



North Devon Council

Report Date: Monday, 7 October 2024

Topic: Future High Street Project Update

Report by: SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland, Head of Place, Property and Regeneration

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Future High Street Fund (FHSF) is a central government fund, administered by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that seeks to support, renew and reshape high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience and ensures future sustainability.
- 1.2. As members are aware the original project for FHSF in Barnstaple focused on 4 interventions:
 - The Pannier Market/Guildhall,
 - The acquisition and rejuvenation of 36/37 Boutport Street,
 - The access and reconfiguration of Queen Street/Bear Street car park and
 - Pedestrianisation (10am – 4pm) and public realm improvements to Butchers Row and Cross Street
- 1.3. Following a report to Members in December 2023, which highlighted budgetary constraints, it was agreed that the public realm improvements to Butchers Row/Cross Street would be removed from the Future High Street Fund programme, recognising that the pedestrianisation had already been achieved. Instead Members resolved to approve a further £500,000 for a separate project for public realm improvements to Butchers Row/Cross Street, recognising the importance of this in connecting the Future High Street Fund works with the wider town centre and waterfront. This is being progressed as piece of work under a separate capital programme budget.
- 1.4. In December 2023, the report advised Members that the Pannier Market intervention had been delivered on budget. This report will provide an update on the remaining interventions; namely the rejuvenation of 36 and 37 Boutport Street and works to Queen Street/Bear Street car park to include a new access from Alexandra Road.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. This is an update report and as such Members are requested to note progress on these significant interventions.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. This is a significant project for the Council and regular reports are required to keep members updated on progress.

4. REPORT

4.1. This report will update Members on the progress of both the Queen Street/Bear Street project and 36/37 Boutport Street. Each project will be taken in turn:

4.2. Queen Street/Bear Street car park and Alexandra Road

The contract for this project was awarded to Macplant Construction Limited on the 29th February 2024.

4.3 Post award, the programme and detailed phasing scheme were set out by the contractor and this information was shared with local businesses and users of the car park.

4.4 The project has been split into three phases both to ensure a part of the car park remains open at all times and to accommodate the construction compound for 36/37 Boutport Street associated works.

4.5 Work to Phase 1 (part of Queen Street car park) commenced on the 7th May 2024. It is due for completion on the 11th October 2024 and has included significant drainage works, the provision of rain gardens for trees and resurfacing works (to include areas of complete reconstruction).

4.6 Despite ensuring that part of the car park remains open at all times, there has inevitably been some disruption and as such, the team have sought mitigations where possible and as follows; responded to requests for additional signage, reinstated a link across the car park from Queen Street as soon as the project would allow as requested by businesses, provided a unit in Green Lanes to enable the businesses to advertise their produce, set up a summer 'trail' to include businesses in Bear Street to drive footfall in that location, offered to introduce them to North Devon Plus who can offer business support and small grants and asked businesses for ideas as to how we can further support them with the tools available.

4.7 The original end date for phase 1 was the 27th September but a slight 2 week delay has been incurred due to unforeseen works.

4.8 The latest cost report has shown utilisation of a significant amount of the £85,000 contingency for this project given the unforeseen works in phase 1. Gates, the Quantity Surveyors, are working closely with us on this project. They issue monthly cost reports, which are followed by a meeting with the internal Project Manager (Head of Place, Property and Regeneration) and Project Sponsor (Head of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive) to enable interrogation of that cost report. The Contract Administrator (Jon Widgery at W T Hills) and external Project Manager (Myles Clough of Myles Clough Management Services) issue CAI's (Contractor Administrator Instructions) during the course of the month with any variations to the Contract where any budget implications are identified. This will continue through phases 2 and 3 to ensure scrutiny of spend and protection of the remaining contingency.

4.9 The contractors will begin planing the remainder of phase 1 this week ahead of resurfacing. There is a risk around the level of remaining reconstruction

required as a result of these works but this is being monitored by the team. Once these works are complete, phase 1 of the car park will re-open (this releases 130 car parking spaces).

