

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>London Road: Ann Street and Providence Place area improvements</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>14 January 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Alan Buck</b>	<b>Tel: 292287</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:alan.buck@brighton-hove.gov.uk">alan.buck@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>St Peter's and North Laine</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The committee is being informed of the results of the public consultation exercise and is requested to approve the revised plans for permanent public realm and environmental improvements to the Ann Street/Providence Place area near London Road.
- 1.2 The committee's approval is required to endorse the plans and allow appropriate measures to be undertaken for the permanent works to go ahead. Such measures would include any traffic orders or further consultations that need to be undertaken to restrict HGV movements in the project area, reallocate on-street parking spaces and undertake any works to the carriageway to enable the pedestrian-focussed improvements to be realised.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the committee notes the results of the public consultation and resulting revisions to the plans for permanent improvements to Ann Street/Providence Place.
- 2.2 That the committee approves the Ann Street/Providence Place Implementation Plans (appendix 2 of this report) as forming the basis for realising a phased series of improvements to the area, commencing later this year.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The plans for permanent improvements to Ann Street and Providence Place are based on the 'Common Room' scheme (the winning entry to the INTERREG IVB-assisted Lively Cities project that was successfully piloted over two weeks in October 2012). The Ann Street/Providence Place improvements are part of a longer-term and ongoing process to regenerate London Road, as established in the council's London Road Central Masterplan (adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2009). The masterplan's objectives are currently being realised through a wide range of projects and developments in the area that

include the Open Market redevelopment, the Level restoration, the redevelopment of the former Co-op department store for student accommodation and retail units, the development of Site J in the New England Quarter, the 'Fusebox' project in New England House (a workspace resource to encourage entrepreneurial and innovative design projects), initiatives stemming from Portas Pilot funding on London Road and forthcoming public realm improvements along and around London Road.

3.2 At its meeting on 8 October 2013 this committee approved draft plans for developing the Common Room concept as a permanent scheme, for the purpose of a six week public consultation exercise that was subsequently held between October – November.

3.3 The plans set out a range of physical works to improve the appearance of the area and the way that it is used, in order to provide a much needed 'oasis' for relaxation, rest and informal recreation on the edge of the high street shopping area and an improved environment on this important pedestrian route between the rear entrance of Brighton Station and London Road, the Level and beyond. These works include:

- 'opening-up' and making better public usage of Providence Place Gardens (the green space opposite St Bartholomew's Church) through the removal of fencing and the introduction of steps, public seating and lighting;
- reconfiguring the bottom end of Ann Street (adjacent to London Road) into a mini pedestrian 'square', with public seating;
- removing on-street car parking spaces (and reallocating them to nearby locations) to make space for the public realm pedestrian-focussed improvements;
- limiting movements of HGVs above 7.5 tonnes through the project area (this will allow necessary deliveries within the project area to be carried out but prevent unnecessary through movements);
- providing a 'shared-surface' treatment to Ann Street and part of Providence Place (that would operate in a similar manner to Brighton's New Road) that – in conjunction with nearby Fenchurch Walk and the Site J plaza and station steps (currently-under-construction) to the west - will serve as an important outlying element of the proposed Brighton Station Northern Gateway project;
- securing a range of other environmental improvements collectively aimed at widening the 'sphere of influence' and environment of the park into the surrounding streets and public realm, making the area more attractive and welcoming, providing for the needs of the existing local communities as well as helping to encourage regeneration and the creation of new street frontage along Providence Place and investment and economic growth in the London Road town centre shops and local area.

3.4 The comments received during the public consultation exercise have been carefully considered and have helped the plans to be refined and modified where

appropriate. Overall the most popular areas of support (or suggestions for improving the proposed design) included:

- illuminating the trees and the church after dark with LED sustainable energy lighting, whilst minimising light pollution;
- using high quality, long lasting, maintenance-friendly, sustainable materials - particularly for the terraced steps;
- clearly demarking the shared-space zone and ensuring parking restrictions are enforced;
- increasing the proposed level of greening across the project area (with particular support expressed for the proposed green wall and requests for hanging baskets, trees, planting, wild flowers and raised beds);
- providing for the free movement of cyclists and people with disabilities across the site;
- providing an increased number of well-spaced Sheffield cycle stands across the site, in particular close to London Road;
- realigning the proposed street furniture in Ann Street 'pocket square' to release more space for pedestrians and cyclists
- encouraging new uses along with the proposed new frontages to the existing rear elevations of buildings around the edge of the project area, to provide cafes, bars, art gallery and new entrances to London Road shops; and
- ensuring that the proposed waste bins are attractive, colourful, compact and to consider making them the subject of a design competition

3.5 The full range of comments received is set out in appendix 1 of this report, with the proposed final version of the plans for the physical changes to the project area forming appendix 2.

