

**GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**



**GUILDFORD
BOROUGH**

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 3 July 2019

LEAD OFFICER: PAUL BASSI, GBC PROJECT MANAGER

SUBJECT: GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM

AREA(S) AFFECTED: GUILDFORD HOLY TRINITY WARD

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Following the completion of the Tunsgate scheme in 2018, Guildford Borough Council (GBC) in partnership with Surrey County Council (SCC) is proposing continuing the delivery of the second phase of our public realm enhancements across Guildford Town Centre.

SCC and GBC approved Tunsgate, now completed, as a pilot scheme for Guildford's Public Realm. GBC now proposes to deliver a holistic streetscape improvement to Chapel Street, Swan Lane and Castle Street that will address accessibility, wayfinding and pedestrian safety. These works are to complement Guildford's historic streetscape to ensure it remains an attractive place to live, work and visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Guildford Joint Committee is asked to:

- i. Agree the following principles for delivering the Guildford Public Realm Scheme:
 - a) Chapel Street: accessibility improved from the junction with the High Street; create a more pedestrian-dominant area; enhance access restriction for vehicles to promote greater use of the carriageway.
 - b) Swan Lane: to upgrade the pedestrianised carriageway with materials in keeping with the town centre's heritage.
 - c) Castle Street: to introduce better traffic measures to address traffic management issues and provide an improved pedestrian link to the castle grounds.
 - d) Town centre Pedestrian Safety: Ensure existing vehicular control barriers and applied 'safety by design' measures are appropriate for the High street and adjoining streets.
- ii. Agree that decisions regarding details of the scheme are delegated to Area Highways manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee and Local Councillors
- iii. Delegate Authority to the Area Highways Manager to take necessary steps to implement the scheme and advertise any formal orders needed to create the changes agreed. Should any objections be received to proposed orders,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Agree that SCC work in partnership with GBC on this project in delivery of the scheme providing in-kind support as required. v. Support the County Council and Guildford Borough Council entering into a formal agreement for the future maintenance and operation of the roads referred to in recommendation (i) and to include the High Street and Tunsgate. 	<p>delegate determination of those objections to the Area Highways Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.</p>
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:	
<p>To request authority to create a scheme to enhance Guildford streetscape and to delegate the details to ensure that the scheme can be delivered in the tight timescales set out.</p>	

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 SCC local committee approved on the 22 March 2017 the Public Realm improvements scheme for Tunsgate. GBC fully funded and completed this pilot scheme in October 2019, and is an exemplar for other Guildford town centre public realm schemes proposed in this report.
- 1.2 Guildford Town centre is a popular destination. As with other town centres, maintaining a vibrant town centre is an important factor for its offer to businesses, visitors and residents choosing Guildford. Amongst other measures, public realm improvements play a significant role in retaining Guildford Town’s status as an attractive destination.
- 1.3 The objective of the schemes outlined below is primarily to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. This accords with SCC’s own Strategic Design guide that states: “The emphasis is now on designing neighbourhoods and creating spaces for people.”
- 1.4 The GBC economic strategy for 2013 - 2031 aims for Guildford to be a “town and borough with: strong infrastructure; world-class businesses with capacity to expand and deliver growth; an evolving and vibrant economy, which creates a progressive and sustainable environment for people today and for future generations living in an ever-improving society.”
- 1.5 The Grimsey Review (2018) about the Vanishing High Street gives a good account of the blight affecting towns. One of its overarching recommendations to address decline of a high street is:

“The curating of a place based on its distinct heritage is multi-dimensional and complex but should feature strongly when developing the “offer”: Why would people want to live, work, play, visit and invest in the “place”? What does it stand for?”

- 1.6 GBC has taken a strategic approach to improving its public realm through developing both a Town Centre Masterplan (2014) and a Streetscape Design Guide (2017) which both emphasise the importance of Guildford’s heritage. Although the council have not formally adopted both documents, they provide a useful guidance for a consistent and considered delivery of public realm schemes.

