

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	3 rd May 2016
Report of:	Interim Executive Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity
Subject/Title:	Macclesfield Town Centre Regeneration – Proposed Public Realm Improvements
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Stockton, Regeneration Cllr Brown, Highways and Infrastructure

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. In 2015, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to the regeneration of Macclesfield Town Centre resolving to both sell a town centre car park for a regenerative leisure-led development and to allocate £1m capital funding for additional complementary regenerative projects.
- 1.2. In February 2016, the decision was made to sell Churchill Way Car Park to Ask Real Estate to develop a cinema, restaurants and an area of high quality public realm.
- 1.3. The Macclesfield Regeneration Team are now looking to push ahead with securing complementary works in the core of the town centre with the £1M capital fund allocated for this purpose.
- 1.4. This report outlines proposals to invest the £1m capital allocation into a programme of public realm improvements to be focused around Castle Street, Exchange Street and upper Mill Street, in/around the pedestrianised core of the town centre. Support is also sought for the brief to seek a package of enhancements with a clear emphasis on creative interventions which will highlight and reinforce Macclesfield's unique identity not just as an historic 'silk town', but one with a strong creative and entrepreneurial spirit - augmenting the identity of Macclesfield as Cheshire's Creative Edge.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 Approve the use of £1M from the Regeneration and Development capital allocation to fund transformational Public Realm enhancements in the Macclesfield town centre

- 2.1.2 Approve the area identified in **Appendix A** as the main focus for that investment.
- 2.1.3 Endorse the concept of seeking to ensure the brief for the enhancements stresses the desire for a package of works which have a strong creative element, to emphasise Macclesfield's distinct identity as not just a silk town but one with a strong creative and entrepreneurial edge as identified in the Macclesfield Heritage and Culture Strategy.
- 2.1.4 Authorise the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity to commission design work to identify options for designs to enhance the public realm in the area identified.
- 2.1.5 Agree that following appropriate stakeholder consultation, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity and the Chief Operating Officer be authorised to approve the exact package of public realm enhancements.
- 2.1.6 Authorise the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity to take all steps he considers necessary to implement the package of public realm enhancements approved by the Portfolio Holder.
- 2.1.7 Authorise the Director of Legal Services (in consultation with the Executive Director) to approve and execute all legal documentation he considers necessary to secure the implementation of the approved package of enhancements.

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. A number of alternative options for allocation of this funding were considered by officers to try and ensure the best option is being pursued to meet the objective of town centre regeneration. A summary of that options appraisal is set out in **Appendix B**.
- 3.2 This process suggested that focusing the £1M on public real improvements in the core area of the town centre would be the best approach to facilitate town centre regeneration. This conclusion draws on evidence which suggests that investment in the public realm can have a positive economic effect in addition to the obvious environmental benefits. Specifically evidence is available¹ which suggests such investment can:
- Stimulate the local economy and generate above average private sector returns;
 - Have a positive impact on perceptions of the area, especially non-local ones;

¹ Quality of Place and Regional Economic Performance: Draft Evaluation of the Existing Evidence and Investment Checklist, 2004, Frontier Economics Ltd

- This positive impact may retain workers in, and attract workers to, a wider area which has easy access to employment centres.

3.3 Through consideration of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan, the Macclesfield Town Centre Vision, the Macclesfield Heritage and Culture Strategy and discussions with the Macclesfield Town Centre Vision Stakeholder Panel, a number of key issues objectives for any public realm enhancement project were identified including:

- Enhancements should be visible and impactful as well as inclusive and beneficial for the whole community;
- Macclesfield's unique sense of place, distinctiveness and identity should be embraced and enhanced, setting it apart from other destinations as globalisation makes unique experiences ever more valuable;
- Macclesfield's history and traditions including its story as a creative centre should be nurtured and highlighted;
- Weak urban fabric should be tackled to enhance the quality of the environment in the traditional retail core;
- The pedestrian experience in the town centre should be enhanced;
- Opportunities for people to dwell, interact and forge stronger community ties should be pursued;
- The money should be spent in a way which complements and reinforces former and ongoing wider efforts to regenerate the town centre;
- The money should be spent in a way which enables opportunities for match funding from other investors to be pursued.

3.4 With such objectives in mind, it is recommended that the £1M be invested in a public realm enhancement scheme which is focused on the core pedestrian area identified in **Appendix A** and that the detailed design, subject to endorsement through further public consultation, should specifically champion an approach which seeks to emphasise the creative arts to highlight Macclesfield's creative identity and help reinforce an appealing and distinct sense of place.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. Focusing enhancements into/around the Castle St, Exchange St and upper Mill St areas will ensure enhancements benefit the whole community as this is the area identified as the Prime Shopping Area in the Local Plan.
- 4.2. Focusing enhancements in/around this area will help enhance an already highly visible, but tired, part of the town centre which will be also very

prominent to visitors to the cinema development proposed on Churchill Way;

