

THE COVID-19 RECOVERY ANNEX JUNE 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic, its public health emergency and socio-economic impact, has intensified the need for new thinking in local government and its partnerships and operational agreements with statutory undertakers, public service providers and civic organizations.

The Ryde Place Plan identifies the following five key challenges for the town and its communities if a better way of living and working is to be constructed. These are now essential to the task of planning and managing Ryde's recovery as the immediate crisis wanes:

1. **The need for locally defined and place-based priorities;** a clear and compelling vision for Ryde and its communities, driven by the town council and shared by an active partnership of local organizations. Covid has exposed the weaknesses in centralised systems of support and revealed the dynamism of hyperlocal, spontaneous, and informal neighbourhood networks. Flexible policy implementation in times of uncertainty, and practical, purposeful management of risk are now needed.
2. **The need for a new and better balance of transport,** improving and increasing safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists and reducing the dominance of vehicle infrastructure. Social distancing has emphasised the problems of streetscapes constrained by traffic. The actions required to create and manage new safe space, for businesses and for pedestrians and cyclists, will set an important precedent for what can be retained as permanent change.
3. **The need to support local supply chains** through direct purchasing and the use of grants and contributions to build the capacity for social enterprise. The Covid emergency has helped to promote and celebrate the diversity and energy of the local SME landscape at a time of great adversity. RBA is showing how the business community can combine public services with business recovery (reinforcing public health messages, lobbying for emergency street works to become improved public realm etc.). This close integration of local public, commercial and non-profit sectors is at the heart of regenerative procurement.
4. **The need to reconsider all major development proposals,** allocated, proposed, and approved (but resubmitted for variation). This is essential work, responding to Covid and the changes it will inevitably bring to the way people think about home and work, access to natural areas, options for transport and the role and function of town high streets.

5. **The need for sustainable development delivered through Biosphere principles.** Covid has amplified the crises in public health, biodiversity, and climate already here and these fundamentally ecological stresses demand systemic change. The three key objectives that underpin the World Biosphere Reserve designation are directly relevant to the work of post-Covid recovery into a 'new normal':
- To find new and better ways to conserve biological and cultural value.
 - To find new and better ways to create economic value from these resources.
 - To find new and better ways to freely share information so we can continue to learn from our collective efforts.

The particular influence of the Covid emergency on public appreciation of local networks of open space, the delivery of public services at 'district' level and the relationship between public investment, civic society and business runs through all five of these Place Plan challenges. In reframing these Place Plan statements to support rapid recovery planning, two special areas of inquiry and action have emerged: the renewal of the social contract and the need for devolution.

The Social Contract

The value of meaningful cooperation, and collaboration, between public, commercial, and civic sectors has been put centre stage by the pandemic. These connections have become degraded over the past twenty years to the extent that their re-emergence now seems almost a revelation. There is a real danger that this sense of special status in a time of exceptional emergency will prevent the best of these arrangements from being conserved and adopted into permanent change for the better. The Place Plan describes this change as being a '*commonwealth of public wellbeing*' and a '*single focus of purpose, consistently and repeatedly applied, and designed to be effectively shared between agents and across sectors*'.

Ryde Town Council is in a position to publicly state its intention to emerge from the constraints of the pandemic with a new social contract (public/private/voluntary partnership) in place, set out what that means in terms of collaborative working, and deliver through the Place Plan.

One definition of the 'new normal' is the proactive sharing of risk and reward between RTC and its residents, businesses and their representatives, and visitors. The promise of investment in public spaces, positive social impact, better local supply chains and environmental innovation in return for a respect for the towns shared public and community assets, and the will and imagination to genuinely work together. This is at the heart of 'new municipalism'.

By actively building this new partnership and placing it at the centre of what it does and how it does it, RTC can create a seamless transition from Covid recovery to Place Plan delivery. The more that rapid response recovery work is positioned as the first phase of Place Plan delivery, the better RTC can negotiate (and demand) effective and efficient working arrangements with IWC (which has adopted the plan) and other controlling interests in the town (which are prescribed for in the plan).

