

**Report to Cllr Steve Waight, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development**

**8 October 2024**

**Award of funding Chichester City Centre (North/East streets) Public Realm Improvement design phase**

**Report by Director of Place Services**

**Electoral division(s): Chichester North, Chichester East, Chichester South and Chichester West**

---

**Summary**

The City of Chichester, the County town of West Sussex, attracts large numbers of visitors each year due to its historical and national importance. As a major regional centre of administration, retail, and cultural facilities Chichester plays an important role in the region.

The existing pedestrianised zones in North and East Street, laid with red brick pavements and York stone slabs in the 1970s, have deteriorated and require major intervention and investment. Upgrading these surfaces is crucial to addressing the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in high street use. This initiative aims to foster growth, attract further inward investment, and enhance the city's appeal and safety for residents, visitors, and businesses.

A better-designed public space would attract more visitors, increase footfall, improve vacancy rates in the city, and reduce maintenance interventions by the County Council. The improvements aim to enhance access to the high street for vulnerable people and boost the environment with improved sustainable transport amenities and green spaces on the high street, enhancing overall quality of life.

The [Chichester Growth Deal](#), a key partnership with Chichester District Council, identified Public Realm Improvements in the city centre as a priority for the regeneration of the economy, this aligns with the county council [Economic Collaboration Report](#) (and draft Economic strategy) and ['Our Council Plan' \(2021-25\)](#) by providing help for people and communities to fulfil their potential.

## Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, is asked to:

1. Approve the initiation of a preliminary and detailed design phase to support the development of the scheme, as outlined in paragraph 1.5 and Appendix A of this report.
2. Approve the commencement of a public engagement process to inform and guide the design phase.
3. Allocate £0.542m to complete the detailed design and all associated enabling works in preparation for a full business case, which will seek approval of the remaining capital budget required for the scheme's delivery.

## Proposal

### 1. Background and context

- 1.1 The Chichester Growth Programme is a partnership between Chichester District Council (CDC) and West Sussex County Council (WSCC). Public realm transformation in Chichester is a priority in the current Growth Programme that aims to support the area to continue to be a prosperous place, supporting businesses and residents to thrive.
- 1.2 This proposed investment in these improvements is strategically aligned and reflects the key themes outlined in the Economic Plan (2021-24): Theme 2: Protect and Revive the Coastal Towns Theme 6: Protect and Revive Tourism and the Visitor Economy Theme 8: Capitalise on Digital Infrastructure and Technology.
- 1.3 Highways defect data for Chichester city centre indicates 1,933 maintenance reports from Q1 2021 to Q3 2023, with a year-on-year increase in both the frequency and severity of interventions needed to maintain surface safety, as outlined in the WSCC Highway Inspection Manual. From an asset management perspective, this trend suggests that as the overall surface condition continues to deteriorate, both the cost and the frequency of interventions will likely rise in the short to medium term. To mitigate escalating maintenance demands, a more sustainable and long-term approach is required moving forward.
- 1.4 Wider partnership feedback has documented the desire for comprehensive public realm improvements that will connect key amenities, heritage, and cultural locations and improve greening of the city; and also improve the economic performance of the city centre as a key tourism destination.
- 1.5 The proposed scheme seeks to:
  - Deal with existing poor streetscape condition
  - Tackle increasing maintenance issues
  - Install fibre ducting into the scheme to improve digital connectivity
  - Improve the commercial viability of city centre sites.

- Create wider economic and social benefits in the form of pride of place.
- Play a role in developing positive health benefits.

### **Proposal details**

- 1.6 The Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, is asked to confirm progression to the concept then detailed design stage of the project and to endorse funding arrangements.
- 1.7 Public engagement will be conducted on the viable options identified from the feasibility study, which builds on the existing research and data for the city centre. The key principles guiding the options include improving safety, enhancing the public realm, and reducing maintenance liabilities for the council.
- 1.8 A further key decision will be required, following the successful completion of detailed design, to consider whether contractor procurement is to begin and whether to delegate authority to council officers to appoint a construction contractor within a funded budget envelope.
- 1.9 This will require future capital funding allocation as the preferred option(s) develops. This is currently estimated to be up to £6.278m in addition to the cost requested in this report. The Chichester Growth Programme will co-ordinate and manage the progression of the scheme to delivery by developing the full business case for investment and providing key stakeholder management. Chichester District Council (CDC) and Chichester City Council (CCC) have identified capital contributions, subject to approval for the delivery of a final scheme.

