

This Report will be made public on 8 June 2022

Report Number **C/22/14**

To: Cabinet
Date: 16 June 2022
Status: Non Key
Responsible Officer: Ewan Green, Director of Place
Cabinet Member: Cllr David Monk, Leader of the Council

SUBJECT: FOLKESTONE TOWN CENTRE LEVELLING UP FUND APPLICATION

SUMMARY: This report presents an overview of a proposed submission to the Government's Levelling Up Fund for Folkestone Town Centre. The report provides an update of the work undertaken so far to develop the submission, the projects to be included in the submission, associated funding requirements and next steps. The report seeks approval to submit a completed submission by 6th July 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/22/14.
2. To note the work undertaken to develop the Levelling Up Fund submission.
3. To agree that the Levelling Up Fund submission be based on the projects and funding requirements detailed in section 3.
4. To agree to allocate the required 10% match funding for the submission and to note that the final funding requirements of the Council will be subject to a further report pending the outcome of the Levelling Up submission and is subject to approval by Full Council.
5. To agree up to £200,000 of budgeted funds being provided to support the continuation of project development required in the period prior to the LUF decision to ensure that delivery is achieved by the LUF deadline of 31 March 2025.
6. To authorise the Director of Place to amend and finalise the Levelling Up Fund ready for submission.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Folkestone Place Plan was approved by Cabinet at the meeting on 22 September 2021(reference report C/21/34).
- 1.2 The plan sets out how to address the ‘Grand Challenge’ for the future of the town centre through identifying six ‘missions’ that respond directly to specific issues identified from an Urban Appraisal. Proposed actions and interventions with clear, targeted impacts are established.
- 1.3 The plan provides a holistic view of the way in which Folkestone Town Centre can continue to harness the natural potential of the area and better serve the district’s residents and visitors in view of the changing role of town centres in the future. It sets a vision and direction for Folkestone town centre, including the necessary infrastructure investment required to achieve sustainable change. Further detail on the Place Plan can be found at <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestoneplaceplan>
- 1.4 Cabinet also approved the prioritisation of the following six priority projects for further development, in support of a Levelling Up Fund application.
 1. Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
 2. Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square
 3. Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm
 4. F51 Environs and Payers Park
 5. Harbour Line & Tram Road
 6. Sunny Sands
- 1.5 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2021-30 ‘Creating Together Tomorrow’ recognises the need to reinvigorate all district town centres, particularly investing in Folkestone town centre.

Ambition 3: A Vibrant Economy sets out priority actions to reinvigorate high streets through investigating opportunities for diversification, attracting investment into non-retail uses, such as creative workspace, leisure housing, cultural and heritage-related activities.

- 1.6 The Place Plan also aligns strongly with and supports the aims of the corporate plan’s ambitions in relation to Positive community leadership, a thriving environment and Quality homes and infrastructure. Sustainability is an underpinning theme throughout the Place Plan and the application responds positively to the council’s declaration of a climate emergency.
- 1.7 A key action in the Corporate Plan Action Plan is the completion of a submission to the Government’s Levelling Up Fund. Following approval by Cabinet in September 2021, further development of the six priority projects has been undertaken with the support of a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by We Made That.

2. OVERVIEW OF LEVELLING UP FUND

- 2.1 The Government’s Levelling Up Fund (LUF) was announced at the 2020 Spending Review for capital investment in local infrastructure in places

across the country that have low productivity and connectivity and are in most need of 'levelling up'.

- 2.2 The government has prioritised local authority districts according to need and Folkestone & Hythe is in the highest level of need category (category 1) which means that the district is in the highest priority group for investment.
- 2.3 Round one of the fund was launched in April 2021, but it was considered appropriate to wait for the second round, in view of the Folkestone Town Centre priority of the council and the stage of development of the Folkestone Place Plan at that time. It was recognised that the Place Plan would provide a strong strategic basis for a future bid.
- 2.4 In March 2022 the Government launched round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and invited applications by the deadline of 12 noon 6th July 2022.
- 2.5 The guidance for round 2 is similar to that for the first round with the focus being on infrastructure investment which has 'a visible impact on people and their communities'. The investment priorities for the LUF are as follows and there is also a requirement that projects support the government's carbon net zero goals and have minimum impact on nature and natural assets:
 - **Transport** including public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements, and accessibility improvements.
 - **Regeneration and Town Centres** to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, regenerate key leisure and retail sites in order to encourage new businesses and public services to locate there, improving the public realm including high streets, parks and green spaces, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
 - **Culture** maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.
- 2.6 LUF bids must demonstrate that they will have visible, tangible impact on people and places, and create a positive change that engenders a sense of pride amongst residents in the 'places they call home'.
- 2.7 District councils can bid for up to £20m either for a single project or a package of three multiple projects which are cohesively and coherently related. Folkestone & Hythe is limited to funding for a single project or single package of projects that can demonstrate spend from the Fund in the 2022-23 financial year. All government LUF funding is required to be spent by 31 March 2025 (or March 2026 in exceptional circumstances).
- 2.8 A minimum funding contribution of 10% towards the LUF bid is encouraged by the government and this can come from a local authority or other third party (public or private sector). This funding cannot be "in kind" so an actual financial contribution is required.

