

Winchester City Council

Public Realm Design Scheme St Maurice's Covert, Winchester

Summary: Winchester City Council wishes to commission a public realm specialist to draw up a scheme for the improvement of the area in and around St Maurice's Covert on the High Street in Winchester.

The scheme should seek to

- highlight the Covert's attractiveness, including its historic setting
- enhance the area to attract more people to pass through it and to use it for a variety of activities
- minimise visual and physical clutter
- strengthen the Covert's role in linking the commercial centre of the city with the Wessex Hotel, Winchester Cathedral and beyond
- enhance the centre of the city as a place where it is a pleasure to walk.

Deadline for bids: Bids from appropriate organisations and individuals should be submitted by **noon on Wednesday 27 April 2016**, in accordance with the requirements set out in section 6 of this specification.

1) Background Information

- 1.1 The project sits under the auspices of Winchester Town Forum, which is the group of City Councillors who represent the six unparished wards in central Winchester. Often likened to a parish council for the city centre, the Town Forum is concerned with services, developments, policies and issues affecting the area.
- 1.2 Among other things, the Winchester Town Forum budget pays for playground refurbishments and the maintenance of parks and open spaces. St Maurice's Covert is one such open space.
- 1.3 The Forum has agreed that the presentation of the Covert should be improved. The space has limitations both in physical terms and as a result of legal covenants, more details of which are given below. Whilst scope for change is somewhat limited, the Town Forum – working in partnership with local stakeholders - seeks an imaginative, relatively low cost, solution which enhance the Covert and its surroundings for the benefit of all.
- 1.4 There have been extensive discussions about the Covert over the last three years, and it has been agreed that external consultants with specialist design skills for the public realm should be engaged to develop a scheme for the site.

2) Policy Context

2.1 Each commission issued by the Council is intended to support delivery of one or more of the themes of the Winchester District Community Strategy, bringing positive change for local people and neighbourhoods.

2.2 The Winchester District Community Strategy (2010 – 2020) has three broad outcomes as follows:

i) *Active Communities* – encouraging healthy lifestyles and active participation in communities, ensuring people can access the services they need.

ii) *High Quality Environment* – ensuring that our natural and built environments are valued, enhanced and respected in a way that contributes to a sense of place and underpins a prosperous economy.

iii) *Prosperous Economy* – fostering a dynamic and creative economy, supported by excellent education and communications. Encouraging new business and entrepreneurship, tackling worklessness and promoting a low carbon economy.

2.3 The enhancement for St Maurice's Covert would support all three of these, by:

i) Active Communities – encouraging walking in the city. St Maurice's Covert is a thoroughfare which links the commercial centre with the cathedral quarter;

ii) High Quality Environment – the project would improve the look and feel of a well-loved historic structure, which includes a Norman tower, ensuring it reflected the past use of the site appropriately whilst making it more relevant to the modern-day city;

iii) Prosperous Economy – the Covert is in the middle of the busiest shopping area, which has seen significant investment in paving, signage, street furniture and public art in recent years. Improving its appearance and usefulness will help to enhance the overall appeal of the High Street, as well as improving the experience of tourists and guests at the Wessex Hotel.

2.4 The Town Forum has also produced The Vision for Winchester Town (see 'Background Reading') which sets out the following themes for the development of Winchester:

- encourage people to create economic prosperity;
- care for our history, heritage and setting;
- be a natural destination for visitors and shoppers;
- provide new and affordable housing;

- improve transport, infrastructure and air quality;
- be a regional centre for creativity and culture;
- create a green and environmentally friendly city;
- be a town that supports safe and stable communities.

This project naturally aligns with several of these themes.

- 2.5 A [Walking Strategy for Winchester](#) has also been produced by a cross-party group of councillors and representatives of local organisations. It is formally supported by the City Council, and references St Maurice's Covert as a priority intervention.

3) Cultural Life

- 3.1 Winchester's creative community already makes an important contribution to the creative vitality and quality of life of local people. The artistic and cultural distinctiveness of the City and surrounding District are recognised time and again in strategies and policies. Residents and visitors are culturally active and have access to high quality arts activity at the District's theatres, galleries, festivals and events. The creative industries make a significant contribution to the local economy through architecture, design, film production, literature, performing arts and fine arts.
- 3.2 The Town Forum and City Council more generally help to sustain and develop successful creative environments through funding, support and joint working with partners who deliver arts activities. In its turn, the District's creative community makes a significant contribution under each area of the Community Strategy and is keen to support and increase this contribution over time. Winchester City Council has a Cultural Strategy which sets out an ambitious vision for the District, with a new cultural leadership group committed to supporting its delivery.
- 3.3 This commission may present an opportunity for creative practices and practitioners based in Winchester, who have proved themselves adept time and again at enhancing the District's townscapes and countryside with innovative work in the public realm, and imaginative engagement with residents and businesses alike.
- 3.4 Potential bidders might be interested to know that 2016 will see a year of themed events and exhibitions across Winchester and the wider county of Hampshire as part of Hampshire Cultural Trust's 'Royal Blood' theme (which aligns neatly with the Queen's 90th birthday year). This precedes a year of Jane Austen bicentenary celebrations in 2017.
- 3.5 The City Council is also adopting walking as its corporate theme for 2016/17, and this project could form part of the legacy in terms of enhancing a city centre, and improving conditions for pedestrians to encourage more people to walk to different destinations across the city.

