

CET/23/1
Cabinet
11 January 2023

Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone – Higher Bullring Public Realm Enhancement Project

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Cabinet be asked:

- (a) to give approval for a public realm enhancement design (developed as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone project) for the Higher Bullring area of Cullompton, as set out in Appendix 1, at a cost of £828,016, to proceed to tender and construction. There is no cost to Devon County Council;
- (b) to delegate powers to the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Local Member and Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, to make minor amendments to the scheme design;
- (c) to approve an increase to the 2022/23 capital programme by £96,711, funded by developer contributions.

1. Summary

This report seeks approval to progress to tender and subsequently construction for Cullompton Higher Bullring public realm enhancement.

2. Introduction

The High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, which is being delivered by Historic England, is a £95 million programme to unlock the potential of high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery and breathing new life into high streets for future generations. Approximately 60 high streets have been offered funding to give them a new lease of life. The lead partners in each place (mostly local authorities) are working with Historic England to develop and deliver schemes that will transform and restore disused and dilapidated buildings into new homes, shops, work places and community spaces, restoring local historic character and improving public realm.

The Cullompton Higher Bullring public realm enhancement project, delivered as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone, has the following objectives as set out in the original Delivery Plan agreed with Historic England:

- Enhance the heritage setting of the town centre;
- Reduce the dominance of motor vehicles;
- Provide an extended space for community events and cultural activities while providing a focus for civic pride.

It is expected that work will proceed ahead of any future delivery of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road.

3. Proposal

The streets and spaces in the town centre are currently dominated by traffic. The majority of the high street, particularly Fore Street, consists of a wide carriageway, with narrow pavements, poor quality surfacing, and little planting or street furniture. Whilst there are very few existing public spaces in the town centre, the street width is much wider at the Bullring, allowing for street trees, seating, wider pavements and the war memorial, and differing in character. The Heritage Access Zone is an opportunity to improve and create new public spaces to enhance the experience of visitors to the town centre.

The design has been developed with a consultant led concept approved by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) to enable a standalone first phase, funded as part of the HSHAZ project, focussed around the War Memorial which would facilitate longer term improvements to the town centre. The design builds on the Town Centre Masterplan.

The HSHAZ funded first phase does not compromise flexibility or the ability of future traffic management options to respond to the town's growth.

The design has taken account of the views expressed through the consultation.

Key considerations in the course of the design included the War Memorial, the street trees, the bus stop, facilitation of loading and unloading and the parking in the area. All these issues were considered together.

In summary the key changes are:

- Carriageway width – this has been reduced to enable the creation of the enhanced public realm whilst remaining sufficient to maintain the current traffic flows
- Bus stop – moved south of the St John Court access, freeing up the setting of the War Memorial
- Pedestrian crossing – realigned slightly to reflect the new kerb alignments
- Disabled parking bays – realigned to enable the offset pedestrian crossing to function safely
- Market access – designed such that the market may continue to access the space to facilitate market days. The creation of the larger public realm allows for future market expansion.

The design process has demonstrated that relocating the bus stop southwards, away from the war memorial, will not detrimentally impact on visibility at the Tiverton Road junction.

The initial proposal for a double bus stop has been amended to a dedicated bus stop at the northern end with a loading bay at the southern end to support local business activities.

Key design considerations to enhance the Higher Bull Ring were around how to reduce parking to provide more space for amenity whilst still providing good accessibility. Parking currently surrounds part of the Grade II listed Cullompton War Memorial and dominates a great proportion of The Higher Bullring. This detracts from the historic cohesiveness of the street and occupies space which could be utilised to serve as part of the public realm. Initial consultation recognised that parking manoeuvres had a detrimental impact on town centre congestion. It was also recognised that there is currently limited provision for cycle parking.

A parking demand survey was undertaken during the initial concept design process, Appendix 2. It was demonstrated that with the removal of 10 spaces, 31 including 4 disabled spaces remaining, weekday demand would exceed capacity between 09:40 and 12:20 and 12:40 and 13:10. During this period, up to 5 cars would need to park elsewhere. Saturday demand would exceed capacity between 09:40 and 11:40 when up to 8 cars would need to park elsewhere. There is considered to be sufficient capacity in the nearby Forge Way car park to accommodate the displaced parking.

