

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
<b>Date:</b>	9 September 2014
<b>Title:</b>	Project Appraisal: Town Centre Enhancements, Church Street, Romsey
<b>Reference:</b>	6042
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

**Contact name:** Gary Hedges

**Tel:** 01962 846809

**Email:** gary.hedges@hants.gov.uk

### 1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to enable the provision of a shared space environment in the historical area of Romsey to address the problem experienced by residents and visitors to the town centre of narrow and uneven footways, limited facilities for cyclists, and the need to balance the desire to have parking in close proximity to amenities with the requirement for convenient locations for delivery vehicles. The 2009 visitor survey results highlight the importance of ensuring that any improvements to enhance the town centre take into account the needs of a variety of potential users, as this scheme plans to do.

#### 1.2. Scheme Outline

The proposed scheme will implement a shared space design for Romsey that seeks to change the way Church Street operates by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower traffic speeds.

At either end of the scheme, ramps will raise the carriageway surface to the level of the footway to create an even surface which will be more accessible for all users and remove the issues associated with varying kerb heights. In order to slow vehicle speeds down on entering the shared space area it has been decided to provide pinch-points at either end of the scheme.

The pedestrian areas will have Yorkstone paving, with the carriageway using a Mastertint surface with granite edging.

The street furniture will be chosen to match the existing furnishings, and provide an enhanced quality space to encourage more visitors to spend time in the area.

The existing street furniture will be refurbished or replaced and improved so that it is in keeping with the historic town centre. Care will be taken to ensure cycle parking, benches, bins and bollards are high quality and meet the needs of the area. Bell bollards will be considered to help protect certain areas from over running by coaches etc.

At the end of Abbey Walk it is proposed to install a barrier to stop pedestrians walking straight out into Church Street. This is particularly aimed at school aged children who may exit Abbey Walk and not stop. It is hoped that the barrier will be bespoke and sourced locally.

Parking is to be retained within the area to provide easy access to the Post Office and shops. Primrose yellow lines will be used to indicate those areas where parking is not permitted.

### 1.3. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Provide shared space between Church Place and Abbey Walk only - this option was considered due to concerns raised by the Safety Engineering Team that the southern end of the scheme was too narrow to accommodate two-way-traffic and shared space. It was felt it could lead to conflict between motorised vehicles and shoppers leaving retail premises. This was resolved by the addition of the pinch-points at either end of the scheme which reduce the carriageway to single file on entering the shared space, thus removing this concern;

Improve the footways and carriageway but not introduce shared space -this option would improve the area but not provide the improved accessibility options that a shared space scheme would. It was therefore discounted;

Make a feature of the hidden stream running under the paving in front of the Former Magistrates Court - making the stream a feature as a water feature in the paving was discounted due to maintenance issues. It is still possible to consider marking the line of the stream into the footway paving. No decision on how this could be done has been made so may not be taken forward;

Parking Zone instead of yellow lines - the Parking Zone for Church Place is not well adhered to with parking outside the formal spaces. It was therefore felt that if a similar system was used for Church Street it may see inappropriate parking leading to congestion. Primrose yellow lines were therefore the preferred option.

### 1.4. Objectives:

- Designing streets that are safe, with low traffic speeds, and desirable locations to shop and access facilities;
- Producing a design which ensures that the town centre is accessible to all;

