

CABINET

Lancaster Square Routes 23 June 2009

Report of Head of Planning Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To report on outline designs for the improvement of public spaces and routes within the city centre and on the outcome of public consultation and for Cabinet to decide on how the project should be taken forward.				
Key Decision	✓	Non-Key Decision		Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	26 th May 09			
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR ARCHER

- (1) To endorse the thematic approach to improving spaces and routes in the centre focusing on the themes of “Lancaster Lore and Legends”, “Georgian Gem” and “City Park”.
- (2) To endorse the outline concept designs for specific routes and spaces for further development by the design team
- (3) To note that Cabinet will receive a further report prior to the next stage of design development to direct the recommendations for each route or space and their priority for implementation
- (4) To update general fund revenue budgets to reflect the revised expenditure profile and external funding draw down, subject to authorisation by the external funders NWDA and Lancashire County Council

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Director (Regeneration), reported on “Lancaster Square Routes” to Cabinet on 9 December 2008. Cabinet delegated to the Corporate Director authority to select and commission consultants for public realm design work - funded by the Northwest Regional Development Agency and Lancashire County Council. This work is advanced now in response to the widespread feeling that the city centre underperforms and that in part this is because public spaces have not been invested in and

are not of the quality required to help make the centre a vibrant and enjoyable place to be in.

- 1.2 Detailed design proposals must be brought forward to a set timetable if possible by the end of July 2009. This report advises on progress in bringing forward design proposals and advises on the options available to members in deciding on designs and how to proceed.
- 1.3 Design proposals are being prepared for:
 - Market Square – to transform this into a civic space that is definitively the heart of the city.
 - Market Street illumination – to create a stunning visual experience by using the latest lighting technologies to trace the 2000 years of history embodied in townscape along this route, linking the historic Castle precinct through to today's commercial centre.
 - Sun Street Square and Sun Street – to ensure that these historic spaces, only a short distance from Market Street, offer an enriching experience with a bright but serene continental ambience.
 - Horseshoe Corner – to establish this intersection of routes as a real place through ingenious urban design and stunning public art.
 - Castle and Quay green space – to reconnect the Castle precinct and the historic Quay so this half forgotten area becomes a unique place of attraction and interest to residents and visitors alike.
 - Castle Precincts (south and west) to create a fitting approach and setting to the John O' Gaunt Gateway.
 - Upper and Lower Church Street, Frances Passage and Gage Street – to reinforce the legibility and amenity of these key connectivity routes on the east-west axis.
- 1.4 Officers procured consultants via a competitive process and selected Gillespies, one of the leading urban and landscape design practices in the UK, specialising in design and development of high quality public open space in both urban and rural environments. Gillespies have been assisted by a multi-talented team, comprising of:
 - Amenity Space – architects, designers and artists
 - Atoll – arts consultancy
 - Buro Happold – lighting specialists/highways engineers
 - Davis Langdon – cost consultant
- 1.5 Gillespies were essentially given a two stage commission to wrap around an officer-led public consultation stage:
 - The first stage involved the preparation of outline design options in the form of pictorial visions suitable for stakeholder and community engagement together with some preliminary costings

- The second stage detailed design work, specification and costing work for preferred options after selection of these by Cabinet.

1.6 Officers have worked closely with the design team to assure that Gillespies brought forward proposals / options that fit to the design framework and brief. The proposals / options for consideration are now in outline.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 As explained in the December 2008 Cabinet report, designs proposals are concerned to improve and enhance the centre for residents and visitors to create a more enjoyable place in which to work, shop and visit, to make the centre a more vibrant place with more vitality and drive up expenditure in shops and on services.

2.2 It is now accepted that investing in quality public spaces generates economic benefits; it enhances visitor experiences, stimulates growth in the visitor economy, raises property values and helps to increase income and profit for local business.

2.3 Gillespies have prepared outline design proposals / options. Designs are focused around three main themes 1. "Lancaster Lore and Legends", 2. "Georgian Gem" and 3. "City Park".

2.4 Lancaster "Lore and Legends" is the overarching key theme for the project as it links all the routes and spaces. To enable legibility and wayfinding small subtle interventions or larger more noticeable public art will tell the lost tales of Lancaster eg up at the Castle subtle floor markings or audio or the art installation at Horseshoe Corner.

2.5 Lancaster has a clearly defined history of fine architecture. Georgian buildings and landmarks are the most notable, hence the 'Georgian Gem' theme although it must be recognised that Lancaster's heritage draws on many other periods also and therefore the theme should be not lead to an over-focus on the one style. The theme includes for improving the setting of historic buildings and landmarks, promoting high quality public realm, cultural activities, restaurants/cafes, evening activities and market spaces alongside encouraging new architectural interventions of the highest quality.

2.6 The "City Park" theme aims to build upon the city's natural assets and resource of greenspace, cycleways and walkways and create a new green focus for the city centre on the existing parkland resource of Vicarage Fields / Quay Meadow.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 A consultation regarding the future of Market Square was undertaken in June 2007 with the assistance of the Storey Gallery. At the end of last year Council Officers invited residents, visitors and traders to give their view on a wider number of spaces and routes and how these might be improved. These responses assisted officers in producing a design framework and brief for consultants in producing outline design options for each space.

3.2 Gillespies presented initial options for consideration by a Places Matter! Design Review panel, following NWDA best practice guidance. Design Review is a respected method of improving the quality of new built environment development proposals by offering constructive, impartial and expert advice to developers, planning authorities and regional agencies on development schemes. The design

team then worked to accommodate Design Panel recommendations in the options brought forward for public consultation.

