

# Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections Project

## Frequently Asked Questions - January - February 2024

### Project background

The Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connection project is one of seven projects within the Hastings Town Investment Plan. The others are the 'Green Low Carbon Skills & Economy, Town to Sea Creative Quarter, Hastings Castle World Heritage Destination, Town Centre Living and Town Centre Core).

The project outlines early ideas to improve public spaces in the town centre and make the area more green, attractive, and fun. The plans outline ideas we think will improve the use of the town centre and make it a place for people to mingle, meet, play and shop.

The public consultation will run from 22<sup>nd</sup> January until 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2024. The public consultation is being led by Arup with support from East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council.

### Project aims

The project aims to:

1. Develop safe, vibrant, and inclusive public spaces whilst promoting active and sustainable travel via walking, wheeling, and cycling.
2. Encourage better use of public spaces with more seating and more room for public art.
3. Promote biodiversity and greening to contribute to the health and wellbeing of people and to help protect the city centre against a changing climate.

### FAQs

We have developed proactive responses to what we believe will be Frequently Asked Questions from the public when engaging. These will also be publicly available on the Consultation Hub.

#### 1. Budget: Where has the money for this come from?

- Budget for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm & Green Connections project has come from the Town Fund Programme. This is a Central Government initiative for selected local councils to spend on projects that work to regenerate public spaces. Hastings is one of the 101 selected towns to receive this funding. Hastings Borough Council received funding of £24.3m for projects through the Hastings Town Deal Fund programme.
- The conditions of this fund mean we cannot use the money on anything else like housing, potholes, or in other areas of the town. This funding is protected and not impacted by the financial position of either council.
- Despite the significant figures associated with the Town Deal Funding, our ambitions mean the funds won't cover the whole design and build. So, while we're consulting on the entire vision, we'll develop the corridor in a phased way – one step at a time. Talking to you about it now means that when further funding becomes available, we have a plan ready to go.
- Conditions of the funds mean it must be spent by March 2026.



- The Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project is also funded by £400k of match funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund. This money was originally allocated to a project on Havelock Road through the Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package but was approved for transfer given the similarities of benefits of the scheme to the wider Town Deal initiative.

## 2. Budget: How the money will be spent?

- The project will be delivered in phases based on available funding.
- The project delivery phase has not been agreed yet and will not be resolved once the design has been further developed. This is because the project team need to understand priorities following consultations and where the funding will provide most impact.
- A strategy for the short-, medium- and long-term phases is still to be undertaken, this will consider various criteria including, health and safety, access, construction methodology, what can be delivered with agreed funding.

## 3. Flooding: How will the proposal address the ongoing flooding issues in Hastings town centre?

- The designs proposed aim to make improvements to some of the surface water flood issues but will not address the full extent of the flooding we're seeing in the town centre. This falls to other bodies including Southern Water and the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) to address.
- Our focus on the addition of trees, gardens and meadows will help to address the surface water flood issues by naturally absorbing water that falls. The designs are also being developed with flooding in mind and aim to create a resilient Town Centre for the changing climate.
- We have consulted the Local Lead Flood Authority and will continue to work with them to seek guidance that will inform ongoing design decisions. The LLFA will lead on flooding from a planning perspective.
- The timescales under which we're pressed to construct this project means we cannot afford to wait for Southern Water to address the significant ongoing issues. Southern Water has made recent commitments.
- We will continue to work with Southern Water, the county flood team and the Local Lead Flood Authority to consider the impacts of flooding in the designs and implementation of the infrastructure.

## 4. Safety: How will the plans address issues I have about safety in the area, especially if it encourages walking?

- The proposed plans aim to improve safety for all users of the Town Centre. It includes a segregated cycle lane for safety of cyclists and pedestrians, improved street lighting for visibility and safety, and reduction in town centre vehicle movements to improve road safety.
- Through this consultation process we will engage with 'Design out Crime' officers as well as Sussex Police and take advice on further safety improvements which can be made.

## 5. Disabled access and parking: How will the proposed designs impact disabled access and parking?

- Current proposals currently include the removal of the on-street motorcycle and disabled car parking bays between Harold Place / Pelham Street. The current usage of those spaces and outcomes of the consultation will be reviewed and will inform the final design. Suitably qualified Accessibility and Gender-Inclusive experts will be working with the design team to ensure that accessibility is being considered.
- Impacts of the project on parking, accessibility and local traffic will be reviewed along with the outcomes of the consultation to influence the next stage of design.