Planning:

It is anticipated that the proposed public realm works would fall under Permitted Development Rights (Part 9 and/or Part 12 of the Town and Country Planning [General Permitted Development] England Order 2015).

4. Options/Alternatives

As an alternative, the District and County Councils could abort the scheme and return the Heritage Action Zone Fund monies to Historic England.

5. Consultations

A two-stage public consultation has been undertaken. The first stage of public consultation concluded last year to form the basis for the initial design to pass through Stage 2 consultation process which has recently been completed.

The Stage 1 consultation on the public realm enhancement project took place at the same time as a consultation on the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan. Officers from Mid Devon Council undertook the consultation in Cullompton between the 28th June and 13th August 2021. In terms of the HSHAZ public realm project, the consultation was to gather initial views on the Higher Bullring (and Fore Street) space and how the community would like to see them enhanced. Between 28th June and 13th August, comments on the public realm enhancement project were invited through the following approaches:

- Interactive map;
- Online and paper questionnaire
- Permanent exhibitions were made available at the Cullompton Community Centre and the Hayridge Centre.

Additionally, three face to face public consultations took place when Council Officers attended:

- Farmers Market in Cullompton - 24th July 2021
- Art Week at The Walronds - 26th July 2021
- Tesco's car park in Cullompton in the late afternoon - 26th July 2021.

Stage 2 consultation on the public realm enhancement project took place between 4 July and 21 August.

Design proposals and feedback surveys were made available on the Mid Devon District Council website and at the Hayridge centre. Two drop in events were held at the Farmers market 30th July and Walronds Gardens 26th July. 32 feedback surveys were received, 21 completed online and 11 paper copies. In addition, 10 emails were received from local businesses/ residents raising specific queries.

Generally strong support for the proposals was received. There are a number of comments made by residents/businesses adjacent to the area of works which have been considered as part of Stage 4 design. These have been in relation to:

- The location of the bus stop
- The impact on Tiverton Road junction
- The provision of a loading bay for adjacent businesses
- Vehicular access for market traders
- Emergency services bay for Clarks Court
- Reduction in on street parking.

6. Strategic Plan

The scheme is well-aligned with a range of actions within the Strategic Plan, insofar as it would increase walking and cycling opportunities and therefore encourage more people to walk and cycle.

The scheme is designed to improve the urban environment in the Higher Bull Ring making it a more attractive destination for shopping and dining, and providing additional space for community activities. It would therefore help support a green economic recovery from COVID-19 for businesses.

The table below summarises how the proposals would impact achievement of relevant Strategic Plan actions according to a seven-point scale, whereby -3 represents a large negative impact and +3 represents a large positive impact

Strategic Plan priority	Strategic Plan action	Alignment
Responding to the climate emergency	Support a green recovery from COVID-19	+3 (large positive)
Responding to the climate emergency	Prioritise sustainable travel and transport	+3 (Large positive)
Responding to the climate emergency	Encourage sustainable lifestyles	+3 (Large positive)

Improving health and wellbeing	Secure investment in transport infrastructure	+2 (moderate positive)
Investing in Devon's economic recovery	Maintain and, where necessary, improve our highway network and improve sustainable transport options	+2 (Moderate positive)
Improving health and wellbeing	Give people greater opportunities for walking and cycling to increase their physical activity	+3 (Large positive)
Helping communities to be safe, connected and resilient	Enable a range of transport options, including public transport	+1 (Slight positive)

7. Financial Considerations

MDDC are the lead partner and accountable body for the programme. The scheme is managed under appropriate financial and legal regulations.

The estimated financial profile and funding sources, of the scheme are as follows:

	Prior Years Spend £	2022/23 Estimate £	2023/24 Estimate £	Total £
Historic England capital grant	48,016		505,000	553,016
Mid Devon District Council contribution			150,000	150,000
Cullompton Town Council contribution			25,000	25,000
Section 106	3,289	96,711		100,000
Total	51,305	96,711	680,000	828,016

£680,000 has been included in 2023/24, the Medium Term Capital Programme, due to be submitted to Cabinet in January 2023.

8. Legal Considerations

It is anticipated that the proposed public realm works would fall under Permitted Development Rights (Part 9 and/or Part 12 of the Town and Country Planning [General Permitted Development] England Order 2015).

