

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE 11/19

Date: 24 July 2019

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: This briefing note provides an overview of development works in Strood as requested by the Committee on 13 June 2019

1. Strood Town Centre – LGF scheme

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Strood Town Centre Improvement project was awarded £9 million of Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The project aims to improve journey times for traffic passing through the town centre, improve the environment for pedestrians and transform the look and feel of the town centre.

1.2 Works to date

1.2.1 Works to improve Strood Town Centre commenced in February 2018, focusing on the transformation of Commercial Road car park and market space. A well-attended event was held on 28 August 2018 to showcase the improvements. The event was also an opportunity to celebrate the regeneration of Strood town centre and promote the future phases of the scheme.

1.2.2 Strood Town Centre works have since continued apace to improve the traffic flow at the junction of Commercial Road with Knight Road. Alterations to the road layout resulted in the removal of traffic signal control at this junction, easing traffic flow. The new layout now provides one ahead lane for westbound (A2 London) traffic and one lane for traffic travelling towards Knight Road. Resurfacing of the carriageway to Commercial Road has also been carried out, along with the installation of raised tables to key crossing point locations to enhance safe crossing for pedestrians. Other key improvements at this location include resurfaced footways, an upgraded signalised pedestrian crossing by Commercial Road car park and zebra crossings.

1.2.3 Weekend road closures started on 10 May to allow the safe replacement of the block paving in Strood High Street with a new asphalt surface. In order to

undertake these works safely and to ensure sufficient time was allowed for repair works to take place and properly cure before reopening to traffic, the High Street was scheduled to be closed to vehicular traffic for up to ten weekends. Ahead of the first weekend closure an extensive communication plan was established and rolled out to ensure businesses and residents within Strood town centre were aware in advance of the planned closures and diversions and to advise that businesses would be open as usual during the closure period. Bus operators were also engaged early on to minimise potential disruption to services. Work carried out during the first three weekend closures progressed significantly ahead of schedule resulting in a significant reduction in the number of full weekend closures.

1.2.4 New surfacing has already been laid to 95% of the scheme area (the length of Cuxton Road; Commercial Road; London Road from Gun Lane through High Street to the junction with Station Road). Kerbs were also re-aligned, and paving slabs installed in high quality materials during the closure period and the High Street is already starting to benefit from the removal of unnecessary posts and railings. Final surfacing works are planned for the end of July (overnight closures only) to complete the surfacing from Station Road to Rochester Bridge.

1.3 **Planned Works**

1.3.1 Future enhancement to Strood Town Centre includes:

- The continued installation of improved and energy efficient LED street lighting.
- New architectural lighting at railway arches and St Nicholas Church building and grounds.
- The completion of the enlarged pedestrian island at the junction of Commercial Road/Station Road/High Street – use of high-quality paving, tree planting and uplighters will provide a gateway feature at the westerly approach to the High Street.
- Improved pedestrian route and access along Station Road to Strood Train Station.
- The resurfacing of Station Road.
- Landscaped areas/tree planting and feature lighting at key focal spaces including Angel Corner, Friary Precinct, and High Street at the junction with Commercial Road.

1.3.2 The improvements to Strood Town Centre are currently programmed for completion by end of Q3 2019/20. Planting will need to take place in the new planting season, which starts from October.

2. Strood Civic Centre Flood Defences – LGF scheme

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The Strood Civic Centre flood defences project was awarded £3.5million LGF funding by SELEP in 2018. Medway Council identified the 3.4ha brownfield Civic Centre site as a target mixed-use regeneration site to meet the high demand for housing, and to contribute towards our aspirations to become an exemplary Waterfront University City by 2035. The site was at considerable risk of river tidal and surface water flooding and required protection works before it could be redeveloped. Once protected, i.e. raised above forecast flood levels, it will be transformed into an area of prime, high quality residential-led mixed-use development with potential for premium housing, offering fantastic views of Rochester Castle and Rochester Cathedral and access to the River Medway.

2.2 Works to date

2.2.1 The majority of the Civic Centre works are complete, with the exception of the access road and the flood gate. The LGF funding has all been spent and was delivered ahead of schedule. The delivery of this project is held in high regard by SELEP due to its adherence to both timescales and budget.

2.2.2 All flood defence works for the Civic Centre site, including land raising, were completed in June 2019.

2.2.3 Consultants Carter Jonas (previously GL Hearn) have been appointed via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework to support on the marketing and OJEU negotiated procurement process for the Civic site. The developer procurement is planned to start in July/August.

