

Bedford Wharf Plaza Landscaping

Report to the Place-Making and Innovation Executive Advisory Board

Ward(s) affected: Friary & St Nicolas

Report of Director of Planning and Regeneration

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Bedford Wharf – Plaza Landscaping

Executive Summary

This report is an update on progress for the Bedford Wharf Plaza landscaping scheme.

The Bedford Wharf Plaza comprises an open area situated to the south of the Odeon and Old Orleans buildings off Bedford Road.

A condition of the planning permission for the replacement Walnut Bridge is that a landscaping scheme (for Bedford Wharf Plaza) must be implemented within six months following the bridge completion.

A redesigned public space at Bedford Wharf plaza is an opportunity to connect the wider regeneration schemes associated with Guildford Station and Solum Housing developments to the historic town centre public realm.

The proposed scheme aims is to develop a masterplan using a set of key design principles to be adopted for the wider Bedford Wharf area that is consistent with wider town centre public realm. This will be achieved through a considered approach to wayfinding, furniture and materials, to improve Guildford's Town centre streetscape legibility and connectivity and to achieve better accessibility for all.

The previous report to Executive on 9th January 2019 approved the sum of £150,000 to be moved from provisional to the approved capital programme to facilitate consultation on, and design of, a landscaping scheme for the plaza.

Work to date has been to consider the impact of the replacement Walnut Bridge on the plaza and to review other public realm schemes being delivered in the Town centre to ensure a consistent approach. We are now in a position to begin public engagement, initially using an online questionnaire, to be launched in September 2019. We will also involve key stakeholder groups and elected members, hence this report to the Place Making and Innovation Executive Advisory Board. This information

will be used to inform the procurement and consultant brief to develop a masterplan for the area.

The approach is to deliver the scheme in phases due planning obligation and to better fit with possible impact of wider regeneration in Bedford Wharf area.

Recommendation to EAB:

That the Executive Advisory Board;

- Provides guidance to the project approach for the Bedford Wharf Plaza Landscaping

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

To complete the Plaza Landscaping project to enable the future discharge the condition of Walnut Bridge replacement project, to integrate the bridge into its surroundings and to enhance the amenities of the wider Bedford Wharf area.

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Purpose of this report is to provide the EAB with an update on progress of the landscaping scheme (hard and soft) at Bedford Wharf Plaza.

2 Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The recommendations support the delivery of the following priorities from the Corporate Plan 2018-2023:
- Regenerating and improving Guildford town centre and other urban areas
 - Implement the vision of the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy
 - Improve the public realm, including surfaces, in key town centre areas
 - Produce a development brief for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Bedford Wharf riverside area for a mix of uses.
 - Replace Walnut Bridge footbridge to improve access between the railway station and town centre.

3 Background

The Site

- 3.1 The Bedford Wharf Plaza is located on the town side of the River Wey in central Guildford. It extends to approximately 0.77 acres and is bounded to the north by the Odeon and Old Orleans buildings, to the west by the River Wey and to the south and east by public highway. The site comprises predominately hard, paved surface with some existing, albeit limited, soft landscaping.

MAP 1. Location of Bedford Wharf Plaza



Background and context

- 3.2 The Solum regeneration development (Ref 14/P/02168) comprising “A mixed use redevelopment comprising 438 residential dwellings” was approved at appeal on 27th February 2018. This development will provide a new focus for the Bedford Wharf Plaza area and will generate increased footfall and cycle use across the Replacement Walnut Bridge. An alignment of the station entrance and the bridge will assist in directing pedestrians and cyclists to the town centre across the Bedford Wharf Plaza.
- 3.3 The Walnut Bridge Replacement Project is identified as a key corporate priority within the Corporate Plan 2018 to 2023. A planning application (ref: 18/P/01213) for the replacement bridge was approved on 10th October 2018. The permission includes a planning condition which requires the site to be landscaped within six months of the bridge being brought into use, in accordance with a scheme that shall first be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.
- 3.4 On 20th September 2018 the Council acquired the Odeon and the Old Orleans including the Plaza area. This allows the Council to directly influence and undertake works to the Bedford Wharf Plaza. The Plaza area will be the first open area experienced after crossing the new bridge and will be an important gateway towards the town.
- 3.5 These recent developments provide the Council with an opportunity to enhance the Bedford Wharf Plaza area through hard and soft landscaping in association with the Walnut Bridge replacement and the wider opportunity for the Bedford Wharf area. The improvement of this area will aid wayfinding from Guildford railway station to the town centre and will enhance the user experience for those

using the Bedford Wharf Plaza following the delivery of the Replacement Walnut Bridge.