Notwithstanding this, a two-stage public consultation has been undertaken.

9. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The design consultants considered how the proposals can help to mitigate impact on climate change, and how the design can support Devon County Council and Mid Devon to become carbon neutral by 2030.

10. Equality Considerations

Where relevant, in coming to a decision the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

In progressing this particular scheme / proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Members and also is available on the Council's website at [Higher Bull Ring Heritage Action Zone Improvement Scheme Impact Assessment - December 2022 - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/Higher-Bull-Ring-Heritage-Action-Zone-Improvement-Scheme-Impact-Assessment-December-2022-Impact-Assessment)

Members will need to consider the Impact Assessment for the purposes of this item / meeting.

The design process has required that the scheme is 'fully accessible and inclusive to everyone, including in terms of mobility and visually impaired'. An overarching project aim is to ensure that the enhancement design 'delivers a coherent and unifying design for the whole study area that meets the current and future needs of the community'. All necessary highways safety audits will be undertaken through the detailed design and construction phases.

11. Risk Management Considerations

The project risks identified are continually reviewed with the Project Board and have previously been shared with Historic England during the funding application and subsequent communications.

12. Public Health Impact

The proposed scheme will introduce increased active travel opportunities in the form of additional cycle parking. The scheme aims to create more space and a more attractive for pedestrians to enjoy and access shops and services through footway widening, enhanced greening and seating.

13. Reasons for Recommendations

In order to unlock the potential of Cullompton High Street, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery for future generations.

Meg Booth

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Electoral Divisions: Cullompton & Bradninch

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport Councillor Andrea Davis

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Background Paper: Nil

Contact for Enquiries:

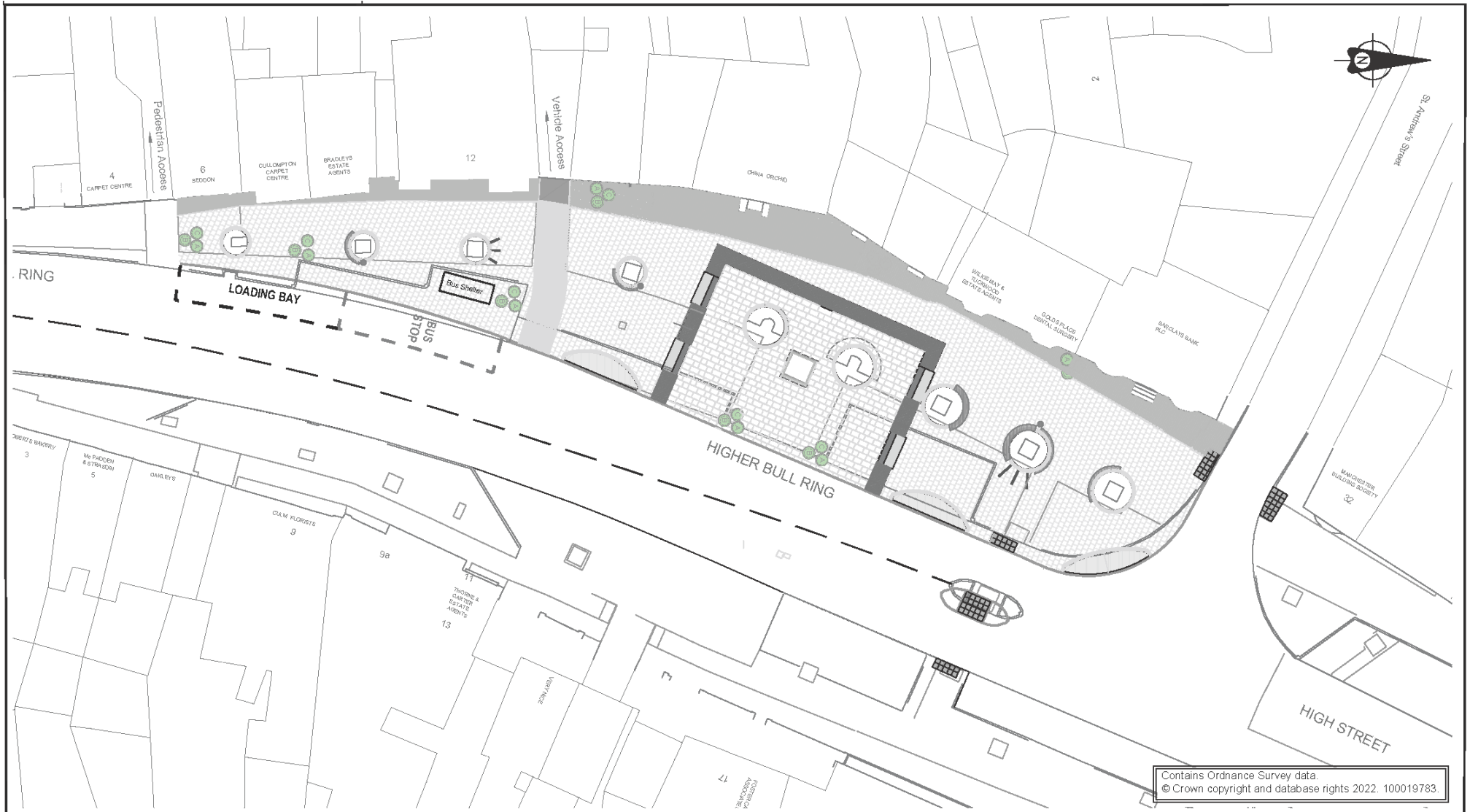
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Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone – Higher Bullring Public Realm Enhancement Project - Final

