

Report to:	NORTH STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM
Date:	15 November 2022
Executive Member:	Councillor Vimal Choksi - Executive Member (Towns and Communities)
Reporting Officer:	Julian Jackson - Director of Place
Subject:	ASHTON PUBLIC REALM - ASHTON MARKET SQUARE AND OUTDOOR MARKET
Report Summary:	The report provides an update on the draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square and the outdoor market including the key findings of consultation and engagement work to date.
Recommendations:	That the Neighbourhood Forum comment on the draft proposal for Market Square redevelopment, including the future provision of the outdoor market, as part of the public consultation agreed by Executive Cabinet at its meeting on 26 October 2022.
Corporate Plan:	Key aims of the Corporate Plan are to provide opportunities for people to fulfil their potential through work, skills and enterprise and to ensure modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations. The interventions that will be supported by the proposed Ashton Development Zone will deliver against these aims in the areas of job creation, modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment.
Policy Implications:	The proposed interventions will support the policy aims of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021, Tameside Climate Change & Environment Strategy, the Council's growth priorities agreed at Council February 2020 and the draft Greater Manchester Places for Everyone joint development strategy.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer)	<p>The report requests approval to commence a consultation on the public realm strategy and related works in Ashton Town Centre.</p> <p>The related works will be financed via levelling up capital grant funding awarded to the Council of £19,870,000 (total grant award). Within this sum, £11,200,000 is allocated to finance public realm improvements in the town centre.</p> <p>In addition to this sum the approved capital programme has a budget allocation of £4,916,000 for public realm works across the whole borough. A total budget allocation of £16,116,000.</p> <p>The estimated maximum total cost of the proposals set out in table 1 section 3.7 is £10,832,846. There is also additional estimated expenditure of £1,000,000 envisaged as explained in section 3.7. Therefore the maximum cost of the proposal is estimated to be £11,832,846, which will be financed via the £16,116,000 available budget.</p>

The outcome and implications of the consultation will be subject to Member approval via a further report at a later date. The report will need to include details of the proposed capital works and related cost implications.

The report will also need to include details of the implications on the revenue budget of the Council. This will include (but is not limited to) the evaluation and impact of rent and service charge income received via market stall holders and market ground kiosk tenants together with the future maintenance related expenditure of the proposed option selected (as set out in table 1, section 3.7).

Legal Implications:
(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

This report details the steps taken to date and the next steps required in relation to the proposals for Market Square and the outdoor market for Ashton Town Centre.

12 weeks is considered the optimal period for an effective consultation process. Clearly this is part of an on-going consultation process as there has already been consultation to engage with key partners and the public to help shape the next phase of consultation. The outcome from the consultation should then be given careful and meaningful consideration by the decision makers as this project progresses. Noting that it will be monitored through Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

Risk Management:

Risks associated with the project are being monitored through the Ashton Levelling Up Fund programme risk register. Delays to the consultation process could have significant implications on the overall delivery programme.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Damien Cutting, Economic Growth Lead



Telephone: 07989 425 566



e-mail: damien.cutting@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 27 October 2021, it was announced that the £19,870,000 Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid for Ashton Town Centre had been successful. The specific interventions proposed in the LUF bid were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the LUF and are critical to unlocking the comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre; supporting a coherent vision and completing of the final phase of Vision Tameside.
- 1.2 The Council has now commenced delivery of the Ashton Town Centre LUF programme in the context of an emerging wider strategic vision for Ashton Town Centre following the decision by Executive Cabinet on 24 November 2021. A Memorandum of Understanding with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was signed in February 2022, which has enabled the first payments of the grant to be drawn down by the Council. A further update was provided to Executive Cabinet on 9 February 2022. Progress on delivery of the Ashton Town Centre LUF programme and public realm works is reported quarterly to the Council's Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.
- 1.3 The interventions supported by the LUF are critical to unlocking the comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre and integrating with other as part of a coherent vision, completing of the final phase of Vision Tameside. The enabling works will act as a catalyst for significantly accelerating delivery of the comprehensive transformation of the Town Centre and unlock its full potential.
- 1.4 Work has commenced on the preparation of a draft proposal (Phase One) for the improvement of Market Square and the outdoor market in Ashton that will be used to shape future design proposals for this key public space in the Ashton Town Centre. The draft proposal has been costed and formulated from feedback received at the Love Ashton Event in March and from discussions with Council officers, key stakeholders and market traders.
- 1.5 Within the wider Ashton LUF programme grant funding of £5,300,000 has been secured associated with the former interchange site. The Council is currently finalising the acquisition of this site from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) that will be the subject of a separate report to Executive Cabinet later in 2022. Following acquisition the Council will be able to commence enabling infrastructure works, comprising land remediation and service diversions, to unlock the site for new uses. This work will be undertaken in the context of longer term opportunities for redevelopment, public realm and movement within the Town Centre.

