

Chard Regeneration Scheme Update Report

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Purpose of the Report

This report updates members of Area West Committee on the Chard Regeneration Scheme project.

Public Interest

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. Chard Regeneration Scheme encompasses the town centre with a focus on redeveloping and bringing in to community use the Boden Mill site. 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.

The project team appointed by the Council and working with the partners includes Alliance Leisure (leisure development specialist) and AHR architects; a multi-award winning architecture and building consultancy practice. It is intended that the Chard Regeneration Scheme will make a significant, positive difference to the economic vitality of the local area. It will be of interest to all who live, work, study, shop, use the services and enjoy the leisure opportunities within the town.

Recommendations

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

Background

The Chard Regeneration Scheme project partnership currently comprises of South Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council, Chard Town Council and is supported by Homes England. The overall governance and authority for the Chard Regeneration Scheme remains vested in the District Executive of South Somerset District Council. The Project Board is the main body for steering project delivery and has decision making delegated to it by Full Council within the parameters agreed. It maintains decision-based control and ensures that the component projects of the Chard Regeneration Scheme are resourced.

Since 2016, the Chard Regeneration Scheme board have been working together to develop a new community-driven development scheme for the Boden Mill site adjacent to Chard Town Centre. The plans include a new leisure centre, library and community hub, a health centre and improved public realm. Alliance Leisure Ltd and AHR Architects together with associated specialist consultants have been appointed to support the delivery of the project. The Council has committed to engaging the residents and stakeholders of Chard in the regeneration scheme and has consulted formally with the public on two occasions where local residents have been given the opportunity to comment on the

proposals for the town centre. There is also a Stakeholder consultation group and a project to engage young people in shaping the future of their town.

Project Update

The regeneration plan is broader than the redevelopment of the Boden Mill / ACI site. However, securing the redevelopment of this site with uses that will attract people in to using the town centre is regarded as critical to the overall successful regeneration of Chard. The redevelopment scheme will be delivered in two phases; phase one will include the leisure centre, library - community hub building and associated public realm. The second phase will include the redevelopment of the two mill buildings, Boden Centre and associated public realm. The project team recently submitted the planning application for the detailed design of the leisure centre and library hub plus the masterplan for the entire site. This followed detailed site investigations, consultation with residents and engagement with statutory consultees such as Historic England. The Planning Application is likely to take at least three months to determine. Due to the historic nature of the site, works, including demolition, cannot commence until planning permission is granted.

The Council are currently liaising with Somerset County Council and other public sector partners to agree the internal design of the library hub building. The Council has appointed 'Opening the Book', an experienced team of designers, to provide space planning and design services to make the most efficient use of the space available. The community hub will include the library, customer access points for the district Council, the registrar, Somerset County Council social services and space for museum displays.

Beyond the Boden Mill – ACI site, another key component of the Chard Regeneration Plan is improvements to the Public Realm. This includes examination of routes to and from the town centre to ensure walking and cycling are easier and more desirable, as well as improving the environment, look and feel of the town centre to increase its appeal, and take better account of the historic built environment. Element Urbanism and Hydrock were recently appointed to complete a public realm enhancement review. This will include a car parking review, coach parking review, a signage and pedestrian wayfinding strategy and a design guide to include a public realm improvement plan. The Stakeholder Group, and local businesses and residents will have the opportunity to comment on the proposals in June/July 2019. Element Urbanism and Hydrock have engaged the Stakeholder Group in the initial work as well as attending the recent consultation event in March 2019 to understand key issues and opportunities relating to their project.

Next Steps

The next steps for the project team includes working with AHR Architects and Alliance Leisure Ltd to develop the designs for both the library hub and mill buildings. Work is ongoing on the detailed cost plans to meet the parameters agreed by Council in 2018. Once planning permission is secured and the costs and budget finalized, demolition works can commence. The options for the public realm improvement plan will shortly be available for the public to comment on. The project team continue to work with the stakeholders and partners to ensure the scheme is community-driven.

The project team are working with Holyrood School because there are aspirations to make the Regeneration Scheme a part of their students project work. This fits in with the curriculum and it is an

excellent way of engaging the young people in Chard. Subject to agreement with the school, we will propose a framework for the Boden Mill case study.

Financial Implications

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

Council Plan Implications

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

None at this stage

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Background Papers

None
