

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item 10

TO: REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL
DATE: 23rd January 2014

RE: WALSALL MARKET FEASIBILITY STUDY

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to update the Panel on progress made to date on the Walsall Market Feasibility Study, as led by the Walsall Markets Working Group.

Background

The Markets Working Group was established in 2012 to consider the future of Walsall Market. GVA/The Retail Group were appointed thereafter and worked with the Markets Working Group on future options for Walsall Market, in terms of both location and design.

The Working Group made recommendations to Cabinet through the Scrutiny Panel which Cabinet endorsed, agreeing to the commissioning of a more detailed Feasibility Study.

In Autumn 2013, a thorough tendering process was conducted, resulting in Arup being appointed for this more detailed piece of work in October 2013.

Progress so far

Initial desktop research has been conducted by Arup, reviewing the previous GVA/The Retail Group study in light of current considerations, including the proposed timescales for the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and the Old Square Phase 1 Exclusion Zone.

Due to the emergence of these considerations in the time since the completion of the GVA/The Retail Group work, Arup's review has had to consider all of the outdoor and indoor locations in the town centre that could possibly facilitate the market based on available space, in light of these issues. Some of these locations will be less feasible than others for reasons other than space, for example operational considerations and financial viability. These issues will be evaluated as part of the Feasibility Study using the expertise of Arup's sub-consultants Glover Property and Marketplace Europe.

A draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been produced by Arup. Some early stage consultation has already taken place in the form of a questionnaire to market traders and a round-table discussion with retailers in The Bridge area.

The first stage of public consultation to consider the future location of the market as well as some preliminary design considerations is now underway. 600 leaflets have been distributed to key retailers in the area, landowners and developers, market customers, and is available for collection from four locations in the town centre for members of the public. The consultation material is also available online and the web link to this has been publicised through direct emails to interested parties, social media and a press release, as well as posters in key locations.

This first round of consultation is due to end on Friday 24th January, with a further round of consultation due to take place at the end of February, to focus on design and public realm options in the preferred location to emerge from this first round of consultation. Lessons that can be learnt from this first round of consultation will be taken on board to ensure that we are able to engage with as many stakeholders as possible during the second and final round of consultation.

The preparation of the future planning application is crucial to the success of this project. Preliminary discussions have already taken place between the consultants and the Local Planning Authority and are ongoing, in order to ensure that the supporting evidence base for the eventual planning application is robust. The comprehensive consultation approach that has been proposed is to ensure that consultation responses and concerns can be considered and worked through, eventually leading to the delivery of a scheme that can be fully supported in planning policy terms.

Timeline

To date

19 th December 2013	Markets Working Group – introduction to the project
10 th - 24 th Jan 2014	Public and stakeholder consultation on location options
23 rd January	Regen Scrutiny Panel – Project update

Future

w/c 10 th Feb	Markets Working Group – Report back from location consultation and evidence base options and Market Storage options
End of Feb	Market Traders consultation event and public consultation on preferred location and design options
6 th March	Regen Scrutiny Panel – Project update
w/c 24 th March	Markets Working Group - preferred option for Walsall Market, including storage solutions and cost estimates and implementation programme
22nd April	Regen Scrutiny Panel – endorse the Working Group's findings and make a recommendation to Cabinet in April
30 th April	Cabinet – Recommendations for the future location and design of Walsall Market
End of May 2014	Planning Application Submitted

Recommendations

To note the update report and agree to receive further reports in line with the timeline presented.

That members of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel continue to engage in the work being carried out, through participation in the Markets Working Group, public consultation and the regular updates to the Panel.

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