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

- 2.1 The County Council and Chichester Growth Partnership have reviewed several potential projects options to improve the public realm in the city and to maximise the impact on recovery of the city centre economy and provide benefits to the local community in line with the growth deal.
- 2.2 These options have been refined to reflect affordability and deliverability, and have been appraised as outlined in Appendix A

### **3. Consultation, engagement, Legal and Commercial Panel advice**

- 3.1 Local WSCC, CDC and City Council Councillors have been updated with progress and development of the scheme. Officers from each organisation have had opportunities to influence and input into the design requirements. The Chichester Vision Group has acted as a steering committee for the design and includes membership from:

- Chichester District Council (Cllrs and officers)
- Chichester City Council (Cllrs and officers)
- Chichester Cathedral
- Chichester University
- Chichester College Group
- Chichester Business Improvement District

- Chichester Festival Theatre
  - Chichester Chamber of Commerce & Industry
  - The Great Sussex Way (tourism destination management)
  - WSCC (Cllrs and officers)
- 3.2 Further public engagement and consultation is planned as part of detailed design phase and will be advertised in line with standard WSCC communication procedures with a dedicated project web page. Stakeholder feedback will be taken on board and considered and incorporated into the design, where appropriate and possible. A full breakdown of the engagement to date for this project is provided in Appendix B.

#### **4. Finance**

- 4.1 To progress the Chichester public realm improvements project requires an estimated £0.542m of capital investment. This estimate is to complete the design stage and has been produced by WSCC highways team. The cost accounts for all standard elements of classification and structure including: Surveys, Project Management, Design Professional Fees, and design contingency fees at each key design stage.

#### **Funding Sources**

- 4.2 The County Council's Capital Programme will fund next stages of preliminary and detailed design and investigation costs of £0.542m from corporate borrowing.
- 4.3 A cost envelope for delivery of works will be developed as designs progress. At this early stage an indicative estimate shows an additional estimated £6.278 is required to complete delivery of the project (total of £6.82m). This will be subject to further governance to approve the final scheme design.
- 4.4 A capital delivery funding strategy is being progressed with partners as part of the detailed design phase. This will be confirmed in a future key decision for the scheme and aims to provide a blended funding model to cover the cost of the scheme.
- 4.5 Contract monitoring will be in place throughout the scheme delivery by WSCC Officers. Fortnightly and monthly meetings will be held to track progress. Budget and contract management software will be used to administer the contract processes.

#### **How the cost represents good value**

- 4.6 Investing in Chichester City Centre's public realm will also demonstrate good value for money by reducing operational and maintenance pressures on WSCC and partners. The public realm in Chichester is deteriorating and the costs associated with maintaining the surface are increasing. Investing in the asset now would decrease the ongoing maintenance costs and would lead to an increase in footfall in the area. WSCC currently maintains North and East Street at a cost of up to £150k per year, with forecasts suggesting this could rise to £616k per year by 2037. At this point, intervention would likely become mandatory and capital costs could be as much as £8.776m on top of the accumulated maintenance costs. Higher numbers of trips and falls and

ongoing concerns about the state of the public realm is having an impact on the public reputation of Chichester City Centre.

- 4.7 Broader economic and social benefits from better designed public spaces can lead to increased levels of footfall throughout the day and night, resulting in greater levels of natural surveillance. Increased footfall and dwell time will boost spending in the local economy and seeks to lower incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- 4.8 This project will support economic growth with the proposal to include installing fibre ducting. This will give city centre businesses the opportunity to connect to super-fast broadband and seek future competitive advantage.
- 4.9 The benefits arising from increasing footfall can be quantified by estimating the site-specific Land Value Uplift to properties impacted by the wider scheme. Moreover, public realm investments have the potential to deliver positive externalities (e.g., reduction in anti-social behaviour, perception of safety, particularly for under 30's demographic; increased employment opportunities) to residential properties in the surrounding area and, thus, have the potential to enhance the land values more widely and attract private investment. Crawley town centre has benefited from investment via the Crawley Growth Programme and has seen footfall numbers increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. Footfall from 2019 – 2023 has increased by 9.4% in the town centre. This has also had a positive impact on lower vacancy rates in the town centre, bringing more visitors to the high street compared with other locations in West Sussex.
- 4.10 Supporting public realm improvements in Chichester City could have similar results as it will also unlock the City for vulnerable people currently deterred by the pavement condition.