Devolution

The Place Plan argues for the delivery of its projects and programmes under the conditions of a new local civic partnership and the profound effects of the Covid pandemic are the catalyst for just such change. However, these new conditions for collaboration and shared action cannot work without a critical level of local administrative discretion and operational control over public space.

'Covid secure' interventions for the town will have to deal with the fact that public spaces, streets, and parks are having to provide multiple functions without being fully resourced to do so. Union Street will have to help businesses to open, by making space to queue their customers, while

ensuring that others can pass by safely. The Esplanade will have to do the same for tenant businesses while ensuring that it can accommodate increased walking and cycling and provide safe access to the beach as people return. Difficulties are arising because RTC is not granted permission by IWC to undertake or commission critical local public works. The standard systems of licencing agreement cannot respond quickly, either to the need for rapid installation, or the need for ongoing modification, adjustment, or adaptation. This results in a generic, one-size-fits-all and once-only solution, militating against a locally relevant, distinctive and welcoming re-opening of Ryde town centre and preventing lasting change after these 'special conditions' are revoked.

These emergency changes to the multi-functionality of public realm of course bring forward the very improvements most helpful to the delivery of the Place Plan in the medium and long term. Ways to retain some permanent remainder of the Covid response must form a key part of RTC planning.

It is therefore essential that a fast-track programme of short-term or long-term tenure, licence, permit or derogation is put in place to allow RTC maximum control over priority public spaces such that it has sufficient authority and discretion to take immediate action alongside the first deployment of street changes by IWC, and to then sustain and evolve that action into long-term change. This whole process should be set out within the terms of an MOU between RTC and IWC as recommended in the Place Plan.

This devolution project will not only release immediate, imaginative and bespoke action for the management of public and economic health under Covid restraint but will also solve one of the main impediments to progressive partnership for regeneration identified in the Place Plan, the lack of a coherent, compelling and encouraging landlord vision shared across the business tenant community within the public estate.

Next Steps

The Covid response to the 5 Place Plan Challenges and the 2 propositions for change that come from this help to revisit the 5 original Place Plan Solutions and set out a plan for the next 3 to 6 months. These actions are intended to help secure and sustain progress against the Place Plan objectives from the immediate work of town centre recovery.

1. CHARTER

- 'A Healthy Way of Living' has never been a more important message for Ryde to broadcast. RTC, its partners and allies need to capture the early spirit of the draft Charter and communicate this as part of the towns move from critical support to recovery.
- The message is first that Ryde is re-opening carefully, guided by overriding matters of public safety, and second that it is actively considering the opportunities to begin shape a better, healthier place for all by turning some of these emergency measures into long-term changes to the public realm.
- The planning and implementation of these new priorities can be identified in the wording of the draft Charter which in turn connects to both the Place Plan and the RTC Corporate Plan. The Charter is therefore an essential bridge between strategic plans and rapid response action.
- The Charter promises to provide accessible and comprehensive public information. Covid and the public restrictions that have followed have left people worried, unsure what to do for the best, unclear in their understanding of what is allowed, what to expect and what will be expected of them. Reassurance through clear instructions, guidance, and encouragement, is a key Covid response by the Place Plan partnership and a demonstration of the 'shared risk' approach underpinning the new social contract.

2. COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM

- The creation of <https://www.rydeunite.org.uk/> as a Covid recovery fundraiser provides an ideal hook to reconnect the town's regeneration efforts with the CCT network, the lobbying voice of the Coastal Communities Alliance and the future funding opportunities that are likely to come via MHCLG, CLoG etc, in the wake of the pandemic.
- If RTC and Aspire identify Ryde Unite as, in part, the continuation of the town's CCT, then this potentially adds fundraising potential to the initiative without compromising or altering its purpose and operation.
- The establishment of a town regeneration fund that supplements precept income is an important demonstration of the will to invest in 'shared benefits' as part of the new social contract.
- The likelihood of disproportionate economic impact on areas of higher social and economic deprivation makes the creation of a locally controlled support fund a high priority.
- A Ryde regeneration fund might then join with the Ryde Regeneration Group to create a local social enterprise partnership affiliated to RTC.

