

## **Chard Regeneration Scheme – Town Centre Regeneration – the next stages**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

This report advises the Area West Committee of the next stages in the regeneration of the town centre sites at the Boden Mill, the adjoining car parks and relevant adjacent SSDC land-holdings.

### **Public Interest**

The report updates the committee on the status of the Development Agreement between South Somerset District Council (SSDC) and Henry Boot PLC to develop the Boden Mill and adjacent sites. The report also outlines the revision of the regeneration programme for the site and advises of the actions taken to bring the programme forward.

### **Recommendation**

That Area West Committee notes the content of the report.

### **Background**

In April 2014 a Development Agreement was signed between Henry Boot PLC and SSDC. The Agreement (which included public realm, under-croft parking, housing and retail elements) was fundamentally dependent on a retail-led project anchored by a major food retailer. This Agreement legally bound the two parties to a three year period during which time a suitable major food retailer was needed to financially 'anchor' the scheme prior to a planning permission being obtained.

Despite protracted negotiations it proved extremely difficult to secure the interest of a major retailer in the scheme. The economic climate had changed both markedly and unexpectedly with most of the larger food retailers no longer favouring a strategy of developing large stores. It should be noted that this change of retailer strategy was not specific to Chard as the economic trend away from developing large supermarkets has impacted on the whole of the country.

In November 2016 it was mutually agreed by both parties to the Agreement that SSDC could explore and prepare alternative options for a new community-driven development scheme for this important site close to Chard Town Centre.

This decision was endorsed by SSDC District Executive Committee in December 2016 when the Committee agreed to commit £50k to funding the development of new options, development appraisals, scheme design and public consultation. Additionally, the Committee set aside funding for 3 years of project management to drive the development programme forward.

### **Report**

SSDC is resolved to seeing the regeneration project progressed to a new phase with immediate effect. SSDC will now retain control of the project through its feasibility, design and build stages to optimise the site potential for the regeneration of the town centre and better ensure the delivery of the project.

It is also recognised that there is a need for stronger community ownership of the project and that the facilities developed within the scheme will need to strongly reflect the aspirations of the community. Project aspirations will need to be measured by development appraisal and a range of suitable options for development will be prepared, prioritised and tested before approval.

To move the project forward we have:

## 1) Revised the CRS Board membership

The composition of the CRS Board was originally reported to Area West Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011. The terms of reference will remain fundamentally unchanged apart from the composition of the Board.

The existing CRS Board have agreed that there is a need for stronger community ownership of the project and that this would be better achieved by including all Chard District Council ward members on the CRS Board. **With effect from the next meeting** of the CRS Board, the membership of the Board shall be:

- The Chair – Project Sponsor (SSDC Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Environment ) The chair has the right to delegate this role when necessary.

### *User Representation - SSDC:*

- SSDC Leader
- SSDC Area West Chair
- SSDC Portfolio Holder (Strategic Planning and Place Making)
- SSDC Chard Ward Members (5 in total)

### *User Representation- Partner Organisations:*

- Chard Town Clerk
- HCA representative

### *SSDC Officer Representation:*

- Chief Executive
- Director(s) as required
- Economic Development Manager
- Area West Officer Representative

### *Other Representation:*

- Professional Officers as required
- Advising consultants as required

*N.B. The overall governance and authority for the CRS remains vested in the District Executive Committee of South Somerset District Council.*

## 2) Moved to recruit a 'Regeneration Project Manager – Chard Town Centre Redevelopment'

The job description was prepared after taking advice from the development industry. We are seeking a development specialist with a wide range of experience and skills that will help us enable and manage the mixed development scheme. The post was advertised internally (in the first instance) and has since been advertised externally in specialist publications. This process is underway at the time of writing. It is anticipated that an appointment will have been made by June 2017.

### **3) Recruited specialist architectural design, surveying and project evaluation services through the NPS Consultancy Group.**

NPS will prepare feasibility studies/ development appraisals of options for potential inclusion in the site development scheme. They will produce a range of options and early stage designs for consideration and public consultation. It is anticipated that public consultation will take place in the summer of 2017.

NPS will then be able to prepare the necessary documentation for procuring construction services for the district council and make recommendations on the stages and phasing of the proposed developments.

This will conclude the initial phase of work for which NPS have been appointed.

### **4) Ensured there will be ongoing liaison with the One Public Estate Programme (OPE)**

As discussed at the last committee meeting, the feasibility of creating a public service hub in Chard is under investigation though an OPE funded, public agencies partnership led by SCC with SSDC representation. The work on this is led by the Project Manager, Nena Beric. She will concentrate on mapping current operational buildings and discussing requirements with other key agencies to identify the potential for colocation into one or more suitable buildings in the town centre. She is aware of the NPS work and will liaise with them to avoid any duplication of effort. The OPE project will be provided with opportunities to feed their work into the CRS project.

### **Financial Implications**

No new financial implications will result from the changes outlined in this report. A budget of up to £50k has already been set aside from SSDCs Infrastructure/Feasibility Fund for the feasibility, appraisal and initial stages of the project work. The budget for the Project Manager has also been set aside from SSDCs Infrastructure Fund revenue budget to fund the post of a Project Manager for a period of 3 years. (District Executive Committee December 2016).

### **Council Plan Implications**

The development of the Boden Mill site assists the council in meeting several of its corporate objectives including:

- Working with businesses and using our assets to grow our economy.
- Support infrastructure improvements to enable growth.
- Working with partners to enable the provision of housing that meets the future and existing needs of residents and employers.

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

None associated with this report

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None associated with this report

### **Background Papers**

- *Chard Regeneration Scheme Delivery Management Structure- Area West Committee March 2011*
- *Chard Town Centre Redevelopment - Update Report (Confidential) (Agenda Item 12) - District Executive Committee December 2016.*