

Chard Regeneration Scheme Town Centre Regeneration Public Consultation Feedback Report

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Purpose of the Report

1. This report updates members of Area West Committee on the public consultation programme for the regeneration plans and proposals for SSDC landholdings adjacent to Chard Town Centre. The site comprises the Boden Mill, the former ACI factory site, the Boden Street and Marketfields car parks the Boden Centre and the Holyrood Lace Mill.
2. The first formal consultation ran from Saturday 16th June 2018 to the 30th September 2018.
3. The comments submitted by the community through this consultation fed into the appointed architect's brief for master planning purposes. The concepts have now been developed and presented at a second public exhibition on Saturday 16th March 2019. This report provides a summary analysis of main comments received so far.
4. The proposals to regenerate Chard are wider than the redevelopment of the key sites albeit these form an early priority. In addition to the main regeneration site at Boden Mill, a Public Realm Enhancement Review has been commissioned to encompass the wider regeneration of the town centre and public realm spaces.

Public Interest

5. Following extensive research and guided by suggestions previously made by Chard residents, South Somerset District Council has worked with partners to develop an ambitious strategy which will bring significant changes and benefits to Chard and the community.
6. Chard Regeneration is a wide ranging scheme encompassing the whole of the town centre but focuses in the early stages on redeveloping and bringing in to community use the Boden Mill / ACI site in the centre of the town. Following consultation in summer 2018 the proposed components to be included on the site are a new leisure centre with swimming pool, a library and community hub, alongside a blend of housing and commercial developments.
7. The project team appointed by the Council and working with the partners includes Alliance Leisure who were appointed as leisure development specialist and AHR architects, a multi-award winning architecture and building consultancy practice. The team, including SSDC, have engaged with other key partners and the Chard Community Stakeholder Group to bring the project forward from concept to design in preparation for submission of a planning application.
8. The latest proposals can be viewed via the District Council website.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that Area West Committee note the content of this report.

Report

The Spring 2019 Consultation

10. In order to maximise community engagement in the consultation SSDC publicised the event widely including through print media, website, social media and a mailshot was sent to Chard residents and businesses.
11. On 13 March 2019 Radio Ninesprings interviewed Councillor Jo Roundell Greene, portfolio holder for the Chard Regeneration Scheme and Deputy Leader of South Somerset District Council about the forthcoming consultation event.
12. On 15 March 2019 a presentation of the proposals were given to the Holyrood Students regeneration group. The group has been working extensively with SSDC and the team to ensure that the voice of young people is represented in shaping the future of the town.
13. Also on 15 March 2019 a presentation of the proposals was given to the key stakeholder group and members of the Chard Regeneration Board.
14. A public event was held at Chard Guild Hall on 16 March 2019. The event comprises a series of consultation boards with members of the project team on hand to talk through the proposals and answer questions. A flythrough of the site was on display throughout the event and presentation talks were held by the architects. In addition, the proposals and flythrough were hosted on the SSDC website to give the opportunity for those unable to attend the event to view and make comments on the scheme. The boards and flythrough can be viewed at <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/life-events/my-business/regeneration-projects/chard-regeneration/>
15. The appointed consultants for the public realm enhancement review (Element Urbanism) also attended the event and talked to the public about the wider town centre aspirations and how they would be approaching their work.

Consultation Analysis

16. 533 people attended the latest consultation event resulting in many conversations, questions being answered and points being made to the team. 103 people left written comments on the day and to date a further 16 comments have been received via other communication channels. This is on top of the feedback received from the Holyrood School students and the Stakeholder Group.
17. For analysis purposes the responses were grouped into the top three re-occurring comments this told us that:
 - The majority of the respondents thought that the wider Masterplan Scheme was very exciting and they were really interested in the proposals.
 - Many of the respondents said they thought the Leisure Centre plans in particular were very exciting.
 - A number of the respondents said they wanted the pool offer to include lessons for all ages.

The top response from the public realm enhancement review was;

- That respondents really liked the wider ambitions for the Public Realm and understood its importance, looking at the wider environment, the historic setting and access to the town, recognising that traffic and transport issues (including pedestrian, cycle, car and public transport) have an important role in bringing the regeneration activities together.

Moving the Regeneration Scheme Forward

18. Following the consultations that have been undertaken, there are some key emerging strategy themes becoming apparent. These themes will form part of the foundations for the Chard Strategy.
19. The project team are currently working on the planning application preparations for the Boden Mill / ACI site with a view to submitting an application in the next few weeks. The timetable for taking forward the works to the site will depend on the planning application process which will involve securing agreement from statutory consultees such as Natural England, Historic England and the Highways Authority. The Project Team have had extensive engagement with these agencies in preparing proposals. If the planning application receives consent and is expedited in a timely manner the aim is to start works on site before the end of 2019.

Works on the public realm and access proposals will continue to take place over the next two months with a view to communicating proposals and consulting in Summer 2019.

Financial Implications

20. There are no new financial implications directly associated with this report.

Council Plan Implications

21. The Chard Regeneration Scheme is a specific objective of the Council Plan and a priority project for 2019-20

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

22. None at this stage

Equality and Diversity Implications

23. None at this stage

Background Papers

24. None
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