

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

13th October 2010

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

FISH HILL SQUARE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME – DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR AGREEMENT FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENTERPRISE MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Members the findings of the public consultation on the draft proposal for Fish Hill Square Enhancement Scheme.
- 1.2 For Members to agree the final design scheme for Fish Hill Square enhancement following public consultation to allow Building Design Partnership (BDP), the designers, to proceed with detailed design in consultation with North Herts District Council.
- 1.3 To seek Members' agreement on the next stage in the project programme relating to further work.

A presentation of the final design proposals and the next stages in the project programme will be made by BDP at the Committee Meeting.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Royston Town Centre Strategy, adopted in June 2008, sets out an Action Plan which requires the preparation and delivery of an enhancement scheme for Fish Hill Square. The aim of the Strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework to promote integrated development and enhancement of Royston town centre, over the next 10 to 15 years, that will seek to benefit its future economic viability and vitality while emphasising its historic character and local identity as a market town.
- 3.2 The Council appointed Building Design Partnership (BDP) in May 2010 to prepare design proposals for the Fish Hill Square enhancement scheme and to supervise the implementation of the works on site.
- 3.3 The funding for the enhancements works is from Growth Area Funding (GAF). Due to the limited size of the budget, part of BDP's brief is to determine how to make the most effective use of the funding available to achieve the best design solution.

3.4 A design proposal was prepared following previous consultation events, meetings and surveys and was agreed for public consultation following a joint briefing session with Royston District members and Royston Town Council. See proposed masterplan attached at Appendix 1.

3.5 A public consultation period on the draft design proposals ran for nearly four weeks, starting with a launch on Saturday 28th August 2010. The consultation period closed on 23rd September 2010. The consultation was supported by a permanent exhibition in the Royston library and the following was undertaken to promote awareness of the design proposal:

- Press releases appeared in the Royston Crow and the Royston Weekly News throughout the consultation period;
- Leaflets were hand delivered to every residential and business premises within the town centre core area, inviting everyone to attend the launch and the exhibition;
- Letters were sent to key stakeholders, including the Royston Town Council, Royston First, Royston Chamber of Commerce, local schools and surrounding parish councils, inviting them either to the launch and/or advising them about the exhibition;
- Posters were displayed in prominent positions around the town informing people about the exhibition;
- An article appeared in the autumn edition of Outlook informing people about the proposed scheme and where they could view the exhibition;
- The consultants opened a Facebook and Twitter account as a means of engaging with the public during the exhibition;
- The Council's website has been kept up-to-date throughout the period of the project.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The proposed scheme relates to the enhancement of Fish Hill Square and encompasses the following key objectives, upon which people were consulted. These included:

- Delivering a well designed high quality scheme that becomes a focal point for the town centre
- Creating a space that retains its local identity and is safe and inviting to visit
- Enhancing the square by providing an aesthetic setting for the buildings fronting onto the space
- Creating a new flexible public space that can be used for activities such as pavement cafes, specialist markets, and events
- Minimising the dominance of vehicles and the impact of parking within the square
- Relocating removed parking spaces elsewhere within the town centre
- Using robust, maintainable and aesthetic materials.

