

Place-making and Innovation Executive Advisory Board Report

Ward(s) affected: Holy Trinity

Report of Director of Environment

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Guildford Public Realm Improvement Project - Progress Report

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 8 April 2019, the Executive agreed to proceed with a public engagement exercise for Guildford town centre public realm improvements from which high-level feasibility design options would be developed. This report considers the outcome of this work and details the available options.

The scheme focused on delivering public realm improvements to the following:

1. Chapel Street
2. Castle Street
3. Swan Lane
4. Pedestrian safety by upgrading existing facilities and introducing new vehicle restrictions to the High Street
5. Signage and Wayfinding to better connect the historic town centre and promote businesses and the cultural offer of Guildford.

The total budget available is £1.3 million which comprises £1.248 million approved capital budget, £49,300 of revenue budget and a £10,000 contribution from Experience Guildford.

It should be noted that Swan Lane was brought within scope due to the offer of a financial contribution from a group of Swan Lane landlords. Also, that architectural lighting, public art and other public realm enhancements did not form part of the original scheme.

AECOM, our Principal Design consultants, have developed a range of costed options, based on feasibility study, but informed by the consultation with residents, businesses, visitors, councillors and council officers. The two options presented are a core scheme that is within budget and an option that captures the broader scope derived from the consultation feedback which include improvements bespoke public realm enhancements (Architectural lighting and other furniture), along with more complex interventions to address Castle Street traffic issues. The latter option creates

budgetary pressures to the council and the need for additional funding if chosen.

The options proposed are as follows:

Option 1: The core scheme (including Chapel Street, Castle Street) plus Swan Lane. This option excludes architectural lighting, signage and wayfinding enhancements but addresses the core elements of road surface treatments, street lighting, traffic control interventions. This can be delivered for **£1.3million which is within budget.**

Option 2: An enhanced scheme which would significantly improve the 'look and feel' of the public realm through integration of architectural lighting, street furniture, wayfinding, signage and a major transformation of Tunsgate junction with a large raised table that replicates the lost historic 'square'. This will cost **£1.67 million. Additional funding of £367,000 will be required** through a virement from the capital contingency fund.

Officers also propose that the full capital cost of the project is funded from the New Homes Bonus reserve, in line with the New Homes Bonus policy approved by Council in February 2016. Funding the scheme from the NHB reserve will mitigate any on-going borrowing costs on the Council's general fund revenue account from this scheme.

To note both costed options, include pedestrian safety barriers for the High street including new gated access for West end of the High Street.

Recommendation:

That the Executive:

- 1) approves option 2 and agrees to progress to detailed design and construction.
- 2) that it approves for officers to proceed with the detailed designs for the preferred option, and to approve a virement from the Capital Contingency Fund up to £367,000.
- 3) Approves that the full capital cost of the preferred option is funded from the Council's New Homes Bonus Reserve

Reason for recommendation

To support the Council's strategic priority of increasing Guildford town centres' economic success, increasing accessibility and improving links between the High Street and Cultural Quarter.

1. Purpose of Report,

- 1.1. This report updates the Executive on the work undertaken to date and seeks executive's view on preferred option for officers to proceed.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The proposals to improve the public realm supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023 theme of Place-making by:

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

“Implement the vision of the town centre 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 scheme's aim is to improve the public realm and pedestrian accessibility in Guildford town centre and to better connect the Castle grounds, museum and other heritage assets with the High Street.
- 3.2 Key areas of focus have been Chapel Street, Castle Street and Swan Lane. Swan Lane was a late addition to the scheme as local businesses offered to contribute to some of the cost of the scheme. See Map below:



- 3.3 Pedestrian safety measures have been included to manage vehicular traffic in the High Street and adjoining streets and increase pedestrianisation in the town centre.
 - 3.4 Although Surrey County Council (SCC) are the Highway Authority for most of the town centre public realm, Guildford Borough Council (GBC) is committed to retaining the quality of its public realm beyond the minimal statutory standard delivered by SCC.
 - 3.5 GBC has developed a town centre masterplan and streetscape guide to enable GBC to raise the standard of the public realm that ensures our historic town centre heritage is conserved for future generations.
- 4. Project Progress**
- 4.1 Since the appointment of AECOM as lead consultant, the focus has been on public consultation and developing feasibility design options that address issues raised from the consultation and site analysis.
 - 4.2 The consultation process involved three in situ walkabout sessions in May 2019, over 3 days, to meet and discuss matters with the local businesses and residents who live in or around the principal streets of Castle Street, Chapel Street and Swan Lane.
 - 4.3 The walkabout sessions were supplemented by an online survey. This generated over 400 responses promoted via social media and targeted letter drops within local town centre area. Results of the walkabout sessions and online consultation exercise are summarised in Appendix 1.