- 4.3. Focusing spending in/around this area will build upon former investment by the Council in Market Place and Chestergate, and will complement and link planned developments by others including the significant extension of the Grosvenor Centre into the locally listed Old Post Office on Castle Street (an investment by Eskmuir), and the forthcoming Ask cinema led development proposed on Churchill Way, stitching together a number of elements into a visibly coordinated and connected whole and strengthening linkages between these significant new developments and the core of the town centre to maximise benefits of increased footfall for existing businesses.
- 4.4. Focusing spending in/around this area opens potential opportunities to pursue match funding.
- 4.5. As the funding available is not sufficient to cover the cost of wholesale replacement of surfacing across the area, repairing the existing paving where necessary and focusing the majority of the money on visible bespoke and unique street furniture, creative lighting solutions, green infrastructure, and public art will ensure a highly visible impactful investment.
- 4.6. Placing a strong emphasis on seeking visual improvements aimed at reinforcing Macclesfield's unique identity as an historic town with a strong creative and entrepreneurial past and present, will help strengthen the town's sense of place to enhance both community pride and the towns attractiveness as a place to visit and invest in.
- 4.7. This focus for the £1M capital fund has been endorsed by the Macclesfield Town Centre Stakeholder Panel. Undertaking further stakeholder consultation at design stage will further test whether the intent to champion an approach which emphasises the creative arts to reinforce a distinct sense of place is welcomed by stakeholders and will ensure the details of the scheme reflect stakeholders preferences.

5. Background/Chronology

- 5.1 As far back at 2007, a Public Realm Strategy was drawn up for Macclesfield Town Centre identifying a number of aesthetic and practical weaknesses in the public realm including: a lack of quality external spaces where people can meet and relax; a visually fragmented street scene; a lack of greenery within public spaces; poor quality and limited provision of street furniture; a confused palette of surface materials; vehicular and pedestrian conflicts; inadequate, poor quality lighting; and inadequate information and wayfinding signage. Issues were identified across the breadth of the wider town centre and an ambitious strategy of enhancements were suggested which would take many millions of pounds to action. Although some detailed suggestions of the strategy have

become outdated, (as it assumed implementation of the original Wilson Bowden scheme being considered at that time), the key issues it identified still largely remain unaddressed.

- 5.2 In 2015, following the demise of the Silk Street Scheme, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to Macclesfield Town Centre by not only resolving to sell a town centre car park for a regenerative leisure-led development but also by allocating £1m capital funding for additional complementary regenerative projects.
- 5.3 That £1M of funding was confirmed in the Regeneration & Development Budget in the 2016/19 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Council in Feb 2016.
- 5.4 On 5th February 2016, it was confirmed that Churchill Way Car Park in Macclesfield Town Centre will be sold to Ask Real Estate Ltd, to enable Ask to develop their proposal for a cinema led regenerative development.
- 5.5 Contracts for the sale of Churchill Way Car Park to Ask are being progressed and whilst the proposed development is still to proceed through the normal planning process, it is now clear where the new cinema scheme is to be located. Fixing this site has allowed officers to consider the best way to invest the £1M of capital funds to complement that land sale having regard to the aspirations of stakeholders and the strengths and weaknesses of the various options for investment.
- 5.6 Various options have been considered by officers having regard to the objectives and aspirations for the town centre set out in a number of strategic policy and framework documents and following discussions over a number of months with the Macclesfield Town Centre Vision Stakeholder Panel regarding the issues facing the town centre as set out in **Appendix B**.
- 5.7 The preferred option, as set out in the recommendation section of this report, is to utilise the £1M to pursue public realm enhancements focused around the area identified in the attached Plan at **Appendix A**, which also includes some images of these spaces to give an indication of the current appearance and standard. These areas sit not just within the town centre boundary but are within or immediately adjoin the identified Prime Shopping Area.
- 5.8 Environmental enhancements and improvements to these areas would not only benefit shoppers and other visitors to the town centre, but would also benefit workers who are employed within the immediate area, businesses located in proximity to these areas, and would help to attract potential new investors.
- 5.9 Investment in our town centres, and specifically in creating High Quality Places, is identified as a key priority for the Council's Economic Growth and Prosperity Service.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 Macclesfield Central: Cllr Beverley Dooley; Cllr Janet Jackson

7.0 Implications of Recommendations

7.1 Policy Implications

7.1.1 Outcome 1: Our local communities are strong and supportive

Enhancing the pedestrianised core of Macclesfield Town Centre will help attract people and business to the centre, providing opportunities for the various communities in and around Macclesfield to come together and share common experiences.

7.1.2 Outcome 2: Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy

Improvements to the central pedestrianised core of Macclesfield will help attract inward investment in adjacent retail and business properties.

7.1.3 Outcome 4: Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place

Enhancing the pedestrianised area of the town centre will encourage people to walk through the centre of the town rather than simply drive to their retail or leisure destination. Opportunities for increasing green infrastructure within the area identified will be explored at the design stage, as this has been identified as a key aspiration of local stakeholders and is identified as a key objective in policy SL4 of the emerging Local Plan.

