
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

**OBAN LORN AND ISLES
AREA COMMITTEE**

DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

8 MARCH 2023

GIBRALTAR STREET PUBLIC REALM PROJECT - CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee to consider the possible options for the Gibraltar Street public realm project and agree the preferred option to be progressed to implementation.
- 1.2 Argyll and Bute Council agreed to allocate £250,000 of Place Based Investment (PBI) Programme Funding to Gibraltar Street, Oban to enhance the public realm and improve access to Oban Town Centre given the function of this space as a key pedestrian thoroughfare linking a key centre of retail to the town centre.
- 1.3 TGP Landscape Architects were commissioned in January 2022 to create design options, test design concepts with community and stakeholders and cost design proposals.
- 1.4 Public consultation was carried out during 2022. However it did not provide clear support for a single option as presented and raised some additional concerns about the proposed scheme. TGP Landscape Architects have taken on board comments received and working within the constraints presented by the site have presented a revised design (Option A - Appendix 1). This option has been costed and is estimated to exceed the available budget due to ground conditions and rising construction costs. The complexity of the works would also require the works to go out to tender which will incur a further delay in implementation. Full details of these costs have been included in Appendix 3 of this report which is marked exempt given it contains sensitive financial information that may impact on any future tender exercise.

- 1.5 Given the above and reviewing all the information including comments received during the public consultation, Officers have put forward an alternative option for members to consider. This option is referred to as Option B of this report and is the preferred option as recommended by Officers. This option would essentially retain the site as is and carry out comprehensive resurfacing works with a good quality surface finish as well as provide upgraded street furniture and enhanced street lighting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee:

1. Note the content of this report and the feedback provided as a result of public consultation during 2022 and specifically in November 2022;
2. Note the issues identified in relation to Option A;
3. Agree that Officers continue to progress Option B which retains existing site levels and looks to resurface the existing streetscape, renew street furniture and improve street lighting.
4. Agree that delegated authority be afforded to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth for the delivery of the project to completion including agreeing a final design.

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OPTIONS FOR**

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On the 12th August 2021, Argyll and Bute Council agreed to allocate £250,000 of Place Based Investment (PBI) Programme Funding to Gibraltar Street, Oban to enhance the public realm and improve access to Oban town centre.
- 2.2 TGP Landscape Architects were commissioned in January 2022 to create design options, test design concepts with community and stakeholders and cost design proposals. The latest public consultation on the proposals was held in November 2022. This report outlines the progress made with the project to date, brings to member's attention Option A which is a revised design for Gibraltar Street taking into account public consultation comments received and explains the thinking in terms of Option B which Officers consider to be the preferred option to take forward.
- 2.3 Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee are therefore asked to consider the report and approve Option B to be taken forward and instruct officers to progress this option through delegated powers.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee:

- 3.1 Note the content of this report and the feedback provided as a result of public consultation during 2022 and specifically in November 2022;
- 3.2 Note the issues identified in relation to Option A;

