

CABINET – 19TH NOVEMBER 2020

Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration Lead Member: Councillor Jonathan Morgan

Part A

ITEM 7 SHEPSHED TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Purpose of Report

To seek in principal approval of the scheme design for public realm improvement works in Market Place, Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Field Street in Shepshed town centre so that a Section 278 application to the County Highway Authority, work on preparing Traffic Regulation Orders and the necessary detailed technical work on the construction design drawings can proceed.

Recommendations

1. That the draft project scheme design proposals, including the draft redesign option for Market Place, as outlined in Part B and Appendices 1 and 4 of this report be approved in principle;
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member to make necessary modifications to the scheme design and specification in the period leading up to and during the submission of the Section 278 application in response to comments from the County Highway Authority;
3. That the phased approach to implementing the project, detailed in Section 14 Part B of the report, be approved;
4. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to accept £600k of grant funding for the project from the LLEP Business Rates Pool Fund;
5. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to seek out additional funding, as may be necessary, to deliver the whole scheme; and
6. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to enter into a Section 278 Legal Agreement with Leicestershire County Council, along with any other contracts and legal obligations necessary, to prepare the scheme for implementation.
7. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to undertake a procurement process for a contractor and the required professional support services, as set out in Part B of the report.

Reasons

1. To ensure that Members are in agreement with the draft detailed scheme design (including the redesign option for Market Place) in principle so that the final scheme drawings and specification can be completed and submitted to the County Highway Authority to secure the necessary approval to carry out works on the public highway and agree any necessary TROs in order that the final construction drawings can be prepared;
2. To enable further minor modifications to the final scheme drawings and specification to be made in response to any technical advice and requirements made by the County Highway Authority leading up to and during the Section 278 and TRO processes;
3. To ensure that a scheme of works can be prioritised and delivered in a phased way, within the available budget;
4. To enable the grant agreement relating to the approval of £600k capital funding from the LLEP Business Rates Pool Fund to be signed and used as match funding for this project.
5. To respond to the provisions of the constitution that limit the delegated authority of Heads of Service to accept grant funding above £200k without separate cabinet approval;
6. To obtain agreement with Leicestershire County Council that the proposed works can be undertaken on the public highway and that any other legal agreements and requirements to prepare the final scheme design for implementation can be secured;
7. To obtain the required Cabinet approval for a procurement process exceeding £500,000.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The new Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024 is committed to supporting and fostering strong economic growth in Charnwood. In support of that overarching commitment the strategy aims to support high streets to become more diverse places with successful retail businesses whilst respecting the heritage of town centres.

The Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan was approved by Shepshed Town Council in 2013. The Masterplan outlines a strategic vision to improve the overall economic health and vitality of the town centre. It focuses interventions on a linked 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements around three clearly defined centres: the Bull Ring, Market Place and Hall Croft. For each of the three 'destinations', the Masterplan set out an illustrative plan for public realm improvements. This project has set out to implement these proposals to the extent currently possible in light of present physical and technical opportunities and constraints and the level of resources available.

The Corporate Strategy also sets out the vision to care for the environment and create healthy communities. The Shepshed Town Centre Public Realm Improvement

Project is expected to make a significant contribution to achieving this vision through the business plan actions for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The project has been progressed to a draft detailed design stage and this has been subjected to a public consultation exercise in September and October 2020. The remaining elements of the project plan programme are as follows:

- Development of final scheme drawings and specification following public consultation (November to December 2020)
- Borough Council to submit a Section 278 application to the County Highway Authority for approval of the scheme drawings and specification (December 2020)
- Scheme approval by County Highway Authority and update to Traffic Regulation Orders as required (January to March 2021)
- Borough Council procurement process to appoint a Principal Contractor to deliver the street works and appoint specialist professional services to support the Council in the management of the construction contract (April to June 2021).
- Cabinet Report – appoint contractor (June to July 2021)
- Contractor commence street works (August 2021)
- Completion of street works (August 2022)

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

The total amount of capital funding currently secured for the project in the Capital Plan is £1.2m. This is made up by external funding £600k from the Business Rates Pool Fund and £600k from the Council's own capital reserves.

The initial estimates for the indicative capital cost of delivering the whole scheme, based on the current draft scheme designs, have been calculated on the basis of standard 'low' and 'high' end estimates. The initial 'high end' estimate for the capital cost of delivering the whole scheme is approximately £1.415m. In addition to the capital scheme cost, the Council will be required to either make a one-off up front commuted sum payment to the County Council or enter into an annual maintenance agreement to cover future public realm maintenance works in the scheme area. The value of the commuted sum is calculated on a scheme by scheme basis but is generally in the region of around 10% of the capital cost of the scheme.

The table below provides a breakdown of the initial capital cost estimates for the four key elements of the scheme and the commuted sum, which are:

	'Low' Estimate	'High' Estimate
Market Place	£800k	£1.1m
Bull Ring	£70k	£110k
Hall Croft	£70k	£100k
Field Street	£10k	£20k
Commuted Sum	£60k	£85k
Total	£1.01m	£1.415m

On the basis of the initial 'high end' cost estimate, there would be a potential funding shortfall of £215k. Members will note that once the scheme design has been agreed a value engineering exercise will be undertaken to identify where any cost savings may be able to be made. Members will also note that the final cost of the scheme will not be determined until the tender from the preferred contractor has been accepted.

In the eventuality of a funding shortfall, the preferred response is to seek supplementary funding to enable the whole scheme to be delivered in one contract. If additional funding is not secured in the immediate term, it is proposed to adopt the phased approach outlined below to deliver the scheme, according to available resources. This phasing has been agreed with both the Shepshed Town Team and the Shepshed Town Council.

- Phase One: Market Place
- Phase Two: Bull Ring
- Phase Three: Hall Croft
- Phase Four: Field Street

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Restrictions imposed by Govt. arising from COVID-19 leading to delays in construction programme and increased costs.	Likely (3)	Serious (3)	Moderate (9)	Construction programme include contingency to accommodate delay. Contractor set out clear plan to respond to prevailing restrictions. Communication Plan set out measures to mitigate impact on local businesses and residents.
Insufficient resources secured to deliver the whole scheme.	Likely (3)	minor (1)	Low (3)	Scheme designed to provide flexibility to implement street works in phases, according to availability of resources

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Delays during preparation of detailed design and construction phase	Likely (3)	Significant (2)	Moderate (6)	Robust Project Plan and project management and monitoring procedures.
Inability to appoint highway contractors with appropriate capacity, skills and experience due to national economic situation	Likely (3)	Significant (2)	Moderate (6)	Use of approved Frameworks including those provided by Crown Commercial Services Limited to pre-qualify potential contractors prior to procurement.

Equality and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared for the proposed Scheme. A copy of the EIA is attached at Appendix 2 to this report. A number of design modifications have been made to the Scheme to improve safety and accessibility, especially for pedestrians and those with greater mobility needs and visual impairment. Following the preparation of draft detailed designs for the Scheme, these will be subject to a Road Safety Audit and a Mobility Audit and assessment by the County Highway Authority. Further scheme modifications may be required as a result.

Crime and Disorder

The guiding principles for the project have been to make the area a more attractive and safer destination for residents, shoppers and visitors, improve trading conditions for local businesses and achieve simplicity in design, whereby the scheme will only consider features of interest that will not attract anti-social behaviour nor cause longer term issues such as maintenance or long term asset management difficulties. The proposed street furniture has been designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Sustainability

The scheme seeks to promote pedestrian and cycle access to the town centre and provides for additional cycle parking facilities in Market Place, Hall Croft and Bull Ring. The scheme also promotes landscaping and additional trees in Market Place and additional landscaping in Hall Croft and Bull Ring, which will assist in absorbing air pollution.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: Shephed Town Centre Masterplan (2013)

<https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/shepheddraftmasterplan>

Officers to contact:

Richard Bennett
Head of Planning and Regeneration
(01509) 634727
Richard.bennett@charnwood.gov.uk

Steve Dibnah
Regeneration and Economic Development Officer
01509 632521
Steve.dibnah@charnwood.gov.uk

Appendices

1. Project briefing on Design Proposals for Shepshed Public Realm Project
2. Equality Impact Assessment
3. Snapshot of Comments from Shepshed Public Consultation Exercise
4. Draft Redesign Option for Market Place

Part B

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Shepshed Public Realm Project will deliver targeted public realm improvements in Shepshed town centre to help create a better environment for users and, importantly, act as a catalyst for stimulating more commercial activity in the town centre. The project will help breathe new life into Shepshed town centre, make it more user friendly and more suited to meeting the needs of the customers of the future. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.
- 1.2 The project will implement a programme of street works to deliver comprehensive public realm improvements in Market Place and complementary 'soft' landscaping improvements in Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Field Street. The overarching ambitions of the project are to improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort, give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre and create a distinct, characterful, pleasant and more attractive shopping-friendly destination.
- 1.3 The main focus of the project will be in Market Place. It will seek to build on the attractive urban fabric and heritage potential around Market Place and create a distinctive and impressive gateway into the town centre from the north. It will unify Market Place and reduce the dominance of vehicles to provide for a safer, more comfortable and pleasant walking and shopping environment. These actions will create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place, draw people to the town centre and support the economic prosperity of local businesses.
- 1.4 It is proposed that construction works will commence in summer 2021 and be completed by summer 2022.

2. Project Context

- 2.1 The project has been informed by the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan, which was approved in 2013 by the Shepshed Town Council following a detailed public consultation exercise. The project seeks to implement some of the key recommendations in the Masterplan, in particular, the delivery of a linked 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements around the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.
- 2.2 In 2012, the Shepshed Town Team was established to guide the development and implementation of the Masterplan. The Town Team comprises of representatives of local residents and businesses and members of the Town Council. It has considered the priorities for public realm improvements over a number of years. It also established a Task & Finish Group to focus specifically on improving the public realm in the town centre. Both the Task & Finish Group and the Town Team itself have been involved in the development of this project.

- 2.3 In 2018/19, Leicestershire County Council announced it no longer had the capacity to undertake non-County Council public realm improvement schemes. As a result, the Borough Council has also assumed the project leadership role to deliver improvements to the public realm in Shepshed town centre as in Loughborough town centre for the Bedford Square Gateway Project. This has required the Borough Council to appoint its own specialist highways and landscape design consultants to prepare the detailed scheme designs and will be responsible for appointing a Principal Contractor to undertake the construction of the street works for both projects. The County Council is a member of the Project Team and is providing informal advisory support throughout the design processes.
- 2.4 A proposal for one way working to Field Street, Britannia Street, Loughborough Road, Forest Street has been under consideration for a number of years. This could help improve traffic flow in the town centre and unlock barriers to other town centre improvements, such as comprehensive public realm improvements in Field Street and the Bull Ring. However, a review of the proposals by the Borough Council in 2019 concluded such a one way scheme was currently undeliverable due to a number of technical issues, the high costs involved and the fact no funding is available and unlikely to be made available in the foreseeable future.

3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 In January 2020, the Borough Council secured approval of £600k of capital funding from the Business Rates Pool Fund, administered by the LLEP, to match the £600k allocated in the Council's Capital Plan for the project (comprising of £430,000 capital receipts allocated in the Borough Council's Capital Plan and £170,000 in receipts from S106 obligations related to developments in Shepshed).
- 3.2 In March 2020, the Borough Council appointed specialist highways and landscape design consultants, Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited, as their Principal Designer to prepare the detailed designs for the scheme. The Borough Council and its appointed Principal Designer have worked closely with the Shepshed Town Team, Shepshed Town Council and Ward Councillors in developing proposals for public realm improvements in the town centre.
- 3.3 Following the project inception in March 2020, the Shepshed Town Council, Shepshed Town Team and Ward Councillors were consulted by the Borough Council and its consultants to agree the project vision, the key objectives and priorities for action for the scheme. The Council's Principal Designers sought to build on the recommendations in the Town Centre Masterplan, as well as ideas developed by the Town Team in 2018, to prepare initial concept design ideas for Market Place, the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Field Street.
- 3.4 In July 2020, a range of concept design ideas were presented to the Town Council and the Town Team in separate meetings on 1 July 2020. Both organisations endorsed the concept design ideas proposed and indicated their preference for a specific concept design option for Market Place.

3.5 Following approval of the concept design ideas, draft detailed designs were prepared by Wood. These were presented to the Town Council on 4 September 2020 and the Town Team on 7 September 2020. Both organisations gave their approval to the draft detailed designs presented. Appendix 1 outlines the draft detailed design proposals for the project.

3.6 At the meetings in September, Wood also presented proposals to the Town Team and Town Council for subjecting the draft detailed designs to public consultation. Both organisations gave their approval to the proposals for an online public consultation exercise, to run from 21 September to 19 October 2020. The public consultation has been completed and the outcome is summarised in this report.

