

AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	16 September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Hemel Evolution: Bank Court Regeneration Consultation Results
Contact:	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers:</p> <p>James Doe, Assistant Director, Planning, Development and Regeneration</p> <p>Nathalie Bateman, Strategic Planning and Regeneration Team Leader for Hemel Evolution</p> <p>Shalini Jayasinghe, Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer</p>
Purpose of report:	To present to Cabinet the results of the public consultation for the proposals to regenerate Bank Court.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet notes the results of the public consultation for the proposals to regenerate Bank Court (Refer Appendix 1: Bank Court Public Consultation Report). 2. That Cabinet endorses the approach set out in the report to make further changes to the design of the scheme.
Corporate objectives:	The Hemel Hempstead Masterplan supports the Council's vision and in particular the corporate objective of Regeneration.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There is provision in the Capital Programme (approved by Full Council in February 2014) for £539,500 to undertake the</p>

<p>'Value For Money Implications'</p>	<p>regeneration of Bank Court as an extension to the improvements along the Marlowes pedestrianised shopping area.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>The regeneration of Bank Court will provide an opportunity to add value to the investments in regenerating the town centre and other major projects, particularly the Marlowes pedestrianised area and the Water Gardens projects.</p> <p>Value for money will also be achieved through the procurement process.</p>
<p>Risk Implications</p>	<p>Risk Assessment is included as part of the delivery of the Marlowes Shopping Zone and Bank Court Regeneration project.</p>
<p>Equalities Implications</p>	<p>The removal of disabled parking spaces in Bank Court has been mitigated by the relocation of an equal number of spaces in the adjacent Waterhouse Street.</p> <p>The delivery of a high quality public space will benefit the use of not only Bank Court but improve access to the Water Gardens and Marlowes pedestrianised area for all through the provision of a de-cluttered, more accessible route. The results of the consultation largely support these proposed improvements.</p>
<p>Health And Safety Implications</p>	<p>The disabled parking spaces are being relocated to adjacent Waterhouse Street formalising disabled parking along Waterhouse Street.</p> <p>A Road Safety Audit will be undertaken as part of the design and delivery of the project.</p>
<p>Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer:</p> <p>No comments to add to the report.</p> <p>Deputy S151 Officer:</p> <p>There are no new budgetary implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. Capital budget of £540k to undertake the improvements to Bank Court was approved by Full Council in February 2014.</p>
<p>Consultees:</p>	<p>James Stammers, Transformation Programme Manager for DBC, and Consultant at V4 Services</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<p>Bank Court public consultation report (Appendix 1)</p> <p>Cabinet Report 17 December 2013: Hemel Evolution: Major projects procurement and funding, Water Gardens and Bank</p>

	<p>Court</p> <p>Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan, 2013</p> <p>Dacorum Local Planning Framework Core Strategy, 2013</p> <p>Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy, 2011</p> <p>Bank Court concept design (Appendix 2)</p> <p>Waterhouse Street proposed parking (Appendix 3)</p>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>MSZ – Marlowes Shopping Zone</p>

Background to Hemel Evolution

1. The Council is making a large investment in Hemel Hempstead town centre to ensure the vision outlined in the Masterplan is delivered, *“By 2021 Hemel Hempstead Town Centre will be an appealing, attractive and sustainable destination with a thriving economic centre and a high quality environment. The regeneration and evolution of the town centre will emphasise the natural and cultural assets of the town and celebrate its New Town history and rich heritage”*.
2. Under the framework of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan and the Hemel Evolution marketing brand, we are currently in the process of designing and implementing several Major Regeneration Projects across Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. These include improvements to the Hemel Hempstead Old Town (now in place), the Marlowes Shopping Zone pedestrian area and Bank Court, creation of a new Bus Interchange on Bridge Street and Marlowes, and the restoration of the Water Gardens.
3. Other work is underway to engage a development partner to bring forward a major leisure scheme on Market Square and a new Public Service Quarter together with additional housing. A new college and further housing is also expected to the north of the Gade Zone.