## 5. Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Significant resource and funding still required	Seek funding with partners to deliver preferred option with costs and timescales
Public Realm improvements don't stimulate growth	Monitor business perceptions and investments in the city centre
Continuing safety concerns from poorly performing public realm intervention	Continue to carry out safety inspections and interventions. Manage Contractor defect period and S278 agreement
Uncovering archaeological site or items	Appropriate risk budget and surveys to be carried out. Working closely with the CDC Heritage Team.
Programme and project development could be politically contentious	Work with Councillors on effective communications plan and continue to engage with local stakeholders to build support
Disruption to local business during construction and mitigations could add to costs	Work with stakeholders on effective communications plan and appropriate mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Significant stakeholder engagement and management due to resistance to proposals	Work with consultants to develop effective Stakeholder Management Plan
Complex utilities and services constraints in historic City Centre	Carry out all required survey work to inform best delivery method

## 6. Policy alignment and compliance

6.1 **Our Council Plan** – Our Council Plan covers the period 2021 to 2025 and sets out the priorities for WSCC over four years and the outcomes it wants to achieve for people who live and work in West Sussex. It focuses on four priorities, all of which are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of tackling climate change. The scheme adheres to these priorities as follows:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations (reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour).
- A sustainable and prosperous economy (such as the introduction of new planting).
- Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential (redesigned space to support new community and economic activity).
- Making the best use of resources (reducing the maintenance liability of WSCC and seeking capital contributions from partners).

6.2 **Legal implications** – WSP (Landscape/ Highways consultants) were procured via the Crown Commercial Services Framework which was established by the Cabinet Office to make use of the buying power of the entire public sector to deliver savings for Local and Central Government. The procurement of WSP was complete collaboratively with Legal and Procurement therefore ensuring compliance with WSCC Contract Standing Orders and European Legislation.

- A review and amendment to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) may be required as part of the process of regenerating the city centre public realm.
- No land is needed to complete the scheme, but access arrangements, highway licences and private works licences will be required for a contractor to complete the capital delivery phase.
- Agreements with statutory undertakers for connections to, building around or for the installation of utility services may also be required.

6.3 **Equality duty and human rights assessment** – In the development of the scheme a full consultation process will be undertaken. During the initial development/feasibility process, an accessibility audit was done which identified key challenges and considerations, especially those with visual disability.

- 6.4 The proposed scheme provides improved public realm spaces to enhance the area, providing improved routes for residents and visitors, including those with disabilities such as the visually impaired, people with physical disabilities or health issues.
- 6.5 **Protecting the environment** – The introduction of new planting in the public realm areas will help improve net biodiversity gain in the area supporting improved air quality and supporting the improvement of mental health.
- 6.6 The scheme provides a positive approach in support of the County Council’s ambitions to reduce the climate impact of its projects.
- 6.7 **Crime and disorder** –It could be anticipated that the improvements to the public realm and infrastructure would have a positive effect on residents and visitors’ attitudes to the area and its use
- 6.8 **Public health** – The scheme encourages access to and from the city centre and new seating will provide locations for the elderly or health-affected residents to pause while moving around the area. The accompanying planting and increased ‘greening’ of the area will support mental wellbeing.
- 6.9 The inclusion of additional cycle storage and the upgrade of access supports the principles of encouraging active travel and improving public health outcomes.
- 6.10 **Social value** – The improved quality of the materials for the road and paved areas, and the provision of new street furniture demonstrates an investment in the location, which when linked to the wider redevelopment in the immediate location provide a significant economic uplift in what is currently run-down.
- 6.11 The scheme provides opportunities for contractors to provide employment upskilling opportunities for local residents. The LOT6 framework also includes a social value requirement which will be utilised as part of the main capital delivery contract works.

