

Town Centre Health Checks

Introduction

This paper introduces the first health checks of Aldershot and Farnborough town centres. In future, they will be produced biennially so that performance of the town centres can be monitored.

The health checks use a number of performance indicators to assess the vitality and viability of the centres:

- Diversity of Uses
- Retail Trends
- Vacancy Rates
- Accessibility
- Pedestrian Flows
- Environmental Quality
- Perception of Safety
- Customer Views
- Action and Investment

It is proposed to publish the health checks. Full copies of the health checks have been placed in the three group rooms and the Members Room.

Background

Planning Policy Guidance 6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' requires local authorities to monitor the health of their town centres through the collection of information on key indicators. Such monitoring should enable early signs of decline to be identified and inform those involved in town centre issues. The town centre health checks have been undertaken in accordance with this guidance.

In June last year, the Council adopted Town Centre Strategies and supplementary planning guidance for the two town centres. At the same time, we committed ourselves to preparing and publishing health checks. We are also monitoring progress on our two town centre strategies. Cabinet considered a report on Aldershot in July and a report on Farnborough is coming to this Cabinet meeting.

Summary of the Health Checks

Aldershot Town Centre

The Health Check concludes that Aldershot is experiencing promising signs of revitalisation, particularly in the shopping core. Highlights include:

- Above average representation of multiple retailers
- A good mix of leading retailers
- Increased demand for retail units
- 50 % reduction in the number of vacant units since May 1998
- Increased footfall between April 2000 and April 2001
- A high level of action and investment

Farnborough Town Centre

The Health Check concludes that the town centre is in reasonable health, pending implementation of the redevelopment proposals.

In reaching this conclusion it was important to balance the performance indicators against Key Property Investment's (KPI) proposals for redevelopment. The high level of vacant units in Northern Queensmead clearly relates to redevelopment proposals, which if implemented, offer an opportunity to improve the vitality and viability of the whole centre. Scope to improve the evening economy was noted and weighed against the plans for leisure and entertainment facilities included in KPI's plans. Highlights include;

- Above average representation of multiple retailers
- A good mix of leading retailers
- Increased demand for retail units
- 100% occupancy of Princes Mead
- High occupancy levels in southern Queensmead
- Increased footfall between April 2000 and April 2001
- A high level of action and investment

Recommendations

That the Aldershot and Farnborough Town Centre Health Checks are noted and endorsed for publication.