4) The Commission

4.1 The Brief

The overall objective of the project is to enhance the environment within and surrounding the passageway known as St Maurice's Covert for the benefit of users and those who pass through it.

The enhancements, in whatever form they take, should:

- a. highlight the special qualities of the Covert - including its architecture and its historic setting – and enhance its presentation, whilst considering sympathetically the covenants, character and history of the site;
- b. strengthen the Covert's role in linking High Street, the commercial centre of the city, with the Cathedral, the Wessex Hotel, Council offices and public lavatories, actively encouraging footfall between these areas;
- c. minimise visual and physical clutter;
- d. ensure that the area is attractive for a variety of uses at different times of the day and year, including effective use of lighting;
- e. be of a form that requires minimal ongoing expenditure on maintenance and repair.

Bids are invited from any individual or organisation in the private, public or voluntary sector with the appropriate expertise and capacity to deliver the commissioned work.

Consequently, Winchester Town Forum, supported by the project stakeholder steering group, now wishes to commission a public realm design scheme for St Maurice's Covert and its immediate surroundings.

4.2 Features of an Acceptable Public Realm Scheme

The outcome for the commission is as follows:

That there is an affordable, deliverable and imaginative scheme laid out for St Maurice's Covert, which is well supported by local residents and stakeholders and which will instruct the delivery of a phased enhancement programme.

Moreover, a scheme which is considered to have met this brief will:

- seek to ensure that the Covert becomes a well used and loved place within the historic core of the city, both by day and at night
- be low in maintenance requirements (cash, skills or time)
- be durable
- complement the existing architecture

- encourage pedestrians through the Covert and throughout the area
- enhance views through the Covert
- respect the restrictive covenants on the site.

To achieve these objectives a number of issues will have to be considered together; these are likely to include:

- pedestrian movement
- use of the area for, amongst other things, stalls and events,
- highlighting, safeguarding and preserving historic buildings
- storage and removal of waste from street markets and retail outlets
- wayfinding
- (perceptions of) safety by day and night
- potential for cycle parking
- shop frontages facing the Covert
- access to public toilets
- shelter and comfort
- interface with the adjoining streets and paths
- integration with the wider public realm
- lighting

Design concepts submitted in fulfilment of this brief should take the form of sketch drawings and text outlining the methodology to be used in fulfilling the brief, including public engagement.

There should be an overall plan for the area with costings for the different elements and an indication of how work could be phased if this is necessary due to the limitations of funds. (This plan would be used for potential external funding applications.)

The plan must include a break down of estimates for the cost of delivery of the various elements of the scheme. Estimates should be divided into supply and installation, and professional fees. It is expected that implementation will be tendered in accordance with the Council's adopted financial arrangements, but that the supervision of the work is likely to remain the responsibility of the designer.

4.3 Anticipated Characteristics of the Successful Bidder

The Town Forum has no preconceived view about the type of organisation suitable for this commission, but expects the work to be completed to an extremely high professional standard. To this end, it is anticipated that the successful bidder will demonstrate knowledge, skills and capacity in most of the following areas:

- extensive experience of place-shaping and public realm programmes
- an understanding of the site and its context
- a good record of working with a range of stakeholders and partners
- experience of delivering public realm improvements
- a reputation for excellent work

- a commitment to community engagement, including working with more vulnerable people named in Equalities Law;
- expertise in cost consultancy
- self-reliance to run with minimal operational support from Council
- excellent communications, visual and verbal, as well as interpersonal and negotiation skills;
- excellent organisational and budget management skills.

4.4 Site Context Analysis and Constraints

St Maurice's Covert is a public thoroughfare in Winchester's Conservation Area. It was formed when the Victorian Church of St Maurice was demolished in 1957 and replaced with the shopping development currently occupied by Debenhams. The Victorian Church had replaced one of the City's more important medieval churches dating from before the Norman Conquest, when the Danish King Cnut sat on the throne of England. In 1172, the benefice belonged to the Priory of St Swithun and the church was served by priests of the Fraternity of St Peter. The medieval church was knocked down in 1842 and replaced with a bland Victorian church, but the medieval tower with its Norman arched doorway was retained as part of that composition and is now Grade II Listed. The Victorian church was accessed directly from High Street and backed on to the cathedral grounds, part of which is now occupied by the Wessex Hotel. Nothing of the Victorian church remains.