- Producing a design which supports and enhances the local economy within the Town;
- Producing a design which is aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the historical environment of the town;
- Producing a design which complements the works undertaken along The Hundred and Latimer Street; and
- Producing a design which provides a cost efficient solution.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The historic core of Romsey hosts the Norman Abbey Church at its centre. The majority of commercial properties are located around the Market Place, Bell Street, Church Street as well as Latimer Street and The Hundred. A number of the public buildings including the Town Hall, Crosfield Hall, Council Offices and Romsey Abbey Primary School are located within the historical centre.
- 2.2. A number of the historical streets have very narrow footways and over the years repeated re-surfacing has resulted in significant rises in levels. Additionally, a number of footways are uneven due to provisions for dropped kerbs and drainage channels. This is particularly problematic as there are a number of housing developments within the town providing sheltered accommodation. Furthermore a 2009 visitor survey indicated that 42% of visitors to the town were over the age of 60 and that 16% of visitors had a disabled person as a member of their party.
- 2.3. In the centre of the roundabout in the Market Place is a statue of Lord Palmerston which is considered the most prominent piece of public art within the town and an important symbol of Romsey. Attempts have been made to brighten the area with the installation of troughs of flowers.
- 2.4. There is a strong desire to undertake further enhancement works within Romsey, focusing on Church Street, Bell Street and the Market Place following on from the works in Latimer Street and along The Hundred in 2004. Improving the environmental appeal and increasing accessibility will assist in retaining and improving the vitality of the town. The enhancement works are required to address a number of the issues faced by many historical town centres. For instance, narrow and uneven footways, limited facilities for cyclists and the need to balance the desire to have parking in close proximity to amenities with the requirement for convenient locations for delivery vehicles. The 2009 visitor survey results highlight the importance of ensuring that any improvements to enhance the town centre take into account the needs of a variety of potential users.

## **3. Finance**

- 3.1. The scheme finance will come from a number of different funding sources.

<u>Estimates</u>	<u>£'000</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>Funds Available</u>	<u>£'000</u>
Design Fee	63	11%	Public Realm Improvement Programme	100
Client Fee	5	1%	LSTF	120
Supervision	20	4%	LTP	100
Construction	482	84%	Test Valley Borough Council Operation Resilience Contribution to Carriageway Works	150
Land				
Total	570	100%	Total	570

3.2	<u>Revenue Implications</u>	<u>£'000</u>	<u>% Variation to Committee's budget</u>
	Net increase in current expenditure	2.4	0.002%
	Capital Charge	49.1	0.031%

#### 4. Programme

- 4.1. It is proposed to start works in January 2015 and complete the works during first quarter 2015/16.

#### 5. Scheme Details

- 5.1. To accommodate a shared space scheme for Church Street, from Market Place to Abbey Walk, the carriageway will be raised by granite kerb ramps at either end to the same level as the footway.
- 5.2. Yorkstone paving will be provided in a colour and laying pattern to match the existing provision in Church Place. The paving will extend to the area in front of the Former Magistrates Court to provide uniformity for the enhancements throughout the area. The carriageway surface will be a coloured surface 'Mastertint' to match the colour of the Yorkstone paving as closely as possible.
- 5.3. The carriageway will be narrowed at each end of the scheme by pinch-points to slow vehicle speeds when entering the 'shared space' area. This will also

provide additional footway width and shorter crossing opportunities. The carriageway width will be reduced in some areas to 5.5m to maximise footway widths in the narrowest sections.

- 5.4. A drainage channel will be formed in flush granite kerbs/blocks with a corduroy inset to assist those with a visual impairment navigate the edge of the pedestrian area.
- 5.5. Existing cycle parking facilities will be upgraded or replaced together with all street furniture. This will include planters, benches and litter bins.
- 5.6. The scheme will provide a 'Square' type approach to bring Church Place into Church Street and further create a feeling of an area shared by all users equally and to give the impression to drivers of increased ambiguity, leading to slower speeds.
- 5.7. The scheme will also look to make repairs to the existing setts in Church Place by relaying on a concrete and mortar bed with gun or slurry applied mortar jointing. This will make use of the setts taken up at the entrance to Church Place to accommodate the Church Street scheme integration.
- 5.8. Primrose yellow lines will be used for parking enforcement as they are more in keeping with this historical location of the scheme than a controlled parking zone and its associated signage clutter.

## **6. Departures from Standards**

- 6.1. None.