**Lee Harris**

Director Place Services

**Contact Officers:**

**Nick Burrell** - Strategic Manager Growth & OPE  
033 022 23881, nick.burrell@westsussex.gov.uk

**Greg Ockwell** – Chichester Growth Programme Delivery Manager,  
033 022 23878, greg.ockwell@westsussex.gov.uk

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Options considered

Appendix B - Project engagement, consultation and communications

**Background papers**

None

## Appendix A – Options considered

Option Name	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Conclusion
<b>Option 1-</b> Do nothing	Continue with BAU	No cost of works	Maintenance costs remain high. Trip and slip reports remain high. Missed opportunity to install fibre ducting. Missed opportunity to promote economic growth.	<b>Option discounted</b> as it does not address maintenance costs and trip and slip reports. It also misses a key opportunity to improve digital connectivity and promote economic growth.
<b>Option 2 –</b> Deliver Option 1 laid out in the WSP Landscape Sketchbook	North and East Street upgraded with nodes, a clear vehicular route, and pedestrian areas. This would include raised planters and refreshed street furniture.	Offers opportunities such as fibre ducting installation. Upgraded paving to reduce trips and slips, and maintenance costs. Promotes footfall. Raised planters to decrease installation costs.	Limited number of nodes. Retains an element of vehicle priority. Higher maintenance costs due to raised planters.	<b>Recommended option</b> as it is the lowest cost option that delivers on key benefits such as decreasing the maintenance budget and decreasing trips and slips. It will increase planting and street furniture.
<b>Option 3 -</b> Deliver Option 2 laid out in the WSP Landscape Sketchbook	North and East Street upgraded with large nodes, less linear vehicular route, and increased pedestrian priority. This would include some in-ground planting.	Offers opportunities such as fibre ducting installation. Upgraded paving to reduce trips and slips, and maintenance costs. Promotes footfall. In-ground planting would mitigate more extreme weather.	Increased costs.	<b>Option discounted</b> because it is more expensive than Option 1 and delivers similar benefits. It can deliver on key benefits such as decreasing the maintenance budget and decreasing trips and slips. It will provide in-ground planting and street furniture.



Option Name	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Conclusion
<p><b>Option 4 –</b> Tarmac only baseline cost option all of North and East Street.</p>	<p>Tarmac all of North and East Street.</p>	<p>Offers opportunities such as fibre ducting installation. Upgraded paving to reduce trips and slips, and maintenance costs. Cheaper maintenance costs.</p>	<p>Would not encourage footfall as it would not improve the look and feel. Conflicts with heritage. Would not provide planting or upgraded street furniture.</p>	<p><b>Consider as baseline option -</b> it may not improve the look and feel of Chichester City and therefore, would not promote footfall despite delivering on key benefits such as decreasing the maintenance budget and decreasing trips and slips.</p>
<p><b>Option 5 –</b> Replacement of exiting surface with like for like materials</p>	<p>Like for like replacement of all materials in North and East Street</p>	<p>Maintains existing material palette</p>	<p>Estimated costs of £18m could be prohibitive. Existing streetscape has several different materials which have built up over time which has created a 'chequerboard' effect with the public realm. No redesign of space to allow for reinforced areas/ tactical layout of furniture to protect footways.</p>	<p><b>Option discounted</b> Cost envelope for initial investment and maintenance of whole life costs too high. No benefit from redesigned space.</p>

## Appendix B - Project engagement, consultation and communications

A formal communication and stakeholder management strategy will be developed by the project team for the design and implementation phases. The below table outlines the existing stakeholder engagement that has been carried out to date.

### Chichester Public Realm Meetings & Stakeholders Engagement Timeline

WSCC and CDC Cllrs have been updated with progress and development of the scheme. Officers from each organisation have had chance to influence and input into the design requirements. The Chichester Vision Group has acted as a steering committee for the design and includes membership from:

- Chichester District Council (Cllrs and officers)
- Chichester City Council (Cllrs and officers)
- Chichester Cathedral
- Chichester University
- Chichester College Group
- Chichester Business Improvement District
- Chichester Festival Theatre
- Chichester Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- The Great Sussex Way (tourism destination management)
- WSCC (Cllrs and officers)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting/ forum</b>
<b>28 Feb 2023</b>	PID and initial meetings with WSCC Highways
<b>1 March 2023</b>	Meeting with CDC to review project brief.
<b>27 June 2023</b>	Chichester Vision Group update
<b>17 July 2023</b>	First Chichester City Public realm Officers Steering Group to agree ToRs.
<b>24 July 2023</b>	First CDC/WSCC Members and officers steering group
<b>19 Sep 2023</b>	Chichester Vision Group update
<b>6 Nov 2023</b>	CDC/WSCC Officers Steering Group
<b>27 Nov 2023</b>	CDC/WSCC Members Steering Group
<b>23 Dec 2023 – 21 Jan 2024</b>	Business & Retail delivery and waste collection survey
<b>15 Jan 2024</b>	Chichester Vision Group update
<b>30 Jan 2024</b>	CDC/WSCC Members steering group.
<b>1 Feb 2024</b>	Chichester City Council planning committee
<b>14 Feb 2024</b>	CDC/WSCC officers steering group
<b>3 April</b>	WSCC Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport briefing
<b>17 April 2024</b>	CDC/WSCC officers steering group
<b>23 April 2024</b>	CDC/WSCC Members steering group.
<b>13 May 2024</b>	Chichester Vision Group update