- 1.7 The Masterplan identified areas south of High Street around Tunsgate, Castle Street and Quarry Street as having a high proportion of Guildford's cultural assets and institutions, while the streetscape guidance provides appropriate design principles and a preferred palette of materials to deliver the masterplan outputs.
- 1.8 The proximity of Chapel Street, Castle Street and Swan Lane to High Street coupled with a developing food and beverage offer makes this an important area for leisure activities in the town centre and for Guildford visitors' perception.
- 1.9 Consultations with local councillors and stakeholders show that there is agreement for the need to deliver public realm improvements in this area. Our plans are to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment in this part of the town and to upgrade routes and gateways between High Street and Castle Street. We will continue to consult with stakeholders to ensure the right balance between accessibility and heritage.
- 1.10 Restoring and maintaining Guildford's traditional palette of materials used for roads is a key desire from residents and visitors. These are mainly the use of granite setts and Staffordshire Blue pavers. Where not practical similar materials to Tunsgate ought to be used.
- 1.11 There are about 250,000 visitors to the Castle Grounds per year, majority are 'arriving on foot'. Creating a better connection across Castle Street is a priority to improve pedestrian connectivity to the south of High Street's emerging Cultural Quarter.
- 1.12 With greater emphasis on pedestrianisation, introducing fit for purpose measures to protect pedestrian is proposed. This will build upon existing High Street barriers and extend to the new areas of pedestrianised streets. These will include upgrading and/or extending where appropriate existing vehicle restrictions to provide an integral safety network that is fit for purpose.
- 1.13 The schemes high-level capital cost is estimated to be £1.209 million, which includes design fees, surveys and traffic management. An allowance of £160-£150k has been included for these exclusion and contingency. This estimate does fall within the £1.268 million GBC have set aside for these schemes and the potential contribution from landowners.
- 1.14 The timetable is constrained by restriction of any works taking place during the retailers' most profitable Christmas season. Avoiding any disruption between November and December is a strong desire from retailers who requested a construction date by January 2020.
- 1.15 Although Surrey County Council (SCC) are the Highway Authority for most of the town centre public realm, Guildford Borough Council(GBC) is committed to retaining the quality of its public realm beyond the minimal statutory standard delivered by SCC. The town centre masterplan and streetscape guide will enable GBC to raise the standard of our public realm that ensures our historic town centre heritage is conserved for future generations
- 1.16 The project will involve the public highway and is to be progressed as a joint scheme involving GBC and SCC. As GBC are investing significant public funds

in the public highway, a reciprocal contribution of in-kind support from SCC is requested.

- 1.17 GBC has appointed AECOM to produce a detailed design. Procurement of works will explore best value from either the open market or use of SCC's own term contractors.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 GBC acknowledges that the public realm in this part of the town centre does not reflect its conservation status. More needs to be done to complement the setting of the many historic assets and cultural institutions around High Street, which includes Guildford Castle, museum and other historic buildings. The area is lacking pedestrian connectivity with both moving and parked vehicles dominating its views and spaces.
- 2.2 Each element of the scheme will address specific issues with the aim of delivering overall benefits to both residents and the town centre. The plan below outlines in red the main area of focus for this project:



Chapel Street

- 2.3 This is a narrow street south of High Street dominated by retail businesses. It is one of our historic 'Gates' and the carriageway has retained traditional

granite setts surface treatment and York raised pavement on both sides of the road.

- 2.4 The main issues to be address: The narrow pavement at the northern end of the street towards High Street impedes accessibility for those with mobility impairment; increasing use of the carriageway for outdoor seating, helping to grow the local economy, is being limited by current carriageway design.
- 2.5 The project will investigate the best approach to improve accessibility, retain where possible the existing granite setts and deliver a better streetscape that is more pedestrian-friendly. This is with the aim of retaining the conservation setting of the street and increasing footfall from High Street towards the castle grounds and historic core.
- 2.6 The scheme will also raise awareness of the street's offer so it is more welcoming through better lighting, wayfinding and signage to reduce street clutter and out of character shop signs.

Swan Lane

- 2.7 An important 'Gate' leading from High Street with a busy retail offer, but its uneven surface and unattractive block paving detracts from efforts to create a better visual visitor experience. Swan Lane has perhaps become the most unrepresentative of all the Gates in its historic reference to either granite setts or York paving treatment within a conservation area.
- 2.8 Retailers on Swan Lane have expressed a desire to replicate the Tunsgate pedestrianisation and have offered to contribute to such a scheme. SCC have stated that this is not a priority within their medium term current programme and any future resurfacing would be undertaken using the most economic material, likely to be asphalt.
- 2.9 It will also raise awareness of the Swan Lane's offer through better lighting, wayfinding and signage to reduce street clutter and out of character overhead shop signs.

