

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Tuesday 14th July

Trowbridge Future High Street Submission

ANNEXES

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TROWBRIDGE FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

KEY CHALLENGES

DATE: 16 MARCH 2020

Challenges

- **Ageing population:** Trowbridge has experienced a significant drop in population growth since 2017, from an above average growth rate of 1.95% in 2016 to 0.10% in 2018, whilst the average growth rate of Wiltshire in 2018 was 0.41%.¹ The town's younger population (aged 24 or under) has decreased significantly, compared with overall growth in Wiltshire's younger population.
- **Vacant buildings:** Trowbridge has a high vacancy rate of 13% compared to the national average of 10.3%, with the majority of units (84%) being Class A Retail. Prolonged vacancy has negatively affected the character of the area with blank façades and unattractive derelict properties creating a poor impression for visitors to the town. Derelict buildings also facilitate anti-social activities; Trowbridge has the second highest rate of anti-social behaviour across Wiltshire and 37% of businesses in the town reported crime over the last 12 months.²
- **Declining footfall:** Average footfall figures have shown a decline of around 4.5% year on year since 2010, from approximately 441,837 monthly visitors in 2011 to 332,975 monthly in 2018.
- **No evening economy within town:** There is a lack of evening retail/leisure activities in Trowbridge town centre, with the majority of shops (including the Shires Shopping Centre) closing by 6pm. Pubs, cafes / takeaways and restaurants account for only 14% of town centre units, several of which are situated within the retail core. Only 14 shops remain open after 6pm, of which half are fast food outlets and the remaining are restaurants. The lack of an evening economy in the town centre results in people being drawn to larger settlements for retail and leisure opportunities.³
- **Tired public realm:** Trowbridge currently has a limited range of public spaces. The existing public realm within the town centre is generally unattractive, lacking in consistency, wayfinding and legibility. This results in poor perceptions of safety, which are compounded by the local press.
- **Poor movement and connectivity:** A complex and busy road network with one-way systems in the town centre, limited provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and poor legibility, wayfinding and connections to the walking and cycling network reduce connectivity in and around the town centre. This restricts pedestrian movement from the railway station to the Shires Shopping Centre and to the old town and fails to create pedestrian loops to support footfall flows. Trowbridge residents have a high car reliance with 45% of residents travelling to work by car

¹ Socio-economic model, Inner Circle Consulting

² Resident Customer/Business Survey AMTi, Wiltshire Council

³ Wiltshire Council Town Centre and Retail Study 2011

for journeys of less than 2km, compared to a national average of 39.6% in 2011.

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⁴ Trowbridge Transport Strategy Refresh 2018, Wiltshire Council

⁵ National Travel Survey: England 2018, Department for Transport

Annex 2: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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TROWBRIDGE FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

UPDATED: JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out a proposed strategy for the development of a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Future High Street Fund, running from February into July, for Trowbridge Town Centre.

This forms the basis of an evolving Engagement Plan and will be added to and amplified as we gain knowledge and make contacts during the business case development process.

It covers the following:

- aims of the engagement,
- principles of the engagement,
- key challenges,
- big picture questions to be explored through engagement and possible implications for the Future High Street Fund bid
- stakeholder groups to be worked with,
- division of tasks between consultant team and client, and
- proposed activities.

AIMS/PARAMETERS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our brief requires us to:

- Undertake consultation with key stakeholders (including the Town Council, the Town Hall Trust, Wiltshire Council's Sustainable Transport Service and others identified through this work), to advise on the current status of the Masterplan, the extent to which its objectives have been achieved, what remains to be done, and whether its objectives need to be updated.
- Undertake presentations and workshops as appropriate. The appointed consultant team will report to a Client Board made up of key officers from Wiltshire Council and Trowbridge Town Council. This Board will meet monthly.
- Make presentations every two months to the Trowbridge Area Board.
- Undertake two public consultation events.
- Undertake two presentations to Cabinet Members.
- Develop a summary report for presentation to a wide range of groups to provide an overview of the key findings and recommendations.
- Develop a Consultation Statement providing a record of the engagement and communication programme.

As a consultant team, engagement also has the following possibilities that we wish to capitalise upon:

- Develop a map of opportunities for projects and initiatives that could contribute to the overall vision for Trowbridge but may fall outside the scope of projects that would be delivered / enabled by the Council.
- Identify existing resources within the community, local businesses and other stakeholders (eg. time, space, added value, etc) to holistically assess the delivery routes for identified projects. This could be captured in a Community Charter that is owned and endorsed by community stakeholders and local residents.
- Building on the initial research, and the existence of the potential Community Charter, establish a Community Stakeholder Group to galvanise interested parties to continue to develop and implement the vision for Trowbridge (akin to Altrincham Forward).

PRINCIPLES OF PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT

Tell the good news story: take the opportunity wherever possible to show the positive aspect of what the Council is doing i.e. (a) updating the masterplan for Trowbridge to ensure that it can enhance the town centre's resilience and make the most of its opportunities; (b) developing a realistic and future-focused plan

to realise the vision for Trowbridge; (c) using the Future High Street Fund opportunity to breathe new life into the high street.

