

TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 21ST JULY 2020

PART I

Report Title	Newton Abbot, Future High Streets Funding Application
Purpose of Report	To consider the proposed projects for the Future High Streets funding bid.
Recommendation(s)	The Executive RESOLVES to: 1) Endorse the funding application and approve final submission to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. 2) Refer the proposed projects to Full Council for approval if the funding application is successful.
Financial Implications	The main implications are detailed in section 3. Martin Flitcroft. Chief Financial Officer
Legal Implications	The main implications are detailed in section 4. Solicitor the Council and Monitoring Officer
Risk Assessment	A full suite of project risk assessments will be included in the final scheme proposals.
Environmental/ Climate Change Implications	The main implications are outlined in section 5. William Elliott, Climate Change Officer.
Report Authors	Estelle Skinner, Green Infrastructure and Habitat Regulations Officer Louisa Brinton, Economic Development Officer – Town Centres Tom Butcher, Senior Estates & Development Surveyor
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Nina Jefferies, Portfolio holder for Business, Economy & Tourism Cllr Alan Connett, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Appendices / Background Papers	Future High Street Fund prospectus - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783531/Future_High_Streets_Fund_prospectus.pdf

2.1 Vision

This project is a rare opportunity to secure significant investment into the transformation and regeneration of Newton Abbot, to improve the quality of environment, ensure future resilience and facilitate transformational change.

The projects seek to enhance the variety of offer and quality of the town centre experience, and enable appealing access via all modes. This will unlock significant social and economic benefits now and into the future.

The proposal focuses on strengthening the Market and Cultural Quarters and delivering upgrades to Queen Street and the National Cycle Network Route.

2.2 Background

The Future High Street Fund (FHSF) was established by the Government to deliver £1billion of investment across the UK to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experiences, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. The fund is being administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).

Initially the funding was limited to just 50 places with Local Authorities being asked to first submit an expression of interest to be shortlisted and then if successful invited to prepare a full business case for funding.

In August 2019, the Government provided an update extending the bid to a further 50 Towns across the UK, fortunately this included Newton Abbot. Working to a tight timeframe, a draft report had to be prepared for mid-March 2020 and final submission by July 2020. If successful, funding must be spent by March 2024.

Newton Abbot was proposed with the application set in the backdrop of the Teignbridge Local Plan 2013-2033 and Town Centre Masterplan (draws on the Local Plan and forms the redevelopment vision for Newton Abbot). The proposals take into account the recommendations of the Government guidance for business improvement districts and reports of Mary Portas, Bill Grimsey and Sir John Timpson.

2.3 Funding Objectives

The purpose and objectives of the fund are clearly defined by the MHCLG, any proposals must fall into the below key areas:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Acquisition and assembly of land to support new housing, workspaces and public realm
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology

The fund is open to maximum bids of £25m but is very clear that only in exceptional circumstances would single awards be made of £25m. Authorities are encouraged to target submissions in the region of £10m.

Delivery timings are also critical to the bid, the window for delivery through the fund is by 2024, meaning that successful projects must be capable of delivery within the next 4 years, with an increased importance placed on 'shovel ready schemes' i.e those that are sufficiently progressed to be implemented immediately subject to funding.

2.4 Proposed Projects & Strategic Vision

The proposed projects are to be considered as a whole for a comprehensive package of changes. The rationale being to achieve the most functional change so that the bid aligns with the funding requirements.

Illustrating a comprehensive package of work is critical to demonstrating to the MHCLG that the scheme will deliver the most functional change, the projects consider:

- 1 Public environment and transport including public realm
- 2 Historical significance
- 3 Changing trends in how people use the high street and towns & supporting evening economy

The timeline has required the bid to be worked up swiftly. Following notification the scheme had to be presented in draft form to the MHCLG in March for first review and the final business case worked up between March and July.

The Newton Abbot bid is made up of 4 component parts that are interlinked to create a whole package. The total bid application will in the region of £10-11m. Final costings are due on some elements of the scheme in the next few weeks, prior to submission.

2.5 Project 1: Public Environment & Transport:

Pedestrian Improvements & Greening along Queen Street, and Cycling Enhancements

The proposed package of works focus on the delivery of an improved environment in the heart of town, as a hub for local communities and an appealing offer for visitors via enhanced pedestrian realm and greening, as well as improved sustainable links:

- Modifying the crossing outside the rail station to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians, paving the way for a cycling link between the rail station & National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 2.
- Improving the quality of the NCN Route 2 via clearer signage and surface markings, to encourage greater levels of uptake of different types of user.
- Improving safety of junctions along NCN Route 2, with greater provision of space for cyclists.
- Marking the current bus-layover area to show it is permitted for use by both local bus and cyclists only, at very low speeds.
- Increasing cycle parking in the town area at key locations; Lemon Road/Queen St. junction; Victoria Gardens; Highweek Way; ASDA
- Narrowing junctions of Courtney Park Road (21m wide) & Quay Road, where there is unnecessary width, to improve safety for pedestrians.
- Redistributing the loading bay capacity from outside the ex-Queens Hotel to unlock space for greening, creating an improved gateway into town.
- Slightly increasing overall loading capacity to support businesses, with extensions of existing bays and one new bay close to Albany Street. The need for good loading capacity is recognised as essential.
- Increasing spaces for disabled parking across Queen Street, Courtney Street, and Victoria Place, to ensure priority parking for direct access for shoppers who are less physically able and ensuring ease of access via wider pedestrian space.
- Wider pavements unlock space for tree planting at suitable locations along Queen Street, to enhance visual appeal and sense of place in this central hub of the community, and to gain the range of significant benefits related to trees. Wider

pavements may also support some outdoor seating, where sufficient width uplift can be achieved.

- Encouraging reduced car dominance via narrower carriageway along the 1-way stretch of Queen Street, enabling wider pavements, to support good-quality access for all users.
- Rationalising locations of street-side parking and loading bays along Queen Street, and relocating some street-side parking to significantly increased capacity at Cricketfield, a 2-3minute walk, ensuring retained parking capacity in the heart of town.
- Retaining at least a third of street-side parking (including disabled access parking) to still enable those wishing to Pop & Shop.
- A budget will be required for a large tree planting scheme.

The Council has been working with Devon County Council (DCC) and Jacobs (multi-national consultancy who has been the partner for a series of major DCC highways schemes) on bid proposals. The scheme works will be funded through existing CIL money, future high streets funding and a contribution from Devon County Council.

Visual images of the proposed works at Queen Street are included in Appendix A.

2.6 Project 2: Public Environment & Transport

Cricketfield Car Park

In order to support the delivery of structural change in Queen Street and in line with the Local Plan target of no net loss of parking, the proposal looks to create further parking capacity at Cricketfield Road to retain parking in the heart of town.

Preliminary designs have been worked up to create an additional 117 spaces split over one and a half levels. This would create a net increase in parking spaces in the Town Centre of 57. Subject to final design.

Jacobs, through Devon County Council, are assisting in highway and access design to ensure that existing traffic flow is not inhibited through the additional provision in the area.

Further to this, the additional capacity will enable future proposals to be drawn up for the cattle market area of the Town, which is also highlighted as being suitable for future redevelopment in the Local Plan and Town Centre Masterplan.

The aims of this project are therefore twofold. To support the need for Town Centre parking by increasing availability within 100m of Queen Street while also unlocking future land for further development.

The proposed scheme will be funded entirely through the fund.

Indicative scheme plans are show in appendix B.

2.7 Project 3: Historical Significance

Newton Abbot Market

The Local Plan and Master Plan aims are to deliver a broader evening economy through encouraging mixed use developments, enhancing the Markets area and providing improved pedestrian connectivity, whilst helping to support the heritage assets.

With the proposed relocation of the cinema (project 4), an opportunity was presented to review how the Market Hall and Alexandra Cinema buildings could be better utilised to

help protect their future sustainability and support the wider town centre economy, whilst also meeting the FHSF requirements for transformational and sustainable schemes.

The Council has been working with Quarterbridge Project Management, specialist in Markets & regeneration on the bid proposal. A requirement of the bid is to demonstrate local support for the proposals and principles and through engagement and development of the business case, it has become clear that a Markets Quarter, alongside the evolving Culture Quarter within the town would meet a growing need for a flexible mixed use space and whilst there are some areas of contention, the general feedback has been positive and given us the confidence to progress with the bid submission. Such a facility would act as an economic and social driver for the wider town centre economy, attracting footfall and encompass a new eating provision, a remodelled entertainment and events venue and high quality market space through:

- Re-connecting the Alexandra Cinema and Market Hall buildings to create a flexible market, food & events space.
- A designated Food Court and seating area.
- A range of permanent retail units and flexible market stall designs to allow the space to be used for a variety of uses including performances and events and the ability to respond to rapidly changing retail trends.
- Redesigned Food Hall wrapping around the building offering an open plan layout, allowing for the new purpose built cinema development and for a partial reveal of the original stone frontage of the market hall and a pedestrian link through to Market Street.
- Improvements to the entranceways and architecture, including the removal of the modern addition along the frontage of the building onto Market Street to create sight lines and increase permeability.
- Market Square improvements to include electricity, tree planting and provide a designated outdoor event and market space.
- Relocation of first floor public toilets.