Today the Covert is considered by many to be a dull space with an intimidating ceiling, poorly lit with municipal style lighting. Access is gained to Market Lane to the rear via openings either side of the tower. The east inner



wall is Debenhams shop frontage which needs to be kept unobstructed at all times by restrictive covenant.

The Covert is paved in York stone slabs. The west side wall is semi-smooth render and is painted light cream. The High Street entrance is completely

open, save for two stone Doric columns supporting the masonry above. Entrance to the covert from the High Street is level but access through the Norman arch at the west rear is via a couple of steps.

The Covert is subject to a covenant from the Church Commissioners which requires that the space be maintained as public open space and that it should not be subdivided. This may not be a definitive constraint. Winchester City Council is responsible for the normal maintenance of the tower but significant repair work or any form of demolition must be referred to the Church Commissioners and the Diocese for approval. The walls, ceiling (including the lights) and floor surface are maintained by Winchester City Council. The space is also affected by restrictive covenants requiring that public access is always available across it.



Whilst commercial use is not entirely ruled out, the past practice has been that only charitable sales may take place in the Covert. These often take the form of volunteer-run table sales, which are not presented to a high standard and do not attract a high level of footfall. However, the opportunity to raise funds in this way is very much established as part of life on the High Street, and it is appreciated by community groups.

There is an historic agreement that a flower stall be situated on the front corner of the covert adjacent to Greggs. The stall operates from Tuesdays to Saturdays.

At Christmas there are strings of white lights across the ceiling, making it more inviting, and it is often used by small choirs and other musicians for fundraising purposes.

To the rear the ground is divided up with different surface materials – cobbles and re-laid gravestones form the central divide between the two thoroughfares which are laid with small unit York stone matching the High Street, on the Debenhams side, and York stone slabs on the Norman arch side. On the Debenhams side, numerous bicycle stands are located. Adjacent to the space

behind the Covert on the west side are the public conveniences in an award-winning converted building with an intriguing and attractive window display drawn from the Council's museum collections. The square formed at this location is separated from Market Lane by a mix of municipal bollards.

4.5 Other Issues

Within the above-mentioned square, it is often the practice that Eurobins are located there during market days. However, unofficial bins are often left there and the permitted arrangement is often exploited – meaning that bins are left out even when the market is not operating. Guests at The Wessex Hotel in Paternoster Row look out on this 'bin store', which does not provide the desired impression of the city. This situation is monitored by the City Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers but is certainly not ideal and has attracted some complaints. These are most notably about the lack of reverence given to the gravestones, but also about the visual intrusion.

The link pedestrian footpath between the St Maurice's Covert square and the cathedral grounds is a pathway running directly adjacent to the Bishop Morley's Almshouses on the west side and the Wessex Hotel on the east. The Wessex hotel land consists of a small parking area with some poorly maintained fencing and much open to view including some bin storage.

4.6 Monitoring and Reporting

The successful bidder will report to a steering group drawn from Town Forum Members and local stakeholders (Debenhams, Greggs, the Wessex Hotel, Winchester Business Improvement District and the Church Commissioners).

Over the life of the commission, the selected organisation will be expected to attend meetings including

- an inception meeting
- meetings to approve concept designs and final designs with costings
- a presentation to Councillors and/or another wider stakeholder group in the city.

Short, emailed updates to the lead Council officer will also be expected, providing brief details of main activities carried out and overall progress against a programme timeline agreed at inception.

5) Fee

The total fee for this commission is £10,000, net of VAT. This includes all travel and expenses, engagement activity.

However, the Council may at its discretion choose to fund or contribute to enhancement activities, where agreed in writing in advance, if these are considered to be desirable. Your bid should not make any assumptions in relation to these.

The Council may also be able to provide free meeting rooms (eg for Steering Group meetings) where agreed in writing in advance.

Winchester Town Forum has a budget of £30,000 (net) allocated to kick start the delivery of the scheme. There is no guarantee that all or any of the works will be implemented as this will depend on the continued availability of funds and the decision of the Council, advised by its stakeholders, as to whether it wishes to proceed.

6) Making a Bid

6.1 Eligibility to Bid

This commission has been advertised on the South East Business Portal, Contracts Finder website and via creative networks. Bids may be submitted by any organisation (private, public, voluntary sector) which considers itself able to fulfil the brief effectively, or indeed by an individual on the same basis.

Where organisations or individuals feel they would benefit from working together to provide the service, the Councils will accept bids from a combination of partners. However, the contract will only be the one lead individual or organisation, and this lead partner must be made clear in the submission (and will be the partner assessed for financial resilience as part of the evaluation process).

