

Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: Holy Trinity

Report of Director of Environment

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Guildford Public Realm Improvement Project

Executive Summary

This report addresses the second phase of the programme to: reconnect the High Street to the town centre's cultural and heritage quarter, enhance the town centre's character and improve visitors' experience within a distinctive conservation area.

The first phase, delivered in 2018, was the Tunsgate pedestrianisation scheme. This used high quality materials to: compliment the High Street's granite setts and heritage, introduce vehicle restrictions and provide shared level carriageway and landscaping.

The second phase of the project will deliver, via consultation, the following:

1. Chapel Street - to enhance the current surface to ensure it meets appropriate disability accessibility standards for all whilst continuing to reflect the town centre's conservation heritage, reusing existing setts or new setts that are in keeping with existing for road surface finish
2. Swan Lane – to upgrade the pedestrianised carriageway with materials that preserve the town centre's conservation heritage.
3. Castle Street – to introduce better traffic controls, signage and physical interventions to address traffic management issues and provide an improved link to the castle grounds
4. Upgrade existing vehicle gates and CCTV – replace existing vehicle barriers and introduce new vehicle restrictions, where necessary and CCTV on Chapel street.
5. Signage - to extend the wayfinding signage to enhance the connectivity across the historic centre, promote retailers and cultural offer near the town centre.

The creation of a more pedestrian-friendly environment and reducing vehicular dominance will help create a safer place for visitors and add to the character of the town. These improvements will ensure visitors experience is positive and that Guildford's town centre remains a popular destination through its attractive historic public realm.

To deliver phase 2, a transfer of the remaining £965,000 from the provisional budget to the approved budget and the £260,000 allocated for high street protection, is required.

Recommendation to Executive:

- (1) That the proposed Town Centre Public Realm Improvements, as described in this report, be approved.
- (2) That the sum of £965,000 retained for public realm improvements and £260,000 set aside for the installation of the High Street safety barrier measures be transferred from the provisional to the approved capital programme to deliver the scheme, and that any external contributions, including the £10,000 from the BID Board, be allocated to the approved capital programme towards this scheme.
- (3) That the Director of Environment be authorised, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, to progress the scheme to completion and seek relevant statutory consents as required.

Reason for Recommendation:

To progress phase 2 of the Town Centre Public Realm Improvements.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report asks the Executive to approve the next phase of the public realm improvements scheme.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The proposals in this report support the Council's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023 theme of Place-making by:

“Regenerating and Improving Guildford’s town centre and Urban Area”

and the specific objectives to:

*“Implement the vision of the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy” and
“Improve the public realm, including surfaces, in key town centre areas”*

- 2.2 The economic strategy for 2013 - 2031 aims for Guildford to be a ‘town and borough with: strong infrastructure; world-class businesses with capacity to expand and deliver growth; an evolving and vibrant economy, which creates a progressive and sustainable environment for people today and for future generations living in an ever-improving society.’

3. Background

- 3.1 The Key driver for this project is the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy (2017) that builds upon the Allies and Morrison Town Centre Masterplan (2015) and the draft streetscape design guide produced in 2016.

3.2 These reviews inform the proposed work within Guildford town centre, which has a distinctive character that should be better connected and conserved through implementing consistent strategic design principles.

3.3 The Town Centre Masterplan states that:

“Walking is a real choice in the town but is a challenge due to the lack of suitable footpaths, the quality of the route often being shared with cars, signage provision and key routing from points of interest. This could be addressed with a planned programme of pedestrianisation works as traffic access is reduced,”

3.4 Although Surrey County Council (SCC) is the Highway Authority for most of the town centre public realm, Guildford Borough Council (GBC) is committed to retain the quality of its public realm beyond the minimal statutory standard delivered by SCC. The town centre masterplan and streetscape guide will enable GBC to raise the standard of our public realm that ensures our historic town centre heritage is conserved for future generations.

3.5 A partnership approach with SCC to deliver the first phase of the public realm improvement at Tunsgate has been successful. We shall continue this approach for the next phase.

3.6 The Council has appointed AECOM to develop the design package for this phase of work. Following this, we shall procure a main contractor for the construction work in accordance with the Council’s Procurement Procedure Rules to achieve best value.