3. FOLKESTONE TOWN CENTRE LEVELLING UP FUND SUBMISSION

3.1 Since the Place Plan was approved work has continued to develop the six priority projects identified in the plan. This has included engaging with stakeholders and the public on the design of these projects, designing the projects and identifying the costs and identifying the activities and timeframes required for delivery. This work has now reached the stage where the selection of projects for inclusion in the LUF application is required.

Engagement

3.2 Extensive engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders and residents to support the development of the Place Plan and this has continued during the process of developing the six priority projects. This has included:

- **Three stakeholder workshops** for organisations affected or involved with specific projects relating to Connecting the Town Centre, Town Centre improvements and the Creative Quarter, took place on 3rd and 4th March 2022 and provided valuable input.
- **An 'in person' event** held in the Bouverie Business Centre for the general public on 31st March 2022.
- **A public online webinar** on 6th April 2022.
- **A number of meetings and forums** where there were presentations and discussions on the priority projects and where members have provided input, including the Folkestone Town Centre Working Group (FHDC Members), Folkestone Independent Retailers Group (FIRG), the Folkestone Town Centre Partnership Board (chaired by Damian Collins MP), Folkestone Town Team, the Folkestone & Hythe Business Advisory Board and the Folkestone & Hythe Young Peoples Forum.

3.3 At these engagements details on each of the projects, including initial designs were presented and discussed. Notes from the stakeholder workshops, copies of the presentation material used at the public event and a recording of the online webinar are available on the FHDC corporate website, so that anyone unable to attend the event could get the detail and provide comment. In addition, an online survey (and hard copy version) was undertaken, with all event attendees and all others encouraged to individually complete.

3.4 This engagement sought to get the views of stakeholders and the general public on proposed designs, as the projects were developing, and also on the relative importance of the six projects, in view of the LUF criteria and funding envelope being insufficient to deliver all six priority projects.

Project Selection

3.5 All the priority projects in the Place Plan will make a positive contribution and impact on the town centre. However, not all of the projects can be included in the LUF submission, as the level of funding available and fund criteria precludes this.

- 3.6 Nevertheless, it is important to note that those projects not included in the LUF submission still remain priorities. The Council, working with partners, will continue to develop these projects and seek to identify other funding opportunities which may bring them forward for delivery in future.
- 3.7 In determining which projects should be included in the LUF application, a number of factors have been taken into account, including those that:
- Deliver maximum impact on achieving our future vision for the Folkestone town centre.
 - Deliver the strategic priorities identified in the Place Plan.
 - Result in investment in Council and / or public sector owned assets which need improvement.
 - Ensure that the bid best meets the requirements of the government guidance and so maximises chances of success.
 - Optimise the opportunity offered by this £20 million funding opportunity.
 - Are unlikely to be funded by other sources of funding in the future.
- 3.8 The proposed projects for inclusion in the LUF application are:
1. Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
 2. Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square
 3. Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm
- 3.9 A synopsis and images of each of these projects is outlined in Appendix 1 and the detailed action/delivery plans for each are in Appendix 2.
- 3.10 The projects which are proposed for inclusion in the LUF application are those which:
- Best deliver the most transformational impact on Folkestone town centre.
 - Are ‘high impact projects that will make the most visible positive difference’ to Folkestone (as stipulated in the guidance).
 - Form the best set of three projects which can be presented as a cohesive, linked set of integrated interventions.
 - Best meet the government guidance for funding through being a planned set of place shaping interventions which:
Boost pride in place by
 - creating of a more attractive route from the railway station to the town centre which will give visitors, in particular, a more positive experience
 - turning the bus station area from being a predominantly built up unattractive site into an attractive ‘green park ’in the heart of the town which residents can be proud of
 - making the precinct town centre area more attractive through improved public realm and providing opportunities for events and attractions for both residents and visitors*Meet the government’s green agenda by*
 - encouraging use of more sustainable modes of transport by improving the walking links between the station and the town and
 - catering for more sustainable transport modes through the development of mobility hubs

Helping to renew and reshape the town centre so that it looks and feels better and can thrive in the long-term by encouraging new uses into the town.

