

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

New members were welcomed: Jamie Whitfield, who will be replacing Justin Thomas as NewRiver REIT's representative on the board, and Paul Hetherington from Team East Sussex. Paul, however, is unable to attend this morning and sent his apologies.

Apologies were also noted for Sally-Ann Hart MP, as despite valiant attempts, she was unable to join the meeting due to technical difficulties.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (25TH OCTOBER 2023) AND MATTERS ARISING

Apologies were extended to Anna Merla as she was not recorded as being present at the meeting. The minutes will be amended accordingly.

There were no matters arising.

4. PROJECT UPDATES

Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections – Ellie McDaniel, Mike Wood and Thomas Weake

Key points:

- Following the presentation at the last meeting and based on feedback that has been received, the scope of the project has been increased to include Wellington Place
- Public and stakeholder engagement was launched last Monday (22nd January) on the East Sussex County Council consultation hub and will be supported by exhibitions and stakeholder workshops in the borough
- The project objectives, summary of work carried out to date, key challenges and public and stakeholder engagement programme were summarised
- It is recognised that there are several challenges faced by the project and it is hoped that these can be resolved via the engagement process and the technical baselining
- It is intended to submit the planning application in July 2024
- Engagement material has been produced, including posters, a brochure and a postcard linking to the [online survey](#) which closes on the 1st March

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

Q&A / Comments:

Sean Dennis commented that the local business community are broadly supportive of the project from what it understands so far and is keen to learn more and engage. It is good to hear that there is recognition of the impact it will have on public and private transport. Hastings residents are reliant on taxis for various reasons and this is a really important aspect that needs to be considered, as well as the flow of buses. He also commented that a number of businesses, particularly those in Havelock Road which will be directly affected know nothing about the project. It is acknowledged that there are workshops taking place but there may be a need to arrange a separate event for Business Improvement District (BID) and Chamber of Commerce members.

Ellie explained that it is intended to do some door-to-door visits to businesses in the area and that a separate event will be arranged for BID and Chamber members.

Emma Smith asked about the main delivery challenges, what these were and how these have been taken into account.

Ellie responded that the two big challenges are flooding and being able to do planting in a way that works in the environment there. A wide area is being looked at which has some issues such as high winds along the seafront and Havelock Road does not get the right amount of sun hence the engagement with local experts to ensure what is being done will be robust and stand the test of time given the environment in Hastings.

Another is the infrastructure side of things, in order to unlock the amount of public realm that we're looking at here significant changes will be needed to the infrastructure, including changes to the bus routes and taxi ranks. Work is underway with key stakeholders to ensure that what is being proposed will be feasible for the town.

The construction-based delivery part is yet another challenge, with regards to phasing, operational businesses, access and accessibility to the town which will be rigorously checked through the process of design and implementation and addressed on a case by case basis.

Kate Adams asked about the specific groups and communities that have been consulted with and suggested they should include families, those with small children and disabled people. She asked for assurance on some of the more involved details around how access will be achieved, such as the width of pavements, level and no drops between curbs and what a pedestrian area needs and asked how these design principles are going to be tested.

Arup has its access and inclusivity team specialist on board and as part of the design process transport, inclusive design, ecology, lighting will be done in an inclusive way and will be connectable and adaptable to all demographics and public groups, this is part of Arup's embedded design process.

Jane Howard-Smith commented on behalf of Sally-Ann Hart MP that this is an excellent and fantastic scheme and suggested that the bottom right bubble on page 5

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

of the consultation brochure needs to include 'protect against flooding and changing climate' as this is an issue that frequently comes up in discussions about the town centre. This will be added in to the next iteration.

James Harris added that in terms of delivery challenges, the town centre environment is probably the most challenging one in which to work due to the many moving parts, including businesses that need to go about their business which in itself is extremely challenging. The other thing based on ESCC's experience is changing anything in transport terms is an incredibly subjective thing. The really important bit is to make sure that everybody that has got something to say about it needs to feed in. What we'll never get is a position that everybody likes everything in the same way, but this will be an iterative process because it is a really kind of ground breaking project for the town.