2. ASHTON PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

- 2.1 A multidisciplinary team led by Planit IE were procured via STaR in January 2022 to prepare a strategy for the redevelopment Ashton Town Centre. The Public Realm Strategy will cover the whole of the town centre of Ashton however, given the successful Levelling Up Fund monies, Phase One of the strategy includes further detail on a draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square and the outdoor market.
- 2.2 Pre-consultation has been undertaken including discussions with Council officers, key stakeholders, Ashton Town Team, Ashton market traders and with the local community at the Love Ashton event held in Ashton Market Hall on 12 March 2022. A consultation strategy includes a summary of comments received at the Love Ashton event, all of which have led into the emerging proposals and concepts of the next stage consultation brochure, which will be presented at the meeting. It was very clear from feedback at the Love Ashton event that residents and visitors to Ashton want to see change and an improved offer of the Market Square with many people favouring the idea of a canopied structure in the square. Anti-social behaviour associated with the existing market stalls was also high on the number of comments that people made with many references to feeling unsafe in the area.

- 2.3 An emerging vision aims to ... *create a fantastic town centre for Ashton-under-Lyne. We are creating a plan to breathe new life into Ashton, to bring more shops, people, and homes, and create a healthier town centre for all people*. In response to this emerging vision and the consultation carried out so far, a draft proposal is included in the Executive Summary illustrating how a rejuvenated Ashton Market Square could be delivered. The draft proposal focuses on providing a high quality and flexible Market Square to meet a host of different user needs including local people, visitors, market traders and event providers.
- 2.4 Consultation and engagement to date has identified that delivery of significant improvements to the outdoor market and Market Square in Ashton is a priority for the local community. Market Square and the market stalls continue to attract anti-social behaviour which in turn, deters people from visiting the area, new businesses from setting up in the centre of Ashton and a general overall negative perception of the town centre. Furthermore, the market stall structures detract from the visibility of key heritage assets in Ashton Town Hall and Ashton Market Hall, they are costly to maintain, have problems with drainage, and the ground levels where the market stalls are situated are uneven resulting in difficulties getting around for elderly people or those with mobility issues.
- 2.5 The Council has secured funding of £19,870,000 from LUF, of which £11,200,000 is identified for public realm works in the Town Centre for delivery by 31 March 2025. As the priority area of focus is to deliver works linked to Market Square, the public realm strategy and some of the design principles are primarily focused on this area and its immediate surrounds. However, the Public Realm Strategy includes proposals, strategies and design principles for the whole of the Town Centre. It will be important that Ashton Town Centre has a clear vision and plan in place in order to respond positively to future funding initiatives as and when they emerge in order to deliver these later phases of works.

3. PHASE ONE - MARKET SQUARE / ASHTON MARKET DRAFT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square (including Ashton outdoor market) has been costed and falls within the identified LUF budget allocated for the public realm in the town centre. Further detail on costings for the draft proposal is identified in Table 1 below. The next stage will focus on the Detailed Design and Construction of Market Square. If there is agreement following the consultation period on the draft proposal, work will commence on detailed costings. The detailed design for this scheme has a 12 month programme for completion.
- 3.2 The proposed works for Market Square will look to improve the quality of the public realm, accessibility and mobility of the square, an improved outdoor market offer including the creation of a flexible town square to incorporate a range of uses and possibilities that will enhance the area and the town as a visitor destination in its own right. The extent of adaptations and improvements to Market Square is dependent on the future ambition and provision of the outdoor market.
- 3.3 The total cost of the draft proposal is £10,832,846 and will include the removal of all of kiosks and market stalls and replacing them with the construction of a large canopy or a series of canopied structures (including a canopy attached to Market Hall) that will include flexible market units to meet the needs of modern market traders.
- 3.4 Costings for the draft proposal have been based on the Gold Standard of public realm delivery and include an annual 8.4% inflation allowance. Silver and Bronze Standards have also been costed for the draft proposal but will result in a lower quality material of public realm and so it is considered neither Silver or Bronze Standards would achieve the desired ambition for the public realm in Ashton. The draft proposal for a flexible, modern Market Square with canopies will include the entire clearance of all existing market stalls and kiosks. Concepts for this approach are based on feedback received from stakeholders and the local community at the

Love Ashton Event. This includes the installation of a large canopy with the opportunity for flexible units for market traders beneath the canopy and elsewhere in the square. The total cost of the draft proposal is estimated at £10,832,846 (excludes VAT, professional fees, other Local Authority fees and other 'On-Costs') and includes an 8.4% inflation allowance on top of total costs detailed (between 2022 and 2024).