Joined up Trowbridge activity: where possible, we need to show how this activity fits into the bigger picture, and that the Council is serious about utilising its resources in the most meaningful and efficient way to realise transformational change.

Clear, easy to understand information and ways to feed in: progress, forthcoming events, who to contact etc. This should be in a set format/aesthetic that is recognisable and easy to understand.

Expectations management: we need to be clear on the scope of influence each stakeholder has, how their input is being used, as well as where and how decisions will be taken.

Commitment to pass on comments/opinions to other projects/Council services i.e. if someone raises a concern or wants to learn something about another project.

Identify an action plan: what can stakeholders contribute and where do they need the Council to step in / how can the Council enable things to happen?

Work with young people as much as possible: involving young people in the project, both in terms of ensuring that their views feed in to the design process, but also where possible giving them opportunities to help deliver engagement activity and/or think about the project with us, will not only benefit the project by allowing it to learn from the aspirations and experiences of younger citizens, but allow us to meet some of the Council's Social Value aims.

Where possible, make use of the opportunity offered by meanwhile uses: programmatically, this may be challenging, as most of the engagement will need to take place in a compressed period of time, but engagement may uncover opportunities to leverage existing resources, spaces and existing events to test and pilot new ideas and initiatives.

Focus on 'learning from': one of the best ways of initiating a productive conversation about possible, yet intangible, futures is by working from the empirical experience and analysis of what is already there. We are interested in listening to people's experience and memories of Trowbridge to understand the macro and micro factors that make a difference in how people perceive the high street.

In addition, the following principles will be at the core of the engagement:

- **Equal access:** the engagement process will be inclusive and seek to overcome barriers to participation to create a more cohesive outcome.
- **Clear and transparent:** The purpose of individual activities and recording of feedback will be clearly articulated and set in context.
- **Appropriate tools:** Materials will be concise and clearly laid out using appropriate formats.
- **Making sure that feedback is effective:** Feedback will be carefully recorded and managed with appropriate communication of findings and responses.
- **Embedding realistic timescales:** The engagement programme will build in sufficient timescales and notice for individuals and groups to get involved.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER – AND HOW WE MIGHT ADDRESS THEM

- **Timing and significance of the Future High Streets Fund programme:** it is known that the Council has been successful in the first stage of the FHSF, and the submission milestones (therefore having a clear deadline) are also known. It is important that stakeholders understand that this is the start of a longer-term process to transform the high street. The time constraints mean that all conversations must have a clear engagement outcome and a clear ask. The establishment of a Community Stakeholder Group to continue the engagement work post-submission will provide a clear channel for ideas and concerns to be presented to decision-makers going forward.
- **Addressing competing needs and concerns:** Trowbridge town centre is host to a variety of users with different needs and priorities. The development of a Community Charter of Stakeholder Priorities and Principles can be useful to document these and map how various proposals could, collectively, best meet them. We will need to show the emerging work within a carefully presented context that shows how the proposed way forward responds to the stakeholder needs, desires, concerns, questions, priorities and principles identified.
- **Potential for meaningful community engagement in the masterplanning and business case development process:** it's important that we try to do this because (a) engaged citizens/users will care about the longer-term impacts and (b) may have useful reflections to offer. However, we are aware that the precise nature of any options may be quite heavily constrained and shaped by other factors (e.g. cost benefit ratios, deliverability, or confidential matters such as on-going commercial negotiations) and that the complexity of this may make it difficult to have a useful discussion. Nonetheless, there is potential:
 1. To divide potential areas of input into bite-sized and relatable chunks e.g. helping identify what it is most beneficial in terms of opportunities, or relationship to the High Street, or cross-programming/sharing of spaces – areas where user knowledge and experience offer a useful perspective alongside those of professionals.

2. To identify specific aspects of the proposals where it is possible – and vital – for user experience to shape things, and then develop specific targeted engagement activity around these.
 3. To be clear on what channels of communication are available to stakeholders for on-going input beyond specific meetings and events – before and after the submission date.
- **Resource:** there are many people with an interest in this project, and the scope of engagement is potentially limitless. However, resource is limited. Initial community mapping, scope assessment and then outreach will be a vital stage in establishing where that resource should be directed in order to secure (i) the best possible opportunities for the town centre, with stakeholder energy and ideas targeted to where it can make the most difference and (ii) the greatest sense of ownership and pride among the people of Trowbridge over the resulting proposals.
 - **Avoiding over-consultation:** we are aware that there are a number of on-going projects and initiatives which are likely to require engagement with the same stakeholders. We will liaise with the project leads to ensure that any feedback received is appropriately incorporated and played back to stakeholders, where appropriate, to demonstrate a joined-up approach.
 - **COVID-19:** The current and potential restrictions in place due to Covid-19 present a challenge to reach stakeholders – particularly where our preference would be to engage with them face-to-face. Our standard approach is to always enable virtual attendance for meetings, enabling maximum flexibility for attendees. In addition, we will explore and agree additional channels for engagement and input. This could include, for example, virtual whiteboards and online mapping open for external inputs, delivering webinars with local schools, online surveys, and sending physical materials and arranging phone calls with vulnerable stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

We have identified the following groups with whom we need to work, within the above parameters. The following table sets out initial thoughts on how this needs to happen. NB. As per Challenge 4 above, resource is not limitless on this project. It is therefore important that we identify with the client team our priority groups to work with – in general terms at this initial stage in the process – and then in detail once the Community Mapping has been completed this month (early February).

