

Portfolio Holder Decision – Stratford-upon-Avon Bridge Street and High Street town centre scheme

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning
Date of decision	15 October 2021
	Signed

1. Decision taken

- 1.1 That the portfolio holder approves the further development of designs for the Stratford-upon-Avon Town Centre Redevelopment Scheme and the undertaking of consultation on the scheme proposals.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 The report asks the Portfolio Holder to approve consultation on the proposals for the Stratford-upon-Avon Town Centre Redevelopment Scheme to enable the consultation to commence in the autumn of 2021.
- 2.2 A decision from Government is expected in the autumn on a bid to the Levelling Up Fund submitted in June 2021 for funding to deliver the scheme. If successful, the Government has stated that all spend will be required by the end of March 2024. To meet this timescale, it is necessary to progress the consultation in autumn 2021.

3. Background information

- 3.1 In June 2021 the County Council submitted a funding bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund for a scheme to revitalise Stratford-upon-Avon's town centre by redeveloping the three key town centre streets of Bridge Street, High Street and Union Street. The scheme seeks to reduce the dominance of motor vehicles in the town centre and give greater priority and space to pedestrians and cyclists in order to encourage active travel and improve air quality. The proposals are also designed

to provide a more sympathetic backdrop to the town's historic buildings and to enhance the town's character and ambiance. It is intended that these improvements will help create a contemporary and competitive town centre offer which will revitalise and strengthen the shopping experience, consolidate the important visitor and tourist economy and secure jobs.

3.2 The scheme proposal put forward in the funding bid was developed through a design process led by Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council working closely with the Town Centre Strategic Partnership (TCSP). The TCSP comprises of 12-member organisations; the Town, District and County Councils, Stratforward (BID), Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Shakespeare's England, Stratford Town Transport Group, Accessible Transport, Stratford Society and Stratford Town Trust. In January 2021 the Town Council commissioned urban design consultants to develop concept options. This work built on proposals contained within the made Stratford-upon-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan and drew on the significant knowledge and experience of local stakeholders and representative groups. A preferred option was selected by the TCSP which formed the basis for the bid to the Levelling Up Fund.

3.3 The current scheme proposals include:

- Creation of a 'ramblas' style street design for the majority of Bridge Street, providing a significantly enhanced pedestrian environment
- Narrowing of the Bridge Street carriageway, improved surface treatments, and removal of parking
- Improved bus provision at the southern end of Bridge Street, with reduced conflict with pedestrians
- Reduction in the attractiveness of Bridge Street to private cars, allowing improved reliability for public transport, and providing cyclists greater priority and better connections to the wider cycle network
- Remodelling of Bridge Street / High Street roundabout including provision of a central pedestrian priority crossing
- Pedestrianisation of High Street between 11am and 4pm
- Narrowing of the carriageway on High Street and improved surface treatments (whilst maintaining 2-way movement when open)
- Improved surface treatments on Union Street
- Cycle parking provision
- Development of a wayfinding scheme

3.4 The scheme proposals have been informed by a comprehensive programme of engagement with key stakeholders. The engagement process to date has included design workshops, meetings with key officers and stakeholders, site visits and presentations. Public and stakeholder support for the underlying principles and broad approach to enhancing Bridge Street and High Street has been firmly established through a succession of a consultation and engagement processes undertaken to support the development of plans and strategies affecting the town centre, including the Neighbourhood Development Plan, Transport Strategy, and the Covid-19 response which saw the reallocation of road space to pedestrians and cyclists to support social distancing and active travel.

- 3.5 Further engagement and consultation on the scheme proposals is required to ensure the views and needs of a wider set of stakeholders and the public can be identified, understood and considered within the design process which needs to progress in order to meet the funding timescales associated with the Levelling Up Fund. An announcement on the outcome of Levelling Up Fund bids is due in autumn 2021, with Government expecting all funding provided by the fund to be spent by 31 March 2024. To meet this challenging timescale the project needs to move into the detailed design phase in early 2022 informed by the outcomes of a consultation process.
- 3.6 If funding is not secured from the Levelling Up Fund, the Council will complete the consultation process but will not progress into the detailed design or delivery phases of the scheme until such time that an alternative source of funding for this work can be identified. Completing the consultation will assist any future bids to funding streams which may emerge by demonstrating that the views and opinions of stakeholders and the wider public have been sought and considered within the design process.
- 3.7 It is proposed to commence a public consultation in autumn 2021 for a minimum period of eight weeks and to prepare and run the consultation in collaboration with the Town Council and TCSP. Prior to the consultation a further round of stakeholder engagement will be carried out followed by a further design review to enable any identified issues to be addressed. This will include meetings with transport operators, emergency services, equality groups and other town centre stakeholders.
- 3.8 The consultation will provide the public and stakeholders an opportunity to review the scheme proposals, ask questions and make comments. Comprehensive information on the scheme proposals will be made available and people will be able to participate in the consultation by:
- Attending a public exhibition or joining an online broadcast
 - Completing an online or paper based survey, with alternative formats or different languages available.
 - Sending feedback directly to the project team.
- 3.9 Feedback from the consultation will be analysed and used to inform the scheme design. A report setting out the findings from the consultation and recommended next steps will be presented to Cabinet in early 2022.
- 3.10 The current project delivery programme has been prepared to enable completion within the Levelling Up Fund funding period which requires spend by 31 March 2024. The construction phase is currently programmed to start at the end of 2022. There is limited opportunity within the programme to absorb delays and consequently delaying the consultation will squeeze the time available for other activities and increases the risk of the project not being completed within the funding period. This could result in a grant offer being withdrawn, spend post March 2024 not being reimbursed or clawback of funding.
- 3.11 There is no statutory requirement to consult on the scheme proposals, however choosing not to consult is likely to result in a poorer quality scheme since it would not benefit from public and stakeholder insight and views.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The consultation is expected to cost between £25,000 and £30,000, funded from either the Council's Transport Development Fund revenue budget, or from the Levelling Up Fund grant if the funding bid is successful. The majority of this cost is associated with preparing consultation materials, updating the scheme designs and analysing feedback.
- 4.2 If the bid to the Levelling Up Fund proves unsuccessful, the Council will complete the consultation process but will not progress into the detailed design or delivery phases of the scheme until such time that an alternative source of funding for this work can be identified.

5. Environmental implications

- 5.1 There are no specific environmental implications associated with the consultation, however overall the scheme is forecast to deliver environmental benefits including significantly reduced motorised traffic flows in the town centre and increased active travel movements with resultant local air quality improvements.
- 5.2 Traffic modelling carried out to inform the scheme design has identified that traffic displacement will take place, with traffic reassigning from the town centre to peripheral routes. Some locations will therefore experience an increase in traffic flows and associated environmental impacts, however the analysis indicates that the overall effect on travel times within the Stratford-upon-Avon area will be limited. The full traffic modelling analysis will form part of the consultation material.

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Lead Director	Strategic Director for Communities
Lead Member	Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning

Urgent matter?	No
Confidential or exempt?	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

None

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Wallace Redford

Corporate Board – Mark Ryder

Legal – Ian Marriott

Finance – Andrew Felton

Equality – Keira Rounsley

Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse

Councillors – Councillors Clarke, Chilvers, D’Arcy and Fradgley

Local Member(s): Councillors Rolfe and Sinclair