## **7. Community Engagement**

- 7.1. Local Borough and County Councillors support the scheme and are keen to have the area enhanced and improvements made to accessibility for pedestrians in the area. The County Councillors covering Romsey Town Centre (Cllr Mark Cooper) and Romsey Extra (Cllr Roy Perry) have been involved in the development of the scheme as members of the steering group from day one. This group has also included local Test Valley Borough Council members, Cllrs Hibberd, Collier and Richards. At the meeting held on 11th June 2014 members approved the scheme and gave their agreement for the scheme to progress.
- 7.2. The proposed scheme was the subject of public consultation for 6 weeks from 28th February to 11th April 2014 with two manned exhibitions, plus presentations given to several local interest groups particularly representing those with a disability or visual impairment. The vast majority of written respondents were in favour of the scheme and several expressed a desire to see an extension of the principles to other parts of the town centre. Only 4 people expressed a general dislike of the entire scheme and the whole

principle of shared space, whilst the rest of those objecting expressed concerns about particular aspects of the scheme.

- 7.3. The scheme will be updated on Hantsweb to provide responses to comments received. Further consultation will be undertaken with those residents and businesses in immediate vicinity of the scheme during the detailed design. Table 1 summarises the main concerns received during the consultation and provides the engineer's/ officers responses.

Concerns Raised	Engineer's / Officers Response
Concerns were raised regarding the safety of shared space areas and the impact on those with visual impairments in particular. There was a desire for more controlled crossing points instead.-	They have been shown to work safely in other areas and care has been taken to introduce measures such as the pinch points to ensure traffic speeds are reduced sufficiently, and providing pedestrians with more comfort zones. Tactile paving will be introduced where feasible to assist those with visual impairment and assistance can be given with re-orientation after the scheme is implemented.
Possible traffic congestion as a result of the pinch point -	Traffic surveys indicate this will not be a problem but should it prove to be an issue the pinch point by Market Place can be easily removed.
Cars parking indiscriminately on the shared surface –	The proposals have been altered to include primrose yellow lines instead of the restricted parking order to assist in restricting inappropriate parking. Strategically placed bollards will also seek to remove this potential problem.
Need for 20mph zone to reduce traffic speeds -	The measures being introduced will reduce traffic speeds to 20mph or less without the need for a formal speed limit change.
Dislike of bollards being used and concern about their design –	They will only be used where necessary and care will be taken to select appropriate designs for the location. They will also have reflective collars to improve visibility.
Approval of shared space concept, but concern that the design and materials proposed are not appropriate -	Given the type of traffic movements in the area, materials have been selected for their durability as well as their appearance. The scheme will take the opportunity to make some alterations to the design by Church Place to address some of the concerns raised regarding the materials used

	there and how they are breaking up, making it difficult for pedestrians
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Table 1 – Concerns raised during consultation and official responses

**8. Statutory Procedures**

8.1. Not applicable.

**9. Land Requirements**

9.1. Not applicable as the scheme takes place on the public highway.

**10. Maintenance Implications**

10.1. The additional maintenance implications will be minimal as the carriageway was already earmarked for operation resilience and the new and improved pedestrian areas reduce the maintenance required for the immediate future. It is not anticipated that any maintenance will be required for a considerable period.

**11. Recommendations**

11.1. That the Executive Member for Economy, Transport, and Environment approve the Project Appraisal for Church Street, Romsey, as outlined in this report.

11.2. That approval be given to procure and spend and enter into necessary contractual arrangements to implement the proposed Church Street, Romsey environmental enhancement scheme, as set out in this report, at an estimated cost of £570,000.

11.3. That authority to make the arrangements to implement the scheme, including minor variations to the design or contract, be delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport, and Environment.

## LTP3 Priorities and Policy Objectives

### 3 Priorities

- To support economic growth by ensuring the safety, soundness and efficiency of the transport network in Hampshire
- Provide a safe, well maintained and more resilient road network in Hampshire
- Manage traffic to maximise the efficiency of existing network capacity, improving journey time reliability and reducing emissions, to support the efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods

### 14 Policy Objectives

- Improve road safety (through delivery of casualty reduction and speed management)
- Efficient management of parking provision (on and off street, including servicing)
- Support use of new transport technologies (i.e. Smartcards; RTI; electric vehicle charging points)
- Work with operators to grow bus travel and remove barriers to access
- Support community transport provision to maintain 'safety net' of basic access to services
- Improve access to rail stations, and improve parking and station facilities
- Provide a home to school transport service that meets changing curriculum needs
- Improve co-ordination and integration between travel modes through interchange improvements
- Apply 'Manual for Streets' design principles to support a better balance between traffic and community life
- Improve air quality
- Reduce the need to travel, through technology and Smarter Choices measures

