

Subject:	'The Common Room' (Ann Street/Providence Place)		
Date of Meeting:	8 October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Alan Buck	Tel: 29-2287
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Ward(s) affected:	St Peter's and North Laine		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 To consider the details of a draft permanent scheme that has been prepared to improve open space and public realm in Ann Street/Providence Place and assist the regeneration of this part of the London Road area, following the successful 'Common Room' Lively Cities two week pilot test held in October 2012.
- 1.2 To approve the draft permanent scheme for the purpose of a six week public consultation exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members of the committee note the work that has been undertaken in taking forward the successful aspects of the Lively Cities 'Common Room' pilot scheme into a draft permanent implementation plan.
- 2.2 That the committee approves the draft permanent plan for the purpose of a six week public consultation exercise commencing later this month, with the results and next stages being reported back to a future meeting of the committee to enable work to commence in Spring 2014 .

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 At its final meeting on 30 April this year the Transport Committee considered a report and presentation on the 'Common Room' pilot project (part of the Lively Cities INTERREG IV B programme). Over a two week period in October 2012 this experiment successfully transformed the Providence Place/Ann Street area (just off London Road) into the 'Common Room' - a vibrant and well used space providing for a range of informal recreational needs. The area is one of a number that are highlighted for open space/public realm improvements in the London Road Central Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD 10) adopted by the council in 2009. The project area forms part of a wider and well used east-west pedestrian route that is set to become even more popular with the works recently completed at the Level (to the east) and the new pedestrian access that will be afforded to Brighton Station to the west when construction work is complete on Site J of the New England Quarter (currently in progress).

3.2 Members of the former Transport Committee endorsed the recommendation for officers to prepare a permanent implementation plan to take forward and develop the successful aspects of the pilot project for consideration this autumn by the successor Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee. Work on preparing the draft permanent implementation plan has since been undertaken by officers, with advice from Plan Projects and Luis Trevino Architects (designers of the original 'Common Room' pilot scheme). The draft plan provides for a greatly enhanced pedestrian and cycle-friendly environment, along with visual improvements and a range of informal and formal recreational opportunities as provided for and observed during the two week pilot. An illustrative plan of the draft scheme, forms appendix 1 to this report and provides the following elements:

- Terraced steps constructed along the eastern length of the park and the removal of the existing railings to provide pedestrian access/egress to and from the park, as well as 'informal' seating opportunities.
- A range of fixed seating within the project area, including the park and Ann Street.
- Removal of on-street parking bays within the project area. The 7 existing on-street resident permit bays would be re-provided close to the project area as would the 3 blue badge spaces currently located at the bottom of Ann Street (the consultation will seek views on the most appropriate locations in the locality for the re-provision of these spaces).
- A ban on heavy good vehicles within the project area.
- A 'shared surface' approach for pedestrians and vehicles on the majority of public highway within the project area.
- Pedestrianisation of the bottom end of Ann Street between London Road and Providence Place, with provision of a loading bay for shops within this area.
- Enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities between Ann Street and Oxford Street to improve linkages across London Road and strengthen the east-west pedestrian connection between Brighton Station and the Level, Hanover, Lewes Road and beyond..
- Additional and improved cycle parking facilities within the project area.
- New planting and public art to improve the overall appearance and environment of the project area.
- A new lighting scheme to illuminate the park area and Grade I Listed St. Bartholomew's Church after dark.
- A revised footpath arrangement on the western edge of the park, to provide a public/private buffer zone for houses that front the park, along with the potential for new planting and/or food growing opportunities and encouragement of greater local community 'ownership' and involvement with the space.
- Revised cycle routing within the project area to minimise potential pedestrian/cycle conflicts on the western edge of the park
- Design coding and advice to encourage new development on the rear elevations of London Road shops backing onto the project area.
- Free large capacity wi-fi within the project area.
- Provision of space and access to enable licensed mobile food vending within the park area.