2.3 Planned Works

2.3.1 Marketing for the Civic Centre development is due to take place between September 2019 to June 2020, with the developer selection process from June to September 2020. The related planning application is proposed for March 2021.

3. Strood Riverside

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Strood Riverside project aims to transform Strood's Waterfront with up to 1,600 new homes, including affordable houses and apartments, along with new businesses and public spaces. The Waterfront sites benefit from proximity to the improved Strood rail station and high-speed access to London, easy access to the Town Centre facilities, south-facing views across the River Medway to

the impressive historic sites of Rochester Castle and Cathedral, and tourism in Rochester.

3.2 Works to date

- 3.2.1 The settlement period for the embankment on Canal Road has ended; drainage and highways works continue, and work has started to asphalt the new road. The surfacing of new roads is substantially complete. The high voltage power line is complete. Once Volker Stevin have left site, appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure both sites will be made secure.
- 3.2.2 A recommendation to declare the land surplus and dispose of it via a competitive procedure was approved at Cabinet on 9 April 2019.
- 3.2.3 All flood defence works for Strood Riverside are complete, except for works (the completion of the re-alignment of Canal Road) which are dependent upon Southern Gas Network. The team are liaising with SGN to accelerate completion.

3.3 Planned Works

- 3.3.1 Southern Gas Network works are to be completed, enabling the Canal Road re-alignment.
- 3.3.2 Marketing for the Riverside development is due to take place between September 2020 to June 2021, with the developer selection process from June to September 2021. The related planning application is proposed for March 2022.

4. Innovation Studios Medway

- 4.1 The pioneering Innovation Studios Medway have been designed to support Medway's growing business landscape, specifically with entrepreneurs, new business start-ups and micro firms in mind. An innovative design using customised shipping containers offer businesses a sustainable, robust and affordable premises Solution on Medway's waterfront.
- 4.2 The Studios opened in July 2018 and within a month all 15 units were tenanted. The businesses at Innovation Studios are soon to be joined by The Medway Film Unit, a local company which produces documentary films.

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Appendix 1 – Kent and Medway Economic Partnership Local Growth Fund Project Monitoring Report

Scheme	Description	Scheme delivery by	Budget and LGF spend	Status	RAG Status	Comments	Key Events for Next Period	Target out-comes
Local Growth Fund round 1 schemes								
Strood Town Centre	Journey time and accessibility enhancements to the town centre including changes to the highway and improved public realm	Q3 19/20	<p>BUDGET Total budget = £10.27m</p> <p>Made up of: - £9.0m LGF - £1.27m match funding</p> <p>LGF SPEND 15/16 LGF spend = £0.2m 16/17 LGF spend = £1.772m 17/18 LGF spend = £0.944m 18/19 LGF spend = £1.384m</p>	Construction (Business Case Approved)	→	<p>The new Strood train station building opened to the public in December 2017.</p> <p>A well-attended event was held on 28th August to mark the completion of the first phase of the LGF works and to promote future phases of the project.</p> <p>A request to extend the project to 19/20 was approved by Accountability Board in November 2018.</p> <p>Extensive re-programming of works and spend profiling, due to restrictions on carriageway occupation, have been required and completion is expected by end of Q2 2019/20.</p>	Work will continue on-site to deliver the remainder of the project.	Jobs = 360 -450 Homes = 600 -815
Non-transport schemes – Local Growth Fund rounds 2 and 3								
Strood Civic Centre site - flood mitigation measures	Improvements to flood defences at the former Civic Centre site to enable the development of the site. The former Civic Centre is a prime development site offering views across the river to Rochester Castle and Cathedral.	Q4 18/19	<p>BUDGET Total budget = £92m</p> <p>Made up of: - £3.5m LGF - £88.5m match funding</p> <p>LGF SPEND 15/16 LGF spend = £0.0m 16/17 LGF spend = £0.0m 17/18 LGF spend = £1.122m 18/19 LGF spend = £2.378m</p>	Construction (Business Case approved)	→	<p>Planning consent has been granted, detailed design and piling work are complete, the land raising is complete and drainage work is underway. The design for the flood gate is nearing completion and installation should be complete by end of Q2 19/20.</p> <p>All LGF funding has been spent, in line with the target set in April 2018.</p>	Delivery will continue onsite.	Jobs = 610 Homes = 325