This will be elaborated upon throughout the masterplan and business case development process, with a focus for identifying priorities for engagement and thus for targeting resources.

Group	Detail / Engagement aim	Method of engagement	Timescales
'INTERNAL'			
Project steering group	Overall steering will be by the Officer Steering Group comprising of the key stakeholders and project leads, to oversee the bid progress and ensure coordination/alignment in outputs and approach to the FHSF submission.	Monthly meetings	Ongoing
Wiltshire Council and Town Council Councillors	This is an important group to engage with to demonstrate the Council's commitment and buy-in over the Future High Street Fund proposals. It includes: (i) Leader of the Council (ii) Cabinet Members, including relevant portfolio holders (iii) local Councillors for Trowbridge	(i) Regular briefing meetings	(i) ongoing
Service/ department heads	It is important to engage with them to (a) learn about the current challenges and build upon emerging policies and	Workshop 1	January

	<p>initiatives; (b) ensure appropriate alignment of resources to deliver the biggest value for the high street, and (c) Demonstrate the Council's capacity for delivery.</p> <p>This will be a key component to build the Management Case.</p>	<p>Online One-on-one meetings (SP/FB)</p>	<p>(1) Mid Feb-early March, pre-draft submission</p> <p>(2) After receiving feedback from MCHLG (May - July)</p>
'EXTERNAL'			
Trowbridge Area Board	Potential to use them as a focus group as the ideas develop and understanding the role they can play in bringing forward some of the initiatives (particularly where private sector needs to lead).	Regular updates (WCC)	Ongoing
Town Hall Trust	To develop scope of potential FHSF project	Online One-on-one meetings (SP)	Ongoing
Shires Shopping Centre, Castle Place, St Stephen's place operators	Zones of activity with the largest footprint in the town centre, key to understanding the opportunities to enhance connectivity and legibility in the town centre.	TBC	April
Landowners and developers	Key to understand barriers to development in Trowbridge and inform the delivery action plan / strategy for the Masterplan	Online workshop and engagement via Invest in Trowbridge	June
Local businesses	Raise awareness about the project happening and encouraging businesses to think with us about how they may be able to change and become more resilient – what types of uses would add to (and not detract from) what they want to achieve?	Online workshop and engagement via Chamber of Commerce	June
Existing community groups	Mapping ongoing.	Online workshop and one-on-one meetings, Council officers attending meetings	June - July
Youth groups / local schools	Potential to deliver workshop with local school to understand drivers and opportunities from young people's perspectives.	Workshop via school (currently being organised)	Early July
Residents	To consider the specific needs and interests of those who feel ownership of the area already, whose High Street who is, and who may be most directly affected by the change.	Online workshop	June

ACTIVITY PLAN

STAGE	DATE	ACTIVITY	Stakeholder(s)	Lead
ROM Development	Late Oct - Early Nov	Agree scope of ROM	Client Team	SP
Development of Masterplan	Dec - Feb	Stakeholder mapping	n/a	SP

update; Draft Business Case	Mid January	Visioning workshop	Trowbridge FHSF steering group Heads of service	ICC Team
	Early Feb	Agree comms protocols and messages	Client team	WC
	Mid Feb	Initial meetings and surgeries with internal stakeholders (discussions to inform management case)	Internal Service Heads	LPC
	Mid Feb – Mid March	Start to make contact with Mapped External Stakeholders, following the order, and any messages, agreed with the Council: introducing ourselves as the Consultant Team and mapping out thoughts and feelings to inform next steps and to start to draw up list of priorities / opportunities / resources. Establish appetite & potential members for Community Stakeholder Group.	Mapped External Stakeholders	SP
Development of Masterplan Action / Delivery Plan; Finalising FHSF submission ** Covid-19 contingency:	Mid May – June	Calibration meetings with key stakeholders and partners (to respond to MHCLG comments on draft business case, where relevant). ** Virtual meetings via skype / zoom	Key Stakeholders	ICC Team
	June	Community workshop ** See appendix 1	External stakeholders	ICC Team
	Early July	Produce final engagement report & scope Trowbridge stakeholder group	n/a	ICC Team

Annex 3: Project location (draft)



Projects Key

- 1.1 Gyratory two-way system
- 1.2 River Biss Project - Shires & Town Bridge
- 1.3 Pedestrianisation of high street
- 1.4 Wayfinding and environmental improvements
- 1.5 Teasel drying house
- 2.1 Town Hall improvements
- 2.2 Adjacent properties improvements
- 3.1 Vacant units change of use
- 4.1 Redevelopment to improve park frontage