3. 3RD SECTOR COMPACT

- This is already very well established in 'recovery mode' between RTC and Aspire, providing crisis support in the community.
- There is an opportunity to begin to build a Ryde-based volunteering network using the recovery infrastructure set up between Community Action, IWC and RTC. Local people who have offered their time to help, via the local hubs set up in response to Covid, are an important resource that can be encouraged to now engage with town recovery work (marshalling, monitoring, delivering etc). Local volunteers recruited through the GoodSam app may be similarly inclined to join a local recovery and regeneration task force.
- Working with IW training providers such as Adult Community Learning, RTC can create a Ryde-specific programme of coordinated recovery initiatives led by a volunteer task force, that can then progress into supporting Place Plan regeneration projects for the medium and long term.
- The current commissioning of installations and fixtures for the HSHAZ from arts and maker organizations (in particular Ryde Arts) should be integrated with the procurement of temporary street interventions in Union Street and Monkton Village, and the connecting pedestrian routes between. This will create a body of work over the next 3 to 6 months from which longer term and more permanent improvements to public realm, orientation, visitor experience and access can be selected.
- This 3rd sector partnership, including RTC, can begin immediately with locally commissioned responses to High Street/Union Street and The Esplanade for example, areas that combine the need for immediate response to Covid constraint with the need for permanent response to long-term decline, rolling out systemic change via stepping-stones of small alteration, improvised enhancement and collaborative project work.

4. PUBLIC REALM NETWORKS

- The four priority areas for immediate action under Covid restrictions are:
 - The High Street, St. Thomas. Union Street Zone.
 - The Esplanade Zone.
 - The Oakvale Zone.
 - Future Ryde urban extension

- Rapid response work will need to concentrate on the management of social distancing in areas shared by business overspill and the visiting public together with clear guidance on options for pedestrian and cycle access and circulation, including the use of open greenspace for recreation, respite and recovery.
- It is important that RTC secures favourable tenure from IWC and Island Roads for the flexible management of each space and the necessary time for sustained delivery given that the need for these arrangements may last several months and then lead to more permanent changes. These agreements should form part of a 'Recovery and Regeneration' MOU between RTC and IWC that also incorporates the delivery of the Place Plan.
- The key areas for immediate action within these zones, and suggested works are:
 - **The pedestrianised HSHAZ area**
 - Changes to street furniture.
 - Temporary street markings.
 - Links with the Network Ryde base and operations.
 - Integration of Town Square and Minghella Square and connecting routes as components in the area's carrying capacity reducing loading on main streets.
 - Role of the library as town re-opening proceeds.
 - **St. Thomas' Square**
 - Orientation and information point.
 - **Adjustments to on-street parking in Union Street**
 - Extended footways in places or at times, for social distancing combined with opportunities for decorative, informative, upbeat fixtures and installations.
 - Test small-scale pedestrianisation experiments for longer-term implementation.
 - **The Harbour including its curtilage within Eastern Gardens and the skatepark**
 - Extended management of public realm for safe distancing and safe recreation.
 - Refresh under-used public space to increase carrying capacity.
 - Provide landlord vision, guidance, and encouragement to site tenants.
 - **Waterside Pool and its surroundings**
 - Pass freehold from IWC to RTC or direct to Waterside Trust.
 - Support the expansion of health recovery activities and services from this base as part of the town's Covid response.
 - **Monkton Village**
 - Promote as a 'rediscovery' destination as part of town centre recovery.
 - Use to develop the idea of a circulation to help spread movement and provide alternative routes (High Street, Melville Street, Monkton Village, Esplanade, Union Street for example).
 - **The Southern Vectis bus station forecourt (IWC land)**
 - Pass freehold to RTC bringing it usefully into the Interchange landlord group where it can influence change and instigate the transport MOU.
 - **Nicholson Road development land**
 - Manage temporary public access to the site, or parts of the site, linking with The Arc, Pig Leg Lane, path 54 and the Oakfield route to Monkton Village.
 - Increase accessible open greenspace for local residents.
 - Manage transition into permanent accessible green infrastructure as part of the Ryde Country Park project.
 - **Urban Extension land**
 - Lobby for early release of public greenspace from approved developments adjoining Nicholson Road/Swanmore.
 - Connect these into the Ryde Country Park project.

