

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

1st December 2010

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: FISH HILL SQUARE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME – CATEGORY B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENTERPRISE MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report to Members the outcomes of the additional work required on Category B items referred from 13th October Committee.
- 1.2 For Members to agree the Category B as set out in Section 4 of this report to allow Building Design Partnership (BDP), the designers, to proceed with detailed design in consultation with North Herts District Council.
- 1.3 To inform Members on the next stage in the project programme relating to further work.

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 At a special Royston and District Committee meeting on 13th October findings of the public consultation and minor changes that have been made to the proposed masterplan in light of the comments received were reported to members as category A items. At the same meeting a list of category B items, additional areas of work that will need to be undertaken as a direct result of the proposed scheme, were identified. It was agreed that these items would be further investigated and reported back at the meeting on 1st December.
- 3.2 The category B items were listed as follows:
 - i) Parking issues
 - ii) Public Art
 - iii) Renaming the Square
 - iv) Street Furniture and Lighting
 - v) Landownership
 - vi) Licensing issues and management
 - v) Church Lane

- 3.3 At the Royston and District Committee on 13th October it was agreed that the proposals for the enhancement of Fish Hill Square described as category A be agreed and that a recommendation be made to the Project Board that this design be adopted. The design was agreed at the meeting of the Project Board on 4th November 2010. This enables the designers to proceed with detailed design in consultation with North Herts District Council.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 The proposed enhancement of Fish Hill Square encompasses the following key objectives:
- 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. CONSIDERATIONS – CATEGORY B ITEMS

4.1 Parking issues

- 4.1.1 The parking issues are split into the proposed type of parking restrictions to be implemented as part of the Fish Hill Scheme and the retention of parking income.
- 4.1.2 In terms of proposed parking restrictions, it is proposed that the restricted zone that currently covers John Street, High Street and Lower King Street is extended to cover the new enhanced square. It is likely that approval is needed from the Department for Transport (DfT) for the restricted zone. A restricted zone will minimise street markings and road signs, it will remove the clutter of street signage currently at the entrance to John Street and will allow for an improved visual environment. (See Plan attached at Appendix 1.) The eight parking bays and one loading bay would need to be defined as part of the zone. This would be achieved by way of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be processed in accordance with the Traffic Regulations. The extent of the zone southwards along Fish Hill and Market Hill is subject to further investigation due to the location of necessary signage.
- 4.1.3 Should DfT approval not be gained then officers will work with Hertfordshire Highways to rationalise the signage and street markings as best it can in accordance with the Traffic Regulations.
- 4.1.4 In terms of parking income, at present the Council receives an income from the 14 bays located within the Square. The proposal is to retain 8 of these bays as part of the scheme and to continue charging for these spaces and the 6 bays to be relocated elsewhere. The following are suggested scenarios to ensure minimal income is lost:
- Scenario 1 - To consider relocating the 6 bays along part of Market Hill, and charging for the these bays. The intention is to ensure that there is still the same amount of free parking bays as is currently available along Market Hill.

- Scenario 2 - To give consideration to the possible reconfiguration of the parking layout at Angel Pavement and Market Place car parks and to consider if additional bays can be accommodated within these car parks. It should be noted that there would be no income from these bays on market days.
- Scenario 3 - To give consideration to the altering the tariffs structure in the Angel Pavement car park to address any potential loss income by not replacing all 6 parking bays from St. Johns car park. It is noted that the bays in Fish Hill Square and the replacement bays should be short stay and the duration should not be longer than 2 hours based on existing usage.

4.1.5 Officers are looking at the scenarios and investigating the feasibility of various options with Hertfordshire Highways and the Local Police as a means of seeking the best solution in retaining income but without additional loss of unpaid parking in the area. Officers will update members at the meeting following their detailed site investigations.

4.2 Public art

4.2.1 BDP, as part of the overall design for the Square, 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. Given that there was no general consensus on the form of Art from the consultation process held in September, it is suggested that officers approach the Meridian Upper School and work with the art students over the next 2 to 3 months to design a feature for the Square. The agreed design will then be created as the sculpture for the Square. An agreed budget will need to be set aside for this feature and will need to be funded from the overall budget for the project.

4.3 Renaming the Square

4.3.1 As part of the September consultation process people were asked to put forward suggested names for the new Square. While a list of suggested names have been created, 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 the schools within Royston. It was also agreed following discussion with the NHDC Communications Team and the Fish Hill Square Project Board that a selected list of the most popular names should be consulted on.