- 3.5 There are a significant number of advantages of progressing the draft proposal, which include the opportunity to open up the views to heritage buildings in the square, shelter for traders and visitors from the elements, reduce the likelihood of ASB by removing the fixed stalls and providing modern market facilities. Ultimately, the clearance of the existing stalls and kiosks will enable the comprehensive redevelopment of Market Square that will deliver a much more flexible space for a multitude of uses in addition to a modern outdoor market, to enable small and larger scale events to take place. The main disadvantages of the draft proposal is that it will inevitably lead to disruption to market traders whilst the work takes place. Measures will need to be put in place to ensure disruption caused to traders is minimised. Specialist consultants in market operations will be included in the multi-disciplinary team to support the practicalities and logistics when the scheme is to be delivered.
- 3.6 A high level breakdown of the costs for the draft proposal are included in table 1 below. These costings will be subject to detailed design work due to commence imminently.
- 3.7 The £10,832,846 estimated cost for delivery of the works excludes VAT (which is recoverable for a council), professional fees, other Local Authority fees and other 'On-Costs'. However the analysis of these additional costs that will be incurred under the detailed design package, to be procured via STaR for the period covering outline design to practical completion, is that these will total £1million. There is an existing budget allocation of £4,916,000 for public realm works in the approved capital programme. The detailed costings will be undertaken in the detailed design package.

Table 1

	Element/Phase		Area (m2)	Gold £	Silver £	Bronze £
A	PUBLIC REALM WORKS					
	Phase 1	Market Square	10,638			
		Site Clearance		265,950	265,950	265,950
		Paving		3,989,250	3,510,540	2,978,640
		Steps/Seating Plinths		250,000	150,000	150,000
		Tree Planting		500,000	400,000	210,000
		Other Planting		150,000	120,000	80,000
		Drainage		265,950	212,760	159,570
		Service Diversions		250,000	150,000	40,000
		Lighting		425,520	265,950	212,760
		Furniture		350,000	275,000	200,000
		Power and Water		100,000	100,000	50,000
		Maintenance		80,000	80,000	80,000
		Preliminaries (20%)		1,325,334	1,106,040	885,354
		Inflation (8.4%)		667,968	557,444	446,234
		Contingency (10%)		893,550	734,285	583,839
		Sub Total		9,513,522	7,927,969	6,342,347

B	MINOR BUILDING WORKS					
	Phase 1	Market Square Canopy		1,098,208	1,098,208	1,098,208
	Phase 2	Market Hall Alterations		221,116	221,116	221,116
TOTAL				10,832,846	9,247,293	7,661,671

4. PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Timescales for delivery are very tight in line with the Levelling Up Funding agreement of works being completed in full by March 2025. Some of the key milestones are included below:
- Procurement of design team to undertake detailed design and construction: October 2022 – October 2023
 - Consultation on Phase One of the Ashton Public Realm Strategy: End of October 2022 / beginning of November for a period of 4 weeks to the first week in December
 - Technical survey work: December 2022 – February 2023
 - Start of early physical works, which could include the removal of redundant stalls and kiosks: May 2023
 - Procurement of contractor: February 2024
 - Main construction phase: February 2024 – March 2025

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Council are now seeking to undertake public consultation on Phase One of the Public Realm Strategy, which includes the draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square using funding secured from Levelling Up Fund. It is proposed that consultation will begin week commencing the end of October 2022 / start of November for a period of 4 weeks. Briefing updates to Ashton Ward members, Ashton Town Team, a market traders group and other key stakeholders will take place before consultation commences.
- 5.2 Consultation material will be available online and an event will also be held at Ashton Market Hall where the local community will be able to speak with Council officers and members of the consultant team around the emerging proposals, which will be displayed on exhibition boards at various locations in the town centre.
- 5.3 Once the consultation period has ended, comments and feedback will be collated. This will inform preparation of the final proposals for the Phase One works for Executive Cabinet approval.
- 5.4 The team are in the process of procuring a detailed design and construction team that will be multidisciplinary and include architects, landscape architects, market specialists and engineers. Once appointed, the team will begin to refine the detail around the draft proposal and will be subject to further public consultation.
- 5.5 Timescales for delivery of the works to Market Square is challenging and the funding agreement is clear that monies need to be spent and works completed by March 2025. This is achievable within the current delivery programme on the assumption that this phase of consultation is completed by November 2022 to enable the first stages of the detailed design stage to progress.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 As set out at the front of the report.