- Create a greener and more sustainable town centre with improved cycling and walking routes.
- Help to 'level up' the town centre so as to build on the success of the Harbour Arm and Creative Quarter, encouraging higher footfall and dwell time in the core retail areas and thus supporting businesses, retail and hospitality.
- Facilitate future redevelopment of key sites for new housing, employment and other uses.
- Address highways and access issues which are a legacy of the former port operation and a barrier to a vibrant town centre.
- Would only come forward with significant public funding and are therefore the best use of the LUF funding opportunity.
- Encourage and facilitate further private sector and inward investment into the town centre for housing, retail and employment.
- Can be delivered within the timeframe required for LUF funding.

Support and Endorsement

- 3.11 Government LUF guidance explicitly requires the support of the local MP for a Levelling Up Fund submission. As the Chair of Folkestone Town Centre Partnership Board, our local MP, Damian Collins, has indicated his support for the proposed submission. The Board was presented with the proposed projects for the LUF application at the meeting on 6th May and there was unanimous agreement. Both a letter of support from the Partnership Board and the completed formal Priority Support Pro-forma required from the MP will be submitted with the online bid application.
- 3.12 There are a number of key stakeholders that have been directly involved in the development of these projects and have indicated their support. This includes:
- **Kent County Council** – as the Local Transport Authority, KCC will be partners in these projects, delivering the highways and some public realm aspects. KCC Officers have been closely involved in the development of these projects through their membership of the Steering Group that has overseen their development. A letter of support from the KCC Leader endorsing these projects and agreeing to work with the council to deliver these has been received and is in Appendix 3.
 - **Stagecoach** – as the operators using the current bus station in Bouverie Square, Stagecoach has been closely involved in the proposals to relocate the provision, as outlined in the designs for the Town Centre Gateway and Bouverie Square project. Their explicit operational needs have been taken into account in the project design. A letter of support endorsing the project and agreement to continue to work closely with the council to deliver this within the required timeframe is in Appendix 3.

Project Funding

- 3.13 The total cost (including professional and project management fees) of the projects to be included in the LUF bid are estimated in the table below:

Project	£
Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections	£2.3 mill
Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square	£14.1 mill
Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm	£3.4 mill
Total	£19.8 mill

(To note: These project cost above are currently being reviewed and likely to be slightly different in the final bid submission)

- 3.14 In view of the minimum requirement to provide 10% match funding for the bid, it is proposed that the funding ask of government is in the order of £17.82 million with £1.98 million allocated by FHDC towards these projects.
- 3.15 The Council's contribution can be allocated from a range of sources including the High Street Fund, Community Infrastructure Levy, Folkestone Community Works CLLD programme and capital programme. And the council has already invested heavily in the Town Centre through the purchase of FOLCA in March 2020 through delegated powers.
- 3.16 The approved FHDC Capital programme does not at this stage include additional funds for the Council's Levelling Up Fund bid. However, the Capital Programme is a 5 year rolling budget and approval for a formal allocation of the required 10% funding match for the Levelling Up Fund bid will be considered once the outcome of the bid is known.
- 3.17 The Kent County Council contribution could potentially be through an allocation from an Active Travel (Tranche 3) project, which includes elements of the Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections project. Should the Tranche 3 bid be successful, then this funding could provide some of the match funding required for the LUF bid and could reduce the funding requirement from FHDC. At this stage, the outcome of the Tranche 3 bid is not known. There is also a possibility that some KCC funding awarded for their Bus Service Improvement Plan might be available as match funding.

Next Steps

- 3.18 Subject to Cabinet approval, the bid to the Levelling Up Fund will be completed and submitted by the deadline of 6 July 2022.
- 3.19 In anticipation of a positive outcome, and to ensure that essential momentum in development of the project is maintained, technical work required to underpin delivery of the projects is recommended. This will ensure that the delivery timetable for the LUF bid can be met.