- 4.4 The stakeholder feedback generated a range of useful views: From the public online consultation exercise, respondents considered the resurfacing of Swan Lane with setts/cobbles to be the highest priority as setts were considered one of the most popular features of Guildford. Other issues identified in the focus group sessions with local residents, accessibility groups, amenity groups (HTAG), councillors and businesses were:
- A. Traffic issues and the need for a pedestrian crossing on Castle Street.
 - B. Accessibility of Chapel Street and more pedestrianisation across the town centre.
 - C. Improving visitors' experiences through creating a welcoming environment with better lighting and crime prevention measures.
- 4.5 AECOM has produced a costed feasibility study that is informed by the consultation, our existing policies to produce a detailed SWOT analysis of each street. This considered approach has resulted in the two options proposed concept designs for each street. These are shown in Appendix 2.

5. Costed Options

- 5.1 The costed options presented by AECOM will need to be further informed by measured surveys, utility and legal searches but each option has considered stakeholder feedback, accessibility, council policies, public highway regulations, planning and heritage issues.
- 5.2 As there are no detailed designs nor decisions made on lighting, furniture and fittings, a provisional sum has been placed against each of these items to enable estimations of full project cost.
- 5.3 The scheme is at an early feasibility stage. Therefore, AECOM have proposed a 5% design contingency and 10% construction contingency to reflect the design stage uncertainties. However, as GBC has a more cautious risk appetite, a further 10% contingency has been added across the full project cost.
- 5.4 Although a further access audit is required it is assumed that a central York stone pathway will be the preference for both Chapel Street and Swan Lane.
- 5.5 The options developed from the feasibility study are as follows:
- 5.6 **Option 1 – Core scheme**
- 5.7 This scheme can be delivered at an estimated cost of **£1.3million. This is within our approved budget of £1.3 million.** Table 1 sets out the key elements:

Table 1 – Option 1

Site	Description	Cost	Comment
Swan Lane	Full resurfacing with Cobble setts and central path of York stone, includes heritage streetlights	£186,098	Excludes architectural lighting, shop signs, and gateway features
Chapel Street	Full resurfacing with Cobble setts and central path of York stone, includes heritage streetlights	£124,820	Excludes architectural and festoon lighting, shop signs, and gateway features
Castle Street East	works to improve road layout introduce a raised pedestrian crossing to castle grounds to Tunsgate	£436,010	Excludes lighting, and gateway features. Pedestrian crossing is signified by a change of materials
Castle Street West	Pedestrian crossing using traditional material	£42,368	Raised level crossing using Staffordshire blue pavers
Pedestrian Safety Measures	Upgrade or new bollards and gates to meet PAS 68 standards on Market St, Swan Lane, Tunsgate, Chapel Street and High Street	£167,680	All Townscape furniture including new vehicle gates on west exist end of High Street
Sub Total £956,976			
OTHER COSTS			
Design and Development Fees		£224,840	
Total Fees and Works		£1,181,816	
Total plus extra contingency	GBC risk factor of additional 10%	£1,299,997.00	Within £1.3million budget

Option 2 – Enhanced Scheme

- 5.8 This scheme costed at £1.6million responds more fully to the aspirations from public engagement and includes significant public realm enhancements to Chapel Street, Castle Street and Swan Lane. Details are shown in Table 2 below.
- 5.9 This scheme includes integrating better street lighting (reverting modern fixtures to heritage style lamps and columns), and Architectural lighting for heritage features and for events (seasonal festoon lighting etc) which would provide a more welcoming environment to support night time economy and deter crime.
- 5.10 A more holistic and detailed wayfinding and signage fixtures and furniture that develop strong local identity and promote local heritage, and a rationalisation of shop signage and remove street clutter, particularly A Boards that have proliferated causing access issues.
- 5.11 Of note and contributing to a significant increase in cost is the traffic measure treatment to improve pedestrian crossing at Tunsgate/ Castle Street junction to reduce vehicle travelling down the one way which will also recreate a former historic ‘public square’ at this location that would better link the Castle grounds to the High Street.
- 5.12 The other significant difference to Option 1 is proposed a widening of the pavement by The Keep public house to deter illegal parking who do not adhere to the existing parking restrictions in place.