- 3.5 Following consultation and subsequent amendments, the draft plan will be costed and include a phasing plan to enable key elements such as the reallocation of parking spaces and introduction of terraced steps to be implemented in the shorter term, with certain other elements being implemented in the future as and when funding becomes available. As well as the improved environment afforded by these works, they are also intended to act as a catalyst for further improvements and investment within the London Road area, including Providence Place and Elder Place to the immediate north of the project area.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Community engagement and consultation have been and will continue to be integral to this project. A stakeholder forum, including representatives from a range of local community interests, was established in July 2011 and has met on a number of occasions to input to the project and be kept abreast of project developments - most recently earlier this year, when the results of the pilot project were presented. The forum has included representation by resident interests, St Bartholomew's Church, St Bartholomew's School, City College, the London Road Local Action Team (LAT) and local ward councillors. The project has been discussed a number of times at meetings of the LAT. Various forms of social media have been used to advertise the project's ongoing development including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter press releases and a newsletter posted to addresses within the project area.
- 4.2 Within the council a multi-disciplinary officer team has inputted to the process of developing the draft permanent implementation plan. This includes officers with expertise in highway design, street maintenance, public realm, parks and recreation, licensing, cycling, parking, planning, leisure, events, sustainability, architecture etc, with further advice on architecture, landscape design and place-making from the Common Room consultants.
- 4.3 The draft permanent implementation scheme will be the subject of a six week public consultation exercise to commence later this month. It will be widely advertised and will include a public exhibition over three days that will be held within Providence Place Gardens

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Preparation of the detailed implementation plan is being funded by a mixture of existing staff resources, INTERREG IVB and the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The permanent scheme will be funded from a mixture of INTERREG IVB, Section 106 contributions, the LTP and other potential future funding sources (e.g. via possible access to funding under a future City Deal arrangement).

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 19/08/13

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Any infrastructure to be provided as part of the permanent implementation plan may fall within the definition of "development" under the Town and Country

Planning Act 1990 and will therefore require planning permission, unless permitted development rights apply.

The traffic measures outlined will require traffic regulation orders which will need to be advertised in accordance with the relevant legislation, following approval of the detailed implementation plan by Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee.

In carrying out consultation on the scheme the Council must comply with the legal requirements for fair consultation. This means that consultation must take place at the stage where proposals are being formulated, adequate time and information must be given to consultees to enable proper responses to be given, and the results of any consultation must be taken into account when developing the scheme.

Lawyer Consulted: *Name Hilary Woodward* *Date: 21/8/13*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The project seeks to implement an element of SP10, for which an equalities impact assessment was undertaken. Equalities implications have informed the data collection process to date. Identified equalities issues have been taken into account in developing a detailed implementation plan, including issues of access for all. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken in respect of the draft implementation plan.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The project seeks to implement an element of SP10 for which a sustainability assessment was undertaken. The project seeks to provide a greatly improved environment and public realm that will be a valued community asset, encourage walking, cycling, outdoor play and recreation and assist in the physical and economic regeneration of London Road, an important inner city area in recognised need of improvement.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The project has identified and seeks to tackle a range of public safety issues including anti-social behaviour, graffiti, street drinking, drug dealing and general perceptions and fear of crime.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 A risk assessment was undertaken as part of the pilot project in order to ensure public safety and the safety of those taking part in its implementation. Further risk assessments will be undertaken as appropriate in developing a permanent improvement scheme for the area.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 The pilot project tested a range of facilities and attractions that had positive public health implications, including the provision of table tennis facilities and

after-school play for the local primary school. A permanent table tennis table has since been installed in the park and forms part of the permanent project for the area. The new seating and other works from the draft permanent scheme will also provide a setting conducive to a range of informal play opportunities, including after school play. The improved environment should also have a positive impact on physical and mental health.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The project helps to take forward important aspects of SPD 10, which is an adopted corporate document that sets out the council's land use, sustainable transport and regeneration aspirations for improving the London Road area.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The 2012 competition for the pilot project allowed for a wide range of alternative options to be examined against the competition brief. The Common Room was considered by the judges to best represent the concerns of the project brief, in addressing the various recognised issues, deficiencies and other problems in the area.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Endorsement of the report's recommendations will enable the Common Room scheme to be taken forward to the public consultation stage and ensure that the community's views and concerns are taken on board in the final implementation of the scheme

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. 'The Common Room' – Consultation Plan (draft implementation plan)

Background Documents

1. Ann Street/Providence Place Gardens – Common Room Site Assessment Report 2012

