

## **Report to Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development**

**February 2023**

### **Endorsement Growth Programme Funding: Southwick Square Public Realm Improvements**

#### **Report by Director of Place Services**

**Electoral divisions: Southwick**

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#### **Summary**

The Adur Growth Deal signed in 2017, is a joint commitment between Adur District Council (ADC) and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to focus partnership resource and investment on economic growth priorities. Work is underway to refresh the growth deal and to review investment priorities. The themes of partnership discussions have identified the need to support economic growth through improving: the public realm; sustainable transport links; and digital connectivity in town centres and high streets. This work has led to the proposed scheme coming forward to support economic regeneration at Southwick Square in advance of a refreshed Growth Deal.

This project aligns with the WSCC Economic Plan (2020-24) and WSCC Council Plan (2021-25). Concept design is underway, and it is anticipated works will commence on site in spring 2023 with completion in summer 2023.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development endorses the allocation of up to £0.600m from the remaining capital growth allocation to complete the detailed design, tender and construction of the scheme which is being managed directly by Adur District Council (ADC); and
  2. delegates authority to the Director of Place Services to enter into a collaboration and funding agreement with ADC that will manage the West Sussex County Council funding and allow ADC draw down of the funds for the scheme.
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#### **Proposal**

##### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 Many high streets nationally have seen historic decline and been identified as being in need of reinvention. The traditional model of predominantly retail destinations is changing. Hospitality and leisure facilities offer the opportunity to

attract footfall and capacity for delivering alternative services for customers on the high street.

- 1.2 Successive lockdowns and decline in footfall have left many businesses in a financially vulnerable position. Although restrictions have been lifted, the lack of regular users of the high street, such as office staff using town centre amenities and reduced tourism, continues to take its toll on the prospects of high street businesses. With some major high street names going out of business or downsizing, the high street has lost some important town centre anchors, resulting in gaps that can be problematic and time consuming to fill.
- 1.3 Town centres and high streets are busier when they offer compelling reasons for people to spend their time there. Spaces work best as destinations when there are multiple things to do in the same location and where these activities prompt social interactions and connections. Urban regeneration supports placemaking to some degree, but its true success comes when social capital is generated at the same time through the activities and relationships facilitated that infrastructure investment alone cannot achieve.
- 1.4 The Adur Growth Programme is a partnership between ADC and WSCC. The joint aim is to create better places for residents by using public resources and assets more effectively and efficiently to support sustainable growth in the Adur District. Public realm transformation in key Adur high street areas is a priority in the current Growth Programme. Investing in the Public Realm also supports the WSCC Council Plan priority of 'A sustainable and prosperous economy' and the WSCC Economic plan (2020-2024).
- 1.5 The Adur Growth Deal is backed up by town centre footfall data, retail studies and the Adur Local Plan that evidences a need for regeneration to encourage economic growth, increased footfall, and improved environmental and townscape qualities. The deal sets out key infrastructure and regeneration development areas alongside public realm improvement in the key areas for Lancing, Shoreham, and Southwick.
- 1.6 Southwick Square forms part of the Adur Growth Deal and is subject to Growth Board governance. Southwick Square has been identified for early intervention due to the under investment in recent years, when comparing to other areas (most notably Shoreham and Lancing). Southwick is a buoyant high street, however the Square itself is outdated and overgrown, therefore a refresh is required to ensure occupancy stays high and public safety is increased. There is also an appetite for growth and the redevelopment of the Square will provide opportunity to utilise the new outdoor space.
- 1.7 In addition to the economic regeneration benefits, investing in the public realm creates a safer, more attractive and less congested environment for all users. This would encourage more walking, improve health and wellbeing, and provide new and reinvigorated places to dwell and spend time in the heart of the Southwick area.
- 1.8 WSCC will work closely with ADC to measure and evaluate the outcomes and benefits of the project to ensure the specific objectives of the scheme are met. With the scheme identified as a priority ahead of the Adur Growth Deal refresh this evaluation will be part of the ongoing governance with ADC and form part of the agreement terms in allocating the funding.

## **2 Proposal details**

2.1 The Southwick Square public realm improvements present a significant opportunity to create person-centred urban spaces. This design approach creates multiple social benefits and points of destination and arrival – the district centre of the future will rely on high quality, distinctive, attractive places for people to enjoy. This scheme seeks to create these places to ensure the town centre is attractive. This is a key economic driver.

- Improving access and key facilities – bringing the public realm up to a modern standard
- Inclusive spaces – Improving safety and inclusive space in the public realm
- Sustainable travel elements – Create healthy and attractive spaces
- Listening to, and supporting, key stakeholders – strong local support from residents and businesses

The scheme will bring public realm improvement through the removal of old and overgrown vegetation and worn and dated brick planters/stairs replaced by a new large open space, sustainable planting and playful pathways, new pedestrian lighting and updated street furniture, trees and other landscaping using local supply chains. This will help revitalise a key gateway and provide a pleasant, safe seating area for residents and visitors to Southwick Square to dwell, increasing footfall. It will also provide a flexible event space for local businesses to spill out into and to enable performances and temporary markets, drawing in visitors to the area.