- 4.2 Nearly 200 people visited the launch and some 150 written responses have been received on the proposed masterplan. A petition was also submitted 4 days after the close of the consultation period. It is interesting to note that the majority of the written comments received were in support of the scheme as a whole. The comments are in the process of being considered and will be reported on in more detail at the meeting. An analysis of the consultation responses are included in the summary document attached at [Appendix 2](#).
- 4.3 The petition was in relation to the cost of the scheme and the potential loss of parking spaces and their relocation elsewhere, the suggested street furniture to be included in the scheme and the suggestion that funding should rather be spent on other services relating to the town centre.
- 4.4 The key points evolving from the feedback to the consultation were in relation to:
- Mostly supporting the proposed Scheme - most people were in favour of the proposed design and supported the concept for the use of the new square as a public space, for special markets, as potential pavement cafés and for other public activities.
 - The potential loss and relocation of parking – there was a mix of responses to this proposal. While some people felt the parking should remain the same, most were in favour of some retention and relocation with suggestions on various options for duration of stay, others felt that this was an opportunity to remove all parking out of the square.
 - The types of features to be placed within the new Square - comments received were: mostly in favour of some trees; different views were raised regarding the type of seating; as well as whether to proceed with the sculpture and if so on the type of sculpture. Concerns were also raised about the amount of features being introduced and the use of the space for other activities.
 - Improvements to Jepps Lane as part of the Scheme plus the opportunity to improve the lighting levels.
 - The types of materials suggested – although most were in favour of the types of material being suggested, they needed to contribute to the historic character of the town as well as being durable and user friendly in terms of accessibility.
 - The option of relocating the car parking adjacent to the new Square was also suggested on the grounds of providing more space for public events with the closing off of the car parking.
 - The potential cost of the scheme – there were two issues here, one was in relation to the limited budget and that it needs to be spent wisely to make an improvement. The other related to the petition and the negative comments received in terms of the money being spent on other services or maintenance issues around the town centre. It is important to note that Cabinet in July 2010 agreed to fund the project from GAF, which is money previously received by the Council from DCLG and should be spent on projects relating to growth in our town centres and other transport initiatives. This is capital money and is to be spent on projects such as Fish Hill. It is also to be noted that as part of the Council's Business Planning Process, revenue funding has been set aside for future maintenance of our town centres up to 2015.

- 4.5 All these issues will be addressed as part of the feedback to be presented to Members at the meeting on 13th October. These will be categorised as follows:
- Category A – changes that have been made to the proposed masterplan in light of the comments received;
 - Category B – additional areas of work that will need to be undertaken as a direct result of the proposed scheme.
- 4.6 In terms of amendments made in light of Category A, officers are seeking Members' views on allowing those parts of the design scheme to be frozen. This will enable the consultants to proceed with the preparation of the detailed design and maintain progress on the agreed project programme.
- 4.7 In terms of the additional areas of work that will be required as part of Category B, officers will be seeking Members' input on the suggested actions.
- 4.8 The final decision on the work covered by Categories A and B will be made by the Project Board which has been established to run this project.

5. CATEGORY A : FINAL DESIGN SCHEME AND PROGRAMME

Final Design

- 5.1 As stated in paragraph 3.3, part of BDP's brief is to determine how to make the most effective use of the funding available to achieve the best design solution while using the most appropriate materials. To keep within an agreed overall budget for the enhancement works BDP have had to review the extent of the masterplan when drawing up the detailed designs. The extent of the enhancement works to be included within the contractor's tender documents is shown in the masterplan attached at Appendix 1. This includes the existing Square and Jepps Lane.
- 5.2 The details include:
- i. Retention of through traffic movements and access to businesses and residences, relocation of parking bays and improvement of pedestrian routes and crossing points;
 - ii. The types of materials and street furniture to be used for the new public spaces in Fish Hill Square;
 - iii. The general positioning of new semi-mature trees.

Project Programme

- 5.3 The Council and BDP are conscious that the method of implementing the works requires careful consideration to accommodate the needs of the local businesses, the residents and any special events programmed to occur during the construction period. The intention is to cause minimal disruption to the functioning of the town centre during the construction phase.
- 5.4 Preparation on the detailed drawings and tender documents for the contract works will commence shortly with the intention of inviting tenders in January 2011. It is anticipated that the works will commence on site in late spring 2011.

- 5.5 Once the successful contractor has been appointed, the Council and BDP will be in a position to inform Members, Royston Town Council plus the local business and residential community of the method of implementation of the works. It is anticipated that this will not be announced until late April 2011. This will be by way of an exhibition in Royston Library, through various leaflet drops and necessary meetings to inform people about the contractor's works programme as well as being kept informed throughout the construction period.

