

TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE ON BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE - POST ENHANCEMENT SCHEME REVIEW

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENTERPRISE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on progress regarding the issues raised under the review process on the Baldock Town Centre enhancement scheme.
- 1.2 To seek Members agreement to the recommended actions at Appendix 1 attached to this report.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report contains a key recommendation that was first notified to the public in the forward Plan on 1st June 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council adopted the Baldock Town Centre Strategy in January 2006 and agreed as one of the key actions to undertake the enhancement of Baldock town centre following completion of the Baldock Bypass in spring 2006.
- 3.2 The Council commissioned Building Design Partnerships (BDP) in February 2007 to prepare a design scheme and supervise the works on site for the Baldock Town Centre enhancement project.
- 3.3 Following agreement of the final design by the Baldock & District Committee in August and November 2007, contract tender documents were drawn up and contractors, namely Skanska, were appointed in April 2008 to undertake the enhancement works.
- 3.4 The works started on site on 9 June 2008 and the major part of the works were completed in May 2009.
- 3.5 It is the practice of this Council to review enhancement schemes usually within 12 months of the substantial completion date to allow the local community, businesses and authorities to familiarise themselves with the new environment and for any monitoring to take place. This review has taken place in consultation with our partners Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). Comments from the Local Police and our Designers, BDP, have also been sought.

- 3.6 An initial report was brought before the Baldock & District Committee in March 2010 which outlined the issues to be addressed as part of the review process. The List attached as Appendix 1 was agreed and officers were tasked with reporting back to a future meeting of the Committee on progress.

4. THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 4.1 It is usual practise for the review to concentrate on issues directly associated with the enhancement scheme. Wider issues such as the migration of on-street parking will also be considered as part of this process.
- 4.2 This review process does not form part of the period for remedying defects relating to the contract for the works. The defects period lasts for 12 months following the issue of the certificate of substantial completion of the works (i.e. to late April 2010). The defects period is part of the contract, and is where any issues relating to workmanship that emerge during this period are resolved and corrected by the contractor. This does not include new works. Both NHDC and HCC officers plus the designers are responsible for compiling a 'defects list' of items over this period for the contractor to correct. If new works are identified then such works would need to be funded separately.
- 4.3 The review process on the other-hand can be on-going as not all items raised will be able to be resolved immediately. This will be dependent on available funding and on the requirement to follow other processes, such as the need to gather further information, to consult with the local community, and to accord with certain legislative procedures such as set out in the Road Traffic Act.
- 4.4 In the period leading up to the review, officers have collated a number of issues that have been raised by members of the public directly in writing or through local Members. Officers have also attended meetings of the Baldock Town Partnership and the Baldock Society to ensure that issues raised at these meetings are listed for inclusion in the review. The list was agreed by Members at their meeting on 8th March 2010 and it was agreed at that meeting that no further action be taken on the following items: (See Appendix 1 attached)
- Item Ref: A6 – Request for an additional pedestrian crossing in High Street.
 - Item Ref A8 – Request for hanging baskets on lighting columns
 - Item A10 – Request for finger post sign
 - Item B1 – Request for parking for additional businesses in town centre
 - Item B2 – Request to extend the resident permit parking Bay areas in town centre
 - Item B3 – Request to extend time restricted parking bays outside the post office in Whitehorse Street to include Saturdays and into early evenings on weekdays

- Item C2 – Consider 20mph speed restriction to reduce traffic speeds through the town centre.

5. UPDATE ON OTHER ISSUES

5.1 The issues listed in Appendix 1 have been categorised into the following sections covering:

- i) Design Issues – in terms of location of street furniture, pedestrian crossings, access requirements and street lighting.
- ii) Parking Issues – in terms of existing restrictions within the town centre and displacement issues to surrounding residential streets.
- iii) Traffic Management Issues – in terms of traffic speeds, traffic control, phasing times at controlled junctions and cycling issues.

Detailed NHDC Officer, HCC and Police comments, suggested recommendations and updated officer comments and recommended actions for each of the items listed are included in the Review Schedule at Appendix 1. The updated officer comments and Recommended Actions are shown in ***bold italics***.

5.2 There are certain items for which growth funding through the Corporate Business Planning Process has been secured, mainly in terms of addressing the parking issues and other related access issues as outlined under items referenced A1, B4 and B5 in Appendix 1. This funding has been secured as part of delivering the actions set out in the adopted District-wide Parking Strategy 2009-2019, which includes undertaking a town-wide parking review in Baldock during the year 2010/2011. This was the subject of a scoping report to the Committee on 14 June 2009 and are also included in the updated report to be submitted to this July Committee meeting (See Agenda Item 8).