Bank Court

4. At Cabinet on 17 December 2013, Cabinet approved proposals to regenerate Bank Court with the concept of creating a piazza style flexible focal area with opportunities for pavement cafes, market stalls and special events including the relocation of all 12 disabled parking bays to Waterhouse Street (Refer Appendix 3).
5. At Cabinet on 17 December 2013, Cabinet also delegated authority to the Assistant Director (Planning, Development & Regeneration) to arrange a consultancy, project management and delivery solution and to award a construction contract in accordance with the Council’s procurement governance arrangements for the regeneration of Bank Court.
6. Regeneration of Bank Court will be implemented as an extension to the Marlowes pedestrianised shopping area improvements. It seeks to regenerate Bank Court to create a high quality public space and improve connectivity between the

Marlowes pedestrian area and the Water Gardens, extending across Waterhouse Street. The contract for the Main Contractor to undertake works to Bank Court has been tendered under the Marlowes Shopping zone and Bank Court improvements tender. Contractor Greenford Ltd has been appointed under a Design and Build contract to develop designs for Bank Court and construct them. This consultation has been undertaken as preliminary step to help develop the designs for Bank Court.

7. Bank Court is an important example of New Town heritage and is identified within an Area of Special Architecture within the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan. The masterplan guides developers to retain as much New Town heritage as possible and asks for the sympathetic enhancement of shop frontages and building fascias within this area. It also proposes that east west links with the Water Gardens be reinforced.
8. Addressing improvements to Bank Court would greatly benefit the planned works to the Marlowes shopping area and the Water Gardens, and it would revitalise the area and improve visitors' experience to the town centre.
9. Concept proposals include improving access between the Water Gardens and Bank Court across Waterhouse Street which will improve accessibility to pedestrians and improve the setting of Bank Court. The surfaces and materials palette from the feature areas in the MSZ improvements scheme will be used through to Bank Court to physically link the spaces and create a unified street scene. Street furniture will be rationalised and replaced to reduce clutter and improve the quality of the public realm. A new lighting scheme will highlight design features and increase visibility through the undercroft areas. New tree planting will green the area linking the planting in the Marlowes pedestrian area with the Water Gardens.
10. Prior to progressing designs for Bank Court, a public consultation was undertaken to gather the views of the public, local businesses and stakeholders on the planned improvements to Bank Court. The consultation was run from 12 July – 10 August 2014 and was promoted widely at the Hemel Evolution Consultation and Information Day in Marlowes on 12 July, by direct communication with a number of disability/carers groups including (Hertfordshire Society for the Blind, Carers in Herts, Community Action Dacorum, Deaf Parent, Age UK, Mencap) by visiting businesses in and immediately surrounding Bank Court, through the Town Centre Partnership, by direct communication with other stakeholders, through Social Media, website and press releases.
11. 243 responses were received. 191 (80%) of consultees felt that 'Improving Bank Court to create a high quality public space' was 'Very important' or 'Important'. 183 (78.3%) of consultees felt that 'Creating a flexible space for activities/markets/outside eating spaces etc, that link the shopping area with the Water Gardens' was 'Very important' or 'Important' and 185 (77.4%) of consultees felt that 'Improving the vibrancy of Bank Court as the key link between the shopping area and the Water Gardens (eg: through popup cafes facing the Water Gardens, food markets, space to relax in view of the Water Gardens) was 'Very important' or 'Important' and 171 (71.2%) of consultees felt that 'Making it easier to access the shopping area from the Water Gardens car parks through Bank Court' was 'Very important' or 'Important'. Please note that not all who responded answered all questions and this is reflected in the figures.

12. Out of the 243 responses, there were 10 qualitative comments related to disabled parking in Bank Court. Some of these requested that the disabled car parking spaces are retained in Bank Court itself. Others highlighted the importance of relocating disabled parking in close proximity. Our current proposals outline that the 12 disabled parking spaces will be relocated to Waterhouse Street (Refer Appendix 3: Waterhouse Street proposed parking). The 10 comments on the removal of disabled parking spaces in Bank Court are outlined below.

"as a blue badge holder I would be concerned at the loss of disabled parking spaces there, also there is a betting shop there which doesn't enhance the ambiance in my view a reinstated fountain and some statuary as in the original design would help I feel. More blue badge parking needed"

"The fact that the car parks are actually quite a way down from Bank Court (for disabled parking) means that losing those spaces to ""pop up restaurants"" seems a bit silly. I think that there should be better facilities for disabled parking in the town, particularly as the road along there is always crammed full of Blue Badge holders on the double yellow lines. I'm not disabled, and get annoyed that anyone with a Blue Badge can park on double yellows, so more spaces would be good."

"It is vital to retaining the disability parking in bank court otherwise you are making accessibility for the disable and elderly very difficult. secondly the project is NOT value for money. There is lots of space in the Marlowe's and how many of these spaces is over use on daily basis? some of the money can be used to clean and clear the river running through the town and improve on the lighting system in the town centre."