- The devolution of management authority over these critical parts of Ryde's public realm is a matter of urgency if crisis interventions are to be developed into regenerative change.
- The integration of these works with the roll out of the phased Emergency Active Travel Fund by IWC is essential if the town's capacity to distribute and manage safe movement is to be secured and then protected for the long term.
- The Esplanade presents a special and urgent case for change. Passing freehold from IWC to RTC at the bus station and at the harbour might be managed within a phased transfer (devolution) of more Esplanade to RTC.

5. **SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NETWORKS**

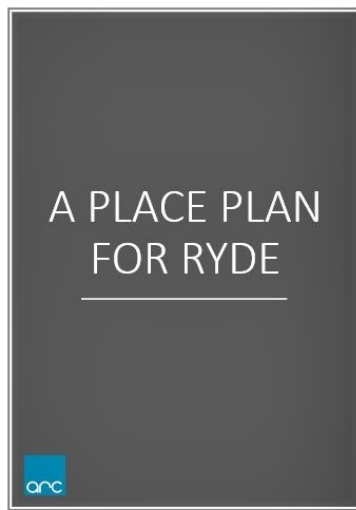
- The priority is to support and develop the local economy by instigating a 'Ryde First' policy for the planning, delivery, and purchase of Covid recovery works.
- Close integration between RTC's procurement of works and the commissioning of projects is essential as there will be new and important opportunities to blur the distinction between grant-aided activity and conventional supply chain. This will help to support civic and community organizations facing significant revenue cuts and at the same time increase RTC's ability to design a more locally responsive and imaginative public service.
- Register Ryde as a Social Enterprise Town with SEUK and promote this status as part of the public messaging around recovery and regeneration.
- Combine this status with Biosphere credentials to create marketing material (investment, tourism) that promotes the town as a first mover in the re-opening of the south coast and Solent region.
- The return to work after Covid will bring with it a changed attitude to agile and remote working. There may be need for flexible, affordable leases to assist the resizing and adaptation of Ryde's business community. RTC can:
 - Compile information on the availability of unconventional, meanwhile, and pop-up premises in the town.
 - Design support packages from the roll out of any national, regional, and local funding rounds to support housing and employment.
 - Use Covid response to proactively progress its plans for the Town Hall (maker space, shared working, mixed use redevelopment etc.).
 - Use the Covid effects of rapidly changing working and domestic situations to accelerate mixed-use regeneration of the town centre, deliberately combining retail, residential, employment, making, studio, civic and pop-up use classes. This work will in partnership with IWC Planning and form part of the review of the Island Plan. This objective should also be a component of the MOU between RTC and IWC.

Link full and permanent pedestrianisation of High Street to partial and pop-up pedestrianisation of Union Street via St. Thomas' Square to create a coherent, safe, informed and appealing 'recovery space'; promote side roads, lanes, public squares and public buildings to spread people and movement and increase carrying capacity

Work out from the Harbour into the surrounding Esplanade, set out safe multi-use areas for tenants, pedestrians, cyclists, and beach access. Waymark links to Monkton Village to spread movement and support businesses. Create other points of action based on change of freehold, at the bus station and at the Waterside Pool

Combine Swanmore Meadows SINC/Pig Leg Lane (RTC) with Arc woodland (Sovereign) and meanwhile use of Nicholson Road (IWC) to create a 'country park' for Ryde. Promote and waymark as part of Covid response for recreation (large, safe, accessible) and respite (quiet, wildlife). Extend into adjacent development sites via release of open spaces





THE URBAN EXTENSION ANNEX JUNE 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic, the public health emergency and socio-economic impacts that have followed, and the curtailment of normal activity in so many areas, has inevitably generated a pause for thought in local authority plans and programmes. In the case of the Ryde Place Plan, the urban extension, its spread of development proposals, housing numbers and types, infrastructure improvements and wider community relevance, is one such topic for re-evaluation. The themes of community open space, pedestrian and cycle access, local health services and economic recovery are natural priorities for change in the context of the pandemic.

