
Chard Regeneration Scheme Update – Area West

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Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides a general progress update on the Chard Regeneration Scheme, specifically:
 - i) An overview of the impact of Covid-19 on the project
 - ii) A progress update on the construction works
 - iii) An update on the closure of the Boden Street public toilets and the plans for demolition
 - iv) An update on the HAZ (High Streets) project

Recommendations

2. That Area West Members:
 - note the contents of the report

Background

3. Following detailed design, SSSDC applied in May 2019 for Planning Consent and Listed Building Consent to build a new Leisure Centre, Library & Community Hub and public realm improvements at the Boden Mill (ACI site) in Chard. The proposal requires the removal of buildings associated with the factory site but the retention of the Mill, Building 11, the listed arch and some adjoining buildings to the south of the arch. The planning application was heard by both SSSDC's Area West Committee and then Regulation Committee on 3 September 2019 where it received approval.

Covid-19 Overview

4. Given the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and safety of worker and the public, the main contractor decided to suspend construction operations at the site on March 27th for two weeks.

5. This two week break allowed the main contractor to assess the situation and plan for a safe recommencement of works. There were many discussions in the background between SSSDC, the main contractor and Alliance Leisure. Alex Parmley led these discussions and was instrumental in securing the re start of construction works on April 14th.
6. Although works have recommenced we need to be aware of the delays Covid-19 has brought to the project. These are concentrated in three areas:
7. Supply chain delays, such as materials being delayed in transit, suppliers remaining closed or delays through key supply chain partners being unable to carry out their duties through illness/staff shortage.
8. Site delays due to social distancing. This could include limits on the total number of people on site, limits on the number of workers in any given area at a time, or delays through additional site health checks and monitoring.
9. Sub-contractor delays, where critical sub-contractors are late starting due to unfulfilled commitments on other sites or staff absence through illness.
10. Cumulatively, it is difficult to fully assess the impact of the potential delays caused by Covid-19 at this early stage. It is important to state that the works are currently behind programme due to Covid-19 and members will be kept updated should this situation change.

Progress Update

11. Following the temporary close down of the construction site due to Covid-19, work recommenced on Tuesday 14th April.
12. The impact of Covid-19 severely affected the supply chain and the main contractor had to seek alternative suppliers or sub-contractors to ensure that works could continue.
13. The return of workers to the site necessitated new safety procedures and site rules to maintain the safety of workers and the public. Although these procedures have not yet added cost to the build project they do add time to the working day resulting in a very minor loss of productivity.
14. The works on site currently are mainly drainage and sub structure works requiring a limited number of personnel. As the construction programme progresses and the number of operatives on site increases there will be new challenges for the site management to maintain social distancing. This could result in some construction operations taking longer than planned due to the number of people on site being limited for safety reasons.

15. To date, the drainage works are progressing well with surface water attenuation tank being installed under the former Marketfield car park. The photo below shows the largest tank located just behind the Royal Mail sorting office.



16. Trees. A number of mature trees were scheduled for removal as part of the works in Marketfield and Boden Street car parks. We have requested that these trees are retained or replaced in the most effective manner.

Boden Street public convenience closure

17. The decision to close the Boden Street public conveniences was approved at the March 2020 Regeneration Board meeting.
18. Following this decision, the facility was subject to further anti-social behaviour culminating in a fire over the Easter bank holiday.
19. The fire affected the accessible WC facility, which was closed with immediate effect. The remaining facilities closed at the end of April following consultation with the Town Council and press releases to the public.
20. The facilities are now secured and officers are undertaking the necessary processes to have the power and water services disconnected to enable demolition.

21. As part of the preparation for demolition the parking ticket machine, signage and rubbish bin will be relocated to the perimeter wall of the car park. The majority of the car park will remain open to the public during the demolition works with appropriate safety measures in place.
22. The demolition works are expected to commence in June or July, subject to the disconnection of services.

HAZ Project

23. The Chard High Street Heritage Action Zone project is part of a nationwide initiative designed to secure lasting improvements to our historic high streets for the communities who use them. It is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and run by Historic England.
24. South Somerset District Council applied for a grant of £1m for the project of which they are expected to find match funding. The programme will deliver improvements to the high street through three complementary strands: (a) undertaking physical improvement works to town centre buildings and within the public realm; (b) facilitating cultural activities and events celebrating the history of the high street and its importance to local communities over the generations and, crucially, (c) giving local communities a key role in deciding what works they want to see happening on their high street and what sort of place they want it to be.
25. An announcement will be made in due course regarding the amount of funding that SSDC will receive. This has been put on hold due to Covid-19. The council are in the process of recruiting a project officer to lead and manage the HAZ programme. They are expected to be in post by July 2020. The regeneration team are continuing to progress the programme and are engaging with building owners eligible for a grant in preparation for the grant scheme opening. The public realm projects are also being developed further with a design team.

Next Steps

26. Following the two week close down of site operations, the phase one construction target completion date of August 2021 is likely to be put back. The implications of the shut down period and the potential implications of social distancing or further government restrictions on movement cannot be fully quantified at this stage. Board members will be kept updated on any delays to the construction programme and leisure centre opening date.
27. Whilst phase one construction is ongoing, the project team will be preparing a planning application for phase 2 and implementing some of the softer interventions as part of the wider Chard Regeneration Scheme programme. This includes

support to attract artisan / independent retailers to the town, support to develop the growth of local food producers and food businesses, and undertaking a market health check in partnership with the Town Council.

Council Plan Implications

28. 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

29. None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity Implications

30. None arising from this report