3.6 An implementation and phasing plan is being prepared in order to ensure the most important physical elements of the project are prioritised and secured within the funding streams that are currently available or that are likely to become available in the near future. Phase 1 would commence in the spring and – as a minimum - comprise removal of the park railings, construction of the park steps, provision of park seating and the introduction of restrictions to HGV movements through the project area. This phase would be funded from financial sources that have already been secured. It is hoped that the creation of the Ann Street mini-square can also be secured in Phase 1, with the following Phase (or phases) securing the elements that will provide the shared carriageway and other elements of the overall package.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 A wide range of alternative options for the area were considered in 2012 at the LICl competition stage for a temporary two week pilot project. The 'Common Room' proposal was unanimously considered by the judges to best meet the requirements of the competition brief, which itself had been informed by the results of considerable analysis of the project area, undertaken in 2011.

4.2 The 'Common Room' concept was tested on-site as a two week pilot in October 2012. The current proposal for a permanent scheme is the result of refining and developing the successful elements of the pilot and improving on, or abandoning, the less successful elements.

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 Over the course of its life since 2011 the project has involved extensive public consultation. Prior to the most recent consultation between October – November 2013 this has included:

- the establishment of a local stakeholder forum that has met on a number of occasions to be kept abreast of events and to input into the project;
- the involvement of local stakeholders and professionals in the 2012 pilot project competition, along with a public consultation exercise on the short-listed entries that included three days exhibiting the plans in the project area and a virtual online exhibition for the duration of the consultation period;
- the use of a range of media to advertise progress on the project and involve the public where appropriate including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, newsletters and more;
- two detailed survey exercises, assisted by a team of community fieldworkers who collected a wide range of data, including people's views on the area and observations and analysis on how the area was being used – the first in the autumn on 2011 and the second during the two week pilot test in the autumn of 2012. The 2011 exercise provided the basis for the competition brief and the 2012 exercise was used to assess the various aspects of the two week pilot and to inform the details of the proposed permanent scheme.

5.2 The most recent public consultation (between October – November 2013) concerned the proposed permanent scheme and included a three day open air public exhibition in Providence Place Gardens and a virtual online exhibition for the duration of the six week consultation period. A meeting of the stakeholder forum was held during the consultation period. The consultation exercise generated 68 responses. These, along with the views expressed at the stakeholder forum, have been noted and carefully considered in refining the permanent plans.

5.3 The response from the consultation has been largely supportive of the various elements of the plans for permanent changes to the area. Of the 68 responses received, 67 supported the overall objectives of the proposal, with only one (unidentified) respondent requesting that the scheme should not go ahead. The opening-up of the park via the removal of fencing, construction of steps and introduction of public seating, along with the creation of a mini 'square' at the bottom of Ann Street all received particularly strong support. This support may well have been aided by the fact that these elements had previously been physically demonstrated and successfully piloted in 2012. Many visitors to the exhibition recalled the two week pilot and commented that they felt it had greatly improved the area, made it accessible to a wide range of people and had considerably reduced incidences of social nuisance for its duration. Indeed, many questioned why and expressed disappointment that the council had removed all the physical improvements after only two weeks.

- 5.4 The principle of applying the 'New Road' shared-carriageway approach to the sections of Ann Street and Providence Place that fall within the project area received support from many, although some were concerned that this could pose a danger to school children from St Bartholomew's Primary School. The safety of all road users – and in particular the local schoolchildren – will be paramount considerations in the detailed design of any shared-surface treatment or similar that is prepared.
- 5.5 St Bartholomew's Church representatives have expressed concern the any changes need to accommodate the occasional parking of large vehicles connected with concerts or broadcasts from the church. This is being accommodated through the integration of removable street furniture at the bottom of Ann Street.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The recommendation should be approved to endorse the implementation of the improvement plans and to allow any necessary traffic orders to be advertised.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 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 is currently being costed but implementation of all phases is likely to be in the region of £650,000. This is expected to be funded from a variety of sources, which could include a mixture of INTERREG IVB, Section 106 contributions, the LTP and other potential future external funding sources (e.g. via possible access to funding under a future City Deal arrangement).

*Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates*

*Date: 12/12/13*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 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.

*Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward*

*Date: 12/12/13*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 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:

- 7.4 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.

#### Any Other Significant Implications

- 7.5 The reallocation of on-street car parking spaces connected with this project will be undertaken as part of a wider rationalisation exercise that is planned in the locality.
- 7.6 A risk assessment will be undertaken in respect of pedestrian safety to inform the detailed design of any shared surface treatment to the roads within the project area.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 The improved environment should have a positive impact on physical and mental health. The new seating and other works from the permanent scheme will provide a setting conducive to a range of informal recreational opportunities. The overall works will provide an environment conducive to formal and informal after-school play sessions, as tested during the pilot exercise in 2012 and at further sessions that took place in 2013. A permanent table tennis table in the park that was installed last May forms part of the project for the area and should become even more widely used as a result of the improvements.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendices:**

1. Ann Street and Providence Place Area Improvements: Results of public consultation (Oct-Nov 2013)
2. Ann Street and Providence Place Area Improvements: Implementation Plan

#### **Background Documents**

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