

Updates from North Herts Council's Enterprise and Estate Teams

Churchgate Regeneration Project Update

The Project Board have held three workshops to discuss potential uses for the site and the financial feasibility of various options available to the Council

The feasibility is being led by consultants Lambert Smith Hampton, as we continue to work alongside them throughout the due diligence phase of this project

Some members of the Project team attended 'UKREiiF' in Leeds 21st – 23rd May. UKREiiF is the UK Real Estate and Investment Forum and is a great opportunity/platform for Councils to showcase their portfolios of real estate opportunities within their towns/boroughs. The event is also attended by hundreds of developers, retailers, house builders, investment companies etc. The team attended alongside 'Invest Hertfordshire' – which makes up most of the Councils in the County, working together to showcase their opportunities

The purpose of attending the event was to demonstrate the work done so far on the Regeneration Project for Churchgate, sharing the public consultation results as well as the technical findings. This enabled developers to have a better understanding of what the Council wish to deliver on the site – and continues to create momentum in the lead up to any Procurement exercise we may wish to do in the Autumn

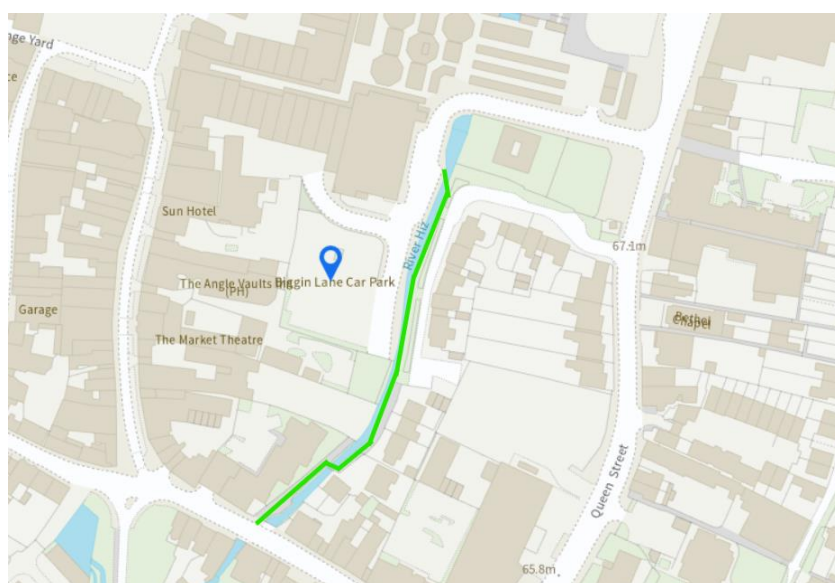
We have been using our comms channels (namely social media) to share Churchgate updates and findings. Recently we filmed and posted two videos – one of the Leader of the Council, Daniel Allen, talking about the importance of our five development principles, and the other with an interview from Steve Norris at Lambert Smith Hampton and Service Director of Enterprise Steve Crowley. This video talks about the steps we have taken so far, and why they are so crucial to our success.

We are now focusing on taking a report to Full Council that will outline a top level option and preferred route for the project.

Churchgate Shopping Centre Management

The new managing agents, Praxis Property Management, are now actively onboard with the day-to-day management of the centre. They are building good relationships with the tenants with an improved presence at the centre and ensuring compliance and day to day management aspects are actioned. There have been recent new lettings of Unit 11 and 17 which are a good addition to the centre. Deep cleaning of the walkway was completed a few weeks ago, and repair and decoration of the canopies is nearing completion and has made a significant improvement. By the time of the Forum meeting the hanging baskets and planters should be in place. We are looking at the potential to improve signage and benches in the walkway too. Praxis are working closely with Visit Hitchin regarding events this year that we can collaborate on.

Riverside Walk – This remains within the Responsible Growth priority of the Council Plan with the aim of delivering the walkway between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane to increase footfall in this part of the town centre. Following the results of a topographical survey of the proposed route, an outline proposal has now been prepared by an external firm of consultant engineers and there was a recent site visit with Executive Members and the Leader. Preliminary indications are that the optimum route of the Riverside Walk will follow the route approximately shown in green below.



The route will involve the construction of a new footbridge over the Hiz near to the Biggin Lane car park. Consultation is underway with the Environment Agency to enable the design of the proposed bridge to be finalised and with Herts County Council Highways for linking with existing footpaths. Works are planned to repair the walkway surface and clear the river to enable inspection of the retaining walls. The path will need to be for the use of pedestrians only (and not mounted cyclists) due to the width of the existing walkway adjacent to Jill Gray Place. Once more detail is available plans will be shared more widely. There are a number of stages to delivery of this project including outline and detailed design, consultation with key stakeholders, planning and conservation area consents, Highway and Environment Agency consents, tender for the works and delivery. The target is to seek completion this financial year.

Charnwood House – The Council remain committed to delivering its ambition to revitalise Charnwood House for the benefit of Hitchin and the wider district. As advised, previous work and marketing by external agents did not lead to a letting or other arrangement to bring it into suitable use for various reasons. Officers are undertaking a review of the work done to date and the reports on the building, and will be bringing forward options for Executive Members to confirm the next steps. Whilst Charnwood House is not formally on the market at present pending the outcome of this work, we are maintaining a list of organisations and groups who have expressed an interest and they will be informed of next steps.

The Council has a web page for the property remains at [Charnwood House | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk) which is periodically updated and includes frequently asked questions.