

Cranbrook Town Centre

Frequently Asked Questions II

Why build 350 houses on what's supposed to be the town centre?

Have a look at any town centre and you will see that flats and houses are part of the landscape. Indeed, they are an essential part of a town centre to ensure that the area does not become dead space outside commercial trading hours. Typically, the density of housing in town centres is higher and that would apply to Cranbrook, although not as dense as in long-established towns.

I'd be very concerned how little town centre space would be left if they allow those extra houses built.

The town centre has to be appropriate for the 21st century and will not contain the same types of businesses and facilities as traditional towns. The town centre will be compact and will be more focused on social facilities and on businesses that do not operate on the internet or are otherwise available a few miles away in or around Exeter.

Once we have built housing on the Town Centre space then it will be unavailable for commercial use when the town is 3-4 times larger.

This is, of course, perfectly true but the provision of the town centre is in large part related to the Section 106 legal agreement with the Consortium which was written to cover the first 3450 dwellings. In future years, as the town grows further, additional retail, leisure and commercial space will be required (as well as schools, green spaces and other civic facilities) and these will be the subjects of Section 106 negotiations with whoever the developers are at that time. There is no reason that these additional facilities cannot be located within the expansion areas and will be appropriate for the neighbourhoods they sit in.

Does the consortium option come with any pitfalls i.e. would it release the consortium from having to provide further amenities in future?

The Consortium was formed to build the first 3450 dwellings in Cranbrook, and when that project is complete (probably in about 10 years) they will dissolve the partnership. Construction in the expansion areas will be done in parcels by individual developers. Part of the reason for the Consortium proposal is that it will discharge all their remaining legal responsibilities in a single project. Briefly, they are obliged to provide a Library, Children's Centre, Youth Centre, Town Council Office, 500 square metres of retail space and land (but not buildings) for "blue light" services, a Health Centre and some Extra Care Housing. Some of these are due to be delivered now, many are not due for delivery until 3450 dwellings are built, so bringing all this forward in a single project, which also includes a doubling of the retail space and the provision of a supermarket and nursery would mean that their obligations are more than fully met. Of course, in the commercial world you don't get anything for nothing, and the offer to deliver the facilities early and to a greater extent than legally required is contingent on EDDC granting permission to the Consortium to develop some of their land in the town centre for housing.

Can we have some guidance from our own council?

Cranbrook Town Council has formulated an opinion on the proposals but this exercise is about getting an opinion from the residents, and we don't wish to lead people in one direction or another. The results of the poll and the comments left on our Facebook pages, website and direct emails will be used to show EDDC what the majority of the residents

want. This will not be the end of the matter, if and when a proposal goes to a planning application there will be a period of public consultation for everyone to comment on the details.

What options do you have to pursue EDDC to speed up their timeline to publish a plan?

The Town Council was formed in May 2015 and ever since then we have been pushing EDDC and the Consortium to agree the delivery of the town centre. Council members have frequently met with both parties and have fully engaged in an obviously lengthy and often complex negotiation. In May 2019 Cranbrook elected 3 ward members to sit on EDDC for the first time and they have also been working to move this process forward as quickly as possible, and EDDC fully understand the need for rapid progress. However, if EDDC choose to instruct the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (a masterplan for the town centre) which would examine different options for the delivery of the town centre, this will take many months to draft and then longer to be approved/adopted by which time the proposal from the Consortium will have fallen away - the supermarket deal is time limited. Be assured the local councillors continue to push hard for progress, even if it doesn't look like it.

Given the ongoing planning applications for extra housing to the east, west and south of current development, do we not have a strong negotiation position with the consortium?

The Consortium will not be developing the expansion areas, that will be done in parcels by individual developers, so we do not have that as a bargaining chip.

We don't need a supermarket, there's a dozen less than 10 miles away,

One of the aims for Cranbrook is to reduce unnecessary travel, to the benefit of the environment and in reducing road congestion. Tens of thousand of miles of car travel each year can be saved by having a local supermarket, and let's not forget those who rely on public transport and who find grocery shopping miles away both inconvenient and expensive. There will also be an economic benefit with the provision of many new jobs within the town, including those in the additional retail/commercial spaces that would be provided alongside a supermarket.

Shouldn't we wait for all the information before we vote?

There will be an opportunity to comment again when planning applications and/or a Supplementary Planning Document are produced, but for now we need a steer from the community as to which option is preferred so that EDDC members can decide which option to run with.

Where you have the Town square, is that going to be pedestrianised?

This is a matter of detail that will be dealt with at the time of the planning application, and that would be the appropriate time to comment on the details. However, the current proposals show a town square/market square on the south side of Tillhouse road and another square directly opposite on the north side, outside the Tillhouse (town council building). Tillhouse Road will remain the Main Local Route through the town so it is very unlikely to be permanently pedestrianised, but it is envisaged that the road could be temporarily closed for special events and, with appropriate road materials, the two squares could effectively be joined to make a large space for those events.