## 6. Impact on bus services: What is the impact of this proposal on bus services?

- Prior to this round of consultation, workshops were conducted with East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, relevant stakeholders and internal Arup specialists - including transport and landscape architecture consultants - to develop an approach to, refine concepts and respond to feedback. This resulted in a number of options which stakeholders considered.
- The current preferred design proposes Havelock Road be closed to general traffic in both directions and provision of a bus lane one way only. A segregated cycleway will be introduced. This option minimises impact on existing bus routes, allows for the implementation of new stop(s) along Queens Road, and unlocks a significant extent of public space through Harold Place.
- In the current proposal, services towards the station would stop at new stops on Queens Road and Havelock Road instead of the existing stop on Harold Place; services from the station would be re-routed around Priory Meadows Shopping Centre – via Devonshire Road, South Terrace, Queens Road and Albert – and stop opposite the shopping centre Queens Road instead of the existing stops on Havelock Road and Harold Place. However, the strategy for bus route alterations is still being progressed and is subject to assessment and stakeholder engagement.
- As with all the design ideas presented, this is a proposal for public consideration. We are looking for feedback on this option to inform future decision making.
- Any changes to bus routes are not confirmed at this stage, pending the outcomes of this consultation and further engagement with bus operators.

## 7. Impact on taxi rank: What are the proposed changes to the taxi rank on Havelock Road?

- The design proposals include removal of the existing taxi rank on Havelock Road. A strategy for the re-provision of taxi rank spaces will be developed, based on the outcomes of the consultation, stakeholder engagement and a review of historic data relating to usage of the existing taxi rank.
- Current proposals identify that the existing taxi rank on Havelock Road could be relocated to Queens Road or Robertson Street. However, this will be reviewed alongside outcomes of the consultation to inform the next stage of design.

## 8. Equality: How has equality and accessibility been considered?

- Accessibility and equality are a key focus for the project. East Sussex County Council have developed an initial Equality Impact Assessment based on the proposed designs, this can be



found on the Consultation Hub. It will be continuously reviewed throughout the project to ensure that all groups are represented and considered as part of the design and construction.

- A range of accessibility groups have been invited to the stakeholder workshops and we are keen to seek their feedback and input into designs to make the town centre work better for all.

## **9. Maintenance: How will the proposed public realm improvements be maintained?**

- We are consulting closely with the ESCC and HBC maintenance teams to ensure there is a suitable management and maintenance plan in place.
- A long-term management and maintenance plan will be developed at the outset of the design. The design also aims to be climate resilient and use a range of species that are low maintenance. The type of species will also be developed in conjunction with Great Dixter House and Gardens.
- The design team have also worked on the Sheffield Town Centre project and have experience in delivering these types of projects.
- As part of the project, we will consult with local colleges and community garden groups to facilitate potential community maintenance plans.
- There are various ways of raising money for the maintenance, both from the local government, volunteering and sponsored. These options will be looked at and assessed for suitability.

## **10. Pelham Street: How will access work?**

- Access to the garage and for servicing will remain but we're assessing route options based on any proposed changes to bus routes. For example, in the current proposal – in which a bus-only route towards the station is provided on Queens Road and Havelock Road – there would be no change to the current operation of Pelham Street. If an alternative arrangement is pursued after having considered stakeholder feedback, access to and from Pelham Street will be reviewed but access would remain.

## **11. Overall programme for the project**

- Once the consultation stage has been completed, the responses will be collected and the design for Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections will be developed to address the main topics.
- The consultation responses and draft developed design will be presented to ESCC Lead Member for Transport and Environment in June 2024 for approval. This will be done in consultation with Hastings' Town Deal Board.
- Planning is to be submitted in the summer once the design has been finalised.
- In order to use all available funding, the public realm improvements need to be constructed by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.



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## 12. Potholes: Can this money be spent repairing potholes or other town maintenance?

- This project is funded from central government and as such they are ringfenced specifically for this project and cannot be spent on town centre or highways maintenance. ESCC Highways are responsible for these activities and are part of their ongoing maintenance plans.