- 3.3 Earlier this year, designers Amenity Space worked with a group of local Year 9 students from four schools to review Market Square and develop proposals for it. Amenity Space were then drawn into the design team and have used their earlier experience and consultation to help develop designs that have been incorporated into the overall scheme.
- 3.4 Officers received the concept designs in the week beginning the 18th May in preparation for an organised period of stakeholder and public consultation. The consultation focused on the thematic approaches devised by the design team and outline design proposals and options for the spaces and routes. The consultation involved:
- Public display in Market Square over five days including market days (two Wednesdays and a Saturday) and non-market days (two Thursdays), both during the school term and during the half term vacation and one early evening consultation. During the consultation the public were able to view all display boards, see a collection of potential stone samples, discuss the proposals with officers, gain information about where and how they could access further information online and advice on how to respond either at the consultation via a postcard, or electronically. Two postcards were provided at the consultation for feedback, one depicting the sketch proposal for Market Square, the other depicting Sun Square. This was provided so that comments could be collected either verbally or pictorially and appeal to the widest audience.
 - An e-mail advertising the event and a follow up email with a copy of the proposals attached was sent to everyone on the planning and corporate consultation database and arts and access organisation contacts.
 - General press release with a feature in the Lancaster Guardian, also featured on the BBC news website and featured in the national 'Planning' magazine.
 - Direct consultation with key stakeholders including the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce
 - A dedicated facebook profile and group page, which has currently attracted over 100 'friends and members'.
 - A specific webpage www.lancaster.gov.uk/squareroutes which was featured as the main news item on the Council website and special email address squareroutes@lancaster.gov.uk.
 - A further video and podwalk were produced by Amenity Space to encourage people to look at the current spaces and talk them through the development of the proposals to date. Both were made available to download with links from the website. The video has received 100 'hits' to date and the podwalk over 50 hits. The video and the consultation events have also been played/advertised on the customer service screens in the Tourist Information Centre
 - Early liaison with the Highway Authority
 - The students from the four local schools involved earlier on in the project attended the consultation and are taking the design boards back to their schools to allow fellow students to comment.

- 3.5 The response to the consultation has far exceeded officer's expectations and it is felt that this is due in part to the variety of consultation methods and opportunities provided which has enabled a wider demographic to access and become engaged in the scheme.
- 3.6 Officers are delighted at the level of interest and the mainly positive responses to the scheme and the concept ideas and are keen to use this attention and response to develop the proposals further.
- 3.7 Given the level of response, officers have not yet had opportunity to fully digest all of the comments and suggestions submitted. In order to do justice to the feedback and ensure that the design team can take into account as many considerations as possible in the more detailed design stage, officers are proposing, subject to authorisation by the NWDA and Lancashire County Council and acceptance by the design team, to delay the commencement of the next stage of the commission. On the assumption that this is acceptable to all, officers will thereafter provide the design team with an updated brief outlining the main consultation findings and any suggested amendments for each of the identified spaces and routes as noted in 1.3 (CHECK numbering AT END). This brief will then govern the production of the more detailed designs.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 4.1 Officers, supported by Gillespies, propose to present and explain the outline design options for each space and route at the meeting. The available options are to:
- Option 1 - to endorse the thematic approach to the outline design options, noting that in September 2009 Cabinet will be presented for approval with a) an updated brief which will enable the design team to produce more detailed designs based on wider consultation and investigation and b) a recommendation as to what order of priority should be given to each space and route for implementation. Notwithstanding this, to endorse / reject any option or, alternatively, element of an option for more detailed development.
 - Option 2 not to endorse the thematic approach being taken, nor the detailed development of the outline design options as presented, but, notwithstanding this, to direct how the design work should progress for each space and route drawing on the Gillespies proposals and options as appropriate.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 5.1 Officers consider that the Gillespies proposals fit well to the brief given and are innovative and well considered. Option 1 will ensure that the full benefits of the consultation and stakeholder engagement can be taken into account and that officers can investigate potential synergies for the delivery of these proposals both in terms of the physical development and for the longer term management and opportunities for these spaces and routes, including for cultural and social activity and market trading for example. This will ensure that a holistic approach to the management of the town centre will be captured. On this basis officers prefer option 1.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Gillespies' design team have prepared exciting concept design proposals / options for spaces and routes in the city centre. These provide a sound basis for further consultation and investigation before committing to more detailed designs and the priority in which these spaces should be brought forward for implementation.

<p>RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>The proposal fits to the Council's Policy Framework, specifically the City Centre Strategy (2003) and Core Strategy (2008).</p>	
<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>Community safety , access requirements and the needs of disabled people inform the design proposals and proposals will be the subject of consultation with relevant organisations both at outline and detailed stages.</p>	
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>The design work by Gillespies is fully funded from external sources and there are no financial implications at this stage. However the general fund revenue budgets will need to be updated to reflect the revised expenditure profile and external funding draw down, subject to authorisation by the external funders NWDA and Lancashire County Council.</p>	
<p>SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS</p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted & has no comments to add</p>	
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no legal implications.</p>	
<p>MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.</p>	
<p>BACKGROUND PAPERS</p> <p>Planning Services Files Gillepsies outline design proposals</p>	<p>Contact Officer: Julian Inman Telephone: 01524 582336 E-mail: jinman@lancaster.gov.uk</p>