7.1.4 Outcome 5: People live well and for longer

A more appealing and stimulating public realm that encourages social interaction should enhance quality of life.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 It will be necessary to undertake a compliant procurement process for the intended work.

7.2.2 Dependant on the outcome of stakeholder consultation, it is possible that as part of this project an amendment to the existing Traffic/Parking/Highway Regulation Orders governing the use of the area is recognised as being beneficial. If this is the case the appropriate separate legal process will be required to be undertaken.

7.2.3 Relevant consideration will have to be given for each transaction to the level of authority required under the Constitution and the Council's statutory powers to contract as and when decisions fall to be made.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 The Regeneration and Development is a programme of works with each project arising being individually assessed and approved via the Gateway process. The programme has been reported in the 2016/17 Capital Programme and has been approved at Full Council on 25th February 2016.
- 7.3.2 A budget of £1m is allowed for within the 2016/19 capital programme within the Regeneration and Development capital allocation under Economic Growth and Prosperity.
- 7.3.3 The funding for this project will come from capital resources. This project has no linked source of funding so the Council will rely on available capital receipts or borrowing to pay for this scheme. If borrowing is required then repayments , either principle or interest, will be paid from un-ring-fenced grant or Council Tax payments as part of the Capital Financing Requirement contained within the revenue budget. Receipts may be achieved through the sale of council assets. The financing costs for this scheme are forecast as a potential charge to revenue of C.£67,000 per annum over a 15 year period.
- 7.3.4 Opportunities will be explored for supplementing this spend with external grant funding, and indeed, contributions from adjacent major landowners will be sought to further enhance the quality and extent of works which can be undertaken.
- 7.3.5 Dependant on the detail of the final design there is potential for some revenue costs to arise from this project for example should it be necessary to amend traffic / parking /highway orders, or for example associated with maintenance of new surfacing or public art installations. On the other hand there may be scope for revenue savings through for example introduction of low energy lighting solutions to replace existing lighting. At this stage, when designs have not been fixed such revenue implications cannot be quantified, but are unlikely to be substantial. On going maintenance costs will be considered as an integral part of detailed design development.

7.4 Equality Implications

- 7.4.1 Consideration will be given to those people with particular mobility and disability issues in the design of the proposed scheme.

7.5 Rural Communities Implications

- 7.5.1 No specific implications have been identified.

7.6 Human Resources Implications

- 7.6.1 No specific implications have been identified.

7.7 Public Health Implications

7.7.1 No specific implications have been identified.

8. Risk Management

8.1 Scheme fails to meet public expectations

8.1.1 One of the most significant constraints/risks to the proposal for public realm improvements is created by the limitation of funding. Although £1M is clearly a considerable sum, enhancements to certain elements of public realm are extremely costly. The desire to create a high quality of finish in the core of the town centre will inevitably curtail the quantum of enhancements even within the limited area defined. The budget is of insufficient size to for example provide suitable replacement high quality paving throughout the area defined. The challenge is to prioritise this investment in delivering enhancements which will have a considerable visible impact and to engage carefully with stakeholders to ensure proposals reflect local perception of place whilst managing expectations regarding what is deliverable with this level of investment.

8.1.2 In order to mitigate the risk of value for money/ensure high impact of the investment, it is proposed that the route to delivery of the programme of works be undertaken as a two stage process:

- To first procure detailed designs for the area from a team of appropriately qualified professionals with experience of delivering public realm projects which incorporate and place a strong emphasis on creative elements, and who are willing to work alongside a lead artist and stakeholders to ensure opportunities for creative, individual artworks which reinforce a strong sense of place are incorporated as integral elements of the design. It is intended that further consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders in conjunction with the Council's Research and Consultation Team to inform those designs.
- To then procure delivery of the final costed design once approved, ensuring opportunity for inclusion of a wide variety of creative elements to be delivered by a range of artists with appropriately demonstrated track records, and community groups supported by more experienced public artists, assuming this approach is endorsed following further stakeholder consultation.

- 8.1.3 It is important to ensure communications surrounding the scheme do not raise unrealistic expectations regarding what can be achieved with £1M. This will be managed through project officers working closely with the communications team.

8.2 Unforeseen costs

- 8.2.1 Ground conditions or other unforeseen issues could result in additional works being required eroding the budget available for feature elements. To minimise risks associated with this, at design stage designers will be asked to liaise closely with utility providers etc to establish as clearly as possible any likely costs associated with underground services. The design team will also be requested to build in a sum for contingencies.
- 8.2.2 The Council must also be considerate of how the investment is to be maintained in future years – a risk is that any public realm investment made now may not be sustainable in future maintenance regimes. To mitigate this, it is proposed that maintenance services are engaged as a key stakeholder for the project, to be closely involved in assessing and informing any preferred improvement options. It is also proposed to work closely with Macclesfield Town Council given their likely role in maintaining street furniture, planters etc.
- 8.2.3 Running in parallel to this report is a High Level Business Case to be discussed at TEG and EMB in April 2016, outlining the approach to the above proposals for technical and monitoring endorsement.

9. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:

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