- 3.20 Some work will be required to continue to bring forward the projects prior to the government's decision. This is in order to ensure that the projects can be delivered within the government's required timeframe for the Levelling Up Fund. This work, and the corresponding level of expenditure will be limited to those projects which are deemed to be a priority to the council, and this is reflected in the activity shown in the delivery plan in Appendix 2 for Q2 2022/23. It is estimated that the spend in this period will be up to £200,000, with £35,000 provided from existing Economic Development budgets and the remainder from the Folkestone & Hythe High Streets Fund. Should the bid be successful then this funding will be recouped to council as they are part of the project costs.
- 3.21 It is intended that the LUF bid projects will be delivered in partnership with Kent County Council (KCC). Setting out an overall delivery strategy forms part of the bid and FHDC formally engaging KCC as delivery partners is the preferred approach, which is an extension of the partnership working already in place.
- 3.22 KCC Highways Officers are part of the overall LUF project team, and are providing advice and technical input into the development of projects and overall bid preparation. The close working relationship is seen as a key strength which will underpin the successful delivery of the LUF projects.
- 3.23 In order to maximise the creative themes that underpin much of town's success at present, including links with the next Triennial in 2024, we intend to appoint Creative Folkestone to provide input and advice into the detailed design of projects. This will ensure that the place shaping value of the projects is maximised and will recognise the importance of creativity in the future development of the town.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 The table below outlines the main strategic risks in relation to the LUF submission:

Perceived Risk	Likelihood	Seriousness	Preventative Action
LUF bid does not have a sound strategic rationale for the projects included.	Low	High	The Folkestone Place Plan sets out the overall visions and strategic direction for the town centre. The projects included in the LUF bid are identified as priorities within the plan.
LUF bid does not have support from stakeholders and partners.	Low	High	The Folkestone Place Plan and LUF bid projects have been developed with significant level of engagement from stakeholders and partners. Evidence of support

			for the LUF bid projects has been provided.
LUF bid does not demonstrate public support.	Low	High	The Place Plan, and LUF bid projects, have been developed with significant level of public engagement. Evidence of engagement will form part of the LUF bid.
LUF bid does not have a robust delivery plan.	Low	High	Detailed Action Plans for each project have been developed. A delivery strategy will form part of the LUF submission which will cover project management, procurement and timescales for statutory consents.
Project costs in the LUF bid are underestimated, putting at risk FHDC as the accountable body	Low	High	A large amount of contingency has been included in the costings. KCC Highways has been directly involved together with their cost consultants to review the costings and to ensure that there is sufficient contingency.
Funding contribution from the Council / public sector is not agreed.	Low	High	A number of sources have been identified for the Council / public sector 10% contribution. The rolling 5 year Capital Budget Strategy identifies Folkestone Town Centre as potentially requiring an allocation subject to the outcome of the LUF bid. Existing ED budgets and the Folkestone & Hythe High Streets Fund will be used to continue work at risk until the outcome of the bid is known.

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments

The key financial implications of the Levelling Up funding bid are outlined in the body of the report. Notably £200,000 to develop the projects that are part of the bid can be met from within existing General Fund budgets and

the High Street Regeneration Reserve. The Council's 10% capital funding required as part of the bid is not currently included in the Council's General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme and will be the subject of a further report. However the DLUHC Levelling Up funding bid guidance indicates the Council could use the purchase of the FOLCA building in May 2020 towards the 10% matched funding.

5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no negative equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. The formal application process to bid for Levelling Up Funding requires equalities impacts to be considered as part of any proposal put forwards.

5.4 Climate Change Implications (OF)

There are no climate change implications arising directly from this report. It provides an update to Cabinet on work undertaken in relation to the Levelling Up Fund. (LUF). Climate Change implications for various projects that will be developed as a result of the LUF will be assessed for climate change implications as applicable

5 CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Ewan Green, Director of Place
Telephone: 07783659864
Email: ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1	Overview of Levelling Up Fund Bid Projects
Appendix 2	Project Delivery Plan
Appendix 3	Letters of Support

Appendix 1: Project Synopsis

Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections

Folkestone Central Station provides great links to the town from London (53 minutes) and the South East region, but it is located away from the town centre and is accessed by the A259, which is the main arterial road along the coast. This road serves as an immediate barrier to pedestrian movement and the arrangement of road junctions around the station presents an intimidating environment for both pedestrians and cyclists wanting to access the town centre.