5.3 This means that those issues listed in para 5.2 above will form part of the investigatory work for prioritising streets that should be included in the town-wide parking review. The prioritising will be subject to available funding and will need to be phased over time as more funding becomes available.

5.4 The other items such as additional lighting along Hitchin Street, and all the Traffic Management issues (i.e. items ref A7 under Design and items ref C1, C3, C4 and C7 under Traffic Management at Appendix 1) are subject to HCC funding and would have to be phased over time as funding became available. Officers from HCC will keep Members informed on progress through briefings and or reports to the Baldock & District Committee.

5.5 More complex issues relating to improving the sightlines at Mansfield Road, (i.e. Items ref A4 in Appendix 1) have required more detailed discussions with the BDP, the designers for the scheme, and HCC as these may be considered as additional items to the contract and could require additional funding that would have to be sought separately.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The terms of reference of the Area Committee state that the Area Committee may make a decision by resolution to allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council (page 50 of the Council's current constitution).
- 6.2 There are no legal implications directly associated with this report. In the case of a Traffic Regulation Orders being prepared as part of the town-wide parking review in the future, the TROs must be drafted, considered and published in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) Regulations 1996 and other relevant legislation.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In line with the approved Parking Strategy and Action Plan, a Capital growth bid, £65K per annum, was put forward and agreed through the Corporate Business Planning process in February 2010 to fund one town-wide parking review per annum for 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14. It has been agreed that this funding will be allocated to the Baldock town-wide parking review for 2010/11.
- 7.2 An investment bid was also proposed and agreed through the Corporate Business Planning Process in February 2010 for the maintenance of lines and signs across the district.
- 7.3 The Council will work together with HCC and other funding bodies to implement some of the issues raised in the Review List. Some funding may have to come through the Area Committee discretionary budget.
- 7.4 With regard to risk there is significant reputational risk associated with the not progressing the items listed in the review list. Both the Baldock town Centre enhancement Scheme and the Parking Strategy town-wide reviews are included on the Council's risk register and is updated annually.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The officer time involved in reviewing and undertaking the recommended actions outlined in Appendix 1 is identified as part of the Corporate Business Planning Process for Planning Services. Actions that involve TROs have also been included in other relevant Service plans, such as the Parking Service and Legal Service, given the requirement to bring in other officers across the council at various stages as various issues raised through the review process are addressed.
- 8.2 The Council recognises the changing nature of equality legislation and incorporates national legislation and regulations into its scheme and services as appropriate, as set out in the Council's Corporate Equality Strategy. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 marked a very significant innovation in the legal framework. It placed much of what was previously only advisory and voluntary on to a statutory footing. The Act extends the provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976 to cover all the activities of all public authorities. It

makes important extensions to public authority duties. Equivalent statutory duties have been created for disability by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and for gender by the Equality Act 2006. These duties divide into a general duty and specific duties.

8.3 The contents of this report do not directly impact on equality, in that it is not making proposals that will have a direct impact on equality of access or outcomes for diverse groups.

8.4 All efforts will be made to meet the Council's equalities plan when working together with and informing the local community on the implementation of TROs in their area.

9. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

9.1 Officers attended meetings held by the Baldock Town Partnership on January 2010 and the Baldock Society on 18 February 2010 to discuss and record issues raised for inclusion in the Review Process.

9.2 Informal briefing sessions have also been held with Local Ward Members to ensure that the items raised through local residents and businesses are included on the Review List.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That members note the issues raised under the review and agree the updated recommended actions as set out in the Review Schedule at Appendix 1.

10.2 That NHDC and HCC Officers be requested to provide progress reports on the outstanding items listed at Appendix 1.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 That the issues raised in the Review Schedule at Appendix 1 are adequately addressed and progressed in accordance with available funding arrangements.

12. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

12.1 Alternative options have been considered on a number of issues listed in Appendix 1 and are addressed in the officer comments. There are a number of alternatives to be investigated relating to the parking and traffic management issues. These will be reported to Members as part of any progress reports.

13. APPENDICES

13.1 Appendix 1: Baldock Town Centre: Post Enhancement Scheme Review List. Updated July 2010

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

14.1 Louise Symes, Planning Projects Manager, ext 4359

Simon Young, Transport Policy Officer, ext 4846

John Ironside, Corporate Strategic Planning & Enterprise Manager, ext 4626

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 Baldock Town Centre Strategy

15.2 End of Scheme Report prepared by BDP

15.3 Stage 3 Safety Audit

15.4 Relevant Committee reports