2.2 Southwick is undergoing regeneration and the 'town centre' features in ADC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP), whilst this also aligns with a strategic push to recreate / upgrade local economic hubs (large and small).

2.3 ADC owns 95% of the commercial property in the location and a major estate regeneration scheme just south of this location on the existing Adur Homes estate is underway. With Southwick Recreation Ground at the end of the high street this also gives an opportunity to tie in with the greenspace.

2.4 Southwick Square is primarily owned by ADC located outside the WSCC boundary, however a small part of the works fall within WSCC land. For works impacting the WSCC footways this has been agreed subject to confirmation of a suitable method statement for installation that these works are to be covered by a S50 agreement and permit from Street Works to work on the Highway.

2.5 The Councils payment to ADC for the delivery of Southwick Square through a collaboration agreement, would be overseen by the Adur Growth Partnership governance, made up of representatives from WSCC and ADC. Within the governance, approval of expenditure within an approved £0.600m would be delegated to officers (within standing orders).

- 2.6 The General Arrangement provided by ADC as attached at Appendix A will be subject to revisions as the scheme progresses following appointment of the construction contractor.

### **3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 3.1 The full business case outlined an option for Do Nothing, invest £0.125m in partial replacement of the public realm and the recommended option of £0.600m investment for total transformation and compliance is presented and will complement the wider regeneration of Southwick.
- 3.2 The Do Nothing option would provide no additional benefit to the district centre and adversely impact the area through continuing decline in public realm, public negative perception of the district in terms of safety and social value and as a result impact the operation of local businesses in the area.
- 3.3 The partial option at £0.125m would provide inadequate value for funding in terms of benefits, was considered aesthetically poor and insufficiently aspirational by ADC members and was rejected by them in 2021.

### **4 Consultation, engagement and advice**

- 4.1 Consultation and engagement with the public, local businesses was undertaken by ADC. This consisted of:
- i) In person - Saturday 1 October drop-in session, Southwick Square - 150 participants
  - ii) Letter drop highlighting web-based feedback from the A&W website - 30 businesses and 30 residential addresses
  - iii) Email out to association affiliated to Community Works highlighting web-based feedback on the A&W website - 120 organisations across Adur & Worthing contacted
  - iv) Direct contact and meetings with stakeholders' organisations including a meeting with Southwick Traders Association (17 November 2022 - 15 participants), Shoreham-by-Cycle active travel group, Southwick MS society (Thursday 22 December 2022), RNIB (Spring 2023)
  - v) ADC internal feedback from Waste & Cleansing, Parks and Foreshore, Community Safety and Wellbeing, Licensing and Place & Economy - 60 officers.
  - vi) Dedicated council webpage featuring design images, FAQs and an email link to submit feedback.
- 4.2 Feedback from these engagement activities has been used to finalise the proposals.

Feedback from the in-person consultation was particularly positive and the event was well attended. In comparison the online feedback was relatively small (5). The new design for the scheme was well received, the increased accessibility and the use of sustainable planting. The use of clear sightlines and improved pedestrian lighting was also welcomed in relation to public safety and in reducing anti-social behaviour.

The local community was keen to understand how the area would be maintained and were pleased to see additional street furniture including bike racks, litter bins and benches.

## 5 Finance

5.1 The total estimated cost of the Southwick Square proposal is £0.600m. This will be funded from the capital allocation for Growth Programmes within the approved capital programme leaving £2.716m available for future projects

5.2 Capital consequences

	Current Year 2022/23 £m	Year2 2023/24 £m	Year3 2024/25 £m	Total £m
Capital budget	0.000	0.450	2.866	3.316
Change from Proposal	-0.150	-0.450	0.000	-0.600
Remaining budget	-0.150	0.000	2.866	2.716

5.3 The effect of the proposal: ADC will be the delivery body for the Southwick Square capital project. WSCC will fund up to the value of £0.600m of the project and any additional funding required for the project will be met by ADC through grant funding and or CIL allocations. WSCC will reimburse ADC on a quarterly basis for costs incurred within the capped £0.600m.

### (a) How the cost represents good value

5.4 The cost benefit of the high value public realm scheme at Southwick Square has been assessed using WebTAG principles and other guidance such as DfT guidance on Value for Money Assessment which defines a five point range from Low to Very High. This will be measured as part of the detail design phase and will form part of the reporting process back to the County Council.

5.5 Qualitatively an increase in business rates through higher footfall across the town centre and reduction in vacancy rates and improved public realm would encourage a place where businesses can thrive and be a great place to live, visit and work as set out in the West Sussex Plan.

5.6 Key retail centres in Adur are going through transformational change for the benefit of future generations. New retail developments, mixed-use schemes, and high quality and durable public spaces will be delivered to address the issues around local social value and social inclusion.

