

Thursday, 30 June 2022

Report of the Leader of the Council

Future High Streets Fund Programme Update

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the progress of the Future High Streets Fund programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. To note the report

Executive Summary

The project is moving into delivery phase, with planning and demolition applications starting to be submitted. As the project moves into RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 3, designs are moving from concept to more detailed designs. The demolition application and procurement of a demolition contractor for the Co-op is now underway, this will enable the work to be completed in time for the start of the build phase for the college. The Programme Board have agreed to sign off elements of RIBA Stage 2 that are ready to progress into Stage 3. As surveys on the FHSF buildings continue, we are discovering more about the condition of the buildings involved and this is helping to refine the scope of works across the programme. Enabling and opening up works have now been procured, with a team looking to start on site in the next couple of weeks .

Projects

College Quarter: South Staffordshire College (SSC) received their grant from the Department for Education, this significantly reduces risk to the FHSF project as it decreases reliance on the council and ensures that SSC's relocation to the town centre will continue as planned. They have progressed through RIBA Stage 3 and are engaging with Homes England in relation to the redevelopment of the existing SSC site. The planning application for the new college has now been submitted, with the demolition application already submitted by Tamworth Borough Council. We continue to maintain strong links with the SSC project and recently invited Peter Marsh, lead contractor for SSC, to the FHSF Programme Board meeting in April to share design concepts and to update us on progress.

RIBA Stage 2 designs for second TEC provision in the Victorian element of the Co-op building have been signed off by the Programme Board.

Landscape Architects Node have finalised designs for the public realm in St Editha's square, factoring in market provision and events space in line with the FHSF outputs. There will be improvements to lighting, planting and street furniture, encouraging the public to use the square .

Middle Entry: There are ongoing negotiations with Peer Group for vacant possession of the Middle Entry Units. Our current target for vacant possession is 31st August 2022. Purcell Architects are refining the design for the new retail units that will be constructed at the south of Middle Entry. Progress on this has been good and we are now developing a fresh concept design that will be brought to the Programme Board for RIBA Stage 2 sign off early June. Work continues to move forward with the structural engineers to plan the safe removal of the glazed roof and link bridges on Middle Entry.

Castle Gateway: The planning application for Peel Café has been submitted, and the fire escape route has now been agreed and approved by building control. The timber survey report has been issued and from initial discussions, the structure may need a new roof. Efforts to reduce costs and preserve the character of the building will be achieved by aiming to reuse roof tiles where necessary. Any modifications will be passed onto the Conservation Officer for comment. At Programme Board it was agreed to sign off the RIBA Stage 2 and to proceed with RIBA Stage 3.

Moving onto Market Street, Julie Anne Florist have signed their lease surrender for 26A and will be moving to a unit further down the street. Vacant possession has been agreed for the end of August.

In discussions with Historic England, they have advised that TBC should aim to preserve as much of the original structures of 26A-27A as possible. The initial timber survey report states that 27 Market Street is structurally unsound and access to the building has been suspended until this is resolved. Timberwise are preparing a recommendation report that will detail the level of repairs required and the associated costs. Once this is received , TBC will be able to determine the scope of works required and approach Historic England to have an informed discussion about how to redevelop the properties.

Ongoing surveys will gather the required information to plan the demolition of the current Nationwide building. The lead contractor will produce a demolition procurement strategy for this area. Discussions around the public realm and area that is left once Nationwide is demolished are ongoing. As part of this area is adopted, we may have to consult with Staffordshire County Highways team once designs have been finalised.

As part of the work to widen Castle Bridge, it has been noted that Western Power have existing electrical cables pinned to the underside of the bridge which will need to be relocated. This will likely involve a complex solution if the cables are to be kept in situ whilst the new bridge is constructed. Western Power's alternative solutions involve relocating the existing substation or re-routing cables. Currently the options and locations proposed are not satisfactory and detract from the outputs of the project. The project team and lead contractor will continue to progress discussions until a suitable solution is reached.

Engagement and Communications

Advertised monthly drop in sessions offer the opportunity for the public to ask questions and stay informed on progress with the FHSF project. So far there has been little interest but this may increase as planning applications are submitted. Comms strategy is discussed at the monthly delivery team meeting updates, allowing the FHSF project team and comms team to update on progress and potential press release opportunities. As the start on site date for the Co-op demolition approaches, attention is now on developing visuals for display hoardings.

Since the last meeting, new window vinyls have been put up in 27 and 27a Market St which encourage the public to scan a QR code that signposts them to the project updates on the Transforming Tamworth website. A meeting has also been set with Staffordshire Police to discuss opportunities to create safe spaces as part of the project's development.

South Staffordshire College are also beginning consultations regarding their relocation to Tamworth town centre. SSC and the Union 4 planning team recently ran a stall on market day, attendees were mainly older clientele. Whilst the plans were mostly well received, concerns were expressed relating to proposals to redevelop the current SSC site and parking availability. SSC are now undertaking further consultation on the college campus to ensure a more even demographic is engaged and represented.

Budget and Timescales

The cost plan has been reviewed at Stage 2 and will continue to be refined as detailed designs are developed and survey results indicate the scope of works required. Whilst construction costs are higher than expected due to inflation and cost of materials, the continued review of the cost plan and input from contractors will determine the real costs associated with the works. The contingency funds have been appraised against the risk register to determine where costs attributed to risk allowance can be reduced. A finance summary is included with the dashboard reports presented at the Programme and Delivery Board meetings. The overall programme plan is currently being reviewed to assess progress against timescales. The Risk Register is maintained by McBains and reviewed with the FHSF Project team at scheduled monthly meetings. The Audit and Governance sub-committee continues to monitor risk for the FHSF programme.

Resource Implications

There are no resource implications as a result of this report.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

There are no legal issues

Equalities Implications

There are no equalities issues

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

The impact of the Future High Streets Fund programme on sustainability is considered by the consultancy team when designing and implementing the projects.

Background Information

None

Report Author

Anna Miller – Assistant Director, Growth and Regeneration
Alice Poulton– Future High Streets Fund Project Officer

List of Background Papers

None

Appendices

None