Another delivery risk is budget, until such a time that you have a final design and you go to the market and the market tells you what it is that they would build it for, there is a delivery risk on that. So, something for us all to be mindful of is that we've all got lots of aspiration, expectations and hopes for this scheme but ultimately it needs to be something that we can all afford.

Cllr Hilton commented that this is an exciting project and that she has been involved with it since the beginning but is a bit worried that given that we know there's going to be a huge amount of revisions in response to this long overdue engagement process, the only bit in RIBA3 that mentions a repeat of this process is a presentation back to the town deal board. A lot more than that will have to be done as there will be all sorts of concerns and people will need to see how these are being addressed before it goes to planning, so that needs to be added to the programme.

Thomas agreed that this is right and a continued piece of engagement post the initial part goes some way to deliver that sense of ownership in the new asset that we're creating and the significance of it, so it is not only the right thing to do in terms of process, it actually fundamentally helps the outcome.

Cllr Hilton also commented that going forward, there's lots of technical stuff that needs resolving and there has been lots of questions about maintenance but in terms of thinking about pop ups, improvisation responses, stuff that can be tried out even though the £10m won't cover everything we want. We need to build in that opportunity for local communities, businesses and residents to trial stuff in what is their town and their garden, their town centre garden space. We need to ensure that there are opportunities to try stuff, of which there are lots of great examples across the country that we can build on.

Nicole Collomb commented that it is great to see the plans coming to public consultation. They look great but obviously are going to create a lot of discussion, which will not all be positive, with people's fears of change. On the issue of the challenging environment for planting, there have been meetings with Fergus Garrett as he went to the last stakeholder engagement session and from the feedback he has given it seems there was some really positive feedback there. It would be great to take on the issue of planting and challenging conditions, but also this aspiration of our original garden town proposal to really create a Hastings specific planting palette that

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

you know is going to be robust but is also going to reflect the character of the town as a coastal town and the particular environment of the individual sort of planting site. Fergus has come up with the idea of doing a workshop focussed on the planting palette and Arup has a huge amount of experience to bring to this, but it'd be really great to bring in some local and more distant experts.

Anna Merla commented that from a Public Health point of view, it would be good to consider the data around the evaluation of the Sheffield project in order to address the main challenges that have been mentioned given how it has informed this project. Using this evidence might help people that are a bit hesitant in implementing this project to change their minds.

5. PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

5.1 Programme overview

Noted. No questions were raised.

5.2 Communications update

Suzanne Oakley, Communications and Engagement updated:

- The Town Deal Open Day is taking place this coming Saturday, 27th January from 10am to 4pm inside the atrium of the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre. This will be attended by representatives across most of the ongoing projects and the main focus will be the public realm project, and a team from East Sussex County Council and Arup will be present as they will be using the event as part of the public consultation. Information has already been circulated but please contact Suzanne if anyone would like another reminder or calendar request (email: Towndeaal@hastings.gov.uk)
- A press release about the public realm project will be going out shortly and Suzanne is working closely with the ESCC communications team on various updates. A post is also live on the [Hastings Town Deal Blog](#) which includes links to the public survey and other information
- The East Sussex consultation site currently mentions that paper copy surveys are available to pick up from the café in the Observer Building which is unfortunately currently closed, although copies can be picked up from the Common Room at Eagle House. ESCC needs to be advised that the wording on the consultation site needs to be changed. **Action: Suzanne**

5.3 Programme finance update

Emma asked about contingency within the funding. Pranesh advised there is no programme contingency but there is contingency for each project which is built into their project costs. In terms of the public realm project, it is showing that more money will be needed than there is but staging of the development is being built in within Arup's work.

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

Jane Howard-Smith asked about The Source Park which is mentioned in the finance update. The business went into administration and a new company has been formed which has the same directors. Pranesh confirmed that the funds received from the Town Deal Accelerator Fund have been used, construction works at the White Rock Courtyard were completed as planned and the asset is still operational. Richard Moore confirmed further that private funding was also invested alongside the received project funding that was used as capital expenditure to the building. The asset remains in continuous use and the project is not affected by the restructuring of their core business which is online retail. The project completed before their restructuring, investment in the asset continues which is going from strength to strength with more jobs being created and more space being brought back into use during winter by a canopy which they have just invested £30,000 in. Richard is happy to talk offline if anyone has any concerns.

