and right up to the station, to be better pedestrianised. The GVG Plan delivers five new squares, two acres of open space, and 1500 metres of revitalised riverside around a redeveloped Town Wharf.

"The Plan is a bold one, it's ambitious," says John Rigg, GVG chairman. "The new bridge, for instance, delivers huge benefits. At a stroke, it tackles the considerable infrastructure deficit in the town centre. The questionnaire, completed by over half of the attendees, revealed 94% supported the new East/West crossing and 92% supported the new route for traffic that would leave the centre free for pedestrians. Over 75% liked all or most of the GVG Plan. That's great support for the proposals that tackle the infrastructure deficit of decades and free up the town from through traffic. They're a forerunner to creating new residential quarters and commercial space in a regenerated town centre."

The GVG Plan delivers significant development. It creates nearly 3,000 new homes plus commercial, leisure and retail opportunities – with a considerable uplift in business rates and council tax, as well as employment, through the scope for new businesses and activities.

The GVG Plan area is mostly away from the historic core and poses little threat to the town's heritage. It respects Guildford's well-loved setting and views. Indeed GVG claims that its Plan brings much need investment to tired areas which have unexciting mixed use, along with unappealing design and architecture. These areas are occupied mostly by ageing government buildings and surface car parks. Network Rail also could frustrate the £2bn regeneration project if it is not open to cooperation with the town.

GVG sees its Plan as a 'once in a generation' opportunity to really make a difference to the centre of town and to banish cars away from the riverside and infamous gyratory. See a spectacular 'fly through' and commentary on the Plan at http://bit.ly/2GVG_Video

GVG has presented its Plan to the Guildford Borough Executive, councillors and officers. It is now waiting to see if the Borough Council will want to give serious consideration to its Plan, which incorporates all of the Council's regeneration ideas. GVG hopes it will lead to the Plan's adoption as planning policy and beyond to delivery.

GVG's next goal is to advance the study of the viability, funding and deliverability of the phases of the project. It will also seek a consensus on the most suitable vehicle which might deliver coordinated town centre regeneration on the scale envisaged and illustrated by its Plan. It could be by way of a development corporation, Town Council or an Area Action Plan under current planning legislation all of which are used by other councils across the U.K.

-Ends –

Notes for Editors

1. Guildford Vision Group (GVG) was formed five years ago with the sole purpose of promoting Guildford's urgent need for a long term vision in which the sustainable vitality of the town and its enterprise is ensured for the next 30 years and beyond. GVG is independent, and has no political affiliations or vested interests
2. Leonard Design Architects is an 80-strong practice with offices in London, Nottingham, Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne.

Its work ranges from designing large scale master plans and major mixed use developments (including public transport interchanges) to smaller developments in sensitive and historic locations.

Notable developments undertaken include Westfield London and Stratford City. It is currently working on major developments in London and the UK, plus in Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Korea, Malaysia and Australia

3. Sketches and extracts from the GVG Plan are available from action@guildfordvisiongroup.com



4. A 'flythrough' with commentary is at http://bit.ly/2GVG_Video
5. Further information available at www.guildfordvisiongroup.com
6. Contact: Yvonka Wilkinson, Campaign Manager, Vision for Guildford Ltd on 07767 251040 or action@guildfordvisiongroup.com