The Station Approach area outside the station building connects to the car park and forms the forecourt and main arrival space for those arriving by train. This is currently an underwhelming arrival space and does not convey a positive sense of arrival to the town for visitors.

The route from the station to the town centre is circuitous due to traffic islands and fast moving vehicles and is relatively hostile and confusing for pedestrians and cyclists alike. The one way nature of many of the existing roads causes higher traffic speeds, making crossing for pedestrians hard/dangerous, with reduced visibility caused by on street parking.

Wayfinding to the town centre is limited to one counter intuitive route for pedestrians and parking and ponding issues currently make footways difficult to navigate, especially for mobility impaired users and those with buggies.

The project will upgrade the highways and public realm in and around the station. This will provide a continuation of the improvements planned through the Active Travel Tranche 2 funding and will complement the proposals for Active Travel Tranche 3. This project includes:

- new flush carriageway, footpath paving and flush kerbs in Station Approach
- a new road layout to Shorncliff Road/Cheriton Road junction, including a new roundabout and new carriageway
- footway widening along Shorncliff Road
- new road markings and traffic lights on Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens
- a new mobility hub at the station, including E-bike/E-scooter hire, an EV charging point, postal collection/drop-off point and secure cycle storage
- new wayfinding from the station to the town centre

The aim of the project is to create a welcoming and attractive arrival space for rail passengers, and residents, with a greening of the area through planters and tree planting and more seating provided. Road improvements and wayfinding interventions will make the route to the town centre clearer and wider, with more accessible footpaths creating more generous and quality pedestrian space. Traffic calming measures will slow traffic speeds and make it easier and safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The provision of a mobility hub for sustainable transport options at the station, as well as new cycle parking and cycle lanes in the roads around the station, will make it safer for cyclists and encourage people to opt for sustainable transport modes around the town.

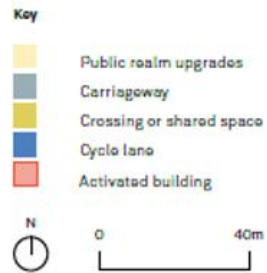
The impact of the project will be to:

- Create a more attractive and welcoming arrival space for town and district's residents and visitors coming by rail. This will in turn make residents feel more positive and optimistic about their town, and be more welcoming to visitors and potential inward investors.
- Make the journey to the town centre more obvious, safer, more accessible and attractive for both pedestrians and cyclists (both for residents and visitors).

- Provide active travel connections to key places around the town, thereby encouraging sustainable modes of travel and improving air quality through reduced air pollution from motorised transport.

Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections

- 1 Public realm upgrades & new public spaces: Upgrades to station arrival areas as a gateway into Folkestone (Partly covered by FHDC and KCC active travel bid if successful. Community Rail Partnership have plans to create a community garden on the disused platform)
- 2 Mobility hub alongside train station: Potential to include cycle hire/ electric cycles (Southeastern delivering a secure cycle parking facility)
- 3 Wayfinding and enhancing the cycling & walking experience: Cheriton Road, Cheriton Gardens & Castle Hill Avenue



Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square

Arrival to the town centre from the north where the train station is located is extremely problematic. There are a series of gyratory road systems that envelop the town centre with very few pedestrian crossing points. Building frontages are blank and uninviting and level changes and access ramps exacerbate the issues. The route from the station is confusing and dangerous for pedestrians, with ponding issues on footways making them difficult to navigate, especially with buggies and wheelchairs. On-street parking also reduces visibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

Middelburg Square, Shellons Street and the Bouverie Square, which is dominated by the bus station, provides very little space for pedestrians and form a sequence of hostile, traffic-focused environments. These, together with the traffic Islands and fast moving vehicles along the roads, act as barriers to pedestrian movement and mean that pedestrians face circuitous routes to cross streets safely to access the town centre, bus station and rail station. The pedestrian underpass, which lands pedestrians on the traffic island by the Saga building and car park, is perceived to be unpleasant and unsafe to use.

The project aims to improve accessibility from Folkestone Central Station to the town centre and around Middleburg Square. It will also provide more green amenity, play provision, events spaces. The proposed new park in Bouverie Square will create a pleasant place for town centre and visitors to dwell and make the environment safer and more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists through the creation of a new mobility hub.