- 3.3 Agree that Officers continue to progress Option B which retains existing site levels and looks to resurface the existing streetscape, renew street furniture and improve street lighting.
- 3.4 Agree that delegated authority be afforded to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth for the delivery of the project to completion including agreeing a final design.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 On 12th August 2021, Argyll and Bute Council agreed to allocate £250,000 of Place Based Investment (PBI) Programme funding to Gibraltar Street, Oban to enhance the public realm and improve the access to Oban town centre. The total council budget for the project is £250,000, with a potential £10,000 contribution from Bid4Oban. Remaining budget for construction is £210,000.
- 4.2 Gibraltar Street is a key pedestrian intersection between Oban Town Centre and edge of town retailers via the Tesco car park that has recently been refurbished. The main objective of this piece of work is to improve the public realm of Gibraltar Street to create an enhanced pedestrian space that encourages people into Oban town centre, and provides an attractive, pedestrian environment in which businesses can operate their business. Despite its short length Gibraltar Street is a complex site with considerable levels changes from both north to south and west to east. Gibraltar Street also has a number of residential and business accesses, at which levels determine how the open space meets these various accesses. In addition there is uncertainty over a number of underground utilities that have emerged during the detailed design process.
- 4.3 TGP Landscape Architects were commissioned in January 2022 to create design solutions, test design concepts with the community and other stakeholders; deliver to RIBA work stage 5 and cost design proposals.
- 4.4 Initial design options were produced in March 2022 with an internal workshop taking place in April 2022 with colleagues from Roads and Infrastructure Services and Elected Members. A subsequent external workshop took place with relevant stakeholders such as BID4Oban, Tesco, local businesses, Oban Community Council and the Oban Access Panel.
- 4.5 Based upon feedback from all stakeholders, designs were refined and an initial public consultation took in June 2022. Feedback from the public was generally positive and the majority of the comments received were around widening the access at the bottleneck of Tesco; making the area more accessible friendly; increasing planting/greenspace and seating; and ensuring the space is brightened with public art work and improved lighting.
- 4.6 Initial designs concepts included redevelopment of both council maintained area of Gibraltar Street into the car park and pedestrian link owned by Tesco. There was initial support from Tesco to resolve the bottleneck on the site and make the space more user friendly and visually attractive, however Tesco later withdrew from the project which reduced the potential impact of the future transformation of the Street particularly with regard to addressing the problematic levels.
- 4.7 As a result of exclusion of the Tesco area, the site for redevelopment has significantly reduced in size. With the Tesco site included, there was a longer distance over which to achieve a gentler slope. Exclusion of the Tesco land has

resulted in a more complex arrangement being proposed to accommodate levels within the site. The main issue has been the need to design around the slope running through the site and the resulting different level areas that had to be created across the site to ensure compliance with British Standards for Accessibility in external spaces. This has resulted in a significant change to the design and a much more complex design than was originally anticipated.

- 4.8 The revised design options were presented to DMT and Oban, Lorn and Isles Elected Members in October 2022, and went out to consultation in November 2022. 217 responses were received to the online consultation and over 100 people attended the in person public consultation event on the day. The majority of online responses (47%) were in favour of what was referred to as Design Option 1, however, a significant number of responses chose neither of the designs presented (37%) with opposition to both plans communicated by stakeholders such as Bossards, Oban Community Council, Bid4Oban, CrossRoads and Oban Hospice.
- 4.9 Comments received in regard to the design and in order of recurrence were as follows: Increase the space for Bossards café (32); Public money should be used for other priorities/areas of Oban (19); Space does not require upgrade, light touch improvement such as tidying up and resurfacing (12); Concerns for future maintenance of the space (10); Improvement on the original designs and support of what looks like a more attractive space for all users (10); Concerns whether space will be able to sustain amount of traffic/is it fully equipped for people with disabilities and those who use mobility scooters (8); and more.

Option A: Revised Design

- 4.10 Following the consultation, TGP Landscape Architects were instructed to make changes to Design Option 1 (presented at the November 2022 consultation) that would maximise the space for the existing cafe to have an outdoor area for their use immediately outside the business and thereby hopefully alleviate concerns of stakeholders and public. The final design option (Option A) has been appended – see Appendix 1 – and represents the best option for allocating usable space to the café, although it does result in a further division of the space.
- 4.11 The indicative scheme has been costed but is not expected to be able to be delivered within the budget currently available. Oban, Lorn and Isles Area Committee is asked to note that initial costs are on a very broad estimate and in addition to construction costs professional fees, tender price inflation beyond Q1/23, lighting and power installations, potential adverse ground conditions, alterations to services and contingency could all add to the overall cost of delivering the project. Additional budget will therefore be required if this design option (Option A) is to be taken forward. Estimated costs are contained within Appendix 3 of this report which is marked as exempt given the sensitivity of the figures included which could impact negatively on any future tender process. Should this option be progressed we would work to confirm unknown costs as soon as practicable.