3.7 The current high level estimate for the scheme is in the region of £1.2million. This includes the money for the vehicle security measures, all professional fees and disbursements. A more detailed cost plan is currently being developed by AECOM. It is intended that the main contractor tender will be sourced using a framework contract; however, we will explore the most expedient best value option available.

3.8 The following table sets out the anticipated spend:

Public Realm Scheme	Estimated Cost £	Budget £
Chapel Street	380,000	965,000
Castle Street	190,000	
Swan Lane	480,000	
Town centre gates and CCTV	175,000	270,000*
Total	1,225,000	1,235,000

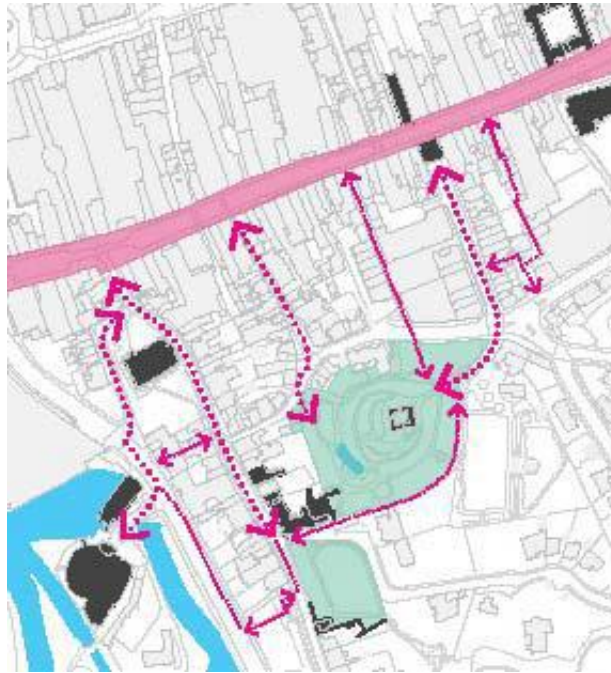
(* includes £10,000 contribution from the BID board)

3.9 The project aims to:

- (a) Provide safer pedestrian routes across the town centre
- (b) Improve and/or preserve the heritage public realm
- (c) Address poor accessibility issues for those with mobility impairments
- (d) Reduce car dominance
- (e) Provide better wayfinding to the heritage quarter
- (f) Declutter the public realm

4. Vision and Scope of the Public Realm Improvement Project

- 4.1 Guildford boasts one of the most thriving High Streets in the country. Its rich heritage has also shaped its public realm contributing to the town's attractiveness to visitors and businesses.
- 4.2 There is a network of inter-connecting streets between the High Street on either side to North Street and Castle Street which are known as the 'Gates.' These historic routes provide a vital pedestrian route that the Council wishes to enhance. See Fig 1. Below:



- 4.3 Following the success of the first phase of the programme at Tunsgate, (see fig 2 illustration of transformation of Tunsgate overleaf), the next stage is to implement:
- I. Phase 2a: Chapel Street – Improve accessibility and road surface treatment to complement the conservation status of the area. Provide signage and wayfinding where required. Review and introduce new Traffic Management Order to complement scheme.
 - II. Phase 2b: Castle Street – Mitigate traffic management issues and road surface treatment. Provide signage and wayfinding where required.

Review and introduce new Traffic Management Order to complement scheme.

- III. Phase 2c: Swan Lane – Improve and resurface Swan Lane. Provide signage and wayfinding where required. Review and introduce new Traffic Management Order to complement scheme.
- IV. Phase 2d: Improve general pedestrian safety and provide a safer environment for the High Street through improving existing gates and targeted CCTV cameras on Chapel Street.

Fig. 2 (Tunsgate - before and after improvement works)



Before works.



After works

4.3 The proposed schemes will be subject to public consultation.

5. Scope exclusions

5.1 The project scope excludes any intervention work to buildings or above ground built structure, except where specifically stated.

6. Issues and Benefits

6.1 Each element of the scheme will address specific issues with the aim of delivering overall benefits to residents, businesses and visitors.

6.2 Chapel Street

6.2.1 This is a narrow street south of the High Street dominated by retail businesses. It is one of our historic 'Gates' and the carriageway has retained traditional granite setts surface treatment and York raised pavement on both sides of the road. The main issues are: the narrow pavement at the northern end of the street towards the High Street that impedes accessibility for those with mobility impairment; and that increasing use of the carriageway for outdoor seating is being limited by the current carriageway design.