- Promote walking and cycling to provide a healthy alternative to the car for short local journeys to work, local services or school
- Develop Bus Rapid Transit and high quality public transport in South Hampshire, to reduce car dependence and improve journey time reliability
- Outline and implement a long term transport strategy to enable sustainable development in major growth areas

**Other**

Please list any other targets (i.e. National Indicators, non LTP) to which this scheme will contribute.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

DocumentLocation

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

- 1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

#### **Equality statement:**

The community street audit identified that the current mix of different levels and materials, lack of dropped kerbs and the restricted widths of the pavements in some places can restrict the movement of some sections of the population and makes it difficult for them to move around within the area. The current condition of the street environment is not perceived to encourage visitors and shoppers to linger in the area.

A flat, even surface across the whole area, in the form of shared space, will overcome many of the issues identified as well as helping to enhance the area. It will be of particular benefit to those people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking aids, people pushing pushchairs and for some older people or disabled people who struggle with steps or are more likely to trip or fall when negotiating uneven surfaces.

It should also be of benefit to the majority of the general public in making it easier for them to move around the area with ease.

However, it may make some sections of the population feel more vulnerable and unsafe, in particular those with visual and/or hearing impairment. It may also confuse young children or those with learning difficulties who have learnt to 'stay on the pavement'.

The consultation with local access groups and some of those taking part in the community street audit acknowledged the benefits for those using mobility scooters and wheelchairs but also raised the following concerns:

Taking away the kerb would take away the reassurance and perception that the disabled have that the road is safe to walk down, guide dogs are trained to stop at the kerb and the visually impaired use them for orientation.

Those who are deaf and hard of hearing and others, when quiet/silent electric cars become more prevalent, will be in danger, actual or perceived on a shared surface.

Young children taught to cross the road from pavement to pavement will not be safe on a shared surface.

Cars may squeeze pedestrians to the side and people coming out of shops and changing direction carrying bulky shopping may not be safe

Shared surface may encourage more cars to use this route. Not all cars will exercise caution and drive sensibly.

Reversing vehicles and car doors left open are a hazard.

Gulleys may not assist if people do not have much feeling in their feet or are wearing certain footwear. Drainage channels can be a hazard if unsteady on your feet.

**Potential mitigating actions:**

Those who live locally can be offered the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new scheme so they can become accustomed to it. Care can be taken to ensure that the building line which is also used for orientation can be negotiated by those with visual impairment, and location of the drainage gutter may assist some people to identify the edge of the main 'pedestrian' area. The use of tactile paving to replace the gutter at any level specific crossing locations may assist in this orientation.

The aim is to reduce the speed of cars and change the perception of drivers so that they are moving more slowly and are more aware of the presence of pedestrians in the area. The drainage channel will act as a guide to those who have vision as to which areas are safer for pedestrians and can be used to guide young children too.

Within Church Street where the road is narrower, there is a change in surface material delineating for drivers where the edge of the main 'pedestrian' area is. Street furniture will be used to restrict the movement of cars onto other areas of the shared surface which are solely for pedestrian use to give them areas where they can feel safe and less vulnerable.

The scheme is aimed at slowing the traffic and placing the priority on the pedestrian. The virtual build out will restrict traffic movements and be unlikely to encourage more cars to choose this route, and indeed may discourage some seeking to use it as a through route.

Reversing vehicles and car doors being left open can be a hazard currently but shifting the priority to the pedestrian should encourage increased awareness amongst drivers of others using the shared space.

The drainage channels may assist some in delineating the space, particularly drivers and pedestrians with good vision. It is accepted that for others this may not be visible and may cause them to trip, although it is potentially less of a hazard than the current kerb edges and range of different levels of surfaces.

## **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1. None

## **3. Climate Change:**

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

There will be no significant impact on our carbon footprint/energy consumption.

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

High quality materials should reduce the frequency of maintenance so have a net reduction in resource use.

