

Chard Regeneration Scheme - Town Centre Regeneration Gateway Scheme (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

This report updates members on the recent work undertaken to bring forward a Town Centre Gateway and seating area adjacent to 58 Fore Street, Chard. The report further recommends the next steps in the project and the allocation of resources.

Public Interest

The regeneration of the public realm areas is of interest to all who live and work and visit the town.

Recommendations

1. That members note the content of this report, and agree to the recommendations of jointly adopting and re-assigning the project management responsibilities for this site to the Localities Team, once they take up their new posts in January.
2. That members agree to provisionally allocate up to £23,000 from the area capital reserve towards jointly underwriting the scheme with Chard Town Council.

Background

This project has been in existence since the 1990's, and for a number of reasons work has been prematurely aborted either due to funding or lack of other resources such as officer time.

The highways department carried out some repairs to the area earlier this year, but their work did not extend to the re-surfacing of the pavement, and it is currently a mismatched and ugly surface.

There have been a number of failed businesses including the latest Italian Restaurant that folded in the summer. This was due to a number of environmental factors such as the high rent (currently advertised at £1,250 pcm), and the fact that the restaurant licensee failed to apply to the highways department for a licenced obstruction, to enable the restaurant to use the generous paved area for additional outdoor seating.

The project proposal is to seek a licensed obstruction to erect some permanent solid seating, with some planters and railings, in order to provide some pedestrian security and a more aesthetic gateway entrance to Chard Town Centre.

At the December meeting, Members agreed the scheme as a priority in the Area West chapter of the council plan.

Location (as shown in Figure 1)

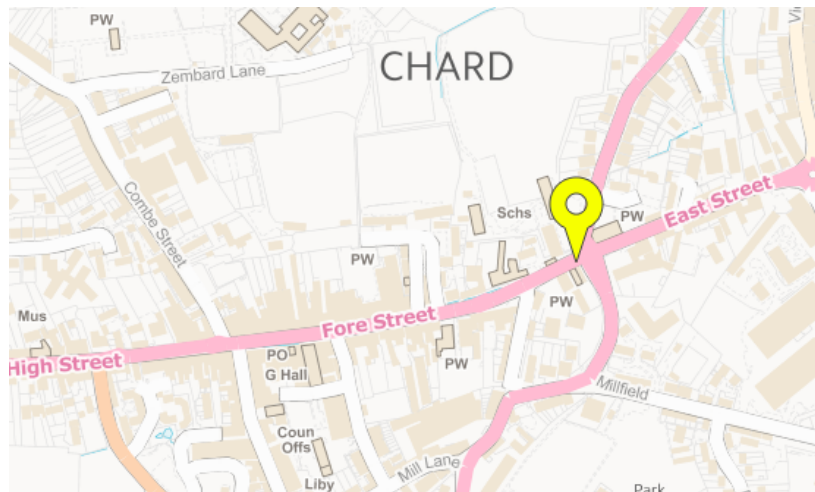


Figure 1

Cost

High level costings have been undertaken by a local Quantity Surveyor. Both options are very costly, due to the conservative nature of pricing without a detailed specification. This means realistically that there is the ability to be able to deliver the scheme either under budget, or improve the specification of what can be achieved within the same budget.

The Town Council has the opportunity to influence the gateway look and feel, by choosing some of the materials and amending some of the design proposals.

This gateway scheme will be the first link to the wider regeneration project that will include other public realm improvements across the town centre. It is thought that by working in partnership on this project, it can continue to come forward at pace.

Scope and Content

Funding - The localities team will be looking at a number of options to get external funding. This could be through local business sponsorship, lottery funding or central government funding opportunities.

Normally Highways would be expected to make a contribution for this type of scheme, however, in this case Phase 1 of the works was completed by the highways department. This included putting in some new kerbing, and partial tarmacking of the area. Highways have been explicit that this initial work is their only contribution to the gateway scheme. Photos of the area with the Highways Phase 1 improvements can be seen in the attached appendix.

Flooding - The Environment Agency data has been checked and the area is in flood zone 1. This means that a flood risk assessment is not required, and the works proposed will not affect the surface drainage.

Design - We used meetings with a highways consultant to inform the final designs. The three main highway safety considerations that need to be taken account of within the proposals are:

- For vehicles emerging from Silver Street onto High Street, the application needs to demonstrate that the railings/planting do not impede the 4.5m x 43m visibility splay to the west

- A 1:500 scale plan has been prepared showing this splay and demonstrating to the highways team that it would appear that there will be no encroachment by the works.
- On the same plan, the pedestrian visibility splay for walkers heading eastbound across the bell-mouth of the Silver Street junction is shown.
- The main concern will be the visibility for vehicles emerging from the parking bays to the west of the works. These bays are very long. However, it is important that should a vehicle enter the bay in forward gear, when the driver comes to exit back out onto High Street before any part of the vehicle encroaches onto High Street, the driver needs to be able to see for a distance of at least 43m to the nearside carriageway edge to the east. The planting and railings are being positioned such that visibility would not be obstructed. Any design changes need to factor in the constraints.

Landscaping / Planters

The Council tree officer can advise on the planting species appropriate to the visibility restrictions. Some work has been done in this area. The watering and on-going maintenance of the planters can be undertaken by the Streetscene team that currently undertakes the Chard Town Centre floral maintenance.

Seating

Members need to choose the product and the full specification; including the dimensions and materials needs to be included as part of the licenced obstruction planning application.

Resurfacing Work

The members from the Area West Committee and from the Town Council need to decide on the extent of the work. Once this specification has been fully costed and approved, the detail with the dimensions and materials proposed need to be submitted with the highways planning application.

Constraints

There are a number of utilities located both above and below ground that will dictate the extent of any works.

There are visibility parameters to be considered as detailed above.

Currently the premises at 58 Fore Street is vacant. The scheme design needs to reflect the requirements of a new Town Centre Gateway, rather than any emerging business needs as they may change over time.

Moving the Regeneration Scheme Forward

Recommendations

It is recommended that;

1. In order to allow the team to pursue a detail specification, the balance of £23,000 (Chard Town Council has agreed a contribution of £15,000) is underwritten from the Area West funds. This request is in advance of any grant funding that the localities team might be able to secure.
2. The funding work-stream is to be taken on by the new Localities Team.
3. The project management support is to be provided by SSDC (TBA by Locality).
4. Once funding is secured, and a final design agreed, it is recommended that the construction work is commissioned through a framework. This will give the funding partners the certainty that, the cost is competitive, as the frameworks need to go through an OJEU process and that a construction team can be mobilised within a few weeks.

Financial Implications

The project is expected to cost around £38,000. A number of funding streams will be explored to reduce the costs. However, to enable the scheme to continue seamlessly; the Town Council has agreed to underwrite £15,000 with the balance of £23,000 being underwritten from the Area West funds. If members agree the above recommendations, there will be £107k left in the AW capital reserve.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None at this stage

Equality and Diversity Implications

None at this stage

Background Papers

Appendix 1 and 2 Mace Cost Report

Appendix 3 Photos of Phase 1

Appendix 4 Scheme Plan

Appendix 5 Tree officer recommendations

Other reports will be made available on handover.