4. Project Aims

4.1 The project's key objectives were agreed with the Shepshed Town Team and Town Council and these have guided and shaped the design principles and the design process. These are to:

- Realise the Town Centre Masterplan's proposed 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements;
- Improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort;
- Give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre;
- Create a distinct, characterful, pleasant and more attractive shopping-friendly destination;
- Help shops and businesses attract a larger footfall and improve overall trading conditions;
- Encourage entrepreneurs to invest and establish new businesses in premises that are attractive and help reverse the downward economic spiral in the town centre;
- Encourage existing residents and residents in the emerging new housing areas as well as visitors to spend time and shop in the town centre.
- Maximise opportunities to secure additional private and public sector funding, including S106 receipts from future planning obligations.

5. Project Objectives

5.1 The project's key objectives were agreed with the Shepshed Town Team and Town Council and these have also guided and shaped the design principles and the design process. These are:

- To enhance the public realm with colour and seasonal variety through refreshing existing planters and creating new areas of planting and tree cover;
- To refresh the existing street furniture to rejuvenate the public realm, reduce on-going maintenance and help give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre;
- To provide for more cycle parking facilities across the project area;
- To retain as much "authorised" on-street parking as possible, including Blue Badge parking, whilst reducing the impact on the public realm;
- To increase the quantity and quality of public open space;

- To ensure adequate provision for the servicing of businesses;
- To achieve simplicity in design and only consider features that discourage anti-social behaviour do not cause longer term maintenance or asset management difficulties.

6. Project Rationale

- 6.1 The Town Centre Masterplan highlights poor public realm and pedestrian safety as key issues for the town centre, indicating they were harming the shopping experience in the town centre. It identifies there is no clearly defined 'town centre' or a central core of activity, the public realm is of general poor quality and there is no consistency of public realm features, which re-enforces a feeling of disjointed and often hidden townscape.
- 6.2 The Masterplan identified enhancing the public realm as a key strategic objective for the town centre. The Masterplan recommended a coordinated strategy to help create a unique character and identity for the town and bring greater cohesion within the town centre. It warned a 'do-nothing' scenario would lead to further decline in the ability of businesses to sustain trading in the town centre, creating a downward spiral of decline and decay.
- 6.3 The project seeks to encourage more people to visit the town centre and explore the local shops and its heritage. Evidence from successful public realm improvement schemes in other UK towns and cities shows that shopping is an "experience" rather than a mere transaction and that shoppers and other visitors view the quality of the public space and cultural and social activities as well as the surrounding shops and businesses as the most important factors when deciding where to visit. The evidence shows that the availability of car parking is not seen as the most important factor in deciding where to visit. The evidence also shows that if more space is given over for walking and cycling and less to cars, the absence of customers arriving by car is more than compensated for by people arriving on foot or by bike.

7. Proposed Designs for Market Place

- 7.1 A project briefing outlining the draft detailed designs for Market Place is provided in Appendix 1. The Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan highlights the potential for Market Place to become the 'heritage quarter' within the town centre. Shops and services around Market Place appear to be generally well-used and there are a number of characterful, well maintained properties and a nucleus of pubs, overnight accommodation, specialist shops and services that could be co-ordinated and enhanced to extend the appeal of the town centre to visitors. However, the Masterplan also identifies the Market Place currently lacks any real identity and is a heavily car-dominated environment. There is very little public open space and the quality of the public realm is poor. The Masterplan identifies opportunities to achieve a rebalance between the pedestrian, the shopper and the car around Market Place, but that significant landscaping and public realm works will be required if Market Place is to fulfil its potential.
- 7.2 There are no physical or technical barriers to taking forward ambitious plans to make Market Place an impressive 'showcase' for the town. In view of this, a

comprehensive public realm improvement programme is possible for the Market Place area. The specific aims for the proposed designs for Market Place are:

- To build on the attractive urban fabric and heritage potential around Market Place and create a distinctive and impressive gateway into the town centre from the north;
- To unify Market Place and provide for a safer, more comfortable and pleasant walking and shopping environment;
- To reduce the dominance of vehicles in the Market Place area.
- To retain the existing number of 'authorised' car parking spaces.

7.3 The proposed measures to be implemented in Market Place include:

- Reorganising the existing 'authorised' parking spaces to maximise the heritage potential of Market Place;
- Creating a large public open space to safely hold special events throughout the year, broadening the appeal of the Market Place and supporting the economic prosperity of local businesses;
- Realigning Brook Street to make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops, provide wider footpaths and additional parking bays;
- Providing for additional cycle parking facilities;
- Using new seating, new street trees and new planting to enhance the public space;
- Providing new street furniture to complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place and designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism;
- Providing for a more visible location for Shepshed's market;
- Providing two loading bay areas for retail deliveries;
- Providing removable lockable bollards to maintain access rights for specific retail units and residential dwellings;

8. Proposed Designs for the Bull Ring

8.1 A project briefing outlining the draft detailed designs for Bull Ring is provided in Appendix 1. The Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan recognises the Bull Ring as the principal gateway to the town but notes it is frequently viewed as the least attractive gateway to the town and currently offers little sense of 'arrival'. It is a hugely car-dominated environment and the quality of the public realm is poor. However, the current road network and the need for a wide bus turning circle severely restrict the options for public realm improvements in this area.

8.2 In light of the barriers identified in the Bull Ring area, the proposals outlined in this project will be limited to 'soft' landscape improvements. In view of this, the specific aims for the proposed designs for Bull Ring are:

- To make the Bull Ring more attractive and welcoming,
- To increase pedestrian safety;
- To improve the pedestrian access into Hall Croft from Field Street.

8.3 The proposed measures to be implemented in the Bull Ring include:

- Creating a ‘pocket park’ that provides more colour, texture and aesthetic interest;
- Enhancing the existing public realm with colour and seasonal variety through new areas of planting and tree cover and freshening up the existing street furniture;
- Providing new seating areas set back from the busy roundabout to allow for the better enjoyment of the space at the Bull Ring;
- Replacing the street furniture, chosen to be comfortable, complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place and designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism;
- Renewing and refreshing the paving surfaces and reducing clutter (e.g. removal of existing railings);
- Replacing the existing bus shelter with a more contemporary structure and a sedum roof to encourage biodiversity;
- Providing for additional cycle parking facilities.

9. Proposed Designs for Hall Croft

9.1 A project briefing outlining the draft detailed designs for Hall Croft is provided in Appendix 1. The Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan’s vision for Hall Croft is that it should become the ‘heart’ of Shepshed - a gathering place. It identifies the potential for Hall Croft to provide a strong central focus in the town centre that enables pedestrians and shoppers to move comfortably and safely away from passing traffic. Unfortunately, a substantial proportion of the area around the “Ewe and I” area next to the library is not public highway and this means it is not possible to enforce a sensible on-street parking plan. The result is that this area is blighted by a car dominated environment and acts as a barrier to delivering on the Masterplan’s vision.

9.2 In light of the barriers identified in Hall Croft, the proposals outlined in this project will be limited to ‘soft’ landscape improvements. The specific aims for the proposed designs for Hall Croft are:

- To build on Hall Croft’s connections with the rest of the town centre and create a place where people want to meet, spend time and socialise in a relatively quiet and pleasant environment;
- To improve the visual appearance and functionality of the public space around the Library in Hall Croft and encourage pedestrian movement between Market Place and the Bull Ring.

9.3 The proposed measures to be implemented in Hall Croft include:

- Enhancing the public realm within the “Ewe & I” area, including:
 - Replacing the seating and moving them into the circle area;
 - Removing existing dated barriers around the trees and replacing with concrete block paving to enable planting around trees;
 - Providing additional informal seating to the raised kerb area;
 - Replacing the spherical stone bollards with raised concrete planters to help enclose the space more;

- Replacing cycle parking in front of the library to incorporate planters and cycle parking;
- Adding colour through planting to blank walls;
- Removing the existing railings at the library and replacing them with planters to allow more colour and open up the space;
- Replacing the street furniture (benches and bins) at the library to complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place;
- Providing for new cycle parking stands at the library;
- Adding planted tubs on outside of handrails on ramp leading up to the Cooperative Supermarket (planters will not affect use of hand railings);
- Keeping the same paving throughout and no changes to the existing vehicle access and disabled parking bays;

10. Key Scheme Benefits

10.1 The key benefits of the proposed scheme are considered to be:

- The creation of a pedestrian and event space in Market Place, which will help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to the town centre and support the economic prosperity of local businesses. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.
- The proposals for widening pavements, level surfaces, more public open space, improved lighting and increased provision of seating, will improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort.
- Improvements to the visual appearance and functionality of the public space in Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market place will help encourage pedestrian movement within the town centre.
- The realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops in Market Place.
- The reorganisation of the parking spaces in Market Place will eliminate the current 'chaotic' parking experience and improve pedestrian safety, compared to the current situation.
- Relocating market stalls to Market Place will provide a much more visible location for the market and help encourage more trading.
- The provision of additional cycle parking facilities across the area will help make the town centre more accessible to cyclists.
- The use of standard street furniture across the project area will help give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre and reduce on-going maintenance.

11. Public Consultation Exercise

11.1 The Shepshed Public Realm Project will build on and take forward key recommendations in the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan regarding proposals for public realm improvements. The Masterplan was subjected to public consultation in 2013 and this confirmed the support of local residents and businesses for the Masterplan, including the recommendations regarding public realm improvements for the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.

- 11.2 The project has also been informed by work undertaken by the Shepshed Town Team to develop ideas for modest public realm improvements for the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.
- 11.3 Both the initial concept designs and draft detailed designs for public realm improvements to be delivered by this project have been considered and approved, both by the Shepshed Town Council and the Shepshed Town Team. During this process of consultation, both organisations raised issues concerning the needs of a diverse range of groups, in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc. The scheme designs have been amended to address needs raised relating to these groups both by the Town Council and the Town Team.
- 11.4 Following agreement with Shepshed Town Council and the Town Team, a public consultation exercise on the draft detailed designs was launched on 21 September 2020 and closed on 19 October 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face meetings and social distancing, a decision was taken to make this an online consultation. The consultation included:
- Consultation web page on the Borough Council's website;
 - Online survey to enable people to comment on the proposals;
 - 3D animation and fly-through of the proposals for Market Place;
 - 3D illustrations of the proposals for
 - Four large information boards providing comprehensive details on the scheme proposals displayed in the windows of Shepshed Library and an additional information board displayed in one of the empty shops in Market Place;
 - Individual consultations with businesses located in Market Place and key landowners in the area;
 - Zoom meeting organised for local residents and businesses to view a virtual presentation of the scheme proposals followed by a Q&A session;
 - Posters raising awareness of the consultation and a postal address for those unable to access the online information distributed to local shops and community buildings;
 - Press releases, radio interviews and other media releases.

12. Preliminary Assessment of the Public Consultation Exercise

- 12.1 A preliminary assessment of the responses received during the public consultation exercise has been completed. Set out below is an overview of the main findings from:

- a) The Online Survey
- b) Zoom Meeting
- c) Individual Consultations

Online Survey

- 12.2 294 people responded to the online survey. 89% of respondents identified themselves as local residents living in Shepshed. The survey asked two

specific questions about the proposals for Bull Ring, Market Place, Field Street and Hall Croft. These questions were:

1. Would you like to see the public realm improvements brought forward in Shepshed?
2. Please rank the four scheme areas in order of priority

12.3 The survey also offered respondents an opportunity to add any specific comments or observations they wished to make about the proposals.

Question 1: Support for the Proposals

12.4 In terms of question 1, respondents were asked to say whether 'yes' they liked the proposals, 'maybe' or 'no' they did not like the proposals. All 294 of the people who completed the survey responded to this question. The results demonstrated a wide range of opinions with neither overwhelming support given for the proposals nor was a majority against them. 58% responded that they either liked or maybe liked the proposals (31% and 27% respectively) and 42% said they did not like the proposals.

Question 2: Ranking the Elements in Priority Order

12.5 In terms of question 2, respondents were asked to rank each of the four scheme elements in order of priority, from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest priority. 263 of the 294 respondents answered this question. Each of the four scheme elements was given an overall score, based on the number of people who chose that scheme as their first, second, third or fourth choice.

12.6 The results showed that 43% of respondents chose the Bull Ring as their highest priority, 32% chose Market Place as their highest priority, 15% chose Field Street and 12% chose Hall Croft as their first priority. Conversely, 36% ranked Market Place as their fourth choice, 30% chose Hall Croft, 22% chose Field Street and 13% ranked the Bull Ring as their fourth choice.

12.7 When all ranking positions were taken into account and an overall score given for each of the four elements, the most popular scheme was the Bull Ring, followed by Market Place, Field Street and then Hall Croft. It is clear from these results that Market Place in particular divided people's opinions the most.

Individual Comments

12.8 Survey respondents were also offered the opportunity to add any specific comments, alternative suggestions or observations they wished to make about the proposals. A total of 255 respondents chose to make comments, some were lengthy covering a range of themes and others focussing on one issue. The nature and subject of the comments were analysed and grouped into a number of key themes. The number of times comments were made by respondents for these key themes were analysed and the results set out in the table below.