Castle Street

- 2.10 This road serves both the residential area, access around High Street and for deliveries to retail businesses in the town centre. SCC recently resurfaced the lower section of the road between Tunsgate and Chapel Street in 2018. The scheme is to address the increasing incidences of traffic entering the one-way system counter to the designated flow, and manage traffic speed and provide safe pedestrian crossing to the castle grounds.
- 2.11 Pedestrian crossing of Castle Street from Tunsgate to Quarry Street is unnecessarily difficult as there is no formal crossing point. With increased pedestrian traffic since the pedestrianisation of Tunsgate, there is now a greater need to facilitate pedestrian traffic across Castle Street.
- 2.12 The junction of South Hill, Sydenham Road and Castle Street does suffer from traffic congestion in particular and improving circulation at this junction will greatly improve traffic flow as well as pedestrian crossing at this point.

Pedestrian Safety Measures

- 2.13 Guildford is a safe place to live and work and the many visitors come to Guildford because of this. Pedestrian and general public safety remains at

similar risk levels to other major high streets across the country; however, Guildford is proactive in its approach and has already introduced safety measures on both ends of High Street that restrict vehicle access.

- 2.14 Following an assessment by the Surrey Police, it was considered that current vehicle control measures were inadequate and do not comply with current national standards for such public spaces.
- 2.15 Working with the Safer Guildford Partnership, this scheme is to build on the current safety measures such as CCTV and local policing. Upgrading our current barriers with less intrusive and fit for purpose barriers will ensure that GBC are taking the most practical interventions to keep pedestrians safe. Additional low-key physical barriers are proposed to ensure potential access points are more protected which will be supported by CCTV where required.

Wayfinding, Lighting, decluttering, and Interpretation

- 2.16 Getting around Guildford's town centre is not readily possible for all visitors for a variety of reasons. We hope to create a more welcoming space that is navigable by all. Having gateway signage for retailers to replace A-Boards will declutter streets; improving lighting to increase the perception of safety and if used creatively would animate the space; and more engaging but discreet wayfinding and interpretation will enrich visitor experience and draw them to areas of the town that have less footfall.
- 2.17 Considering use of public art and appropriate street furniture to supplement the already rich heritage of the 'Gates' is an aspiration drawn out from our consultation. Incorporating services and other facilities in the public realm will allow more seasonal events and al fresco use of the carriageway if partially or fully pedestrianised.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)

- 2.18 To facilitate the increased pedestrianisation, a review of the existing TRO is required in view of changing when vehicles are permitted on Chapel Street and Swan Lane. Further consultation is to be undertaken when plans have been further developed.

Post construction maintenance

- 2.19 The significant investment in Guildford public realm by GBC does require an operational protocol with SCC for future maintenance. As a historic town centre, Guildford has kept its historic assets intact which includes its streetscape, ensuring that use of appropriate material following any roadworks must remain as a consistent standard for future reinstatement works.
- 2.20 Discussion is underway with the cSCC Highways team to facilitate a partnership approach with GBC. Responsibilities of both parties to meet GBC's aspiration for the town centre is paramount; however, SCC, as the Highways Authority, will remain ultimately responsible for managing and maintaining the public highway.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The “do nothing” approach will see the continual degradation of Guildford’s High Street heritage and character by use of poor quality materials which in turn will be a negative impact to its widely accepted attractive public realm. The economic impact on the vitality of our high street caused by poorly maintained and designed public realm is well documented.
- 3.2 Therefore, we have considered for each of the schemes several options set out in Appendix 1 and summarised below as follows:

Chapel Street

- 3.3 Raising levels – Partial or full level raising of carriageway with pavement to facilitate a better transition of pedestrian access for those with mobility issue. Or possible series of accessing crossing points. This would also potentially increase area available for use ‘al fresco’ activities.
- 3.4 Increasing the width of the pavement - This would provide better access on the pavement for pedestrians particularly at the High Street end, which is too narrow for wheelchairs or prams.
- 3.5 Surface Materials finish – Retaining existing granite setts or replacing with similar materials used in Tunsgate. In addition there are options of using granite setts with a central ‘cart track flagstone’ or use of granite setts as central feature similar to Mill Lane.
- 3.6 **Preferred option**
The design principle to be adopted to keep the ‘look and feel’ of Chapel Street is to retain the use of granite setts and flagstone. Following further consultation a decision of either raising the levels across the full carriageway or just part re-lay with granite setts is to reviewed.