- 4.12 The advantages of the new design option are that it has the ability to transform Gibraltar Street by visually enhancing the space and ensuring the pedestrian footway is compliant for all users. The designed option addresses the various levels restrictions and accesses onto the open space, whilst providing grades that meet the British Standard requirements for Accessibility in external spaces. The design option does however subdivide the site up into various platforms/sections and it may feel less open than it does at present and be less flexible as a thoroughfare.
- 4.13 Officers in Roads and Infrastructure Services have been consulted throughout the entirety of the project and have indicated that they would not have capacity to implement Option A at this time due to the complexity of the construction but will be able to take forward Option B. Option B is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Option B: Resurfacing option

- 4.14 Following on from the consultation feedback suggesting a lighter touch option and comments from the Oban Community Council whom 'urges that the proposal reverts as nearly as possible to the Gibraltar Street area of the original plan, so that a suitable seating area can be available to Bossard's customers' (see Appendix 2 – Original Designs Presented June 2022 Consultation), an option could be considered which simply focuses on the site as it is with no change to levels but instead looked to significantly upgrade the surface finishes, provide high quality furniture and improved street lighting.
- 4.15 The resurfaced option (Option B) would focus on replacing existing materials and street furniture to provide a refreshed space, with repairs made to the steps and lighting could also be provided.
- 4.16 Initial discussions with Roads and Infrastructure colleagues indicate that the works could be delivered within the budget available (although a full cost breakdown is still to be drawn up) – including replacing the existing pavements with new high quality paving; repairs to steps; and the addition of new high quality street furniture and lighting. Roads and Infrastructure colleagues have advised that the project could be completed within circa 6 weeks, starting on-site after the tourist season – September/October 2023.
- 4.17 The advantages of the resurfacing option (Option B) is that it can be delivered within the existing budget; the council have delivered similar schemes; the scheme would be completed within a shorter timeframe which would help with public support and minimise disruption to businesses; feedback from consultation in regard to light touch improvements and space for café owner would be met.
- 4.18 It is anticipated that a period of work would be required to confirm final finishes on paving, street furniture and lighting before works could be agreed.
- 4.19 If Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee chooses to proceed with the light touch resurfacing project (Option B) with the site remaining as is, agree that officers will progress to implementation and work with officers in Roads and Infrastructure Services.

- 4.20 Delegated authority is requested to be afforded to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to progress the delivery of the project via the option confirmed at Committee to completion, including agreeing any procurement process as may be necessary.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The consultation process carried out in 2022 did not provide clear support for a single option and raised some concerns about the proposed scheme. Whilst the design team have tried to address these, they have not been shared with stakeholders at this stage and so there is no further feedback to share. Further feedback on the deliverability of the project and costs of construction have led to officers recommending that Option B, essentially a resurfacing option which would be delivered by Roads and Infrastructure Service. It is anticipated that this option can be delivered within the budget available but this will be subject to a detailed costing.
- 5.2 If Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee decide to proceed with Option B, officers will progress to implementation and work with officers in Roads and Infrastructure Services.
- 5.3 Following Area Committee decision, officers will progress the preferred option, update local stakeholders and progress with delivering the project to an appropriate timescale.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – the works would support Oban Town Centre which in turn will support the overarching objective and long term outcomes of the Council's Corporate Plan, Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan, the Local Development Plan and the Economic Strategy. Capital works must be in line with the Place Based Investment Programme criteria.
- 6.2 Financial - £250,000 of Place Based Investment funding has been allocated to the project. Budget remaining for construction costs is £210,000. If Option A is progressed additional funding will be required to be sought from the Policy and Resources Committee with estimated costs in Appendix 3 of this report which is marked exempt.
- 6.3 Legal – None.
- 6.4 HR – None.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None.
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – The project supports local economy and community through place-based regeneration activity.
- 6.5.3 Islands - None.

- 6.6 Climate Change – Construction works undertaken will result in carbon emission although it is anticipated that these will be restricted to the construction period.
- 6.7 Risk – As with all construction projects a number of risks will be ongoing and a risk register will be maintained. Delivering Option A may lead to higher risks as referenced to in section 4.11 of the report.
- 6.8 Customer Service – None.

Kirsty Flanagan

**Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth
Policy Lead for Strategic Development, Councillor Robin Currie**

13 February 2023

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Final Design Option

Appendix 2 – Original Designs Presented at June 2022 Consultation

Appendix 3 – Gibraltar Street Public Realm Project Estimate Costs – EXEMPT