Table 2 - Option 2

Site	Description	Cost	Comment
Swan Lane	Relay with Cobble setts and central York stone	£221,667	includes architectural lighting, shop signs, and gateway features but includes streetlights
Chapel Street	Full relay with central York stone from High Street to Castle St. Lighting, wayfinding	£168,452	Includes lighting, shop signs, and gateway features includes streetlights
Castle Street East	Castle street works to improve road layout and introduce a large raised table crossing	£625,096	A larger raised table using high quality materials, includes widening of road pavement at March Hare public house, architectural lighting, and streetlights, street furniture (seats)

Castle Street West	Pedestrian crossing and widening of pavement	£42,368 £69,938	raised levels crossing between Chapel Street and castle grounds using Staffordshire blue pavers and creating narrow highway to limit nuisance parking
Pedestrian Safety Measures	Bollards and Gates to meet PAS standards	£167,680	All Townscape furniture including gates and bollards
Sub-total of works		£1,295,2012	
OTHER COSTS			
Design and Development fees total	Sub-total of fees	£228,840	
Total	total of fees and works	£1,524,041	
TOTAL with GBC extra risk contingency of 10%		£1,676,445.1	Additional Budget of £376,000 will be required

Town centre pedestrian safety measures

- 5.13 AECOM have developed the vehicle restriction options following an assessment by Surrey Police and other key stakeholders. The area of focus is the pedestrianised area in and around the High Street and the aim is to ensure that all existing barriers comply with the current standard (PAS68) for protecting pedestrians.
- 5.14 The options proposed will mean upgrading the existing high street barriers and installing new PAS68 compliant gates at both ends of the High Street. A visualisation of the east exit of the High Street proposed new gates is shown below and in Appendix 3:



- 5.15 Additional bollards/gates will also be located at Tunsgate, Chapel Street, Market Street and Swan Lane.
- 5.16 There are very limited options for gates and bollards that are PAS68 compliant and the designs are generally utilitarian, and preference is for products from Townscape due to cost and design. To achieve complementary heritage style gates will require a bespoke manufacturing process which is expensive and takes longer to produce than standard gates.
- 5.17 The cost of the barriers is based on using Townscape furniture which are most in keeping with existing style but this will need to be further developed to reduce the street clutter impact they may present.

Risk and Issues

- 6.0 As with any scheme cost certainty increase as it progresses into detailed designs phase. As we are in feasibility stage there is a substantial contingency, reflected in AECOM project cost and with a further additional contingency GBC we have added to the overall cost estimate. This therefore takes contingency from 10% to 20% for both design and construction risks.
- 6.1 The outstanding land searches need to be undertaken to understand the impact on the under crofts of adjoining buildings that may exist as this will affect road construction. To reduce this risk, a visual inspection of all properties will also be undertaken as land searches are not always correct.
- 6.2 The proposal will impact on parking management. This will be resolved through any future Traffic Regulation Orders required. There will also be opportunity to look at wider traffic impacts to help issues on Castle Street which can be built into the scheme as detailed designs are developed.
- 6.3 Works that affect any buildings will add further complexity to the project particularly if needing listed building consent and/or planning permission in the conservation area. The core scope option reduces this risk. However, in Option2 this risk will result in significant delays to develop this area of design and consents.
- 6.4 AECOM fees, procured through SCAPE Framework, represent a significant proportion of the total cost. It also excludes professional service-related fees incurred during construction which have now been factored in to other professional fees. The additional contingency added to the total cost shall also cover these elements and some other professional services such as clerk of works. We could retender all professional services to test the open market via open competition, but this will delay the project and lose continuity of knowledge and relationships now developed with stakeholders.
- 6.5 Architectural lighting and wayfinding (as proposed in Option 2) will have significant impact on look and feel of the scheme. These aspects are what the public generally would appreciate most and creates a sense of place. However,

they are the design elements that require consents from landlords as well as planning which may delay delivery of the project.

- 6.6 The proposed financial contribution from a landlord on Swan Lane remains uncertain and unlikely as pressure on retailing continues. Discussions to seek contributions are continuing but we do not envisage the contribution would now be likely due the significant cost of works and unstable retail market.

Financial implications

- 7.1 There is currently £1.248 million available approved capital funding supplemented by £49,320 revenue to deliver the Public Realm Scheme. Guildford have also set aside £10,000 contribution towards this scheme. This amounts to a total of £1.307 million to deliver a scheme.
- 7.2 Executive approved provisional budget of £2 million for town centre public realm improvement in Jan 2017. A drawdown of £835,000 to capital programme was approved in July 2017 to fund phase 1 works which related to Tunsgate. A further drawdown of £200,000 was made in February 2019 to complete stage 1 works and progress stage 2 was made under delegated authority.
- 7.3 The £2 million capital budget was further supported by £260,000 approved budget relating to pedestrian safety measures that was transferred to a single public realm capital programme in the April 2019 Executive report.
- 7.4 The £10,000 of contribution from Guildford's BID towards high street barriers as well as potential funding from Swan Lane Landlords will be welcome contribution to the scheme.
- 7.5 As outlined in paragraph 5.7 above, Option 1 can be delivered within the budget for the scheme of £1.3million.
- 7.6 As outlined in paragraph 5.12, As Option 2 is the preferred option, additional funding of £376,000 will be required. Officers therefore request a virement of £376,000 from the New Homes contingency fund.
- 7.7 The project is currently anticipated to be funded from general fund borrowing. As the scheme is on the approved capital programme and the virement is from the capital contingency fund there is no additional underlying need to borrow or debt cost on the Council's general fund revenue account than that already budgeted for. However, in order to mitigate the borrowing costs on the general fund, officers now propose that the scheme is funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve as delivery of improvements to public realm meets the criteria of the New homes Bonus Policy approved by Council in February 2016.