Main Themes Raised by Respondents in Online Survey	Total Number of Respondents Making these Comments	Percentage of Total Respondents Making these Comment
Support for the whole scheme	61	24%
Concern with the reorganisation of parking in Market Place, including concerns about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived loss of spaces • More parking needed • No longer able to 'nip in and out' of a shop • Struggle to walk to the shops • Not as easy to spot a vacant space 	184	72%
Concern about impact of parking proposals on local businesses in Market Place	57	22%
Concern about traffic safety issues in Market Place and not being able to return in the direction you have come from after parking.	38	15%
Anti-social behaviour will be encouraged in the town as a result of these proposals.	34	13%
Risk of vandalism against new planting and seating.	27	11%
Not enough space for market stalls in Market Place	15	6%
Money should be spent on a one way system instead.	9	4%

12.9 A snapshot of the comments received from the online survey is to be found in Appendix 3 of this report. Members will note there were a significant number of comments made in favour of the proposals for all four elements of the scheme. Nevertheless, the majority of comments received were focussed on issues of concern relating to parking, safety and layout in Market Place. While there appeared to be an active minority voice at play with regard to some of the parking issues raised concerning Market Place, Members will note there were some valid and very helpful comments relating to all four elements of the scheme. These included important issues in Market Place concerning potential difficulties returning back to someone's original destination after finishing shopping in Market Place without having to navigate around the town centre's one way system, concerns about safety issues of parking on Brook Street, more needing to be done to make the pedestrian crossing on Brook Street safer and difficulties for motorists to spot a vacant parking space because the parking would be so widely distributed – and manoeuvring to those spaces safely, especially if you were on the opposite side of the road.

Zoom Meeting

- 12.10 A Zoom webinar was held on 15 October 2020. 55 people registered for the event and a total of 33 people attended on the night. A small number of attendees raised questions with a focus being on parking, safety and layout with respect to the Market Place proposals. Overall, the webinar was well received.

Individual Consultations

- 12.11 It was recognised at the outset of the public consultation exercise that this would have to be an online consultation in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, six of the key shops in the Market Place/Cheapside area were either visited or contacted on the phone as part of the consultation process (Post Office, Butchers, Convenience Store, Fish Shop, Pub/Hotel and Carpet Shop). The three main shops in Market Place (Post Office, Butchers, Convenience Store) expressed strong concerns with the proposed scheme for Market Place. The overwhelming concern related to their perceived impact the proposed reorganisation of parking would have on their customers and ultimately their business.
- 12.12 Shepshed Library and Leicestershire County Council have been consulted on the proposals, in particular those proposals in the vicinity of the library and on land in the ownership of the County Council. A meeting on site is due to take place at the start of November to discuss the proposals and their impact on County Council property.
- 12.13 Age UK have been contacted, specifically in relation to the proposal to add planting and other landscaping features to improve the visual appearance of the blank wall along the side of the Age UK property on Field Street/Hall Croft (which currently included barbed wire running along to top of the wall). Age UK have responded in a positive manner to the proposals and further discussions will take place to confirm the final designs.
- 12.14 The Coop has also been consulted, given their extensive land ownership in the Hall Croft area and the specific proposals on their land. A formal response is still awaited.

Consultation with Shepshed Town Team and Shepshed Town Council

- 12.15 Both the Shepshed Town Team and Shepshed Town Council have been consulted throughout the design process for this scheme. Following the completion of the public consultation exercise, meetings were held with both the Town Team and the Town Council to brief them on the outcome and provide an opportunity to discuss the way forward. Both the Town Team and Town Council considered and took on board the comments made during the consultation, in particular those relating to Market Place. Members will note, both the Town Team and the Town Council strongly remain of the opinion that the general thrust of the design proposals for Market Place should not be changed as it will provide an impressive 'showcase' for the town.

- 12.16 In considering the comments received during the consultation, both the Town Team and the Town Council recognised and acknowledged there had been many legitimate concerns raised with regard to the current proposals, particularly relating to parking and traffic circulation in Market Place. They both agreed it would be appropriate to consider amendments to the proposed designs for Market Place that could help address those concerns, where possible, particularly around parking, whilst at the same time remaining true to the agreed principles and objectives of the project.
- 12.17 A sketch redesign option for Market Place was presented to the Town Team and the Town Council for their consideration. The redesign option was welcomed by both the Town Team and the Town Council and they gave their support for this sketch redesign to be worked up into the final design scheme for Market Place. A copy of the redesign option is included at Appendix 4, for Member's information. Members will note, the redesign option includes a number of design revisions to address legitimate parking concerns raised during the consultation, whilst still retaining the fundamental core elements of the scheme. The key elements of the redesign are:
- The parking bays will be concentrated in two distinct places rather than dispersed across the area, namely on Church Street and in front of the Crown Hotel;
 - As a result, parking choices will be clearer and simpler and it will be easier to exit for onward journeys without necessarily having to negotiate the one way system down Church Street;
 - The total number of 'allocated' parking spaces will be increased from 14 to 19 spaces;
 - The proposed large public open space in front of the Crown Hotel will be scaled back and 11 parking spaces allocated;
 - The proposed parallel parking on Brook Street will no longer be part of the scheme, enabling the pedestrian crossing to be repositioned to a safer location along Brook Street;
 - The proposed planting areas on Market Place will be scaled back to allow for an increased public open space for special events and the relocated market, etc.
- 12.18 Members will note the proposed chevron parking on Church Street will involve cars reversing into the spaces. This is a requirement of the County Highway Authority and a Government regulation.
- 12.19 Members will also note the proposed designs for the whole scheme will be subject to approval by the County Highway Authority, which may necessitate further technical changes to the scheme design before it can be approved. Prior to submission to the County Highway Authority, the proposals for Market Place will also be subjected to an independent Road Safety Audit (RSA) and a Non-Motorised Users (Mobility) Audit. The RSA will assess the road safety implications of the proposed scheme design and the Mobility Audit will consider how the proposed scheme design will affect pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users.

13. Costings

- 13.1 The initial estimates for the indicative capital cost of delivering the whole scheme, based on the current draft scheme designs, have been calculated on the basis of standard 'low' and 'high' end estimates. Contingency sums have been built into these cost estimates. The initial 'high end' estimate for the capital cost of delivering the whole scheme is approximately £1.415m.
- 13.2 In addition to the capital scheme cost, the Council will be required to either make a one-off up-front commuted sum payment to the County Council or enter into an annual maintenance agreement to cover future public realm maintenance works in the scheme area. It is generally considered that a one-off payment of a commuted sum provides the best way forward as the costs associated with an annual maintenance agreement are uncertain year on year, making it difficult to budget in advance. The value of the commuted sum is calculated on a scheme by scheme basis but is generally in the region of around 10% of the capital cost of the scheme.
- 13.3 The table below provides a breakdown of the initial capital cost estimates for the four key elements of the scheme and the commuted sum, which are:

	'Low' Estimate	'High' Estimate
Market Place	£800k	£1.1m
Bull Ring	£70k	£110k
Hall Croft	£70k	£100k
Field Street	£10k	£20k
Commuted Sum	£60k	£85k
Total	£1.01m	£1.415m

14. Phased Implementation of Scheme

- 14.1 On the basis of the initial 'high end' cost estimate, there would be a potential funding shortfall of £215k. Members will note that once the scheme design has been agreed a value engineering exercise will be undertaken to identify where any cost savings may be able to be made. Members will also note that the final cost of the scheme will not be determined until the tender price from the preferred contractor has been accepted.
- 14.2 A key goal for the project has been to deliver a high quality public realm improvement scheme and, if necessary, to deliver this in a phased approach according to the funding available, rather than compromise the scheme quality to fit the available resources. Accordingly, the scheme has been designed in such a way for it to be capable of being implemented in phases.
- 14.3 If additional funding is not secured in the immediate term, it is proposed to deliver the individual elements of the scheme in priority order as agreed with both the Shepshed Town Team and the Shepshed Town Council. The priority order is as follows:

- Priority One: Market Place
- Priority Two: Bull Ring
- Priority Three: Hall Croft
- Priority Four: Field Street

14.4 In the event of a funding shortfall, the proposed approach is:

- Firstly, to seek supplementary funding, as necessary, to deliver the whole scheme as part of a single construction contract;
- Secondly, if the search for supplementary funding is unsuccessful or likely to result in undue delays imposed on the construction programme, to proceed with those phases of the scheme that can be delivered within the current level of funding available in accordance with the prioritised approach outlined above.
- Thirdly, to complete any remaining phase(s) in priority order, according to the availability of resources at the time.

15. Procurement of Contractor and Professional Support Services

15.1 Members will recall that following the decision by Leicestershire County Council to no longer assume the project lead role on non-County Council led public realm improvement projects, it has fallen on the Borough Council to take responsibility for driving forward both the Shepshed Public Realm Project and the Bedford Square Gateway Project. Part of this responsibility includes the procurement of a Principal Contractor to deliver the street works. In view of the Borough Council's lack of experience and expertise in managing such contracts, there will also be the need to secure the services of a specialist project manager and clerk of works to administer and manage the construction contract on behalf of the Council. The cost of appointing the Principal Contractor, project manager and clerk of works will be met from within the capital budget for this project. The construction phase of the project is programmed to start in Summer 2021 and the procurement processes will commence in March 2021.

15.2 In order to procure the street works and professional support services for the Shepshed project, the Council will use an appropriate national framework agreement. For the Bedford Square project, the Council selected appropriate framework agreements provided by Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Limited, which is an executive agency and trading fund of the Cabinet Office of the UK Government. The decision to use the CCS frameworks followed a soft market test exercise undertaken by the Council to evaluate the suitability of a number of national frameworks. Prior to the commencement of the procurement processes for the Shepshed project, Officers will review the effectiveness of using the CCS frameworks to ensure they remain the most attuned to the Council's requirements and offer the Council the greatest choice and therefore control over the quality of the project deliverables.

16. Position Statement

- 16.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented additional challenges to overcome in order to seek to maintain the original project timetable. The engagement and consultation process, in particular, has had to be adapted to respond to the prevailing restrictions concerning COVID-19. Nevertheless, the Borough Council has been able to maintain good progress in delivering key project milestones. However, Members will note that circumstances out of the control of the Borough Council may provide further challenges to achieving the project plan programme timetable moving forward.
- 16.2 During the procurement process for the Bedford Square Gateway construction contract, it became apparent that contractors are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their normal level of services due to on-going staffing issues as a direct result of restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff absences due to self-isolation and illness. As a result, additional time may need to be allocated for the procurement process for the Shepshed project next year, depending on the prevailing circumstances at the time.
- 16.3 It is also clear from reports within the construction sector that delays in construction programmes are being experienced due to additional health and safety measures arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with prevailing regulations regarding social distancing on construction sites. Again, such considerations may need to be given to the construction timetable for Shepshed next year, depending on the prevailing circumstances at the time. There is also some evidence to suggest that this may also be impacting on construction costs, which may also need to be factored into project costs, depending on the prevailing circumstances at the time.
- 16.4 Furthermore, it has been apparent from conversations with potential contractors and suppliers that the COVID-19 pandemic may also be having some knock-on effects in the supply chain with regard to the timely sourcing of construction materials and also the price of materials. Again, these issues will be considered once the Principal Contractor for the project has been appointed.

Shepshed Public Realm Improvements Project Briefing

Introduction

This briefing provides an overview of the proposals to deliver public realm improvements in three distinct centres within Shepshed town centre, namely Market Place, the Bull Ring and Hall Croft. It sets out the background to the project, its key aims and objectives and a detailed description of the proposed improvements, including illustrations of the draft detailed designs.

Background

The project is being led by Charnwood Borough Council, with support from the Shepshed Town Team and Shepshed Town Council. The project's aims and objectives have been informed by the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan, which was approved in 2013 by the Shepshed Town Council following a detailed public consultation exercise. The project seeks to implement some of the key recommendations in the Masterplan, in particular, the delivery of a linked 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements around the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.

Progress to Date

Charnwood Borough Council has successfully attracted a project budget of £1.2 million to deliver a programme of public realm improvements in the town centre. In March 2020, the Borough Council appointed specialist highways and landscape design consultants to prepare detailed designs for the scheme. Draft detailed designs were finalised in September and these were subjected to public consultation in September and October. The findings from the consultation are currently being analysed and amendments to the scheme design may be considered in response to comments received, if they add value to the scheme and are technically feasible and in line with the agreed aims and objectives for the project.

Project Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to lead the delivery of targeted public realm improvements within the town centre, to help create a better environment for users, stimulate commercial activity and create points of interest for visitors. The main focus of the project will be the physical improvements to the public realm in Market Place. The purpose of these improvements is to create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to the town centre. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.