4.3.2 The suggested selected list is as follows:

- King James Square
- Priory Square
- Roysia Square
- Fish Hill Square
- Old Court House Square
- Jubilee Square
- St. John's Square

These will be consulted on in the new year through press releases, the Council's website and by informing various organisations and the local schools.

4.4 Street Lighting and Furniture

4.4.1 In terms of Street Lighting, following discussions with Hertfordshire Highways, it has been confirmed that the light columns to be used in Fish Hill Square are to be standard highways columns and supplied by one of their preferred suppliers. Herts Highways have requested that the lights on the street and within the square should

match light columns that are already being used within the county, to ensure that Herts Highways are able to easily maintain and replace any parts necessary. The columns will be approximately 5m high with the lamp attached to the column by an arm. These will be a similar design to those used in Baldock High Street. (See Appendix 2 attached). It has also been agreed with Herts Highways to allow for some of the trees to be uplit.

4.4.2 A further suggestion, which could add to the ambiance of the Square in the evening is giving consideration to uplighting the façade of the court house and that discussions should take place with the new restaurant owners of the Old Court House.

4.4.3 In terms of seating, the designers have looked at a number of possible seating options for the Square. Following a discussion at the Fish Hill Square Project Board it was agreed to proceed with a seating feature that is minimalist and wraps around the trees in the square. This could best be achieved with granite benches with timber inserts, back rests and arm rests. The granite benches are very cost effective, with prices in the same range as mid/low cost seats. Heritage seats are far more expensive and also have a high maintenance cost. Granite benches are robust, require low maintenance, are easy to clean around, visually neutral and flexible in design form and arrangement. (See Appendix 2 attached)

4.5 Land ownership issues

4.5.1 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.

4.6 Licensing issues and event management

4.6.1 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 HCC are in the process of resolving this issue and it is anticipated that clear guidance will be provided to the local businesses and town centre manager in the Spring.

4.7 Church Lane

4.7.1 It was agreed at the meeting of the Royston & District Committee that should funding be available in the future that the re-surfacing of Church Lane must be a priority. It has been suggested, that as part of the Fish Hill Square Scheme and, subject to available funding from the existing budget that consideration is given to possibly improving the lighting and street furniture within Church Lane as well as giving it a good surface clean.

5. PROJECT PROGRAMME

5.1 At present the project is progressing according to programme. However, should any unforeseen issues arise that are likely to delay the project then Members will be notified accordingly.

5.2 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.

5.3 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 spring. 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. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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 naming of the Square and the public art feature.
- 6.2 Given that the design scheme has been 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.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 With regard to risk there are significant reputation risks associated with the 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.
- 7.3 A CDM co-ordinator has also been appointed for the project to manage health and safety risks as required by the CDM 2007 Regulations.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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 combat discrimination in all its forms.
- 8.3 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.

9. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That Royston and District Committee agree the proposals for the following Category B items as set out under section 4:
- i) Extending the restricted zone to include the Square as set out in paragraph 4.1.2 and in the plan at Appendix 1
 - ii) Officers are to find a solution that retains the income level for 14 bays in the Fish Hill/Market Hill area without the loss of existing free spaces in the area as set out in paragraph 4.1.4
 - iii) Working with the art students at Meridian Upper School to design an art feature for the new Square as set out in Paragraph 4.2.1
 - iv) Consulting on the list of suggested names for the new Square set out in paragraph 4.3.2
 - v) The street lighting and street furniture as set out in section 4.4
- 10.2 That the Royston and District Committee note the on-going work associated with:
- (i) Land ownership issues,
 - (ii) Licensing issues and event management
 - (iii) Possible limited improvements to Church Lane as part of the overall scheme as set out in paragraph 4.7.1
- and that officers keep the Committee informed on progress through regular update reports.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The final design and category B items are the result of a significant amount of consultation and survey work. Agreeing the final design and the category B items in relation to street lighting, street furniture and traffic management will allow for the issuing of the contract tender documents thereby keeping the project to programme.

12. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix 1: Proposed extension of restricted zone
- 13.2 Appendix 2: Proposed street lighting and furniture

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

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15. CONTRIBUTORS

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16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 167.1 Royston Town Centre Strategy
- 16.2 Relevant committee reports
- 16.3 Relevant surveys and consultation summaries