Specifically the project will:

- Relocate the bus stops currently in the bus station to being along the main road, making this more suitable for the needs of the bus operator, Stagecoach, and bus users.
- Enable Bouverie Square to become a new green space at the heart of the town centre with a mobility hub that provides more options for active and sustainable transport.
- Redesign the Cheriton Gardens & Cheriton Road junction to create a roundabout that will enable all directions of travel.
- Introduce two-way traffic along Bouverie Square north and change access into the 'island' carpark.
- Pedestrianise the Foresters Way highway between Middleburg Square and Grace Hill roundabout which will serve to increase public space and give greater priority to pedestrians.
- Introduce two way traffic along the Shellons Street which will slow down traffic and create a pedestrian crossing which will increase accessibility to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.

This overhaul the legacy highway system and the creation of a new park in the heart of Folkestone in Bouverie Square, which reinstates a once set-piece garden square, will:

- Make the town safer for pedestrians and more accessible for pedestrians.
- Enhance the attractiveness of the town centre.
- Make bus stop provision more suitable for the bus operator and improve accessibility to the town centre for bus users.
- Encourage residents and visitors into the town and to stay for longer.
- Bring commercial opportunities for the council, which owns this area, to generate new income streams for supporting the local community.
- Encourage sustainable transport users, through the creation of a new mobility hub which will in turn improve air quality through reducing pollution from motor traffic and improve health and a sense of well-being.
- Encourage private sector investment and particularly the marketability of the Saga Building in the Middleburg Square opposite the new Bouverie Square park.

- Boost resident's pride in Folkestone and make them feel more positive and optimistic about their town.

Middelberg Square and Bouverie Square:

- 2.1 Reinstating Bouverie Square as an arrival space and focal point *
- 2.2 Improved gateway to the town centre including a new bus station layout*
- 2.3 Mobility Hub' with cycle hire and storage
- 2.4 Parking review (Already commissioned by FHDC)
- 2.5 Overhaul of the legacy highway system: Cheriton Gardens & Cheriton Road, redesign of junction to enable all directions of travel from this point*

Shellons Street

- 2.6 Redesign of road layout to improve all modes of travel and movement. Public realm improvements and crossings along Shellons Street*

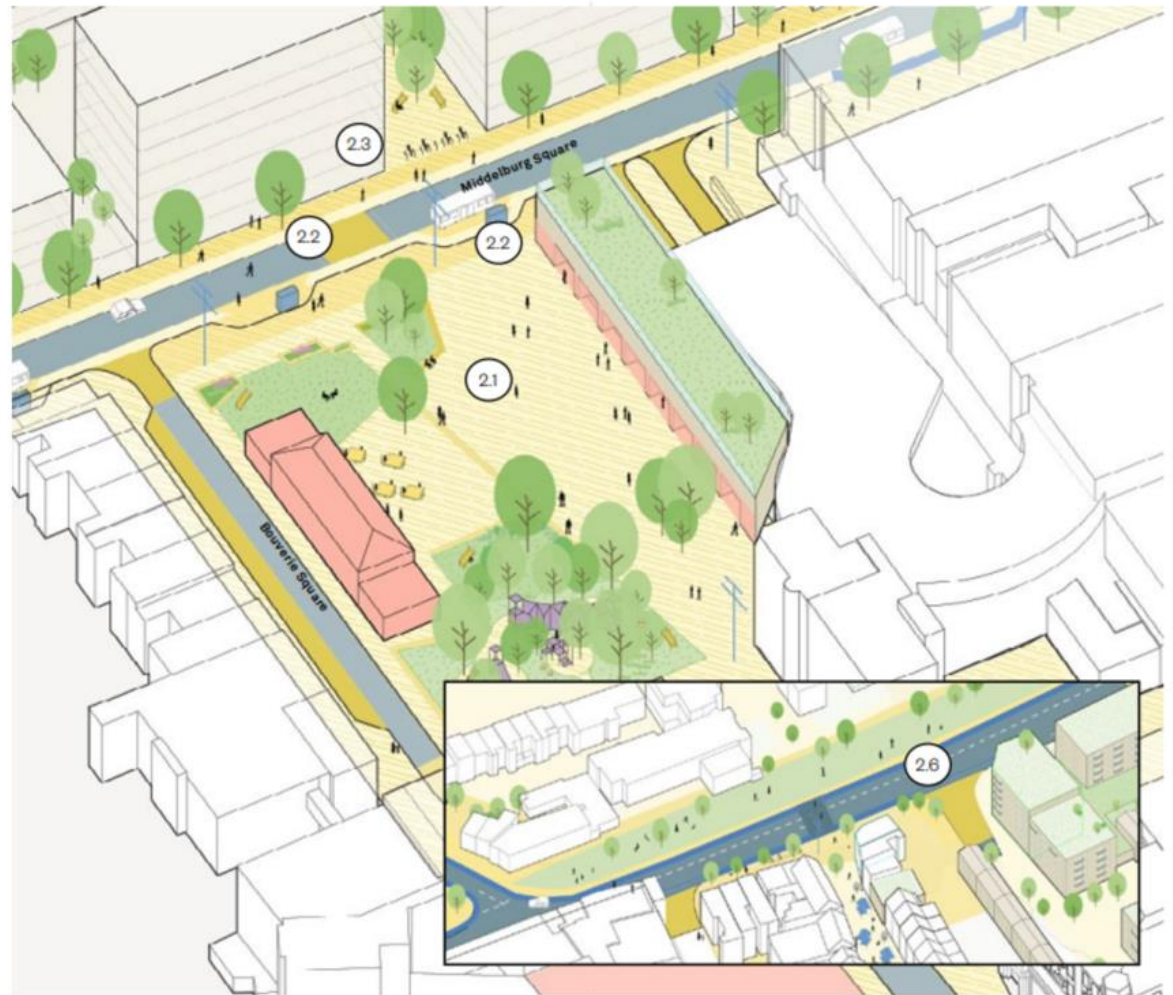
*Projects are integral and will need to be delivered together