The key project aims are to:

- Realise the Masterplan's 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements;
- Improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort;
- Give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre;
- Create a distinct, characterful, pleasant and attractive shopping-friendly destination;

- Help shops and businesses attract a larger footfall and improve trading conditions;
- Encourage entrepreneurs to invest and establish new businesses in premises that are attractive and help reverse the downward economic spiral in the town centre;
- Encourage existing residents and residents in the emerging new housing areas as well as visitors to spend time and shop in the town centre.
- Maximise opportunities to secure additional private and public sector funding, including S106 receipts from future planning obligations.

The project's key objectives are:

- To enhance the public realm with colour and seasonal variety through refreshing existing planters and creating new areas of planting and tree cover;
- To refresh the existing street furniture to rejuvenate the public realm, reduce on-going maintenance, help give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre and designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism;
- To provide for more cycle parking facilities across the project area;
- To retain as much "authorised" on-street parking as possible, including Blue Badge parking, whilst reducing the impact on the public realm;
- To increase the quantity and quality of public open space;
- To ensure adequate provision for the servicing of businesses;
- To achieve simplicity in design and only consider features that will not cause longer term issues such as maintenance or long term asset management difficulties.

Proposed Designs for Market Place

The Town Centre Masterplan identifies the potential for the area around Market Place to become the 'heritage quarter' of the town centre. Shops and services around Market Place appear to be generally well-used. There are also a number of characterful, well maintained properties and a nucleus of pubs, overnight accommodation, specialist shops and services that could be co-ordinated and enhanced to extend the appeal of the town centre to visitors. However, a key concern is that Market Place lacks any real identity and is a heavily car-dominated environment, with a confusing array of road junctions. The public realm is poor, with very little public open space and limited soft landscaping or places to stop and rest. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to achieve a rebalance between the pedestrian, the shopper and the car around Market Place. Significant landscaping and public realm works are required if Market Place is to fulfil its potential, but there are no major physical or barriers preventing such works.

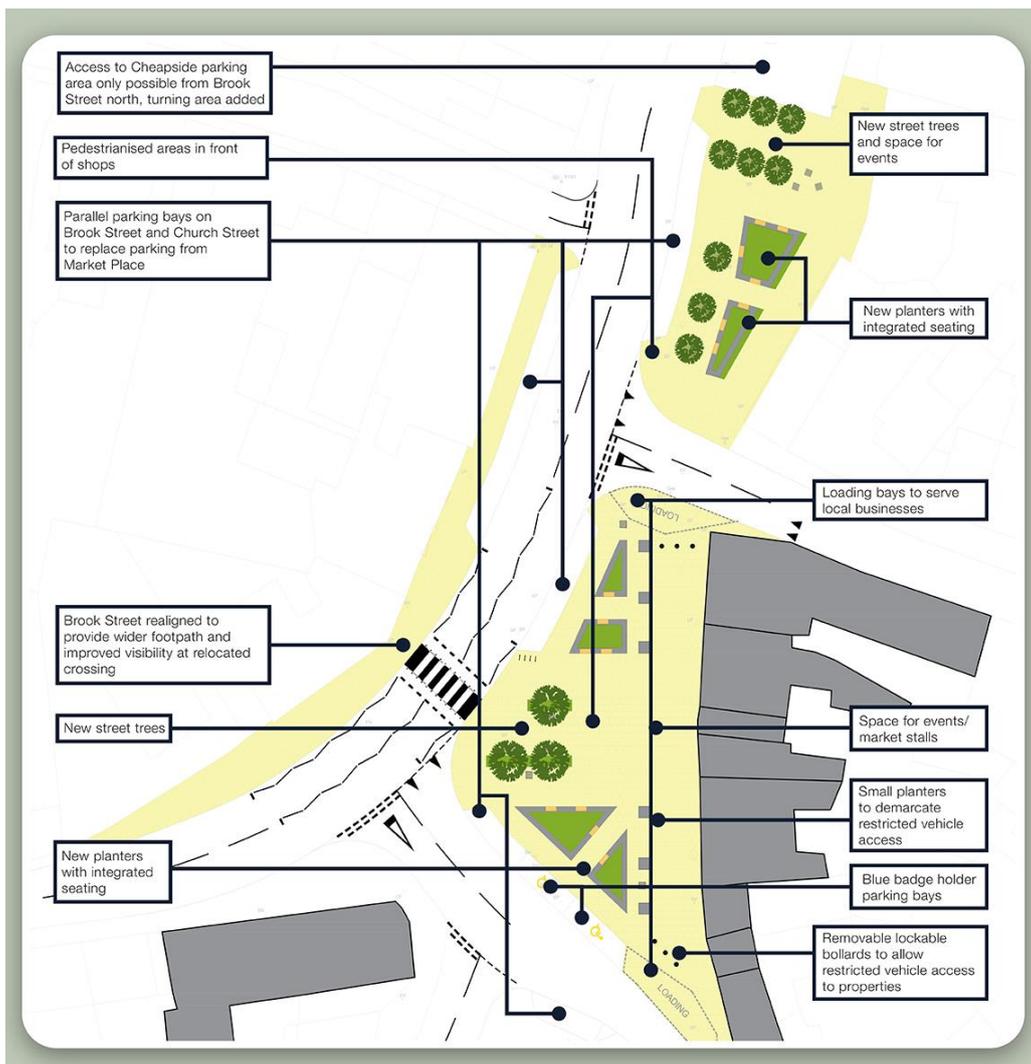
The specific project aims for Market Place are:

- To build on the attractive urban fabric and heritage potential around Market Place and create a distinctive and impressive gateway into the town centre from the north;
- To unify Market Place and provide for a safer, more comfortable and pleasant walking and shopping environment;
- To reduce the dominance of vehicles in the Market Place area.
- To retain the existing number of 'authorised' car parking spaces.

The public realm improvement proposals for Market Place, include:

- Reorganising the existing 'authorised' parking spaces to maximise the heritage potential of Market Place;
- Creating a large public open space to safely hold special events throughout the year, broadening the appeal of the Market Place and supporting the economic prosperity of local businesses;
- Realigning Brook Street to make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops, provide wider footpaths and additional parking bays;
- Providing for additional cycle parking facilities;
- Using new seating, new street trees and new planting to enhance the public space;
- Providing new street furniture to complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place and designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism;
- Providing for a more visible location for Shepshed's market;
- Providing two loading bay areas for retail deliveries;
- Providing removable lockable bollards to maintain access rights for specific properties;

Set out below is a plan of the proposed improvements for Market Place, together will some 3D illustrations of the proposed design.



Plan of the Market Place Proposed Designs



Illustration of the Market Place Proposed Designs



Illustration of the Market Place Proposed Designs



Illustration of the Market Place Proposed Designs

Bull Ring Proposed Designs

The Bull Ring is recognised as the principal gateway to the town but is frequently viewed as the least attractive gateway to the town and the quality of the public realm is poor. Unfortunately, without significant changes to the road network in the town centre there is limited scope to deliver transformational change in the public realm in the Bull Ring.

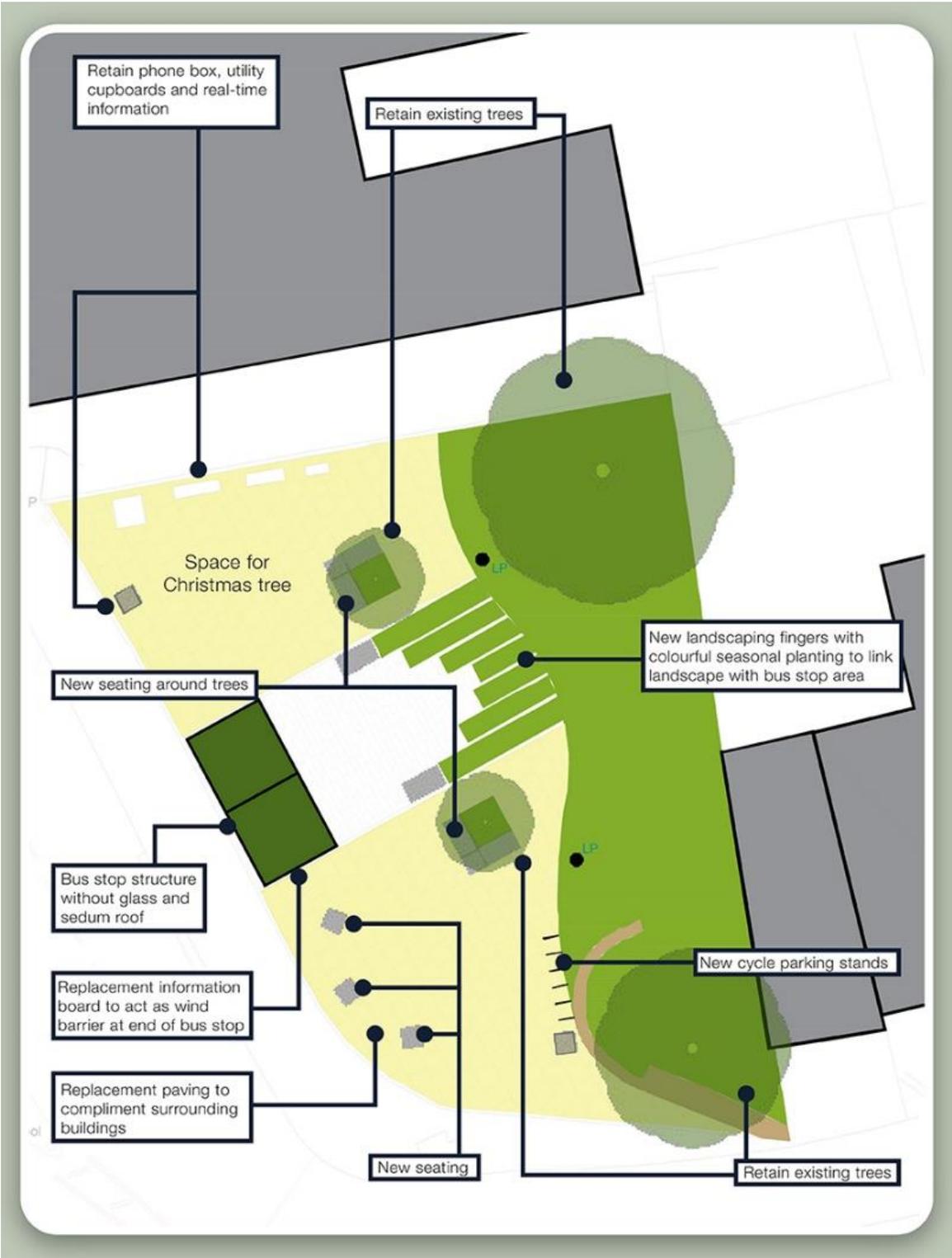
The specific project aims for the Bull Ring are:

- To make the Bull Ring more attractive and welcoming,
- To increase pedestrian safety;
- To improve the pedestrian access into Hall Croft from Field Street.

The public realm improvement proposals for the Bull Ring, include:

- Creating a 'pocket park' that provides more colour, texture and aesthetic interest;
- Enhancing the existing public realm with colour and seasonal variety through new areas of planting and tree cover and freshening up the existing street furniture;
- Providing new seating areas set back from the busy roundabout to allow for the better enjoyment of the space at the Bull Ring;
- Replacing the street furniture, chosen to be comfortable, complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place and designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism;
- Renewing and refreshing the paving surfaces and reducing clutter (e.g. removal of existing railings);
- Replacing the existing bus shelter with a more contemporary structure and a sedum roof to encourage biodiversity;
- Providing for additional cycle parking facilities.

Set out below is a plan of the proposed improvements for Market Place, together with some illustrations of the proposed design.



Plan of the Bull Ring Proposed Designs



Illustration of the Bull Ring Proposed Designs



Illustration of the Bull Ring Proposed Designs

Hall Croft Proposed Designs

The Town Centre Masterplan identifies Hall Croft as having the potential to provide a strong central focus of concentrated activity, around which people can meet, spend time and socialise, enabling pedestrians and shoppers to move comfortably and safely away from passing traffic and provide the connective link between Market Place and the Bull Ring/Field Street. However, land ownership issues impact on the ability to enforce a sensible on-street parking plan and, as a consequence, the area is blighted by a car dominated environment. These factors limit the scope of public realm improvements that can be considered at the present time.

