

GVG Release

5 February 2020



Bold Action No.1? GVG Calls For Comprehensive Bus Service Review As Part Of North Street Redevelopment

Guildford, Wednesday 5 February 2020: Following its recent call for bold action on town centre transport, Guildford Vision Group (GVG) believes the imminent redevelopment of North Street should trigger a comprehensive review of Guildford's bus services.

"We're expecting the North Street redevelopment to include a repositioning of the bus station to Leapale Road," says Bill Stokoe, chair of GVG. "Before too much gets set in stone, let's have a proper review of our bus services. What do we want of our bus services in the era of climate change? Are services, including park & ride, co-ordinated effectively and efficiently? Are the current regulatory and pricing regimes appropriate? Any review should look at improving routes and access so more people choose to use a bus rather than their car, especially with the prospect of 14,000 new homes in and around Guildford."

GVG continues to study and consult on a variety of options as to the siting of the town's bus station. Is a bus station in the town centre a good use of land that might otherwise be used for more housing, open public space or other public facilities? Is Leapale Road the best location for a revamped bus station?

GVG recognises that many of its supporters and the wider public have a very firm view that the town centre should have a bus station – with facilities - rather than a well-integrated series of bus stops.

The town's hilly topography does mean that many people turn to their cars rather than walk to a bus stop as an option, assuming one is nearby. Cross town services suffer because the congestion in the centre militates against reliable timetabling. Guildford is currently served by eight bus operators. Is that an efficient setup?

The North Street redevelopment must allow for wider pedestrianisation of North Street and adjoining areas. That in turn will have consequences for bus routes.

The operation of the bus services is also directly affected by the town centre's road layout. The North Street redevelopment will involve at least the closure of Commercial Road, and part of Woodbridge Road. Some people would argue that any central bus operation ought to be in close proximity to the railway station, thus encouraging greater interoperation.

Consideration of the bus services in the town centre inevitably turns attention to the necessity of a masterplan, something GVG has been calling for over the past nine years.

"Sadly, we've heard very little about the masterplan," continues Bill Stokoe, "since the council passed its July 2019 resolution to have one. The resolution also called for the appointment of top-quality masterplanning consultants to lead the process. To my knowledge, nothing has happened in that regard. And we've seen no sign of the brief that they might work to. That brief is absolutely crucial. It must cover the state and capacity of the town centre infrastructure. It must come up with evidence-based options that put people rather than cars first, reduce traffic and pollution, integrate transport options better and make our town an even more attractive destination to visit and enjoy."

GVG will continue to press for a comprehensive masterplan covering the town centre. Any plan will also have to pay due regard to the likely impact of the 14,000 new homes that are to be built over the next 15 years, mainly in the former green belt big developments around the edge of town and further afield. How will these developments connect to the town centre? Buses must play an important part in helping to restrain, if not reduce, traffic growth and to reduce pollution through the use of eco-friendly vehicles.

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Notes for editors

- GVG is a group of concerned residents with very relevant skills and experience
- The GVG masterplan flythrough can be found at <https://youtu.be/SExTozSKB-A>
- For more information, contact Bill Stoke on 07768 124685
- The GVG masterplan delivers more pedestrianisation in a safer, healthier environment plus a reinvigorated riverside