The extent to which RTC can influence these development schemes is constrained by the fact that some have already been approved by the local planning authority and there is no legal basis for revoking those decisions other than through the planning process itself (i.e. schemes seeking variations and the possibility of 'timing out').

This annex therefore explores areas of useful intervention by which RTC can seek to secure better post-Covid outcomes for the Place Plan, through development, or object to plans and variations that it does not consider beneficial.

1. SCALE AND IMPACT

The schemes with the largest potential impact on Ryde, in housing, employment, public realm, landscape and road infrastructure are Pennyfeathers, Nicholson Road and West Acre (Bullen Dairy). All are 'live' in the planning system (Pennyfeathers through variations to approval, the others still under consideration at the time of writing) and therefore their proposals are open to influence, alteration, or withdrawal.

RTC needs a professional working relationship with each project team in order to be able to effectively communicate its own point of view, discuss options, challenge claims, and ask for essential information on the development details. This action does not impair or compromise RTC's entitlement to object to the same proposals. Response to a submitted planning application, in the normal process of public consultation, is not enough on its own; there must be more proactive engagement and dialogue.

Each of these development sites is likely to persist as a potential future impact whether current applications succeed or not and so the relationship between RTC, landowners and development interests is essential if proper influence over the expansion of Ryde is to be achieved and overarching community benefit, for the people and places of the town, set in place as the essential benchmark.

The points for consideration given in this annex are based on the three major developments, but all apply equally to the smaller schemes nearby and can be applied in the same way to, for example, Rosemary Vineyard/Trotters and Smallbrook Stadium.

2. CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

RTC will need to carefully consider the in-combination offer of infrastructure improvements shared between these major development proposals. RTC will need to seek clear and regular briefing from the IWC team working on priority junctions for example, to understand the degree to which all developments are dependent upon one another, i.e. can a minimum acceptable level of infrastructure be delivered by any one scheme alone and how will any deficit be solved given the local authority's extreme financial constraint following the pandemic?

Transport

The problems that affect Westridge crossroads junction, the Great Preston Road/Smallbrook Lane junction, road safety issues on Smallbrook Lane to Ashey Road, road safety and traffic management in and around the existing Nicholson Road industrial estate, might all be exacerbated by partial or site-only highways changes delivered by individual developments. A complete overview can only come from IWC and Island Roads but a well-informed, local voice demanding coherent planning must come from RTC. The relationship between the proposed developments and the LCWIP is similarly essential. Do the schemes facilitate its delivery, add value and capacity, or do they make it harder by working against the local cycling and walking targets?

Green

The same evaluation must apply to green and community infrastructure. To what extent does each scheme add to, expand, and enhance the existing public open space, public access, and permeability of its local environment? Do any of the proposals provide a means of better overall management of existing and neighbouring public greenspace or will they add pressure and risk eroding the existing resource?

There is an opportunity to combine the plans for Ryde Country Park with those for community land and buildings. The new park would incorporate the greenspace provision from both Nicholson Road and Pennyfeathers and could potentially 'twin' with the proposals for an eastern park at West Acre, creating the largest area of its kind on the Island. A consistent land management approach will be needed across the whole park and so a 'ranger base' sited at the most convenient or expedient development should be considered a priority. This would then also allow environmental outreach and engagement activity to grow from the same centre.

Community

Each of the three major schemes is offering to provide a community building or centre. It is important that there is clarity around the sorts of activities and services imagined. If each is essentially the same all-purpose facility, then it may be that one or more becomes redundant and is at risk from redevelopment for housing or workspace.

It is important that RTC makes it clear, to both developers and the LPA that it expects to see some element of masterplanning in the decision making around community contribution.

The new community centres promised by each development all include GP services. It is essential that RTC works with the NHS, CCG, ICP and locality hub to ensure that there is no permanent drift of health service provision from existing areas in Ryde which are currently accessible by walking for many who would find it much harder to reach the urban extension without driving (and may not have a car).