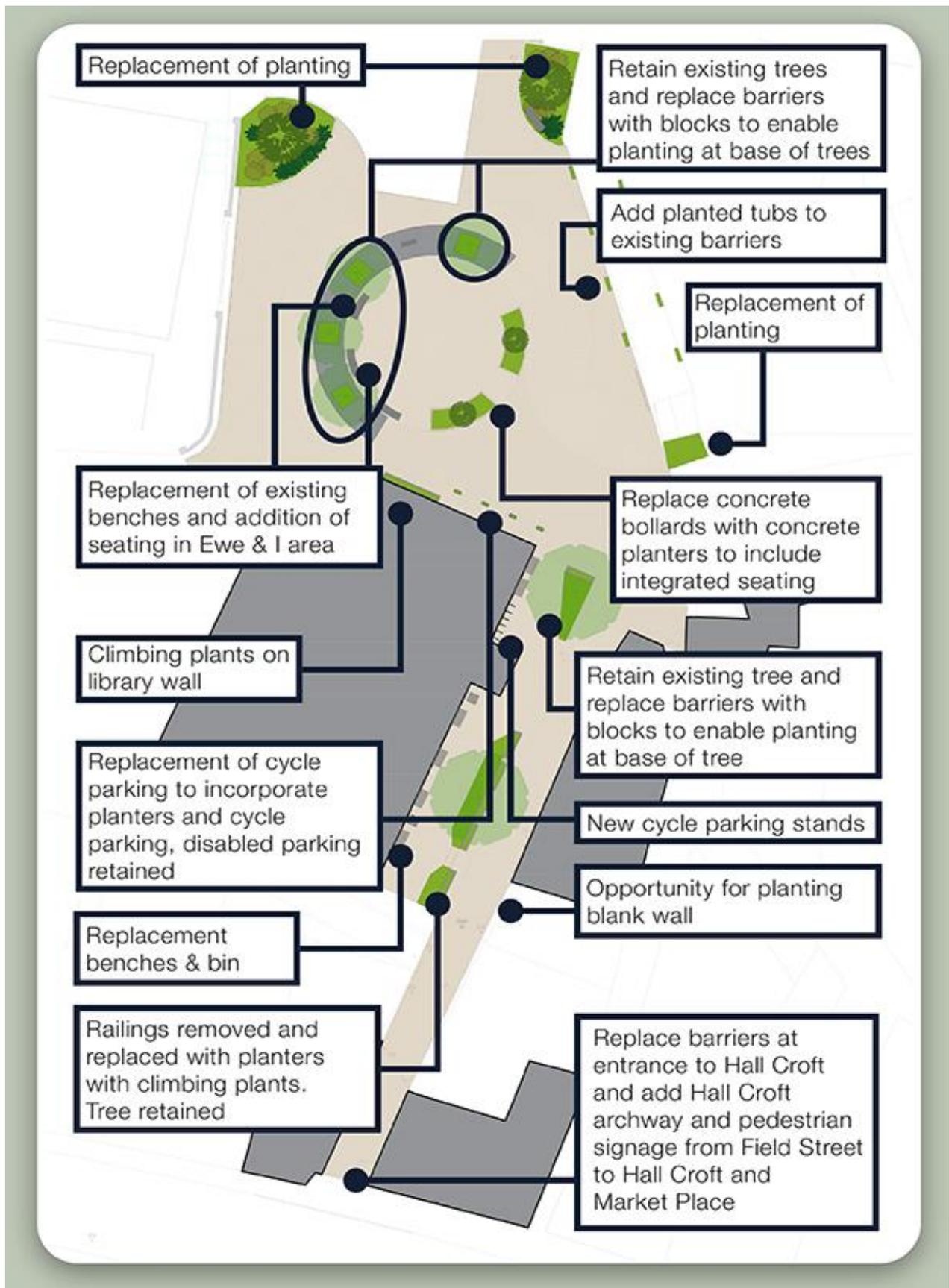
The specific project aims for Hall Croft are:

- To build on Hall Croft's connections with the rest of the town centre and create a place where people want to meet, spend time and socialise in a relatively quiet and pleasant environment;
- To improve the visual appearance and functionality of the public space around the Library in Hall Croft and encourage pedestrian movement between Market Place and the Bull Ring.

The public realm improvement proposals for Hall Croft, include:

- Enhancing the public realm within the "Ewe & I" area, including:
 - Replacing the seating and moving them into the circle area;
 - Removing existing dated barriers around the trees and replacing with concrete block paving to provide some height to enable planting around trees;
 - Providing additional informal seating to the raised kerb area;
 - Replacing the spherical stone bollards with raised concrete planters to help enclose the space more;
 - Replacing cycle parking in front of the library to incorporate planters and cycle parking;
- Adding colour through planting to blank walls, including along the passageway connecting Hall Croft with Field Street and climbing plants for the blank library wall;
- Removing the existing railings at the library and replacing them with planters to allow more colour and open up the space;
- Replacing the street furniture (benches and bins) at the library to complement those to be provided in the Bull Ring and Market Place;
- Providing for new cycle parking stands at the library;
- Adding planted tubs on outside of handrails on ramp leading up to the Cooperative Supermarket (planters will not affect use of hand railings);
- Providing a new planter in former trolley storage area at the base of the stairs to the Cooperative Supermarket;
- Keeping the same paving throughout and no changes to the existing vehicle access and disabled parking bays;

Set out below is a plan of the proposed improvements for Market Place, together with some illustrations of the proposed design.



Plan of Hall Croft Design Proposals

Illustrations of Hall Croft Proposed Designs



Hall Croft Proposed Designs in vicinity of the “Ewe & I” circle



Replacing seating and street furniture as well as additional seating and refreshing the landscaping within the “Ewe & I” area



Adding planted tubs to existing railings on ramp to the Cooperative Supermarket



Replacing cycle parking on side of library facing the “Ewe & I” to incorporate planters and cycle parking



Removing library railings and replacing with planters to open up the area, placing climbing plants on blank library wall, replacing benches and bins to complement those to be provided in Bull Ring and Market Place and providing for new cycle parking near library entrance



Removing existing railings and replacing with planters with climbing plants either side of small change in level, additional seating to complement those to be provided in Bull Ring and Market Place



Opportunity to add colour through planting to blank walls and replacement street lighting



Replacement Barriers, New Archway Feature and Finger Post Signage

Material Palette

The proposed material palette will look to freshen up the areas of public realm with a mix of contemporary and traditional style of street furniture. The new street furniture will be both robust and visually appealing and provide new areas of planting to brighten up the area.



Next Steps

The next steps in taking the proposals forward are outlined below:

- Development of detailed designs – October – December 2020
- Submission of detailed package of works for approval by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) as Highways Authority - December 2020
- Scheme approval by LCC and update to traffic regulation orders as required within area – January – March 2021
- Charnwood Borough Council to engage with contractor to deliver public realm improvement works – April – June 2021
- Start of on-site work – Summer 2021
- Anticipated phased construction period of 10 – 12 months

The scheme has been designed in such a way for it to be capable of being implemented in a phased approach, according to the level of resources available. The proposed phasing and prioritisation of street works is as follows:

- Market Place
- Bull Ring
- Hall Croft
- Field Street

Please view the 3D animation for a better understanding of the design proposals at Market Place at: www.charnwood.gov.uk/shepshed

Charnwood Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment 'Knowing the needs of your customers and employees'

Background

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

Legislation- Equality Duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex (Gender)
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct Discrimination
2. Indirect Discrimination
3. Harassment
4. Victimisation
5. Discrimination by association
6. Discrimination by perception
7. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
8. Discrimination arising from disability
9. Failing to make reasonable adjustments

Note: Complete the action plan as you go through the questions

Step 1 – Introductory information

Title of the project	Shepshed Public Realm Project
Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Steve Dibnah
Date EIA started	July 2020
Date EIA completed	September 2020

Step 2 – Overview of the project being assessed:

Outline: What is the purpose of this project? (Specify aims and objectives)

The purpose of this project is to deliver targeted public realm improvements in Shepshed town centre that help create a better environment for users and, importantly, act as a catalyst for stimulating more commercial activity in the town centre. The project will help breathe new life into Shepshed town centre, make it more user friendly and more suited to meeting the needs of the customers of the future. It will involve a programme of street works to deliver comprehensive public realm improvements in Market Place and complementary 'soft' landscaping improvements in Hall Croft and the Bull Ring. It will deliver a scheme that addresses identified needs. The project has been informed by the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan (2013) and in particular its proposals for a linked 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements around the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place. The main focus of the project will be the physical improvements to Market Place. These actions will create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to the town centre. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.

Project Aims

This project's overarching aims are to:

- Realise the Town Centre Masterplan's proposed 'spine' of complementary public realm improvements;
- Improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort;
- Give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre;
- Create a distinct, characterful, pleasant and more attractive shopping-friendly destination;
- Help shops and businesses attract a larger footfall and improve overall trading conditions;
- Encourage entrepreneurs to invest and establish new businesses in premises that are attractive and help reverse the downward economic spiral in the town centre;
- Encourage existing residents and residents in the emerging new housing areas as well as visitors to spend time and shop in the town centre.
- Maximise opportunities to secure additional private and public sector funding, including S106 receipts from future planning obligations.

For **Market Place**, the specific aims are:

- To build on the attractive urban fabric and heritage potential around Market Place and create a distinctive and impressive gateway into the town centre from the north;
- To unify Market Place and provide for a safer, more comfortable and pleasant walking and shopping environment;
- To reduce the dominance of vehicles in the Market Place area.

For the **Bull Ring**, the specific aims are:

- To make the Bull Ring more attractive and welcoming,
- To increase pedestrian safety;

- To improve the pedestrian access into Hall Croft from Field Street.

For **Hall Croft**, the specific aims are:

- To build on Hall Croft's connections with the rest of the town centre and create a place where people want to meet, spend time and socialise in a relatively quiet and pleasant environment;
- To improve the visual appearance and functionality of the public space around the Library in Hall Croft and encourage pedestrian movement between Market Place and the Bull Ring.

2.2 Project Objectives

The project's overarching objectives are:

- To enhance the public realm with colour and seasonal variety through refreshing existing planters and creating new areas of planting and tree cover;
- To refresh the existing street furniture to rejuvenate the public realm, reduce on-going maintenance and help give a greater sense of identity and cohesion to the town centre;
- To provide for more cycle parking facilities across the project area;
- To retain as much "authorised" on-street parking as possible, including Blue Badge parking, whilst reducing the impact on the public realm;
- To increase the quantity and quality of public open space;
- To ensure adequate provision for the servicing of businesses;
- To achieve simplicity in design and only consider features that will not cause longer term issues such as maintenance or long term asset management difficulties.

The project's specific objectives for **Market Place**, are:

- To reorganise the existing 'authorised' car parking spaces in order to unify Market Place and:
 - a) Provide for a safer, more comfortable and pleasant walking and shopping environment using new seating, new trees and new planting to enhance the space;
 - b) Create a large public open space to safely hold special events throughout the year, broaden the appeal of the Market Place and support the economic prosperity of local businesses;
 - c) Provide for a more visible location for the relocation of market stalls from Hall Croft;
- To realign Brook Street to make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops;
- To provide two loading bay areas for retail deliveries and maintain access rights for specific retail units and residential dwellings;
- To provide for additional cycle parking facilities.

The project's specific objectives for the **Bull Ring** are:

- To create a 'pocket park' that provides more colour, texture and aesthetic interest;
- To enhance the public realm with colour and seasonal variety through new areas of planting and tree cover and freshening up the existing street furniture;
- To replace the existing bus shelter and provide new planting and new seating areas to complement those to be provided in Hall Croft and Market Place.
- To provide for additional cycle parking facilities.

The project's specific objectives for **Hall Croft** are:

- To enhance the public realm with colour and seasonal variety through new areas of planting and refreshing existing planting tubs;
- To add colour through planting to blank walls;
- To freshen up the existing street furniture and provide new seating to complement those to be provided in Bull Ring and Market Place;
- To replace the barriers at the entrance from Field Street and add a new archway and signposting to Hall Croft and Market Place;

- To remove the existing railings at the library and replace with planters to allow more colour and open up the space;
- To provide for additional cycle parking facilities.

What specific group/s is the project designed to affect/impact and what is the intended change or outcome for them?

The project is intended to benefit the whole community including local residents, visitors, general public, landowners and local retailers operating in this part of the town centre.

Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the project?

This project is delivering a number of priority actions recommended in the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan (2013). The Masterplan was approved by Shepshed Town Council following a detailed consultation with local residents and businesses.

The Shepshed Town Team was established to guide the development and implementation of the Masterplan. The Town Team is comprised of representatives of local residents and businesses and members of the Town Council. It has considered the priorities for public realm improvements over a number of years. It established a Task & Finish Group to develop specific proposals for the three key centres identified in the Masterplan (namely, the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place). In 2016, the Borough Council commissioned the preparation of concept plans for public realm improvements in the Bull Ring area. Following consultation with the Shepshed Town Team, it was decided not to pursue such a scheme at that time. In 2018, the Task & Finish Group prepared their own initial ideas for modest public realm improvements in the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place. Unfortunately, no action was taken at the time to take those ideas forward.

In 2019, the Borough Council secured significant resources to enable a comprehensive public realm improvement project to finally go ahead. It appointed specialist highways and landscape design consultants in March 2020 to prepare detailed designs for a scheme. The consultants built on the original recommendations approved in the Town Centre Masterplan, as well as the ideas developed by the Town Team in 2018, to prepare some concept design ideas for the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.