Key

-  Public realm upgrades
-  Carriageway
-  Crossing or shared space
-  Cycle lane
-  Play space
-  Activated building



0 40m



Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm

The core area of Folkestone town centre is largely pedestrianised and the focus of activity is on Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street. Sandgate Road is the designated Primary Retail Area in the Local Plan, and Guildhall Street is within the Secondary area. Both have suffered from evidenced and reported decline over recent years with high levels of vacancy and decreasing footfall.

Sandgate Road in particular has felt the effects of national retail multiples leaving town centres, with the remaining large floor plates proving difficult to let. Many of the footways outside shops are narrow compared to widths of road and parking bays.

Guildhall Street attracts lower footfall, though the independent landlords have been able to let out smaller units more easily and the area appears to have weathered the pandemic comparatively well.

At the eastern end of Sandgate Road where it meets with the Old High Street, a café and restaurant scene is developing. Behind Sandgate Road, the domineering Bouverie Place shopping centre remains well used and fully let.

The project comprises:

- Upgrading public realm to bring visual interest, introducing greenery to soften the urban landscape and provide sustainable drainage to reduce flooding, and improve signage in Guildhall Street, Sandgate Road and town centre service areas.
- Bringing forward the refurbishment of the Folca building to create a new medical centre on part of the site and lead the way for a new mixed use scheme on the remainder of the site, which will include new retail and leisure use, business space and potentially learning space provision. The LUF investment will enable the formal separation of the two parts of the building (through the construction of a wall) which will enable Folca 2 – the new mixed use scheme, to be progressed and enable the unit to be brought back into use to create a new viable offer on the high street which will bring increased footfall and new job opportunities to the town centre.

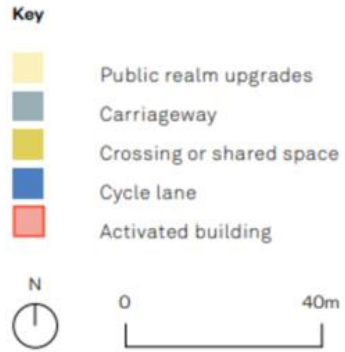
The impact of the project will be to:

- Bring in new and alternative uses into Folkestone town centre through the new health centre and new uses in the Folca building that will support the diversification of the town centre and bring new functions and purposes for visiting Folkestone. This will increase both footfall and potential spend that will benefit all town centre businesses and this in turn will encourage further redevelopment of vacant properties and derelict sites in the town centre as Folkestone's economy develops and create further employment opportunities for local communities.
- Improve the urban environment by bringing an improved setting with greater visibility of the Town Hall, Museum and Cinema, with new public realm in Guildhall Street encouraging it to become a thriving high street with an improved and new market offer that supports other uses and helps to activate the area
- Create a more attractive town centre through improving the townscape environment and refurbishing heritage assets which will boost pride in place and make Folkestone residents to feel more positive and optimistic about their town.
- Enhance the positive external reputation of Folkestone and attract more inward investment and new development.
- Ensure that the town centre offers all social, civic and economic functions that people need day and night.
- Create more diverse spaces which will enable businesses to stay and grow in the town centre.