5.7 Direct economic and Growth Deal benefits of the implementation of Southwick Square realm improvements are:

- £0.600 million capital investment into Southwick Square
- Increased footfall by 2.5 – 5% per month based on July 22 footfall report as a baseline

- Creation of 15 construction jobs for scheme 1 with 80 forecast for future schemes in Lancing and Shoreham
- Supporting 50 local businesses within the main precinct
- 2,614 sq.m of public realm improvements
- Support and enhance the architecture and aesthetics
- Additional opportunity for community engagement activities and cultural / events at the new public spaces

**(b) Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

- 5.8 Economically the Southwick Square scheme will provide employment opportunities, inward investment and business location attracting a wider workforce pool. It will provide an overall uplift in property and rental values as well as visitor, worker, and resident spending.
- 5.9 Environmentally new planting will improve air quality and reduce pollution with increased biodiversity and the reuse of an underutilised space.
- 5.10 Socially it will provide a greater sense of place; greater social and cultural use, community cohesion, improved health and wellbeing and crime reduction and increased safety with places to explore for children and young people.
- 5.11 Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact: Assets are all in the ownership of Adur District Council.

**6 Risk implications and mitigations**

<b>Key Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
Buried Utilities Impacting Scheme	ADC Project team will liaise with Statutory Undertakers. Continuity of ADC engineering officers with knowledge and detail of previous schemes in Southwick Square. Utility services have been thoroughly assessed by two external topographic surveys.
Objections from Residents and Business Users	ADC engaged with local stakeholders on concept design, which had positive support from Councillors, public and businesses. WSCC will continue to engage with key stakeholders, residents, and businesses to ensure support for final design - as required
Objection to Traffic Regulation orders	Scheme is partially on public footways as part of Highways land and liaison will continue with Highways teams through Growth Programme governance and Highways Hub through reporting and monitoring processes .
Financial Risk Management	The £0.600m financial contribution to the project is the maximum contribution given by WSCC, if costs overrun this will be managed by ADC. Short time period anticipated between detailed design,

Key Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
	tendering and start of construction (four months). The detailed design will be the subject of an independent pre-tender estimate for likely construction costs as well as a risk review to estimate and provide funding contingency.
Delivery Timescales	An experienced project team has designed similar public realm schemes, engineered solutions, and managed supply chain to keep project on track.
Construction Inflation	Current material and labour costs could reduce effective budget. The scheme will seek to use standard products and value engineer solutions, while retaining a scheme as close to original concept as possible
Maintenance revenue implications	The designs will provide improved quality of landscape and sustainability of materials and are expected to reduce short-medium-long term maintenance with revenue implications. ADC will take on maintenance following an agreed defects period, with extended warranties to cover certain materials.

## 7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 **Our Council Plan** – WSCC investment in Southwick Square is strategically aligned and reflects the key themes outlined in the WSCC Economic Plan (2020-24) and WSCC Council Plan (2021-25) as outlined in Section 1 of the report.

7.2 **Legal implications** – WSCC and ADC are to enter into a partnership collaboration agreement to regulate the release of the funding to ADC and govern how the funding will be spent on the project through the Growth Board governance.

### 7.3 Equality duty and human rights assessment –

7.3.1 Most people in the area will benefit from an improved design of the public realm and town centre environment. ADC project team have considered Equality Impact (see background documents) of the scheme and concluded that the proposals do not have any adverse outcomes and have a number of positive benefits in accordance with the Public Sector Equality duty.

7.3.2 The rights of those living near to an improved Southwick Square including businesses have been considered and not been interfered with. ADC has engaged stakeholders on the development of designs, to support health and well-being of vulnerable users.

7.3.3 The EQIA (attached Appendix B) will be subject to revision as the scheme progresses and reviewed and assessed as part of the project governance.

### 7.4 Climate change

7.4.1 This is an existing area of public realm and pavement space which is to be upgraded. Where possible, existing materials are being reused and reworked to make them suitable and extend the life of the asset presenting opportunities to reduce the scheme carbon footprint by removing the need to import new materials.

7.4.2 New planting will improve air quality, reduce pollution and help to increase biodiversity. These measures will have a positive impact on the reduction of carbon.

## 7.5 **Crime and disorder**

7.5.1 At this point no implications relating to the Crime and Disorder Act have been identified. A redesign and upgrade to the access and pedestrian lighting around Southwick Square, aims to improve security and safety. Poor, tired and outdated public space can contribute to crime and reinforce a negative perception of an area. Good public space can help foster a sense of pride, discouraging crime, as well as promoting healthy living. The new scheme design removes hidden corners, obsolete planting and allows a clear view for safe passage east to west and north to south. Reports of anti-social behaviour in the Southwick Square have resulted in damage to nearby street furniture, hidden from view by the existing scheme

## 7.6 **Public health**

7.6.1 The scheme provides new footway and cycleway connections which would enable residents to make journeys by foot or bike which would support improvement to their health and wellbeing.

## 7.7 **Social value**

7.7.1 Socially it will support a greater sense of place; greater social and cultural use, community cohesion, support improved health and wellbeing and crime reduction.

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## **Appendix A**

General Arrangement map

## **Appendix B**

Equality Impact Assessment for Southwick Square Regeneration – completed by Adur & Worthing Councils