6.2 Timing (all dates in 2016)

Commission advertised on South East Business Portal	Week commencing Monday 21 March 2016
Deadline for submission of bids	Noon on Wednesday 27 April 2016
Financial checks on lead bidders	Week commencing Tuesday 3 May 2016
Evaluation panel shortlists bids	Tuesday 10 May 2016
Interviews to evaluation panel	Thursday 9 June 2016
Commission inception meeting	Thursday 16 June 2016 at 2pm Winchester City Council offices

Please note these dates in your diary as they cannot be changed to accommodate individual bidders. The interviews will take place at Winchester City Council's offices in Colebrook Street, SO23 9LJ.

Please also note that the evaluation panel will expect to meet personnel involved in the delivery of the programme at the presentation stage, and not other organisational representatives.

6.3 Content of the Bid

This Brief is to select a design team or individual who will produce a costed plan – with outline designs - to achieve the outcome and associated features set out in section 4.2 of this specification. This must include the development of local partnerships to support delivery of the plan, and indicative costings for managing and implementing the works should the plan be approved for implementation.

There is no set format for a bid, but you must include the following information:

- Full description of the organisation(s) including governance arrangements
- For lead organisations, a copy of the most recent annual accounts or other appropriate evidence where not available
- A clear description, **not exceeding 4 A4 pages** of how you propose to deliver the commission, and describing the skills/expertise available for delivery of the commission and the measures of success which you would propose (excessively long or jargon-ridden bids are less likely to score well during evaluation)
- The names of those who would be involved with the project, and their cvs
- A basic project plan (eg simple Gantt chart) showing key milestones for the project)
- A breakdown showing how the fee will be deployed
- A headline risk assessment
- Two examples demonstrating relevant experience including low-res visuals
- Two referees for work of a comparable nature, and relevant to the proposed project team.

6.4 Evaluation Process and Criteria

Process: All bids will be evaluated in the following sequence:

- Shortlisting by the evaluation panel, which will consist of representatives of Winchester Town Forum, Winchester Business Improvement District and local stakeholders (eg nearby businesses, Church Commissioners).
- Financial checks on shortlisted organisations
- Presentations by three (maximum four) individuals/organisations to the panel
- Collection of references for preferred bidder

Criteria: The evaluation criteria which will be applied to all bids are as follows: the ability and capacity of the bidder(s) to deliver the commission, based on:

- approach to delivery of the commission (methodology, proposed PIs, familiarity with key issues, company style)
- relevant skills and experience (including skills mix)
- response to the brief, and to the commissioning approach more broadly (understanding of issues and opportunities)
- realism of project plan

max 25 marks

- recognition of the need to engage with and provide for individuals from minority backgrounds as identified by Equalities Law (eg consideration of access issues for those with disabilities; potential for tactile features for those with impaired sight)

max 5 marks

- the stability and reliability of the bidder (track record, financial status and resilience of lead bidder, overall credibility of bid). Where the Panel's financial advice indicates an unacceptable level of risk, this could lead to rejection of the bid.

max 10 marks

- value for money of the bid, such as day rates, added value, enhancements, opportunities for professional development (eg via internships or apprenticeships)

max 10 marks

6.5 Contracting Arrangements

Following the selection of the preferred bidder, a follow-up meeting, email or phonecall may be required for further information or clarification. Assuming this is satisfactory, there will be discussion of the final contractual and monitoring arrangements, and a service order will then be issued by Winchester City Council which, along with this specification and the winning bid, constitutes the Council's contract. If the preferred bidder wishes to have in place a formal contract, the bidder will be expected to provide a template for use by the Council.

7) Making a Bid

Please submit your bid electronically by **noon on Wednesday 27 April 2016** to:

Sonia Vincent
Economy and Communities Support Officer

at svincent@winchester.gov.uk

Please mark the email 'St Maurice's Covert Commission' and **ensure the file size is under 5 MB**. The Council is unable to accept submissions by DropBox or other shared filing systems.

To request an informal discussion about the commission please email your contact details to Eloise Appleby, Assistant Director (Economy and Communities), at eappleby@winchester.gov.uk or call 01962 848 181.

Background Documents

Cultural Strategy for the Winchester District:

www.winchester.gov.uk/community/arts/winchester-cultural-capital/

[Winchester District Community Strategy, 2010 - 2020](#)

[The Vision for Winchester Town, 2012 - 2017](#)

[Walking Strategy for Winchester, 2014](#)

Notes of the most recent working group meeting, with local stakeholders (Jan 2016) will be provided on appointment

Copies of the conveyancing documentation in which the covenants are set out will be provided on appointment

See also Appendix 1 – Site Plan of St Maurice's Covert, Winchester