Housing

The three major developments deliver approximately 1380 new homes, of which approximately 480 would be affordable. Ryde, as is the case for the other main urban centres on the Island, has an urgent need for smaller (1,2 bed) affordable housing provision. The track record of delivery after approval is poor across the island and this is a critical consideration for RTC when reviewing and responding to the current applications and their revisions. Is it clear who the affordable provider is? Does the scheme phasing show early delivery of the affordable stock? What assurance is there that priority housing for local people has been put ahead of more speculative development? An important question is whether assured sale and delivery of the affordable component of a much larger, and more uncertain scheme, might provide a point of leverage for RTC to propose partial, meanwhile, amended or alternative development options.

Economic

Each of the proposed major developments includes some workspace and retail provision. Nicholson Road is predominantly an employment scheme whereas Pennyfeathers and West Acre are residential, but the principle of maximum local benefit should still apply.

As with the other critical infrastructure issues, the key concern is the extent to which new centres of economic activity promised by new development, complement, connect with, support, and extend existing local business. Will new development build additional local economic resilience and opportunity, or will it put existing business under new stress?

S106

Critical local infrastructure is the basis for s106 negotiations. It is important that RTC insists on discretionary and justifiable contributions to natural and social infrastructures alongside transport and education. These are allowed for in the Island Plan supporting documents but need lobbying for as a local priority.

Development schemes should be expected to provide both on-site works and off-site contributions to critical infrastructure issues such as the emerging Ryde Country Park and the delivery of the LCWIP if they are to meet RTC and Place Plan criteria for relevance, suitability and public benefit.

3. PHASING AND PRE-COMMENCEMENT

There is scope to influence the delivery of public benefit on any approved developments that do begin work. Planning conditions will set out pre-commencement requirements and the milestones for discharge against any phasing programme. RTC can influence these matters, whether through new application or variation, to deliver better outcomes for existing and future communities.

Key objectives to consider are:

- Early phase delivery and management of public open space contributory to the Ryde Country Park.
- Early phase delivery of affordable housing both because it is a social priority and because it is managed as a single estate and can therefore be integrated into the open space/park 'manco' arrangements.
- Early phase delivery of new community facilities to support existing neighbourhoods first.

4. LAND STERILIZATION

If any of the major development projects fail, either through refusal of planning permission or by permission lapsing, then there is the potential for large areas of land to become dormant, disused, or derelict. RTC will need to consider if there are ways in which it can intervene to secure meanwhile or permanent benefits for the town and its communities. These might be alternative development conversations with the landowners where RTC plays an active role, or temporary community uses that provide site owners with some benefit, financial or otherwise. Whatever options might emerge, the voice of RTC and its partners in shaping those next possibilities is essential.

5. CONCLUSION

The urban extension across the south-east of Ryde is a significant component in the Place Plan. The scrutiny, coordination and management of the extension is made much harder by the lack of a masterplan, LDO or other mechanism to enable desired outcomes to be designed and regulated en bloc. This has resulted in piecemeal and uncoordinated development pressure, duplication of generic community offers, fragmented infrastructure delivery and a disjointed timetable of planning applications and project commencements.

RTC is therefore limited in its ability to review the urban extension other than by actively engaging in the various live planning consultations currently underway, a mix of schemes yet to be determined, those approved but returned for variation, and those approved but presumed stalled pending some change yet to come. This is a messy and challenging approach, but it is all that is now available.

The impact of Covid-19 on the consideration of accessible open space, neighbourhood-level community services and partnership working has provided a set of cues for re-engaging with the urban extension that can be used by RTC to prompt changes to the development schemes presented. These are set out in this annex.

The component schemes within the urban extension must show how, individually, and together, they:

- Extend, and contribute to the management of Ryde Country Park.
- Extend and deliver the LCWIP.
- Add new neighbourhood community facilities without displacing existing town centre services (in recreation, sport, health, education, and social support) and without unhelpful duplication/competition within the urban extension itself.
- Ensure necessary upgrades to critical local infrastructure without the risk of incomplete, disjointed, and ineffective piecemeal implementation.
- Connect with and enhance local centres of business and employment.

RTC is encouraged to work closely with major development stakeholders in order to strengthen its ability to shape change during the current planning timetable, and to create the conditions for better alternative proposals should existing schemes withdraw.