6.2.2 The project will investigate the best approach to improve accessibility, retain (where possible) the existing setts and deliver a better streetscape that is more pedestrian-friendly. This is with the aim of increasing footfall between the High Street and Castle Grounds.

6.2.3 The scheme will also look to provide a better balance of parking facilities in the vicinity in conjunction with better wayfinding to reduce street clutter.

6.3 Swan Lane

6.3.1 Swan Lane is an important 'Gate' leading from the High Street with a busy retail offer, but its uneven surface and unattractive block paving detracts from their efforts to create a better visitor experience. Swan Lane has perhaps become the most unrepresentative of all the Gates in its historic reference to either granite setts or York paving treatment within a conservation area.

6.3.2 Retailers on Swan Lane have expressed a desire to replicate the Tunsgate pedestrianisation scheme and have offered to contribute financially. SCC has stated that this is not a priority for it and any future resurfacing would be undertaken using the most economic material, likely to be asphalt.

6.4 Castle Street

6.4.1 This road serves the residential area, provides access around the High Street, and facilitates deliveries to retail businesses in the town centre. SCC recently resurfaced the road in 2018. The proposed scheme is to address the increasing incidents of traffic entering the one-way system counter to the designated flow, manage traffic speed and provide safe pedestrian crossing to the Castle Grounds.

6.5 High Street vehicular gates and CCTV camera

- 6.5.1 Guildford is a safe place to live and work and many visitors come to Guildford because of this. Guildford is proactive in its approach to managing pedestrian safety and has gates on the High Street, Tunsgate and Chapel street that restrict vehicular access that will be upgraded, in addition to others where required, so that they are fit for purpose. Guildford's Business Improvement District board supports this initiative and has agreed to provide £10,000 towards the scheme.
- 6.5.2 In addition, in response to local businesses on Chapel Street, CCTV cameras will provide reassurance to an area that is now emerging as an attractive retail street and thoroughfare for residents and visitors.

7. **Governance**

- 7.1 A project manager oversees the project and reports to the Director of Environment. A regular monthly review of the project direction and approach is undertaken through a project board that comprises a representative from SCC, the BID, and senior officers from Street Cleansing, Highways, Parking and Parks.
- 7.2 Authorisation from SCC to approve all works and traffic management orders is required and that will be sought through the appropriate SCC delegated decisions process.

8. **Programme**

- 8.1 Whilst any major construction will cause disruption, we will ensure there is minimal disruption leading up to and during the Christmas period for retailers and other local businesses. The timeline indicated below assumes that consultation, design development and completion of works may be possible before the Christmas period that starts from in November 2019.
- 8.2 However, it is unlikely that all schemes can be delivered within this programme timeframe and therefore some work streams will be phased to begin post-January 2020. The precise impact will become clearer when the plans for the full detailed schemes are completed. Any decision on a phased approach will be confirmed following public consultation.
- 8.3 We are aware that a key factor that affected the programme at Tunsgate, aside from the allowance to accommodate the development of the Tunsgate Quarter, was the lead-time for materials. Although we do have some stock of materials, an early decision will need to be made to order more 'Tunsgate' granite setts for Swan Lane.
- 8.4 A feasibility study has already commenced as funds are available from the phase 1 scheme. The indicative timeline is as follows:

Description of task	Task start	Task end
Survey sites and site analysis	29 March 2019	4 May 2019
Develop concept designs for all schemes	25 March 2019	16 May 2019
Consult on proposed design scheme	22 May 2019	12 June 2019
Finalise design scheme and presentation	17 June 2019	1 July 2019
Statutory consultation notices	16 May 2019	16 July 2019
Procurement and Award Main Contractor	23 July 2019	6 August 2019
Mobilisation	6 August	25 August 2019
Construction	3 September 2019	November 2019
Handover	November 2019	

