



CABINET

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To: Councillors Barkley (Vice-Chair), Bokor, Harper-Davies, Mercer, Morgan (Chair), Poland, Rollings, Smidowicz and Taylor (for attention)

All other members of the Council
(for information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Cabinet to be held in Virtual Meeting - Arrangements to Follow on Thursday, 7th May 2020 at 6.00 pm for the following business.



Chief Executive

Southfields
Loughborough

24th April 2020

BACKGROUND PAPER

6. BEDFORD SQUARE GATEWAY PROJECT

2 - 3

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

Key Decision

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

BEDFORD SQUARE GATEWAY (PUBLIC REALM) PROJECT

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS FROM ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION EXERCISES

1. Public Exhibition, 6 and 7 March 2020, John Storer House

Attendance from members of the public: 116 (Friday 6th March = 43, Saturday 7th March = 73)

Summary of comments received:

- Overwhelming majority supportive of the proposals: particularly welcome was the widening of pavements, improved environment and large public space in Devonshire Square, improved access to Granby Street car park via Devonshire Lane, creating a distinct area within the town centre (paving materials, lighting, street furniture), branding the area as Loughborough's 'Independent Quarter'.
- Only four overly negative responses received over the two days, two of whom seemed to be against the principle of spending public money on such schemes, rather than against any specific design proposal. One concern over the reduction in parking in Devonshire Square.
- A number of comments identifying the need for some form of pedestrian crossing between Devonshire Square and Granby Street.
- Questions raised over potential loss of parking were directed towards Bedford Square rather than Devonshire Square and all were happy with the response received (no overall change).
- Some of those attending did not feel the proposals went far enough and would have liked to see full pedestrianisation along Ward's End and Devonshire Square.
- Concerns over cyclists riding the wrong way and no provision for a cycle lane.
- Support for prohibiting blue badge parking on double yellow lines along Ward's End.

Early outcomes of engagement: pedestrian crossing point at Devonshire Square/Granby Street, raised tables at entrance to new car parks in Bedford Square, new seating and planting in Bedford Square South, new loading bay on Ward's End, relocation of a proposed loading bay, new loading bay in front of Post Office.

2. One to One Meetings with Local Businesses

To date, the Borough Council has engaged in 24 face-to-face meetings during February and March 2020 with shops and local businesses in Devonshire Square, Ward's End and Bedford Square. It is anticipated that additional face-to-face meetings will be carried out with other shops in the local area in the coming days. The purpose of these meetings was to provide an opportunity explain in detail the proposals being put forward and to enable individual shop owners to ask questions specific to their own business.

Of the 24 shops visited, 21 were fully supportive of the whole scheme. This included ten shops and businesses in Devonshire Square, ten in Ward's End and one in Bedford Square. In terms of the other three shops visited, while they were all supportive of the proposals for Bedford Square and Ward's End, they expressed a preference for increasing the number of parking spaces in Devonshire Square rather than the proposed small reduction. This included two businesses in Devonshire Square and one in Ward's End.

3. Business Engagement Event, 27 February 2020, John Storer House

The meeting was organised by Love Loughborough BID. Representatives from 15 businesses in Bedford Square, Ward's End and Devonshire Square attended the meeting, together with representatives from 8 other organisations, including the market traders, bus company, the BID and the Borough Council.

A small number of those attending spoke out in favour of the scheme, saying the design proposals were of a high quality and what the town needs and will improve the shopping environment. There was also acknowledgement that the Council had already made a significant number of amendments to the scheme to incorporate comments from local shop owners, the Loughborough Town Team and the BID. A small number raised concerns with the proposed reduction in parking in Devonshire Square.

Related issues and questions raised at the meeting:

- What assistance could be given to address the number of empty units in the town centre?
- What assistance could be given to help improve shop frontages?
- Will it be possible to offer business rate relief during the implementation of the scheme?
- Will any support be given to those small businesses currently exempt from business rates?
- Will more of an effort be made to organise events compared to Market Place?
- Concerns over anti-social behaviour associated with provision of new street furniture.
- Concerns over impact on footfall following pedestrianisation in Market Place, re-routing of buses and the new inner relief road.

4. Social Media

A 3D animation of the proposed scheme design was produced and a link was provided on the Council's website and Facebook account to enable people to view the animation. To date, there has been a total of 617 views on YouTube. On Facebook there have been 2,921 one minute views and 7,634 three second views. Facebook: 119 comments to date. 61 'likes'.

A range of constructive comments have been made online, to date including:

- Need pedestrian crossing point between Devonshire Square/Cattle Market/Granby Street
- Make Granby Street narrower at junction with Devonshire Square/Cattle Market
- Need more seating
- Turn seating around in Devonshire Square to face shops
- Pedestrianise the whole scheme
- Better provision for cyclists (more cycle parking, cycle way)
- Need more independent shops

Steve Dibnah

Regeneration and Economic Development Officer

12 March 2020