Following the project inception in March 2020, both the Shepshed Town Council and the Shepshed Town Team were consulted by the Borough Council and its consultants to agree the project vision, the key objectives and priorities for action for the scheme. Subsequent to this agreement with both organisations, a range of concept design ideas for the public realm improvements were prepared and presented to the Town Council and the Town Team in separate meetings on 1 July 2020. Both organisations endorsed the concept design ideas proposed and indicated their preference for a specific concept design option for Market Place.

Subsequently, work commenced on the preparation of draft detailed designs for the scheme. These were presented to the Town Council on 4 September 2020 and the Town Team on 7 September 2020. Both organisations gave their approval to the draft detailed designs presented. Both organisations also gave their approval to the proposal to subject the draft detailed designs to public consultation in September and October.

Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this project? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.

Data/information such as:

- Consultation
- Previous Equality Impact Assessments
- Demographic information
- Anecdotal and other evidence

Public Consultation

This project aims to build on and take forward key recommendations in the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan regarding proposals for public realm improvements. The Masterplan was subjected to public consultation in 2013 and this confirmed the support of local residents and businesses for the Masterplan, including the recommendations regarding public realm improvements for the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.

This project has also been informed by work undertaken by the Shepshed Town Team in 2018 to develop their own ideas for modest public realm improvements for the Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Market Place.

Both the initial concept designs and draft detailed designs for public realm improvements to be delivered by this project have been considered and approved, both by the Shepshed Town Council and the Shepshed Town Team. During this process of consultation, both organisations raised issues concerning the needs of a diverse range of groups, in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc. The scheme designs have been amended to address needs raised relating to these groups both by the Town Council and the Town Team.

Demographic Information

Demographic information (based on Census 2011) is available which provides information on a range of the protected characteristics, in particular, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex.

- **Race:** In Charnwood, the White British population accounted for some 85% of the population. The largest ethnic groups are Indian 6% (10,225 people), Other White 2.5% (4,147 people) and Pakistani 1 % (2,022 people) (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013; CBC Equality Strategy 2016-2020).
- **Religion:** Some 56% of the population of Charnwood are Christian with some 29% having no religion. Hindus and Muslims are the next largest group with at 5% and 2% respectively. Buddhists, Jews and Sikhs combined make up just over 1% of the Charnwood population (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013; CBC Equality Strategy 2016-2020).
- **Gender:** The 2011 census records that the total population is some 166,100 split broadly 49.9% males (82,900) and 50.1% female (83,200) - although there are significantly more males than females within the 15 – 19 and 20 - 24 age brackets.
- **Age:** The Borough contains a large proportion of 20 to 24 year olds (especially males). The 25 to 29 years age group contains the lowest proportions. 14.9% of the population are aged 14 years or under. 16.4% of the population are over 65 (Census 2011).
- **Disability:** In Charnwood, it is estimated that there are 10,540 (6.4%) physically disabled people between the ages of 16-64 with a moderate or serious mobility disability. In Charnwood it is estimated that there are 21,675 adults with mild to moderate hearing loss and 5,100 people with sight impairment. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people will be affected by mental health issues at some time in their life. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental disorder in the UK. In Charnwood this equates to 33,220 people. (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013; CBC Equality Strategy 2016-2020).
- **Sexual Orientation:** There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population within Charnwood or the UK as a whole. Sexuality is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics; however, it is acknowledged that approximately 6-10% of any population will be LGB. In Charnwood this

would be between 9,960 and 16,610 people. (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013; CBC Equality Strategy 2016-2020).

- **Gender Reassignment:** There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the transgendered population within Charnwood or the UK as a whole. Gender identity is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** Within Charnwood 64,729 people (46.9%) are married and 271 people (0.2%) are in a registered same- sex civil partnership. (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013; CBC Equality Strategy 2016-2020).

Road Safety Audit

A Road Safety Audit (Stages I and II) will be undertaken after the public consultation as part of the design process for Market Place/Brook Street in Shepshed. The RSA checks the road safety implications of the proposed public realm improvement scheme in order to minimise future road collision occurrence and severity once the scheme has been completed. The RSA takes into account all road users, particularly vulnerable users such as pedestrians and pedal cyclists. Those practical recommendations for improvement that arise out of the RSA will be addressed by further revisions to the scheme design.

Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit

A Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit will also be carried out after the public consultation as part of the design process for Market Place/Brook Street to consider how the proposed scheme design affects pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users. Revisions to the design will be undertaken to address the findings of the audit.

What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)

Demographic Information

The demographic information available confirms that Charnwood is a diverse borough with a range of differing needs from individuals and community groups, which will be considered and addressed as part of the project.

Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?

In light of the answers you have given in Step 2, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not, please explain why.

The draft detailed designs for the scheme will be subjected to a public consultation exercise with local residents and local businesses during September and October 2020.

The project was established to implement key recommendations in the Shepshed Town Centre Masterplan (2013) concerning public realm improvements. The Masterplan was approved by Shepshed Town Council following a detailed consultation with local residents and businesses during 2013. During 2020, there has been extensive consultation with both the Shepshed Town Council and the Shepshed Town Team on the project vision, its key objectives and priorities for action, as well as the initial concept ideas for the scheme and the draft detailed designs. Both organisations agreed that the draft detailed designs should be subject to a public consultation exercise.

The public consultation exercise will be launched on 21 September 2020 and close on 19 October 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face meetings and social distancing, a decision was taken to make this an online consultation. The details of the consultation are outlined below.

A specific consultation web page has been created on the Borough Council’s website, which includes details on the scheme, including:

- a) Project background and description
- b) Plans and sketches illustrating the draft detailed designs
- c) 3D animation of proposals for Market Place
- d) 3D illustrations of proposals for Bull Ring, Hall Croft and Field Street

The web page also includes a link to an online survey for those wishing to make comments and an address to which to send any written comments. Information on the scheme was also posted on the Borough Council’s Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. For individuals, including older people, who wish to contribute to the consultation but are unable to use or access technology, a postal address is available for them to send their response. Posters have been distributed in shops around the town centre in in the library with information on the appropriate contact address to use.

Four large information boards have been placed in the windows of Shepshed Library to enable people to look at the scheme proposals. An additional information board has been placed in a shop window in Market Place, giving specific details about the proposals for Market Place. Posters have also been distributed to local shops and community buildings to publicise the scheme and the consultation exercise. A press release was also issued and editorial has appeared in the local media, as well as radio interviews.

Only limited face-to-face engagement with local shops will be able to take place during the consultation period, where this is assessed as being safe. Nevertheless, a Zoom meeting will be held between 12 to 16 October to enable local residents and businesses to join an online presentation on the proposed designs and to ask questions.

The responses received during the public consultation will be analysed and any appropriate changes to the scheme design will be made, where they enhance the approved aims and objectives of the scheme and are within the scope and budget of the project. A report will be presented to a meeting of the Borough Council’s Cabinet on 19 November, outlining the outcome of the public consultation and the scheme design. Feedback on the public consultation and any changes to the scheme design will also be provided to the Shepshed Town Council and the Shepshed Town Team.

Step 5 – Assessing the impact

In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the project has a positive or negative impact on the individual or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any ‘protected characteristics’ and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

	Comments
Age	Positive - Design of the public realm can impact on the ability of older people to use it as they are more likely to experience long-term ill health and physical impairments such as mobility difficulties and impaired vision and hearing. The proposed public realm improvements, in particular the widening of pavements, level surfaces, more public open space, improved lighting and increased provision of seating, will assist in their use of these key areas of the town centre. The realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops in Market Place.

The RSA and NMU audits will consider the needs and priorities of this group and changes will be made to the scheme design to address any areas identified where improvements are recommended.

The changes to the movement network and parking will also assist accessibility to the town centre for older people improving the services and facilities available to them.

Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for older people and children/young people and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making these groups feel safer and less intimidated.

Negative – The implementation of the street works will inevitably result in some temporary disruption, which may impact on older people and children/young people. However, these works will be carried out in phases so that not all of the area will be affected at the same time, thereby minimising the temporary disruption caused by the street works, particularly in terms of accessibility and car parking.

In terms of accessibility during the improvement works, the contractor will be obliged to maintain access to shops throughout the street works, where possible, as well as ensure the health and safety of older people and all other groups at all times.

In terms of parking, there will inevitably be periods of temporary disruption in the level of car parking available in and around Market Place while street works are being carried out and potentially Cheapside (if this area is used as the contractors compound for storage of materials and welfare facilities). Mitigation actions will be taken to support this group whilst the improvements are taking place. For example, there will be regular publicity and signage displayed warning of the temporary disruption and to urge this group to use alternative parking in the area. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide any temporary increase in parking elsewhere to mitigate the temporary loss of spaces, due to lack of alternative land.

The scheme design proposes to maintain the current level of designated parking in Market Place. However, the parking spaces will be reorganised to unify the space and enable the creation of a large public open space for special events, more seating and landscaping. The parking will be moved from the current parking area in front of the shops and distributed around the outside of the new public open space, which will include parking on Brook Street.

This proposal could impact on older people and children/young people in a number of ways, including:

- a) Small increase in distance to walk from some of the new parking spaces to the shops, which could cause some inconvenience for those with mobility needs;

- b) Parking on the kerb side rather than in a designated parking area off the road, which may be perceived as an added safety risk ;
- c) Some parking spaces will require crossing Brook Street or Loughborough Road to access the shops, which may be perceived as an added safety risk.

In considering the concerns identified with respect to this protected characteristic, balanced against the wider public interest, it is felt that reasonable accommodations have been factored into the design to address as many of the needs of older people and children/young people as is feasible within the overall site constraints and the agreed purpose of the scheme. This includes:

- a) The reorganisation of the parking spaces in Market Place will eliminate the current 'chaotic' parking experience and improve pedestrian safety, compared to the current situation. At present, the parking bays in Market Place have to be accessed within a small confined and busy space, which makes vehicle manoeuvring very difficult and less safe for pedestrians;
- b) The two designated Blue Badge parking spaces will be allocated in the two parking spaces closest to the shops;
- c) The scheme design will ensure the authorised parking spaces are larger than those current in the area and are suitable for use by Blue Badge holders;
- d) The proposed realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops for those needing to park on the opposite side of Brook Street to the shops.
- e) It is assessed that the proposed kerbside parking bays may be no more unsafe than in the existing parking area given the random movement of vehicles through there at the moment.

The purpose of the improvements is to create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to the town centre. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.

Further work will be undertaken to assess the feasibility of providing a raised table across Loughborough Road to provide added safety for pedestrians when crossing the road to access the shops for those parking on the other side of Loughborough Road.

Another identified potential barrier includes digital exclusion via the consultation period. For those individuals, including older people, unable to use or access technology to participate in the consultation a postal address has been provided. The relevant contact details have been displayed on posters circulated to local shops in the town centre and in the library.

**Disability
(Physical, visual, hearing,
learning disabilities,
mental health)**

Positive – The RSA and NMU audits will consider the needs and priorities of this group and changes will be made to the scheme design to address any areas identified where improvements are recommended.

The proposed public realm improvements will assist those with disabilities in their use of this part of the town centre and the access to services and facilities. This includes the proposals to widen some pavements, level surfaces, more public open space, improved lighting and increased provision of seating, will assist in their use of these key areas of the town centre. The realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops in Market Place. Tactile paving and dropped curbs will be used in Market Place to signify safer crossing points to assist people with impaired sight. Any adverse impact on those people who would benefit from a smooth surface are outweighed on balance by the prevention of more serious impacts for people with sight impairments than those with mobility difficulties.

Some of the proposed changes to the movement network and parking will also assist accessibility to the town centre for those with a disability, improving the services and facilities available to them.

Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this protected characteristic and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making these groups feel safer and less intimidated.

Negative - The implementation of the street works will inevitably result in some temporary disruption, which may impact on those with disabilities. However, these works will be carried out in phases so that not all of the area will be affected at the same time, thereby minimising the temporary disruption caused by the street works, particularly in terms of accessibility and car parking.

In terms of accessibility during the improvement works, the contractor will be obliged to maintain access to shops throughout the street works, where possible, as well as ensure the health and safety of older people and all other groups at all times.

In terms of parking, there will inevitably be periods of temporary disruption in the level of car parking available in and around Market Place while street works are being carried out and potentially Cheapside (if this area is used as the contractors compound for storage of materials and welfare facilities). Mitigation actions will be taken to support this group whilst the improvements are taking place. For example, there will be regular publicity and signage displayed warning of the temporary disruption and to urge this group to use alternative parking in the area. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide any temporary increase in parking elsewhere to mitigate the temporary loss of spaces, due to lack of alternative land.

The scheme design proposes to maintain the current level of designated parking in Market Place, including the number of spaces designated for Blue Badge holders. However, the parking spaces will be reorganised to unify the space and enable the creation of a large public open space for special events, more seating and landscaping. The parking will be moved from the current parking area in front of the shops and distributed around the outside of the new public open space, which will include parking on Brook Street.