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The Executive approved the provisional budget of £2million for town centre public realm improvements in January 2017. A drawdown of £835,000 to the capital programme was approved in July 2017 to fund the phase 1 works. A further drawdown of £200,000 was made in February 2019 to complete the stage 1 works and the decision to progress stage 2 feasibility work was made under delegated authority. There will be a significant underspend of the £200,000 that will be used towards phase 2 scheme expected to be between £30,000- £50,000.
- 9.2 There is now £965,000 retained in the provisional budget for public realm improvements that can be transferred to the approved capital programme.
- 9.3 An additional provisional budget of £260,000 agreed in February 2019 to deliver the High Street safety barrier measures is also available to be transferred to the approved capital programme. As any High Street barrier will involve public realm improvements, it would be prudent to allocate these funds to the public realm scheme to ensure a more joined-up approach to delivering both schemes.
- 9.4 There is a £10,000 contribution from Guildford's BID towards the cost of the High Street barriers.
- 9.5 The costs for all the schemes are achievable within the existing £1.235 million budget based on previous similar works in the town centre. As a much-reduced scheme for Castle Street is now proposed, the addition of the Swan Lane project is possible particularly with contribution from Swan Lane retailers. Discussion on the level of contribution will continue as detail of the scheme for Swan Lane is developed. We will continue to seek further contributions from landowners and the BID towards all of these schemes.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 The Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Infrastructure and Governance and Managing Director have all been fully briefed on the project. Presentations at key points in the project have been made to Corporate Management Team, Executive Councillors, and the Place-making and Innovation EAB.
- 10.2 A programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement has been ongoing. A presentation of the next phase of public realm works was given at the stakeholder forum in December 2018, and to local retailers/businesses from Chapel Street in January 2019.
- 10.3 A broader public consultation exercise will inform the project's detailed specification and will allow the Council to make better decisions on delivering both resident expectations and fulfilling the Council's duty to provide safe and accessible public spaces.
- 10.4 The consultation programme will include focus group meetings with local groups such as: the Holy Trinity Association Group, businesses, the BID, and Guildford Access Group. Online and postal surveys together with public presentations will be undertaken to ensure we capture the views of as many users as possible who will benefit or be impacted by the schemes.

11. Place-Making and Innovation Executive Advisory Board – 8 April 2019

- 11.1 At its meeting on 8 April 2019, the Place-Making and Innovation EAB considered these proposals and commented as follows:
- The proposed public realm improvements were welcomed and should feature some continuity in materials.
 - The public should be made aware of any related landscaping proposals from the outset.
 - Although contributions from traders were anticipated, some concerns regarding the cost of implementing and maintaining the project remained.
 - Every effort should be made to minimise negative impacts on local traders during the works.
 - Highway measures to reduce the impact of food deliveries were sought.
 - Associated consultation should be widespread and include the public, visitors and relevant local amenity groups and societies. Consultation material should be shared with councillors to widen the audience.
 - The possibility of developing a shopping/retail/tourism trail/wayfinding app should be considered.

12 Legal Implications

- 12.1 Specific legal advice continues to be provided to ensure that all future proposals are implemented in accordance with the Council's procedures and statutory requirements.

13 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 13.1 We will continue to review and update the Equalities Impact Assessment as the project progresses. As accessibility is a key success criteria, a full EIA will be completed.

14 Human Resource implications

- 14.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

15 Summary of Options

- 15.1 We are already aware of a range of views on the preferred choice of surface materials, the extent of pedestrianisation and the impact on parking. The public consultation will inform the preferred options for each scheme that has minimal impact but delivers the most for all.
- 15.2 The “do nothing” option will see a degradation of the Guildford’s high street heritage and character through the use of poorer quality materials. This will have a negative impact on the local economy and the attractiveness of the public realm.
- 15.3 As Castle Street has had recent investment of resurfacing of the carriageway by SCC, the proposed works are now more to address traffic management than a more integrated road surface ‘heritage’ treatment. This option will reduce the potential impact on parking in the vicinity.
- 15.4 To minimise disruption to residents and businesses, a phased approach may be needed to ensure accessibility is maintained at peak times. If needed, this will affect the projected completion date.

16 Conclusion

- 16.1 Guildford town centre is a success story, having a buoyant and thriving high street with high occupancy rate, visitor numbers and exemplar historic public realm.
- 16.2 The public realm project is part of the Council’s drive to ensure Guildford remains a popular place to live, work and play with the town centre environment making a significant contribution to this.
- 16.3 This project provides an opportunity to avoid any degradation of the historic ‘Gates’ which give Guildford its unique character. The benefit of these schemes will be to improve accessibility and the connectivity across town centre as well increasing pedestrian security.
- 16.4 The next steps are to continue to develop the designs for the scheme that is sympathetic to the town’s heritage and resolves issues and risks relating to both access and traffic management.

17. Background Papers

None

18. Appendices

None