"I would like to see all 12 of the disabled bays relocated?"

"Make sure disabled parking is near to Bank Court and also restrict parking in Waterhouse Road so that traffic especially buses can get through easily."

"What about disable people, where do they park for easy access to the shops ?"

"Control 'blue badge' parking along and around Waterhouse Street, so that roads are not blocked or narrowed and junctions are not unsighted by inconsiderate parking."

"Double-yellow lines should not be parked on. Clarity is required in this area. This happens in the vicinity of the canal (Waterhouse Street)."

"this is not a good plan for the disabled as this has only pointed out the spaces are being moved to waterhouse street but what part is it close or up by the old market space would it not be better to move them to bridge street as this is central."

"Parking spaces that make the banks and shops easy accessible to disable people is a more functional use of the area, and will not incur exorbitant costs to keep it"

13. Many of the other qualitative comments are already being addressed through our current regeneration plans and designs for the town centre or were positively encouraging the plans. Samples of these comments are outlined below.

"Just to say it's great the improvements to town are starting. Old town now looks much better."

"It all sounds really positive."

"Please improve the lighting in Bank Court"

"In my opinion improvement would be fine. It would be wrong to over commercialise and saturate the area with similar outlets be they retail or food/service based. There still needs to be an element of space and not feeling cramped."

"This is a big enough space to create some linkage through to the Marlowes but not big enough to be a venue in its own right. I would think the best use would be to make an open interesting possibly calming space with trees, seating and planting that allows visibility both ways but sufficiently enclosed (the current car park part) to make it a place for taking your coffee, with views across to the water garden. If this becomes a venue that ambience will be lost."

"Please join up the civic centre end of town with the rest of Marlowes, make it nice to walk through the whole town right through to the old town. Join the water gardens maybe by spreading the area across that grotty road so people want to spend time there. Put in a great fruit and veg market like St Albans. More planting, nice seating, pop-up events, displays. Artisan shops and cafes. Transform that miserable feel the town has, please!"

"I would like to see an improvement in the walkways through the water gardens as well as proper repairs to the river banks which will last. unlike the last lot of repairs."

14. Over 50% of the qualitative responses were related to generic wider town centre issues such as cost of parking the quality of shops in the town centre and not specifically related to the regeneration of Bank Court.
15. Full details of the results of the consultation are outlined in the Bank Court Consultation Report. Please refer Appendix 1: Bank Court Consultation Report for full details.
16. Whilst designs for Bank Court are at concept stage (Refer Appendix 2: Bank Court concept designs), our concept designs already address a number of the general comments made by consultees. Consultees suggest that the disabled parking is relocated in close proximity to Bank Court and in a suitable location. Our plans (Refer Appendix 2 and 3) outline that disabled blue badge parking will be relocated along Waterhouse Street which is in close proximity to Bank Court and also provides the additional advantage by providing visitors a choice of parking spaces along the length of Waterhouse Street, in close proximity to a wider variety of shops and destinations. Consultees suggest that lighting in Bank Court is improved. Concept designs propose improved lighting to Bank Court. Consultees suggest the need for improved, safer walkways. Concept designs propose improving the paving in Bank Court in line with improvements to the Marlowes pedestrianised shopping area. Consultees suggest creating a pleasant space with trees, planting and improved seating. Concept designs suggest a fresh, clean, decluttered space with some trees and planting and new street furniture.

17. Results of this consultation will be key to influencing the detailed designs for Bank Court and we will seek to incorporate comments that fall within the remit of this project wherever possible whilst delivering the project on budget and within Hertfordshire County Council's recommendations and restrictions. Relocation of the 12 disabled parking spaces to Waterhouse Street will be key to the proposed concept of a 'piazza' style space. Less than 5% of consultees commented on the removal of the disabled parking spaces and many of them commented on having suitable alternative parking in close proximity to Bank Court which we are delivering through improvements to Waterhouse Street (Refer Appendix 3: Waterhouse Street proposed parking).
18. Officers will now take these points back to the designers so they can be addressed where possible.

Greenford Ltd will initiate work to progress designs for Bank Court over the next few weeks. As the proposed project area covers the crossing between Bank Court and Water Gardens in addition to Bank Court, all designs will be subject to Hertfordshire County Council's highway approval. Therefore the design stage is expected to last until April 2015. Construction on Bank Court is expected to start in May 2015 and aim to be completed by Autumn 2015.

19. In addition, Officers will also take forward the statutory consultation for the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the proposed changes to Bank Court in October 2014.