Subject to a successful bid application the final scheme proposals will need to be developed alongside the full business case. Further discussion will be needed with the range of tenants that occupy the Market Hall and Alexandra Building and how the flexible space can be championed to provide a mixed use space to function throughout the day and into the evening.

The proposal is to create a viable and sustainable building that will provide a service to the town and be flexible for the range of users.

The final funding package will need to be a mixture of grant monies and prudential borrowing by the Council. A draft business case has been prepared and presented to the capital review group (CRG) and has been approved in principle. The CRG is composed of senior and key members of Council staff and reviews the capital proposals for Council projects, bids and investments.

The final scheme will be brought back to Full Council for approval, subject to funding, later this year.

Visual images of the proposed plans are included in appendix C.

2.8 Project 4: Evening Economy

Cinema

Key aims of the Local Plan and Master Plan are to develop the evening economy and centralise Newton Abbot as the hub of the district.

Throughout engagement and the preparation of the Local & Town Centre Master Plan it was clear there was support for a new multi-screen cinema in Newton Abbot.

In December 2018 the Executive was presented with proposals to develop a new 4 screen cinema, with two further units below. This project was agreed in principle subject to final funding. The structure of that proposal remains in place with an occupier ready and able to proceed with the scheme subject to the Council securing funding and delivering the project.

This project dovetails with the market hall improvements, helping to create a strong Town Square and broad range of available services, creating a Markets Quarter & Cultural Quarter in this central area between Queen Street and Golden Lion Square.

The inclusion of the cinema development seeks to secure the necessary funding to support the viable delivery of the scheme. This scheme goes some way to illustrating that the bid also includes 'shovel ready' projects that have been in the pipeline.

Subject to a successful bid application the final scheme proposal will be brought back to Full Council for approval. The final funding package will need to be a mixture of grant monies and prudential borrowing by the Council. A business case has been prepared and presented to the capital review group (CRG) and has been approved in principle.

Through the preparation of this bid further talks have been held with the proposed operator who has confirmed the existing financial package and estimated occupancy remain the same. That is based on a recovery from Covid-19 and no long term requirements for social distancing, so there will be no need for a re-designed layout and seating design. However this will be monitored.

Draft scheme designs are shown in appendix **D**.

2.9 Engagement / Covid 19

Following the outbreak of Covid19 it has not been possible to hold a physical public engagement on the proposed projects. However the information has been presented to the Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Town Centre Partnership.

The information has also been published on the Council's website with questionnaires and feedback options for each limb of the proposal. This in turn has been reported in the local press and via the Council's social media platforms to try and reach as much of the public as possible. A letter was delivered to all town centre businesses.

There have been 159 completed Queen Street online questionnaires (130 from the public and 29 from businesses), also a series of detailed emails from businesses, and a further 66 completed cycling online questionnaires. We are currently reviewing all the feedback and will use this to achieve the best overall outcomes.

The Markets Quarter proposal received 877 public, 10 trader and 4 stakeholder responses to the online engagement survey and a couple of more detailed email responses. We will continue to work with all those who have responded, should we be successful with the funding bid.

It is important to note that the fund had a short lead in period from draft submission, but that does not prevent the proposed submissions from evolving as the project progresses

and to account for public comments. The feedback from the public engagement will be reviewed and a formal response, covering key themes, will be posted on the Council's website. The feedback will be used to hone the proposals, as part of the detailed design process that will take place if the funding is secured.

3. Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications related to the submission of the bid, it will not bind the Council to accept the monies nor deliver.

Two of the proposed schemes will require financial match funding from the Council. Those being the Cinema and Market Hall, draft business cases have been presented to the capital review ground that are agreed in principle. The public transport improvements will be match funded through CIL receipts together with match funding from DCC. The car park will be funded by the bid.

4. Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications associated with the submission of the bid application. Is it proposed for each project within the bid proposal to be presented to full council for approval detailing any legal issues.

5. Environmental Implications:

Dwellings and non-residential buildings associated with the FHSF requiring a major planning application will need to provide a carbon reduction statement and demonstrate an emissions reduction of 48% relative to 2006 building regulations in order to comply with Policy S7, as outlined in the adopted Local Plan. This requirement should be considered early on within the design phase to reduce the cost of delivery.

Proposals to enhance cycle and pedestrian infrastructure will incentivise the uptake of active and low-carbon transport options (cycling, walking and rail).

Proposals to enhance the provision of mixed-use development should reduce the need to travel and create a more self-sufficient town centre.

Proposals for car parking re-deployment/rationalisation are advised to include an EV charging strategy to promote the use of low-carbon and low emissions transport.

There are no known significant environmental or climate change implications at this stage of the FHSF.

6. Conclusion.

The Executive is asked to endorse the funding application and the projects included within, noting that the final schemes are subject to further comments from public engagement.

Final project reports will be presented to the Council subject to successful funding bid.