Consultation

- 8.1 The public consultation has been useful to inform the concept plans proposed. Attached is a summary feedback from both the Online Questionnaire and Walkabout sessions.

- 8.2 The walkabout sessions were attended to be focus groups to be able to get more detailed feedback. They were attended by ward councillors, local groups such as Holy Trinity Amenity Group, businesses, Experience Guildford, Guildford Access Group and local residents. Each event was publicised by a letter drop to all properties on each street.
- 8.3 Walkabout feedback from Local businesses were mostly about disruption and timing of any works preferring this to happen after the New Year or other peak seasons, provisions for delivery vehicles, and supporting visitors experience by better lighting and CCTV for both night time economy and early winter nights. Whilst the amenity group emphasis was on pedestrianisation, conserving existing granite setts or replacing setts like for like and dealing with nuisance parking/parking issues.
- 8.4 From both walkabout sessions and the online survey, accessibility was considered to be most significant for Chapel Street due to the uneven surface and the narrow pavement at the High Street End and better street furniture to improve surrounding. Tackling Castle Street's confusing one-way system and inadequate pedestrian crossing was also high on residents' priorities to resolve.
- 8.5 The online questionnaire survey was publicised via a social media campaign and generated 12,000 hits on our Facebook account. This resulted in over 400 responses. Preference was for Swan Lane to be recobbled as this was considered the most unattractive of all the streets being proposed for improvement.
- 8.6 Within the programme going forward there are plans for further public exhibitions to both present the preferred option and then the final option to ensure the public are aware of the programme of works. As the designs are still in feasibility stage, there will be opportunity to refine scheme further and particularly to see how best we can address pedestrian crossing at the Castle Square.

Legal Implications

- 9.1 It is open to the Executive to select its preferred option. In exercising this discretion, Members should be mindful of their duty under the Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the "Best Value" duty).
- 9.2 Each of the options outlined in this report require varying legal and procurement actions. Officers from Legal Services and the Procurement team will continue support the progress of this project to ensure best value outcomes.
- 9.3 It is confirmed that AECOM have provided the contracted services in accordance with the budgetary allocation for those services. A decision on a preferred option

for this project will assist officers prepare a specification to support the appointment of a designer for the works.

- 9.4 All contracts related to this project must be procured in a manner which complies with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Guildford Borough Council's Procurement Procedure Rules.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 We will continue to review and update the EIA as the project progresses. As accessibility is a key success criterion a full EIA will be completed.

Human Resource implications

- 11.1 There are no HR implications.

Summary of Options

- 12.1 The outcome of the site analysis and consultation exercises provided AECOM with more informed understanding of the issues than outlined in original scope and hence the range of options now presented. There is a budgetary constraint for option 2 scheme. However, the opportunity to deliver an enhanced scheme will see a significant step change in the benefits of the scheme and opportunity to deliver a more consistent streetscape so that there is a more united look and feel of Guildford's public realm.
- 12.2 The Enhanced Option does present an increase budgetary cost. This is namely attributed to the larger 'raised square' at Castle Street. However, the cost increases are also from inclusion of architectural lighting, furniture, signage, shop signs and public art which are inherently more complex to deliver, as the delays in getting collective response from all landlords to have a standardised approach to such fixtures to their building may be protracted leading to cost inflation.
- 12.3 The preferred option (option 2) delivers the benefits of better disability accessibility of key routes from Chapel Street and Castle Street, whilst enhancing conservation of local heritage character of Swan Lane with appropriate choice of materials. Lastly it will increase pedestrian safety through additional barriers within the High street area.

Next Step

- 13.1 To move the project forward, a decision is required on the preferred option to progress to detailed designs, and procurement of lead designer as AECOM, have completed their contractual services obligations, for detailed design stage works. As additional capital GBC funding is required, this will need to be approved by Executive.

Programme

- 14.1 The following programme sets out an estimated timescale for delivery of Option 1 which is the only option within budget.
- 14.2 There is preference for construction for each street to be sequential as opposed to all at once hence the possible 6months to the programme timeline.

Events	Nov2019	Dec	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Appoint Lead Designer											
Develop Public Exhibitions of preferred options											
Host Public Event											
Develop Detailed designs											
Planning Permissions (if Required)											
Exhibition of final scheme											
Procure main contractor											
Contract Start on Site											
Works completion											

Appendix 1- Consultation Summary

Appendix 2 – Design Options

Appendix 3 – High Street 3D Visuals Pedestrian Safety measures