Vision

- 4.1 The development of a new plaza provides an opportunity to create an animated and creative space that performs as a public square and a gateway to the town centre. Using urban design principles, the proposed masterplan could address some of the anti-social behaviour issues through encouraging more positive use of the space, by encouraging its use as a social space; creating multi-generational interest from hard and soft landscaping that embeds play value and public art. Which in turn provides greater passive surveillance through the increased footfall and site presence.
- 4.2 The vision for the square should reflect Guildford Town centre's historic landscape. The new Plaza would enhance this heritage and be a springboard for future streetscape improvement in the town centre. To develop this vision, we are now seeking views from the public through a series of consultation events.
- 4.3 With other current public realm schemes now being progressed at Chapel Street, Castle Street and Swan Lane (Tunsgate now completed), there is now greater opportunity to ensure a more consistent and joined up approach across the town centre, with the various 'character areas' receiving suitable and contextual surfacing and landscape enhancements.
- 4.4 An outcome of our review of other recent public realm schemes being proposed, is that there is a recognisable street hierarchy design and palette of materials that should be conserved to reflect Guildford's town heritage. Whilst pedestrian priority is also being promoted in the new schemes, we identified that there is also need to have consistency in signposting key routes better through choice of materials and wayfinding which we shall be developed further in Plaza Masterplan.

Masterplan

- 5.1 The need for a Masterplan for Bedford Wharf Plaza is essential as opposed to a simple landscaping design scheme that just addresses issues for the plaza in isolation of its surroundings. There are many factors that will influence and affect the masterplan implementation, therefore a staged approach advocating by masterplans are useful as it allows for greater flexibility to make improvement as and when required.
- 5.2 The Walnut Bridge completion is a hard milestone for the masterplan and key driver due to its immediacy and planning obligations. There is a need to deliver the a 'making good' landscaping requirement within 6 months of the bridge completion. Therefore, the first phase of the masterplan delivery will address this planning obligation.
- 5.3 The masterplan phased approach reflects that the current budget is not enough to deliver a complete redesign of the plaza. Therefore, having a phased approach will provide an opportunity to deliver core essential improvement as

and when funding becomes available and It will also facilitate better inward investment towards specific development needs identified in the masterplan.

- 5.4 The scope of the Plaza Masterplan will ensure that it can tie in current developments known (e.g. Guildford Station and Solum Development) along with future aspirations for the wider Bedford Area.
- 5.5 As the aspiration for the plaza as a significant gateway to the town centre, we will be seeking a highly experienced urban designers to deliver this scheme. We will begin to soft market test potential specialist in this field and have to date engaged with a number of practices to discuss at high level their approach. Procurement of lead consultant will explore framework contracts and an open competition to attract the best the market can offer.

Masterplan Programme

- 5.6 Indicative programme for delivery of this scheme is set out below table:

Activity	Start Date	End Date
Public Consultation Online	20 September 2019	21 October 2019
Lead design Consultant Procurement	15 October 2019	18 November 2019
Master planning consultation on vision and engagement	December 2019	March 2020
Surveys	December 2019	February 2020
Design options development	March 2020	June 2020
Consultation on preferred designs	June 2020	September 2020
Masterplan final report	September 2020	December 2020
Consents and permission	December 2020	April 2021
Procure Phase1 main contract	Feb 2021	June 2021
Delivery of Phase 1	TBC - Enabling works to coincide with construction of Bridge – currently scheduled for Q4 of 2021	

Finance

- 6.1 Funds for the scheme were approved in the January 2019 Executive of £500,000 from the provisional capital programme under ref: PF7(p) Transport schemes for future Local Growth Fund and other funding opportunities.

- 6.2 The Executive agreed for a capital allocation of £150,000 to progress the design of the scheme and £350,000 to remain in the provisional capital programme. There is still £350,000 on the provisional programme and £149,000 on the approved programme as of July 2019.

Next stages of the project

- 7.1 We shall begin to procure a lead consultant/Landscape Architect to undertake full landscaping design. This would include a suitable design to satisfy the planning condition aspect of the replacement Walnut Bridge application through to the masterplanning reflecting the wider regeneration that will impact on this area.

Consultation

- 8.1 Public consultation is integral part of the production of design options for the masterplan. An online consultation is planned in to be launched in by October 2019 to run for 4/5 weeks which will be accompanied by a social media and other press campaign. The consultation questionnaire is the first stage, aimed at beginning the public engagement and capture high level aspirations to refine our scope for a consultants' brief. Meetings with officers, key stakeholders, statutory organisations and amenity groups shall also be convened to ensure we understand how the scheme will impact those most affected and to gauge views on how best to approach the delivery of the masterplan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 The design of the Landscaped area will have regard to relevant Equalities and Diversity legislation and regulations. An Equalities Impact Assessment will also be undertaken as part of the project. Clearly, compliance with the DDA will be a key consideration.

Legal Implications

- 11.1 The design and delivery of the landscaping scheme will lead to the Council entering into a number of legally binding agreements or contracts, advice as to the appropriate procurement route will be provided by the Procurement Manager.

Human Resource Implications

- 11.2 No human resource implications have been identified. The project will be managed from within the Major Projects Team (MPT) with key support from external consultants.

Conclusion

- 12.1 The Landscaping of the Bedford Wharf Plaza provides an opportunity to further enhance this evolving area and contribute to the quality of future development of the area. The improvement in the area would be in accordance with the objectives of the Corporate Plan, satisfy the landscaping planning condition for

the replacement Walnut Bridge and provides an opportunity for public consultation on design options.

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<i>CMT</i>	<i>TBC</i>
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