6. CATEGORY B : ITEMS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 Parking issues – the current car park has 14 bays. The proposal is to retain 8 of these bays as part of the scheme. The remaining 6 spaces can be relocated along the southern section of Market Hill. The form of traffic management arrangements along with associated Traffic Regulation Orders and parking management arrangements relating to the scheme will require further detailed investigation.
- 6.2 Public art - BDP proposed a sculpture at the northern end of Fish Hill in line with John Street. This would create a focal point when entering the square from these streets. The form of this public art was the subject of the consultation and there was no general consensus on its form. It was suggested at the Royston Committee Meeting on 22nd September that the proposal should be subject to further consideration, as this could be implemented at later date outside the remit of this contract.
- 6.3 Renaming the Square – as part of the consultation process people were asked to put forward suggested names for the new Square. While some suggestions have been made as to names, it was suggested by Royston & District Committee at their meeting on 22nd September that the consultation on this should be widened to include other organisations and schools within Royston.
- 6.4 Licensing issues and event management - the public space created by these proposals is intended to be used for a variety of events. Some of these events will require a licensing agreement and some will require planning permission. The owner of the land will be responsible for administering these approvals. NHDC and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are in the process of resolving this issue and it is anticipated that clear guidance will be provided.
- 6.5 Church Lane - the Council has been in discussion with HCC and Anglian Water with regard to improvements along Church Lane. Church Lane is an important pedestrian link between Fish Hill Square and Melbourn Street which is currently in need of resurfacing and lighting improvements. However, budget restrictions have necessitated omitting Church Lane from the current area of improvements, but should funding become available in the future the enhancement of Church Lane may be a priority.
- 6.6 Land ownership issues - There are a number of different landowners around the Square who need to be kept informed of the proposed works. These are currently being investigated with Herts County Council.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Terms of Reference in relation to Area Committees apply to this report and include acting as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest and in particular to elicit/hear the views of local bodies and organisations and to provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services. There are no legal implications arising from this report in respect of seeking formal public comment on the proposed design scheme.

- 7.2 In the event that the design scheme is agreed, there will be legal implications regarding working on the highway and allowing for a Section 278 Agreement, the procedure for any Traffic Regulation Orders required and dealing with any involvement of private land in the case of requiring necessary consents. These various legal implications will be considered in detail, and dealt with, at different stages throughout the project.

8. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a capital budget of £460K for the project funded from Growth Area Funding (GAF). A requirement of GAF funding is that it must only be spent on capital projects. Any potential impact on parking income as a result of the proposal will need to be addressed through Cabinet. Discussions are taking place with other services to ensure that the proposed scheme can be maintained within existing budgets.
- 8.2 With regard to risk there are significant reputation consequences associated with non-delivery of the project, which has a very high public profile. The Council's risk register has been updated to reflect this area of risk. A risk register for the project has been prepared and will be maintained and reviewed by the Project Team.
- 8.3 A CDM co-ordinator has also been appointed for the project to manage health and safety risks as required by the CDM 2007 Regulations.

9. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The officer time involved in the enhancement project is identified as part of the Corporate Business Planning Process for Strategic Planning and Enterprise and to be included in other relevant Service plans, given the requirement to bring in other officers across the council at various stages in the project.
- 9.2 The Council incorporates the statutory equalities duties which apply to all its activities into policies and services as appropriate, as set out in the Council's Corporate Equality Strategy. We also recognise that in our society, groups and individuals continue to be unfairly discriminated against and we acknowledge our responsibilities to actively promote good community relations, equality of opportunity and to combat discrimination in all its forms.
- 9.3 During the development and consideration of service and budget planning options, the impact of equality of access and outcomes should be considered whilst working together with, and informing the local community on, the detailed design scheme and the implementation plan for the project.

10. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 10.1 BDP have undertaken a variety of stakeholder workshops, presentations to key organisations including the Town Council, drop-in events and interviews.
- 10.2 Briefing sessions have been held with Royston & District Members to gain further information and to give feedback on proposals and on progress.
- 10.3 A public consultation exercise was undertaken between 28th August and 23rd September 2010.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That Royston and District Committee agree the proposals for the enhancement of Fish Hill Square described as Category A, set out at Section 5 of this report, and as presented at the meeting and recommend to the Project Board that this design be adopted.
- 11.2 That the Royston and District Committee recommend to the Project Board the list of additional work required as set out in Category B, under Section 6 of this report, and that officers report back on the outcome of these at the meeting of the Royston and District Committee on 1st December 2010.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 The final design is the result of a significant amount of consultation and survey work. Agreeing the final design will allow for the issuing of the contract tender documents, thereby keeping the project to programme.

13. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 13.1 The final design has considered a number of alternatives within the overall scheme.

14. APPENDICES

- 14.1 Appendix 1: Proposed Masterplan – issued as part of the public consultation.
- 14.2 Appendix 2: Summary of Public Consultation Responses

15. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Royston Town Centre Strategy
- 17.2 Relevant committee reports
- 17.3 Relevant surveys and consultation summaries

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