Swan Lane

- 3.7 The existing block pavers, laid in the 1990s, have large areas of depression and uneven surfaces and are not in keeping with the rest of the town centre’s characteristic cobble paving. The two main options are either to replace the pavers either with materials similar to those used at Tunsgate or with granite setts that have central design detail of York stone cart track, or setts to accommodate foot traffic.

Preferred Option

- 3.8 As Swan lane is one of our historic gates, unlike Tunsgate which is a later addition to the streetscape, it is more appropriate to restore the existing cobble sett paving so that it is in keeping with the main historic granite setts across the town centre. This preference was reflected by the focus groups consultation. Further consultation will determine the two options of cart track flagstone in the centre or use of granite setts.

Castle Street

- 3.9 Following a traffic assessment by AECOM, they have proposed converting South Hill/Castle Street/Sydenham Road junction to a mini-roundabout, changing priority of traffic flow into Castle Street, a new raised table to west of roundabout to slow traffic and give pedestrians priority.

- 3.10 Further enhancement could include widening of pavement/narrowing carriageway between Chapel Street and Tunsgate Car Park, and introducing bollards to prevent pavement parking.

Preferred option

- 3.11 Both recommendations address distinct issues so could be delivered independently. However, the overall benefit of doing both will provide a more comprehensive solution to Castle Street access and traffic issues.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

4.1 A comprehensive programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement has been ongoing following on from the completion of the Tunsgate scheme. This phase of the project has included a series of direct engagement through focus groups and online surveys.

- Chapel Street retailers meeting – January 2019- organised Guildford BID
- Focus groups walkabout – four sessions between April and May 2019 – invitation-only to businesses and residents on Chapel Street, Swan Lane and Castle Street
- Online survey hosted on GBC website

4.2 Further consultation will be undertaken to refine the preferred options that will be developed in further detail.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The high-level estimate for the construction of the planned improvements is approximately £1.209 million for contingency and fees. Officers will be able to provide a better estimate following further design work following additional investigative site surveys and outcome of consultation.

5.2 Private sector contributions are also being pursued, namely from Swan Lane landowners who have suggested a willingness to contribute to the scheme for this street specifically.

5.3 The Guildford BID have committed £10,000 to the scheme so far and GBC have set aside £1.268 million to deliver the scheme.

6. WIDER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications
Equality and Diversity	Significant implications
Localism (including community involvement and impact)	Significant implications

Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications
Public Health	No significant implications
Human Resource/Training and Development	No significant implications

- 6.1 Equality and Diversity - Design of the scheme will provide for enhanced pedestrian facilities, including those to assist mobility for people with disabilities. At-grade design with no kerbs will provide improved accessibility at Chapel Street.
- 6.2 Localism - The regeneration of the Guildford town centre has been driven by a comprehensive process of public consultation as part of the Guildford town centre masterplan. There is a strong support and desire to improve the quality of public spaces and streets in the town centre.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 7.1 The proposed public realm enhancements will complement redevelopment of Tunsgate Quarter and together they will provide significant opportunities to contribute towards the regeneration of this part of the town and benefit the town as a whole. The approach is to deliver a scheme that is of high quality, declutters the environment and produces a space and environment that can adapt to different uses and add to the vitality of the town.

8. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 8.1 If the Joint Committee approve the recommendations, GBC and SCC officers will progress decisions made by the Committee.
- 8.2 Officers will consult with stakeholders on developed plans which will include refinement of the plans and consult on the preferred options.
- 8.3 Subject to detailed design, tender costs and a satisfactory resolution of any issues, work on the scheme is planned to start in January 2020. It is estimated that construction programme would be around 3-4 months.

Contact Officer:

Contact Officer: Paul Bassi

Job title: Project manager, Major projects

Telephone number: 01483 444515

Consulted:

Guildford's BID

Guildford Society

GuildfordVision

Holy Trinity Ward councillors

Guildford Access group

Holy Trinity Amenity Group

All retailers/businesses/residents on Castle Street, Swan Lane and Chapel Street

General Public (via Online survey)

Background papers:

GBC Executive report –Public realm Improvement Project approved on 8th April 2019

[Guildford Town Centre Masterplan Report, October 2015](#)
