

Monday, 26 September 2022

Report of the Leader of the Council

Future High Streets Fund Quarterly Update

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

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

Recommendations

It is recommended:

1. To endorse the report

Executive Summary

The project has progressed well since the last update. As the programme continues through RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 3, detailed design information is being reviewed ahead of going out to tender for contractors. The Programme Board reviews RIBA Stage 3 details and approves the tendering process. The demolition application for the Co-op retail store has been approved and a contractor appointed to carry out the works. The programme board have agreed to the appointment of Armac as the demolition contractor.

As surveys on the FHSF buildings continue, the project team 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 been completed in the Peel Café and the TEC, with works to Middle Entry due to begin once the acquisition of the Middle Entry properties is finalised. Focus now is on procurement strategy, with tender packs being prepared and soft market testing with contractors underway. A major works application has been made to Staffordshire County Council for the highways works required as part of the programme.

Projects

College Quarter: South Staffordshire College have submitted their planning application for the new site and are now awaiting determination, likely to be the October planning committee. Tender via Pagabo framework is due to commence on 9th September following the completion of RIBA Stage 4 on 29th July.

The demolition of the Co-op retail store has now been approved and the tender exercise completed. Armac have been appointed as the successful contractor following approval from Programme Board. Initial meetings have taken place and they are due to start on site in September.

The planning application for the Enterprise Centre is approved and McBains are preparing tender documents for the refurbishment works. RIBA Stage 3 designs have been approved by Programme Board. The strip out of the building will be undertaken by Armac and will enable works on the refurbishment of the building to begin.

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 bid outputs. A meeting was held with the TBC Arts and Events team to review the designs and allow them to comment on suitability for future events, in line with the desired outcomes outlined in the FHSF bid.

Middle Entry:

The legal agreement with Peer Group for the acquisition of the Middle Entry units is now complete. Site investigations on the vacant units will commence shortly. Purcells are refining the design for the retail units that will be constructed at the south of Middle Entry, following pre-application feedback. RIBA stage 3 designs for the Flex building have been approved by Programme Board. Work continues to move forward with the structural engineers to plan the safe removal of the glazed roof and link bridges on Middle Entry. Preparation of documents for the planning application is now underway and designs have been approved by Programme Board.

Landscape architects Node have been appointed to draft designs for the public realm area in front of the Flex building. Designs should be available for comment by mid-September.

Castle Gateway: The planning application for Peel Café has been approved, with the focus now on preparing documents for tender. RIBA Stage 3 designs have now been approved by Programme Board. McBains, Purcells and Nationwide have been collaborating to agree a fit-out strategy for the premises and are due to meet with Building Control soon.

Moving onto Market Street, Julie Anne Florist vacated 26A on 31st August. Following the results of the timber survey, structural propping was recommended to secure the building to prevent collapse. Propping has now been erected which will enable works to continue now that it is safe to enter. A specialist heritage structural engineer has been appointed to help determine the strategy for 26A-27A and a site visit was undertaken at the beginning of September. The conservation officer has been engaged to comment on current designs and will comment on strategy once the structural engineer has issued their report, expected by the end of September.

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, with landscape architects Node now appointed to develop designs. As part of the public realm area is adopted, we will 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 Distribution (WPD) have existing electrical cables pinned to the underside of the bridge which will need to be relocated. We have now reached an agreement with WPD that allows us to keep the cables in their current location and avoids having to relocate services. The current focus is to engage with a bridge consultant to start the process of delivering a bridge in the planned location in terms of fabrication options and logistics.

Engagement and Communications

Meetings with businesses and interested parties affected by the upcoming works are being scheduled. 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 releases. As the start on site date for the Co-op demolition approaches, attention is now on developing visuals for display hoardings and announcing the appointment of Armac as the demolition contractor for this site. The TBC comms team are liaising with the College on upcoming press releases and the hoarding for their site.

Budget and Timescales

The cost plan has been reviewed again mid-way through Stage 3 and will continue to be refined as detailed designs are developed and survey results indicate the scope of works required. An updated cost plan has been issued and presented to the TBC Finance team and Programme Board. As the design process progresses, the scope of works are further refined which gives a more accurate picture of the costs associated with delivering the programme. Whilst construction costs are higher than expected due to inflation and the rising cost of materials, the continued review of the cost plan and input from contractors during the tender process will determine the real costs associated with the works.

There are contingency funds allocated across the Programme to mitigate risks associated with the Programme of works . The contingency funds allocated to risks across the Programme are continually reviewed as new survey information becomes available and can shed light on what are likely risks and associated costs versus what can be reduced.

An updated Programme was issued by McBains in August with key planning, tender and start on site dates included. The TBC team continues to review progress with McBains weekly and report progress against key milestones to Programme Board.

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

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List of Background Papers

None

Appendices

None