- Enable new behaviours and practices to be piloted in the town which can be scaled up in the future.

Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm

- 3.1 Upgrades to Guildhall Street and improved market offer
- 3.2 Public realm and greening to Sandgate Road and service areas
- 3.3 Guildhall Square' as a new civic square
- 3.4 New Silver Screen/ Museum/ Town Council signage
- 3.5 Folca – medical centre and mixed use scheme, including possible retail, leisure, business and learning space
- 3.6 Explore options to integrate cycling and skateboarding in the town centre
- 3.7 Market improvement programme



Appendix 2: Project Delivery/Action Plan

	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25
Project 1. Station Arrival and Town Centre connections											
A. Station Approach		Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3 & 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor	Works	New road layout operational						
B. Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens		Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3)	Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor			Works		New road layout and bus station operational		
C. Station Arrival Area		Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3)	Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor				Works			New road layout and bus station operational
Project 2. Town Centre gateway and Bouverie Square											
A Middelberg Square and Shellons Street		Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3)	Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor	Works				New road layout and bus station operational		
B. Bouverie Square			Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3 & 4)		Procurement of Works Contractor			Works			New square open

Project 3. Town Centre Public Realm							
A. Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street		Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3)	Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor	Works	Building Operational	
B. Folca	Design Work Completed (RIBA Stage 3 & 4)	Procurement of Works Contractor	Works	Building Operational		Statutory Procedure: Final Building Control Approvals	

Appendix 3: Letters of Support



Ewan Green
Director of Place
Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Castle Hill Avenue
Folkestone CT20 2QY

30th May 2022

Dear Ewan,

Levelling up fund bid

As you will already know, Stagecoach currently leases and operates from the bus station in Bouverie Square. As a key stakeholder in Folkestone Town Centre we have been involved in the development of the Folkestone Place Plan, published last year, which sets out the long term ambitions for the town. The Plan includes a priority project aiming to bring forward new uses for Bouverie Square and to relocate the operations of the current bus station.

Since then we have continued to work with the council and their consultants and have been closely involved in the design proposals for the redevelopment of Bouverie Square and the relocation of the existing bus station provision close by to Middelburg Square and Shellons Street. While there is still some detail to work through, the proposal will overcome a number of operational challenges which exist with the current configuration of the bus station and will greatly improve the pedestrian experience in the area. This proposal also aligns closely with the aims of the National Bus Strategy.

All partners agree that encouraging sustainable travel, including by bus, is essential for Folkestone as we seek to collectively address the climate crisis.

We are therefore committed to continuing to work with the council to deliver this project which will meet both the aspirations of our customers and serve to significantly enhance Folkestone town centre.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Arnold", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Matthew Arnold
Commercial Director

Stagecoach South East, Bus Station, St. George's Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2SY
T: 01227 828106 stagecoachbus.com

Registered Office: East Kent Road Car Company Limited, One Stockport Exchange, 20 Railway Road, Stockport SK1 2EW. (Registered in England & Wales 104366)



Clr David Monk
Leader of Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Civic Centre
Castle Hill Avenue
Folkestone CT20 2QY

Roger Gough
Leader's Office
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Tel: 03000 416167
Email: roger.gough@kent.gov.uk

31 May 2022

Dear David

I am delighted to hear that Folkestone & Hythe District Council are preparing an application to submit in round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund. It is great that you are focusing this bid on addressing some of the legacy highways issues in Folkestone which relate to when it served as a port, and on enhancing the town centre environment. I understand that KCC officers Lee Burchill and Matt Hogben from our Highways team have been working closely with your team on these projects, providing both advice and technical input for the LUF bid. I am glad to hear that our partnership approach is working well and support the continuation of this close relationship and the lead role that the KCC highways team will take in project delivery if your application is successful.

I am very happy to endorse your Council's submission to the LUF and believe these will have a transformational impact on Folkestone and will enable the town to better serve the needs of both residents and visitors in the future.

We very much hope that this excellent bid receives government support from the Levelling Up Fund.

Yours sincerely

Roger Gough
Leader of Kent County Council
Member for Sevenoaks North and Darent Valley