John Bownas asked for clarification on the budget for the public realm project (£10m) as it has been stated that this isn't enough to deliver a scheme which hasn't yet been designed and costed. Ellie explained that the costs are based on the current designs as they have been shared now but the consultation phase has just started and these could change. As the scope of the project has been extended to Wellington Place which was not included in the original plan it means the costs will exceed the available funding and other sources will have to be secured. It is not clear yet what other sources are available, but it could range from government funding to private investment. Currently, it is important to complete the designs and have them ready to go as this will put us in a better position to submit business cases and write bids when sources become available.

5.4 Hastings Station Gateway project update

Joseph Brown, Town Investment Programme and Partnerships Manager was introduced to the meeting and updated:

- The council has been working with Homes England over the past year to consider ways of regenerating the town centre and this work continues to develop via funding from them
- A Strategic Regeneration Investment Framework has been commissioned for the town centre which will act as a prospectus for the town, including a long-term masterplan, delivery plan, management plan and funding plan
- The original focus was on the land and sites immediately around Hastings Train Station, but following feedback at the stakeholder engagement workshop held last November, this has now been widened to include Hastings town centre as per the local plan boundary to ensure wider connections and opportunities
- HBC officers hosted a walk around with Homes England, Lambert Smith Hampton and Arup earlier this week to identify overlaps and opportunities between this project and the public realm project
- Homes England and Lambert Smith Hampton have also been in attendance at the public realm project stakeholder workshop earlier this week and will be present at future ones, including the open day this coming Saturday to ensure

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

the two projects are mutually beneficial and to avoid similar conversations being held twice with the same stakeholders

- Further engagement activities are being planned from now until March

5.5 Long Term Investment Plan for Towns – Endowment Fund

Victoria Conheady, Deputy Chief Executive updated:

- A summary and the guidance have previously been circulated to the board
- Town deal board members will recall that in 2020 when the town deal was announced and there was a need to set up a new town deal board and there were discussions as to whether the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should become that board. It was eventually decided to set up the town deal board as a sub-group of the LSP
- In terms of setting up a Town Board as set out in the long term town plan guidance, the LSP is currently being reviewed as it is prudent to do so given the need to have the police, fire service, health and educational sectors involved. There is also a need to be really cognisant of the same funding stream that is going into Bexhill as most of these partners work across both areas
- As part of reviewing the number of boards that currently exist, there are 38 attended by officers and members across the town. The idea is we create a hub by changing the LSP and the currently existing boards be used as thematic boards to feed into the long term plan so that we are not creating more meetings for people to attend
- The long term plan will be led by the data pack that has come out of the deep dive that was completed prior to Christmas where housing and homelessness was raised by pretty much everyone who attended interviews and stakeholder meetings held by DLUHC. There is also focus on education and skills, transport and connectivity, health inequalities and retail and business crime. It is hoped the data pack will be received soon and will be circulated
- Discussions are currently underway with the local MP, DLUHC, LSP, Hastings Community Network chairs and other leaders in the town about evolving the LSP membership to become the town board for the purposes of this fund and those discussions also include the fact that a new chair is needed. The membership needs to be better balanced and more reflective of the town as it is now rather than when it was first set up in 2003

5.6 Levelling Up Partnership update

Pranesh Datta, Economic Development Manager updated:

- DLUHC has completed the stakeholder engagement and considered all of the proposals and a package has been prepared for ministerial approval
- Once confirmation of the proposals has been received this will be shared with the board and others as appropriate

TOWN DEAL

25 JANUARY 2024

5.7 Hastings Town Deal 'Deep Dive'

Ruth Kynoch, Towns Fund Finance and Project Officer updated:

- Hastings has been selected as one of the areas for a deep dive review by DLUHC, who are looking at governance, counter fraud, procurement and subsidy control
- All data has been submitted before the deadline last Friday, with some of it being submitted early enough for DLUHC to select two areas of procurement to gather more information on which is now being reviewed
- A report will be pulled together and if anything comes out of that then we shall get some recommendations that we can then discuss and work on

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

11:00, Tuesday, 18th June 2024