- 4.10 On completion of phase 1, works to phase 2 will commence, which includes Bear Street car park and the new entrance to Alexandra Road. The current project programme sees these works being carried out between the 18th October 2024 and the beginning of February 2025. Phase 2 will include all planting of trees in Phase 1 and 2 and the laying of the coloured asphalt to the key footways/desire lines in Phases 1 and 2 to ensure consistency together with the erection of permanent signage.
- 4.11 Phase 3 (the contractors compound) will then commence when the Boutport Street works are completed. The Programme currently anticipates these works being carried out between November 2025 and January 2026. The contractors will return to site to complete these works.

4.12 36/37 Boutport Street

The contract for the refurbishment of 36 Boutport Street and regeneration of 37 Boutport Street was awarded to Pearce Construction in February 2024.

- 4.13 Pre-construction works commenced in February 2024 to include the erection of scaffolding around the entirety of 36 Boutport Street.
- 4.14 Works to date have focused on 36 Boutport Street and the contractors have made significant progress. All roofing works are now all but complete; to include the lower, middle and mansard roof.
- 4.15 The contract with Pearce Construction included a number of significant provisional sums and target savings. The contract had to be set up in this way because the building is Grade II listed and so we were unable to 'open up' the building and understand all required works prior to the works commencing. As works have been uncovered, there have been a number of challenges. When the slates were removed from the Mansard roof, it was clear that some of the timbers were not in good condition. We had to work very closely with the structural engineers and a specialist timber company to find the most pragmatic solution for this listed building. Furthermore, the lintels to the main façade were also found to be in poor condition. The first solution identified required the propping of the entire façade internally within 36 Boutport Street, which would have proved particularly challenging. The contractor has now found an alternative solution, which will be easier to implement and includes permanent ties to the main structure.
- 4.16 The project team hold monthly progress meetings, which include the contractor, to report on progress in line with the contract and to ensure information is being received and decisions are being made in a timely manner. All outstanding RFI's (Requests for Information) are reviewed and any concerns discussed.

- 4.17 As with the car park project, monthly cost reports are received from Gates and a meeting follows with the Project Manager and Project Sponsor to scrutinise them. This is critical on this project to ensure monitoring of provisional sums against actual spend and spend against the target savings list.
- 4.18 At the last cost report, 38% of the contingency was reported as remaining. Whilst this will appear low, the main unknowns were always with 36 Boutport Street and where any utilisation of contingency would have been anticipated. The majority of these are now 'known' and have been firmed up in the cost report i.e. the condition of the roofs, structure etc.
- 4.19 The contractors are reporting a delay to the Programme. A formal extension of time is awaited and the team are currently working with Pearce Construction to establish whether some of this time can be mitigated elsewhere in the Programme. The delay has been incurred due to the complexity of the building and needing to work through the solutions as a project team to ensure the best solution for the listing building are achieved, having regard to programme and budget.
- 4.20 Members of the project team recently took the Lead Member for this project and the Chair of the Planning Committee on site to see the progress being made and to see first-hand the care and attention the contractors are paying to the building and the complexities of the work.
- 4.21 A further report will be brought to members in due course to update on the project's progress.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Future High Street Fund Programme has significant resource implications on the project team, which includes officers from the Place, Property and Regeneration service, Planning, Legal and Finance.
- 5.2. The cost of works associated with both of the interventions in this report are covered by the approved budgets within the Capital Programme.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. The EIA for this project is regularly updated. This report does not directly affect it.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- 7.1. The consultants for this project have created a unique sustainability tracker for this work.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:



8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda: The completed scheme will deliver cultural, commercial and residential space.

8.1.2. Improving customer focus: The works will improve the overall appearance of the town centre but we need to ensure they are accessible for all.

8.1.3. Regeneration and economic development: The works will significantly enhance the appearance of the town centre and deliver significant and important parts of the Barnstaple Vision.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. The decision in respect of the recommendations in this report can be made by this Committee pursuant to delegated powers provided in Part 3 Annex 1 of the Constitution.

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

Future High Street Programme material

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland, Head of Place, Property and Regeneration.