This proposal could impact on those with disabilities in a number of ways, including:

- a) Small increase in distance to travel from some of the new parking spaces to the shops, which could cause some inconvenience for those with mobility needs;
- b) Parking on the kerb side rather than in a designated parking area off the road, which may be perceived as an added safety risk for those with disabilities;
- c) Some parking spaces will require crossing Brook Street or Loughborough Road to access the shops, which may be perceived as an added safety risk.

In considering the concerns identified with respect to this protected characteristic, balanced against the wider public interest, it is felt that reasonable accommodations have been factored into the design to address as many of the needs of this protected characteristic as is feasible within the overall site constraints and the agreed purpose of the scheme. This includes:

- a) The reorganisation of the parking spaces in Market Place will eliminate the current 'chaotic' parking experience and improve pedestrian safety, compared to the current situation. At present, the parking bays in Market Place have to be accessed within a small confined and busy space, which makes vehicle manoeuvring very difficult and less safe for pedestrians;
- b) The two designated Blue Badge parking spaces will be allocated in the two parking spaces closest to the shops;
- c) The scheme design will ensure the authorised parking spaces are larger than those current in the area and are suitable for use by Blue Badge holders;
- d) The proposed realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops for those needing to park on the opposite side of Brook Street to the shops.
- e) It is assessed that the proposed kerbside parking bays may be no more unsafe than in the existing parking area given the random movement of vehicles through there at the moment.

The purpose of the improvements is to create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to

	<p>the town centre. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.</p> <p>Further work will be undertaken to assess the feasibility of providing a raised table across Loughborough Road to provide added safety for pedestrians when crossing the road to access the shops for those parking on the other side of Loughborough Road.</p> <p>Another identified potential barrier includes digital exclusion via the consultation period. For those individuals, including those with a visual impairment and unable to use or access technology to participate in the consultation a postal address has been provided. The relevant contact details have been displayed on posters circulated to local shops in the town centre and in the library.</p>
Gender Reassignment (Transgender)	Positive - Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making this group feel safer and less intimidated.
Race	Positive - Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making this group feel safer and less intimidated.
Religion or Belief (Includes no belief)	Positive - Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making this group feel safer and less intimidated.
Sex (Gender)	Positive - Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making this group feel safer and less intimidated.
Sexual Orientation	Positive –Personal safety in public spaces may potentially be an issue for this group, particularly female residents/customers. The improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making this group feel safer and less intimidated.
Other protected groups (Pregnancy & maternity, marriage & civil partnership)	<p>Positive – Improving the public realm will help women who are pregnant or in maternity gain better access to services and facilities in this part of the town centre.</p> <p>The RSA and NMU audits will consider the needs and priorities of this group and changes will be made to the scheme design to address any areas identified where improvements are recommended.</p> <p>The changes to the movement network and parking would also assist accessibility to the town centre for women who are</p>

pregnant or in maternity, improving the services and facilities available to them.

Negative – The scheme design proposes to maintain the current level of designated parking in Market Place. However, the parking spaces will be reorganised to unify the space and enable the creation of a large public open space for special events, more seating and landscaping. The parking will be moved from the current parking area in front of the shops and distributed around the outside of the new public open space, which will include parking on Brook Street.

This proposal could impact on women who are pregnant or in maternity in a number of ways, including:

- a) Small increase in distance to walk from some of the new parking spaces to the shops, which could cause some inconvenience for those with mobility needs;
- b) Parking on the kerb side rather than in a designated parking area off the road, which may be perceived as an added safety risk;
- c) Some parking spaces will require crossing Brook Street or Loughborough Road to access the shops, which may be perceived as an added safety risk.

In considering the concerns identified with respect to women who are pregnant or in maternity, balanced against the wider public interest, it is felt that reasonable accommodations have been factored into the design to address as many of the identified needs as is feasible within the overall site constraints and the agreed purpose of the scheme. This includes:

- a) The reorganisation of the parking spaces in Market Place will eliminate the current 'chaotic' parking experience and improve pedestrian safety, compared to the current situation. At present, the parking bays in Market Place have to be accessed within a small confined and busy space, which makes vehicle manoeuvring very difficult and less safe for pedestrians;
- b) The two designated Blue Badge parking spaces will be allocated in the two parking spaces closest to the shops;
- c) The scheme design will ensure the authorised parking spaces are larger than those current in the area and are suitable for use by Blue Badge holders;
- d) The proposed realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops for those needing to park on the opposite side of Brook Street to the shops.
- e) It is assessed that the proposed kerbside parking bays may be no more unsafe than in the existing parking area given the random movement of vehicles through there at the moment.

The purpose of the improvements is to create a pedestrian and event space to help broaden the appeal of the Market Place to provide complementary activities to draw people to

	<p>the town centre. This is a direct response to changing retail patterns and a post-COVID-19 world.</p> <p>Further work will be undertaken to assess the feasibility of providing a raised table across Loughborough Road to provide added safety for pedestrians when crossing the road to access the shops for those parking on the other side of Loughborough Road.</p> <p>The implementation of the street works will also inevitably result in some temporary disruption, which may impact on women who are pregnant or in maternity. However, these works will be carried out in phases so that not all of the area will be affected at the same time, thereby minimising the temporary disruption caused by the street works, particularly in terms of accessibility and car parking.</p> <p>In terms of accessibility during the improvement works, the contractor will be obliged to maintain access to shops throughout the street works, where possible, as well as ensure the health and safety of women who are pregnant or in maternity.</p> <p>In terms of parking, there will inevitably be periods of temporary disruption in the level of car parking available in and around Market Place while street works are being carried out and potentially Cheapside (if this area is used as the contractors compound for storage of materials and welfare facilities). Mitigation actions will be taken to support women who are pregnant or in maternity whilst the improvements are taking place. For example, there will be regular publicity and signage displayed warning of the temporary disruption and to urge this group to use alternative parking in the area. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide any temporary increase in parking elsewhere to mitigate the temporary loss of spaces, due to lack of alternative land.</p>
<p>Other socially excluded groups (carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)</p>	<p>Negative - An identified potential barrier includes digital exclusion via the consultation period. For those individuals, including those with low literacy and unable to use or access technology to participate in the consultation a postal address has been provided. The relevant contact details have been displayed on posters circulated to local shops in the town centre and in the library.</p>

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- a) If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- b) Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

Temporary Disruption in Market Place, Hall Croft and Bull Ring

The implementation of the street works will inevitably result in some temporary disruption. There are two main areas of temporary disruption:

- a) Accessibility issues to homes and shops during the street works. This will predominantly impact on residents and businesses in the vicinity of Market Place/Cheapside and to a lesser extent in the Bull Ring and Hall Croft.
- b) Temporary loss of parking spaces during the street works. This will predominantly impact on residents and businesses in the vicinity of Market Place/Cheapside and to a lesser extent in Hall Croft.

In terms of accessibility during the improvement works, the contractor will be obliged to maintain access to shops throughout the street works, where possible, as well as ensure the health and safety of older people and all other groups at all times.

Mitigation Measures

The Borough Council will establish an internal Business Management Group for the Shepshed public realm improvement project. Its role will be to provide leadership in coordinating the actions undertaken by the Council and others (including the contractor) to mitigate any temporary disruption arising from the street works carried out to deliver the public realm improvements. It will also take responsibility for all communications and media activity surrounding the project. The Group will also be responsible for maintaining an up to date Communication Plan and to lead on appropriate communications actions during the construction phase.

A range of measures have been identified, which will help mitigate the impact of any temporary disruption, including:

- Contractors to undertake the street works on a phased approach to minimise disruption and to maintain access to all shops at all times, as far as possible, as well as maintain traffic flow at all times;
- Contractor to be responsible for traffic and pedestrian management within the project area throughout construction works to minimise the impact of construction on the local traders in the area;
- Preparation of a clear and comprehensive media plan to publicise the street works and the measures to be implemented to minimise disruption;
- Printed bulletin (subject to COVID-19 restrictions) and online bulletin, circulated to all local shops and businesses, sharing details of the programme of works and contact details for key individuals;
- Designing some temporary vinyls and installing them on the temporary fencing erected by the contractor during the street works, to depict (for example) shop frontages) to help promote shopping;
- Mount a publicity campaign (including adverts) to persuade shoppers to come to town regardless of any disruption during the construction phase;
- Securing agreement of the appointed contractor to cooperate with the Council in supporting measures to minimise the temporary disruption and support local shops and businesses.

The construction contract will also require the Contractor to specify a named contact within the company with the role and responsibility to liaise closely with the Borough Council's appointed project manager, as well as the Business Management Group, giving monthly updates of the programme of works in order that the Borough Council is able to alert businesses and ensure the appropriate communications are in place well ahead of the event.

In terms of parking, there will inevitably be periods of temporary disruption in the level of car parking available in and around Market Place while street works are being carried out and potentially Cheapside (if this area is used as the contractors compound for storage of materials and welfare facilities).. Mitigation actions will be taken to support protected characteristics whilst

the improvements are taking place. For example, there will be regular publicity and signage displayed warning of the temporary disruption and to urge this group to use alternative parking in the area. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide any temporary increase in parking elsewhere to mitigate the temporary loss of spaces, due to lack of alternative land.

Reorganisation of Parking Spaces in Market Place

The scheme design proposes to maintain the current level of designated parking in Market Place. However, the parking spaces will be reorganised to unify the space and enable the creation of a large public open space for special events, more seating and landscaping. The parking will be moved from the current parking area in front of the shops and distributed around the outside of the new public open space, which will include parking on Brook Street.

This proposal could impact on women who are pregnant or in maternity in a number of ways, including:

- a) Small increase in distance to walk from some of the new parking spaces to the shops, which could cause some inconvenience for those with mobility needs;
- b) Parking on the kerb side rather than in a designated parking area off the road, which may be perceived as an added safety risk ;
- c) Some parking spaces will require crossing Brook Street or Loughborough Road to access the shops, which may be perceived as an added safety risk.

Mitigation Measures

In considering the concerns identified with respect to women who are pregnant or in maternity, balanced against the wider public interest, it is felt that reasonable accommodations have been factored into the design to address as many of the identified needs as is feasible within the overall site constraints and the agreed purpose of the scheme. This includes:

- a) The reorganisation of the parking spaces in Market Place will eliminate the current 'chaotic' parking experience and improve pedestrian safety, compared to the current situation. At present, the parking bays in Market Place have to be accessed within a small confined and busy space, which makes vehicle manoeuvring very difficult and less safe for pedestrians;
- b) The two designated Blue Badge parking spaces will be allocated in the two parking spaces closest to the shops;
- c) The scheme design will ensure the authorised parking spaces are larger than those current in the area and are suitable for use by Blue Badge holders;
- d) The proposed realignment of Brook Street will make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops for those needing to park on the opposite side of Brook Street to the shops.
- e) It is assessed that the proposed kerbside parking bays may be no more unsafe than in the existing parking area given the random movement of vehicles through there at the moment.

Further work will be undertaken to assess the feasibility of providing a raised table across Loughborough Road to provide added safety for pedestrians when crossing the road to access the shops for those parking on the other side of Loughborough Road.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

The project will benefit the community as a whole by contributing towards improving the town centre, with particular groups experiencing a positive impact through a more inviting public realm, improved accessibility to services and facilities, improved movement networks and improved designated parking and loading/unloading.

Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this Assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?
A Project Executive has been established by the Borough Council for the project. This will monitor the delivery of the various aspects of the public realm improvement scheme. A Project Plan has been prepared and is regularly monitored by the Project Executive. Regular meetings with the Shepshed Town Team will also be scheduled during the construction phase. This will provide a framework for regular monitoring the impact of this project and the resolution of potential barriers / adverse impacts.
How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes? e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.
The Shepshed Public Realm Project is already factored into the service plan and performance management frameworks.

Step 7- Action Plan

Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan: The issues identified should inform your Service Plan and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan			
Reference Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
1	Borough Council to establish an internal Business Management Group to coordinate actions to minimise temporary disruption caused by the street works.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
2	Contractors to undertake street works on a phased approach to minimise disruption and maintain access to shops as far as possible.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
3	Contractor to prepare effective traffic and pedestrian management plan to minimise the impact of street works on local residents and traders.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
4	Preparation of a clear and comprehensive media plan of measures to minimise disruption.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
5	Regular information circulated to residents, local shops and businesses on the programme of works.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
6	Contractor to specify a named contact to liaise with Borough Council and give monthly progress updates.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
7	Two designated Blue Badge parking spaces to be allocated in closest bays to Market Place shops.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
8	Realignment of Brook Street to make the pedestrian crossing a safer route toward the shops.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
9	Assess feasibility of providing a raised table across Loughborough Road.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020
10	Regular monitoring of the impact of this project and the resolution of potential barriers / adverse impacts, as appropriate.	Steve Dibnah	September 2020

Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?

