

Subject:	Valley Gardens Enhancement Scheme		
Date of Meeting:	29 November 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Tom Campbell	Tel: 29-3328
	Email:	tom.campbell@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: ETSCMM24834	
Ward(s) affected:	Hanover & Elm Grove, Queen's Park, Regency, St Peter's & North Laine		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 Valley Gardens is a landmark location to local residents, businesses and visitors stretching almost 1.5km through the centre of Brighton & Hove. Bounded by key transport infrastructure that links the east-west coastal route with the main north-south corridors in and out of the city, today Valley Gardens might be considered to be lacking the impact and amenity that would be expected of a significant public space in a city ranked as a top UK visitor destination. This report sets out proposals to engage local communities and businesses in ways in which to redefine the role of Valley Gardens in the city. The work will seek to transform the quality of the public realm for local residents, enhance the value Valley Gardens contributes to the wider visitor economy and enhance its function as a transport corridor. Also incorporating a delivery strategy, the initiative will involve:

- Design & Master planning;
- Transport modelling;
- Capital investment planning;
- Project delivery & resource planning.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Transport & Public Realm authorises officers to progress the development of initial design proposals and a delivery strategy for the Valley Gardens Enhancement Scheme, incorporating stakeholder engagement and consultation.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 Enhancing Valley Gardens has been an objective of the council for a number of years. The council's second Local Transport Plan [LTP2], published in 2006, included proposals for a major urban realm scheme in this corridor towards the end of the planned 5-year investment programme. However, reductions in funding levels prevented proposals from being developed and implemented as originally planned.

- 3.2 A Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis document has recently been prepared. The document provides an overview of the quality and use of the existing public realm in and around Valley Gardens, along with the policies and projects that may impact on the Gardens in the near future.
- 3.3 The council is currently involved with a number of projects, such as the Biosphere Reserve City and The Level Enhancement Scheme, which have the potential to complement any enhancements to Valley Gardens. In addition a number of private developments are planned for the surrounding area. These are described in more detail in the Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis document, which is available in the Members' Rooms.

Project Approach

- 3.4 The project approach proposed in this document is consistent with RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) guidance on best practice in urban realm project management. Assuming the proposal is approved, over the coming year the project will progress to RIBA Stage C (incorporating analysis, consultation and development of design proposals and recommendations).
- 3.5 Initial work will focus on gathering public and stakeholder opinions and using this information, together with the analysis already carried out, to produce a Design Brief. The Brief will then inform design of a preferred concept scheme that is practical, costed, and phasable.
- 3.6 A number of concept scheme options will be developed. These will be presented to the Cabinet Member in autumn/winter 2012, along with a request for approval to conduct final consultation in order to identify a preferred scheme approach.
- 3.7 Paralleling the design process will be an investment and funding feasibility study. It is intended that the final preferred concept design and associated funding / delivery strategy will be presented to the Cabinet Member in early 2013 with a request to progress towards phased implementation, commencing in 2013/14.

Resources required

- 3.8 The Senior Responsible Officer for the project will be the Strategic Director Place and the political lead will be the Cabinet Member for Transport & Public Realm. The project will be managed by a team drawing on expertise in urban design, highways engineering, planning, communications, project management and parks & open spaces. Some additional, specialist support or advice may also be required depending on the nature of the preferred scheme design.
- 3.9 Funding will be required during 2012/13 to meet costs associated with the process outlined in this report. Funding and resourcing decisions relating to the scheme's development and delivery will be considered as part of the capital programme process (of which the Local Transport Plan is part) in coming years.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Due to its high profile location in the centre of the city, any proposals for Valley Gardens will impact on a significant number and variety of people. Effective consultation throughout the design process is key to ensuring that any scheme

ultimately developed can meet the needs of as many people as possible. It is proposed that, with the Cabinet Member's approval, initial consultation is carried out in the early 2012/13 and that stakeholder engagement continues throughout the design process.

- 4.2 Where possible existing media, such as City News and the council's online consultation portal, will be used to ensure the consultation process is inclusive and wide-reaching, whilst also being resource efficient. Public exhibitions and engagement with specific stakeholders through existing partnerships and fora will also be used when necessary.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Capital: The Department for Transport has allocated £6.576 million to the council for the 2012-13 Local Transport capital settlement. In February 2012 the council will approve the sum to be allocated to the Local Transport Plan to deliver transport improvements. It is anticipated that any funding required to deliver the proposal outlined in this paper would be set aside from this settlement.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 26/10/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Transport Act 2000, as subsequently amended by the Local Transport Act 2008, introduced a statutory requirement for local transport authorities to produce a Local Transport Plan [LTP], to keep the LTP under review and to alter the LTP if considered appropriate. The LTP provides the policy framework for capital investment in schemes and measures to maintain, manage and improve the city's transport network.
- 5.3 The council has to follow the rules on consultation promulgated by the government and the courts. The council needs to ensure that the consultation process is carried out at a time when proposals are still at their formative stage, that sufficient reasons and adequate time must be given to allow intelligent consideration and responses and that results are conscientiously taken into account in finalising the proposals.
- 5.4 The preparation of and recommendations set out in this report have had due regard to the legal requirements referred to above. It is not considered that any adverse human rights implications arise from the report.

Lawyer Consulted: Carl Hearsom Date: 25/10/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.5 Consultation will be carried out according to the council's consultation and equalities guidelines to ensure that the process is accessible to all. Equalities stakeholders will be specifically consulted.

- 5.6 Accessibility guidelines will be followed during the design process and further details will be provided when the design has progressed.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.7 Valley Gardens is a key point in the city's transport network and improving sustainable transport facilities in the area will have a significant impact on sustainability throughout the city.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.8 The Community Safety Team, Police, and local community groups will be engaged through consultation. Community safety issues will be identified and the design process will seek to 'design out crime' as far as possible.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.9 The primary risks are that the scheme will fail to meet its full potential due to any design not representing the needs of all users, and that there will be insufficient funds to deliver improvements. This former risk will be mitigated through a thorough consultation process that will engage with a wide range of stakeholders at all stages of design, the latter by development of a funding / delivery strategy alongside the design process.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.10 Increasing the level of physical activity carried out each day has significant health benefits. This scheme will encourage increased physical activity through improving walking and cycling facilities.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.11 Enhancing and improving Valley Gardens has been a long-term priority of the council and is consistent with the objectives of the new LTP3 and the Public Space Public Life Vision.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Doing nothing would see the Gardens remain as a poor quality environment that offers nothing for local residents and represents a poor welcome for visitors. A 'do less' scheme would likely see areas of the Valley Gardens tackled in isolation instead of as a whole. Such an approach would lead to a disjointed environment – indeed the current layout of the area suffers to an extent by a historic incremental approach to development. The approach proposed in this paper sees a concept design developed for the whole of the Gardens that can then be delivered incrementally as and when funding or other opportunities arise, achieving a balance between practical deliverability and consistency of vision.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The report recommendations enable the council to progress the development of a concept design for the Valley Gardens in partnership with the local community. The final design will be phasable and accompanied by a realistic delivery /

funding strategy, so that delivery can be achieved on a practical basis, enabling the council to deliver long term objectives.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis - 2011

Background Documents

1. Report to 7 April 2011 Cabinet – 2011/12 Local Transport Plan Capital Programme
2. BHCC second Local Transport Plan [LTP2] – 2006
3. BHCC Core Strategy : Proposed Submission - 2010
4. BHCC third Local Transport Plan [LTP3] - 2011
5. Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis - 2011