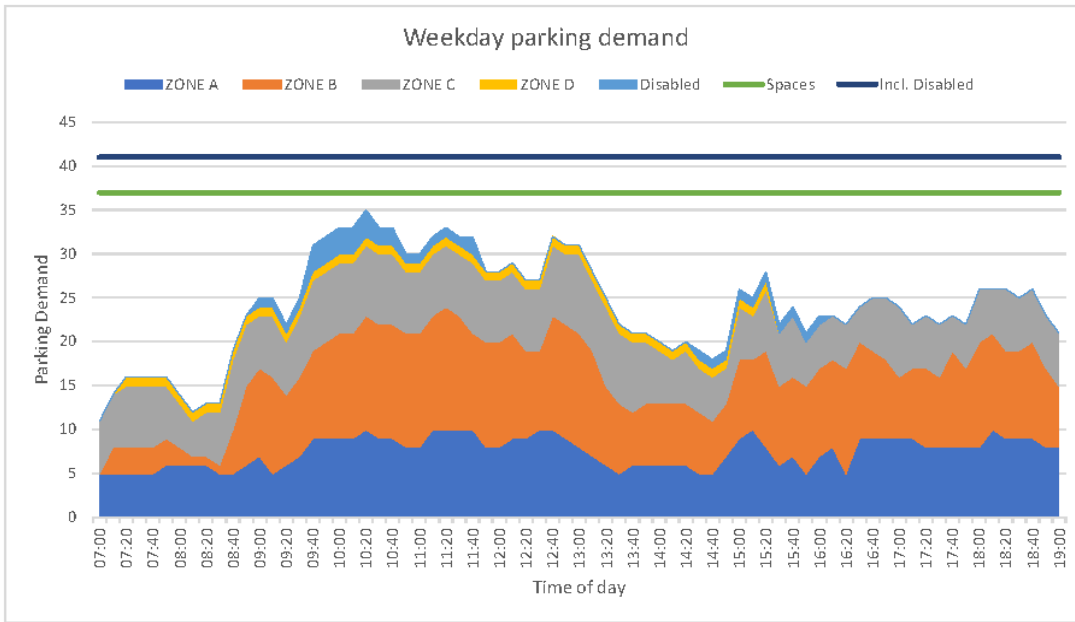
Appendix 1 to CET/23/1



Contains Ordnance Survey data.
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	Engineering Design Group	Cabinet	date	scale
		job/title/proposal CULLOMPTON BULLRING ENHANCEMENT	number	
			C19034/4 - Cabinet	

Appendix 2 to CET/23/1



- Zone A = North west
- Zone B = North East
- Zone C = South West
- Zone D = South East

Spaces	
Zone A	11 Spaces
Zone B	15 Spaces
Zone C	10 Spaces
Zone D	1 space and 4 Disabled