	Who needs to know? (Please tick)	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	Yes	Published report
Service users	Yes	Published report
Partners and stakeholders	Yes	Published report
Others		
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		

Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by the [Service Head](#))

Please delete as appropriate	
I agree / disagree with this assessment / action plan	
If <i>disagree</i>, state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:	
	
Signed (Service Head):	Head of Planning & Regeneration
Date: 15 October 2020	

[Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.](#)

SHEPSHED PUBLIC REALM PROJECT

PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE: 21 SEPTEMBER TO 19 OCTOBER 2020

SNAPSHOT OF COMMENTS RECEIVED AS PART OF THE ONLINE SURVEY

Support in Favour of the Proposals

- “I am all for the improvements and hope this is a taste of things to come since Shepshed has lacked investment for years. I know the reduced parking is a concern for some, but it doesn't seem much reduced to me and people can always park a little further away.”
- “The Market Place I believe will give the biggest improvement. I like the idea it will be more pedestrian friendly, yes, probably at the expense of car parking but then it's about time pedestrians are given greater priority for this area. I especially like the idea of the market stalls to be placed in this area - the market place!”
- “Thank you for an excellent/clear webinar/zoom presentation of the proposals. As a local resident who is able to access the town on foot I appreciate the focus on "public realm".”
- “I think overall the project will encourage more people to use the centre of Shepshed as it will enhance the area with seating and planting.”
- “Car users will not be happy but they should not dominate the decision.”
- “Delighted to see these proposals. Shepshed needs some beautifying.”
- “The new Market Place looks great and will definitely improve Shepshed, I feel the aesthetics of Shepshed could be improved further by re fronting shops and pubs to look more like a quaint village.”
- “The Market Place looks great, having the market there will drive more business. It's a shame some of the shop fronts aren't being done up.”

Concerns about the Parking Proposals for Market Place

- “The Market Place plans look fantastic but there are currently 15 car parking spaces outside the post office and I feel it would harm these businesses for them to lose these. The number given in the plan is not adequate. I would sacrifice the area outside the new chip shop to gain these extra spaces.”
- “The new design for the market place is awful. Currently the parking spaces are always in use for people nipping into the post office or the butchers, why would you remove these off road spaces? The companies want people to 'nip in' , we want the companies to stay, so why would you stop people from being able to quickly park and pop in? Don't get me wrong it looks nice with 2 extra flower beds, its not very practical though is it?”
- “I do worry about the parking which will be affected in the market place. If there isn't enough people will either park their cars in silly places or not use these businesses.”
- “Elderly shoppers, Blue Badge holders are grateful to be able to park in the Market Place and removal will only discourage shoppers.”
- “Please don't reduce the parking near the Post Office - it will only move the issue on to the narrow streets, causing potential danger to pedestrians and putting people off using local shops.”
- “I think it is absurd to take away local parking for residents and visitors. There is already a distinct lack of free parking without removing what's already there!”
- “The loss of parking spaces & reintroduction of street parking seems a regressive move. How safe will it be getting infants or the infirm out of a car onto a busy road which is being narrowed to allow for wider pavements?”

- “Parking provision has to be considered as more of a priority to encourage people to shop in Shepshed. The centre of Shepshed just isn't going to be somewhere that people stroll to have coffee and browse the shops. It needs to be functional as well as smarter.”
- “Parallel parking on a main road sounds dangerous with cars stopping and reversing into oncoming traffic to park.”
- Both myself and my husband are very concerned about the proposals in the Market Place. My husband has a Blue Badge if the only Disabled parking is at the bottom of Church Street we feel it will be very dangerous when attempting to reverse park into a space when you can't see approaching cars from Brook Street who are indicating to turn left to go up Church St.”
- “I love the design for the Market Place but I'm concerned that there is not enough thought put into how people in cars will be able to return in the direction they have come from.”
- “When vacating the space [at the bottom of Church Street] where can you go? It is one way, so lots more traffic would have to proceed up Church St or use the Co-op car park as a run through! We probably visit Market Place at least 2/3 times a week coming from the Belton side of Shepshed which means we will need to turn round somewhere to drive home. Where?”
- “I would like to know where the residents of Brook Street Shepshed are being asked to park going forwards?”
- “This scheme does not provide off street parking for residents.”
- “If you want to make any actual improvements in this area how about moving the position of the zebra crossing because it's in such a dangerous position as idiots race around the corner.”
- “To remove the parking on Brook St/Market Place would put extra pressures on the streets surrounding.”
- “The crossing outside of Newboulds really needs moving to a safer place. Driving towards Hathern, it can be very difficult to see anyone waiting to cross from Newboulds side.”

Other Concerns about the Market Place Proposals

- “Too much space is used for seating. That enough space could be left to hold Christmas markets and other social events for the community. Possibility for food or drink festivals even if they only attract locals would be amazing for the local economy. If enough space could be left near business premises this could allow new business with outdoor seating.”
- “I am fully in favour of improving the appearance of Shepshed. However my concern is over the relocation of the market. The Market Place is nowhere big enough to accommodate the newly resurgent market.”
- “Space allocated in the Market Place for 'relocation' of the market appears wholly inadequate given the current size and number of stalls (6no,) and size of queues (following social distancing rules) at the Friday market in Hallcroft - the market as seen a resurgence over the past 5-6 weeks and is proving popular and is well-supported, with 30+ people in queues and milling around at any one time.”

Comments about the Landscaping/Street Furniture Proposals

- “Too much emphasis on pots and planting for colour. Plants will just be destroyed. Waste of money.”
- “The number of new planters is welcome but only if the town council accept their upkeep and maintenance if not they will be an eyesore.”
- “There will be a need for a robust and well funded strategy (possibly a system of sponsorship.) to ensure flowers are watered, weeded, dead headed and generally maintained. Possibly hardy evergreen shrubs or bushes might be more appropriate or at least form part of the display?”
- “Consideration may be needed for the up keep of the planted areas, which tend to be quickly ruined. Maybe trees rather than small plants would survive better and still soften the area.”

- “Will the planting plan include local provenance seed? Have sunlight surveys been conducted in order to specify plant type, watering needs, effects upon structures & subsequent maintenance costs?”
- “Providing benches with arm rests to help us push up from a seated position.”
- “What use are seats which will only be used by groups of youngsters or drinkers who have left the pubs?”
- “The real solution to vandalism should be adequate policing.”

Comments on the Hall Croft Proposals

- “Could the land of Hall Croft cafe be purchased anonymously by the council (to achieve a good price). Then be turned into a pay and display car park?”
- “Hall Croft Entrance Gate: The barriers proposed look the same style as existing. I believe these aren't very inviting and actually make it less like a gateway to Hall Croft.”
- “Hall Croft Entrance: A possibility, providing property owners agree could be to create wall memorials/Art along near along the passage. Using talented local artists. This would brighten the area up making it more attractive but also cultured and diverse.”
- “The soft landscaping scheme in Hallcroft should include retention of the Mulberry bush/tree, which has a historic association with the old Hallcroft School, or replacement with a new Mulberry plant.”
- “Hall Croft Market area: I suggest as planned remove the concrete circles but don't replace them with flowerbeds were the ground is flat. Leave the space open to allow a more useable space for market days and events. The circle is currently wasted space that could be used better.”
- “These are excellent proposals. We note that there is a flower bed at street level shown outside the library. We wonder about the wisdom of this. Plants at ground level can easily be walked on. Perhaps raised beds or planters would be more appropriate?”
- “Field Street and southern entrance to Hall Croft are excellent. We like the planters and wall plants topped with wood fencing enhancing the ugly brick wall and replacing the razor wire. In fact could more be done to enhance the visual appearance of this area, possibly manger type wall planters.”

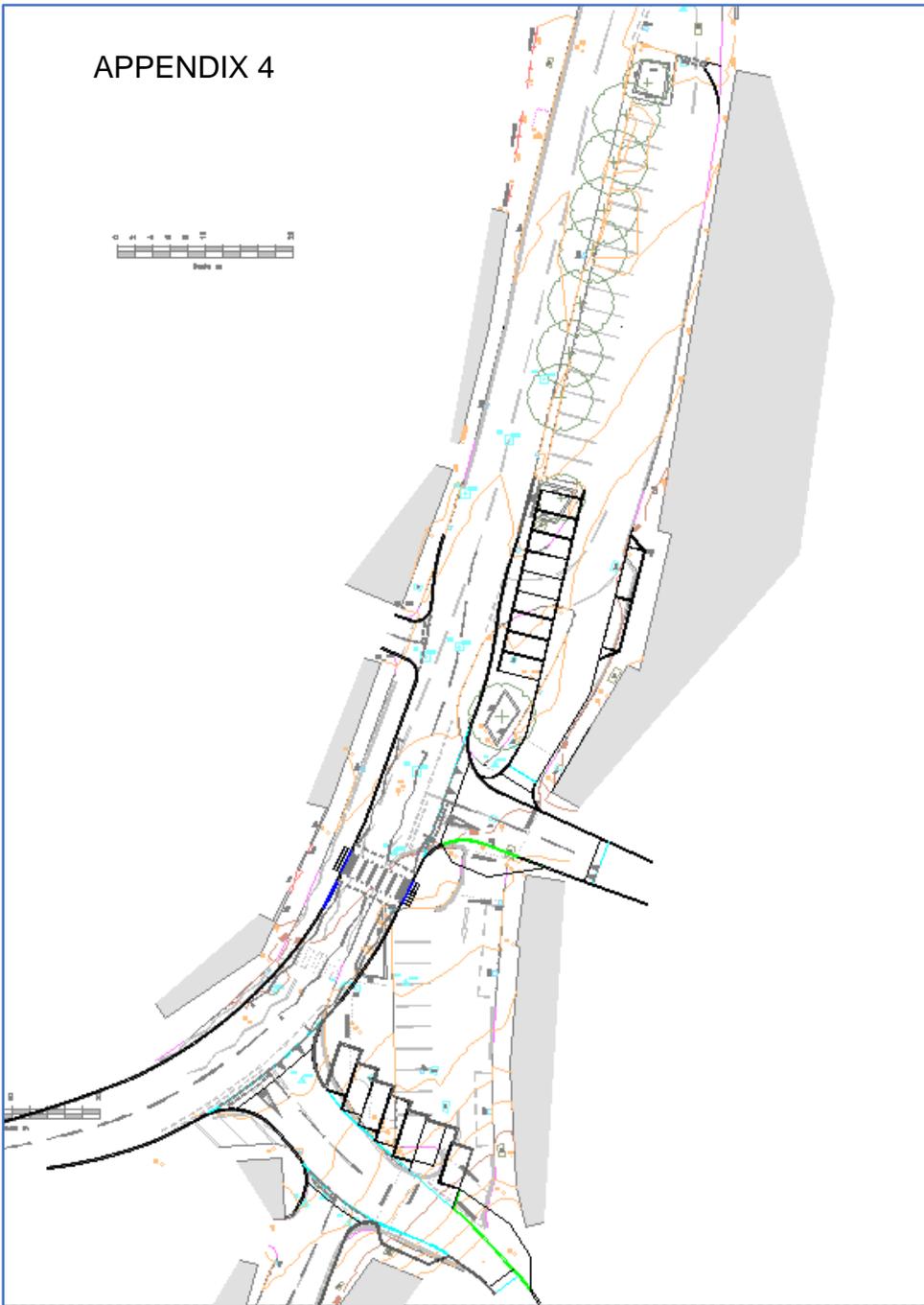
Comments on the Bull Ring Proposals

- “The Bull Ring could be improved by moving the bus shelter much further back and making a designated lay-by for the busses to pull in off the road.”
- “Re. Bus shelter in the Bullring - the absence of side panels will be sadly missed during winter weather.”
- “Could a small roundabout with a central feature e.g. statue, clock, tree or ornamental light be put in the centre of the Bull Ring?”
- “Just signage and benches will not change the bull ring or field street it needs money for improving shop fronts and also needs something to slow the traffic down to feel safe!”
- “It all looks good, my only concern is that the seating will cause youths to congregate in the bullring instead of other people using it for what it is intended for.”

Comments on the Field Street Proposals

- “Proposal for Field Street may benefit from 'greening' / artwork on the brick retention wall along the south side of the street. A pity more cannot be done along Field Street to make it a more attractive shopping area and thoroughfare.”

APPENDIX 4



Shephed Public Realm Project: Redesign Option Market Place

Total parking bays:

- 19 new parking bays on Church Street and Cheapside
- 18 existing parking bays retained on Cheapside
- Nett gain of 5 new parking bays

Proposed kerb alignment:

- Brook Street realigned
- Pedestrian crossing on Brook St repositioned
- Church Street:
 - 5 x new standard chevron bays
 - 2 x new disabled bays (sharing yellow hatching)
 - 1 x new standard parallel bay
- Cheapside parking area:
 - One-way arrangement with access via Loughborough Road and exit via Brook Street to the north (with build out and give way at the Cheapside / Dovecote junction)
 - 9 x new standard 90 degree bays
 - 2 x new parallel bays
 - 18 x existing parking bays retained
 - Raised table over Loughborough Road connecting public realm area at Cheapside with Market Place for pedestrians