

REPORT TITLE: ENHANCING ST MAURICE'S COVERTWINCHESTER TOWN FORUM16 NOVEMBER 2016CABINET7 DECEMBER 2016PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR VICTORIA WESTON, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUILT ENVIRONMENTREPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMY & COMMUNITIES)Contact Officer: Eloise Appleby Tel No: 01962 848 181 Email eappleby@winchester.gov.ukWARD(S): ST MICHAEL'SPURPOSE

As part of a package of measures to enhance the commercial centre of the city, Winchester Town Forum allocated a budget to improve the presentation of St Maurice's Covert on the High Street. The Covert is part of the site of the former church of St Maurice, between Debenhams and Greggs.

Members felt that the potential of the Covert – as a linking route between High Street and Cathedral, as a shelter and as a covered space for community activities or cultural performances – was not being fulfilled. There was a concern that its appearance actively deterred wider usage, and invited antisocial behaviour.

With the support of an Informal Member Working Group drawn from the Town Forum, a commission was advertised for consultants to research and develop a design scheme for the Covert. A budget of £10,000 was allocated from the Town Account for this design work – now all but complete – and a further £30,000 to support delivery of the new scheme.

A full presentation was given by the appointed architects at the meeting of Winchester Town Forum in September 2016. This report summarises key aspects of the design scheme, and proposes a further financial contribution to enable delivery of the first phase of the completed scheme in the Council's capital programme for 2017/18.

RECOMMENDATIONS:To Town Forum

1. That the Enhancement Strategy produced by ScottWhitbyStudio to improve St Maurice's Covert be welcomed;
2. That confirmation be given by Members as to whether they wish to proceed to delivery or withdraw from the project at this stage;
3. That, should delivery be the preferred option, the £30,000 budget identified to support the enhancement scheme be confirmed for the purpose and made available as soon as the necessary consents are in place to begin delivery;
4. That, should delivery be the preferred option, a further capital contribution from the Winchester Town Account to the delivery project of £30,000 be recommended to Cabinet for 2017/18;
5. That, should no further funding be made available from the Town Account or General Fund, enhancements delivered to the value of the existing Town Account allocation of £30,000 be commissioned as a first step to more complete delivery;
6. That the Town Forum Informal Steering Group, having fulfilled its original terms of reference, be extended as a steering group for the delivery of the enhancement works.

To Cabinet

1. That the Town Forum be acknowledged for championing and leading the St Maurice's Covert enhancement project to this point;
2. That the proposals of ScottWhitbyStudio to improve St Maurice's Covert be welcomed;
3. That confirmation be given by Members as to whether they wish to proceed to delivery or withdraw from the project at this stage;
4. That, should delivery be the preferred option, a further capital contribution from the Council's Capital Programme of £140,000 be considered for 2017/18 to enable prompt delivery of the first package of enhancement works;
5. That, should delivery be the preferred option, provision be made in the Town Schemes within the Capital Programme in 2017/18 for a further capital contribution from the Winchester Town Account to the delivery project of £30,000 be recommended to Cabinet;

6. That a direction be made under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4a for authorisation to negotiate with ScottWhitbyStudio for the delivery of architect's services to oversee delivery of the first package of enhancement works, from planning stage to completion, at a cost of £15,000 + VAT as detailed in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 of the Report.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME

- 1.1 The enhancement for St Maurice's Covert supports three of the Community Strategy outcomes as follows:
- a) Active Communities – encouraging walking in the city. St Maurice's Covert is a thoroughfare which links the commercial centre with the cathedral quarter;
 - b) 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;
 - c) 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.
- 1.2 Winchester Town Forum has also produced [The Vision for Winchester Town](#) which sets out a number of themes for the development of Winchester. This project aligns with the following:
- care for our history, heritage and setting;
 - be a natural destination for visitors and shoppers;
 - improve transport, infrastructure and air quality;
 - be a regional centre for creativity and culture;
 - be a town that supports safe and stable communities.
- 1.3 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.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Winchester Town Forum made a total allocation in the Town Account of £40,000 to support the St Maurice's enhancement project. Of this, £10,000 was the fee to produce a design scheme and £30,000 was intended to support delivery of the scheme.

2.2 The commission for the design scheme is now all but completed, with final costings coming in at the time of writing this Report, and the initial £10,000 has been spent.

2.3 The estimated costings were reviewed at an earlier stage by the Winchester Town Forum (St Maurice's Covert) Informal Group, which proposed that the scheme be delivered in two 'packages':

a. Initial design costs (already spent)	£ 10,000
b. Phases 1 & 2 delivery (ie the bulk of the enhancement works)	£170,000
c. Professional fees and charges for phases 1 & 2	£ 30,000
d. Phase 3 delivery(opening the tower, narrowing Market Lane)	<u>£105,000</u>
TOTAL	£315,000

These figures are best estimates at this stage of the project. It is anticipated that the bulk of the professional fees would be incurred for Phases 1 & 2, which in themselves are likely to have the highest impact for users of the city centre. Consequently a total estimated budget of £200,000 is required to progress delivery of the first package of works.

2.4 Commercial stakeholders such as The Wessex Hotel and Debenhams – who have been active participants in the project - have been asked if they might be willing to contribute to the overall budget. The view is that those responsible for making such decisions would find it hard to justify with no direct return on such investment.

2.5 With public interest stimulated through the thorough and creative engagement programme run by ScottWhitbyStudio, Members are invited to consider allocating additional resources to the project to facilitate the early delivery of phase 1.

2.6 To this end it is suggested that

- a) Members of Town Forum consider recommending to Cabinet that provision be made in the Town Schemes within the Capital programme for 2017/18 to allow an additional contribution of £30,000 from the Town Account in 2017/18, over and above the £30,000 already identified. This could be funded from the Town Account allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy income.
- b) Cabinet considers an allocation of £140,000 in the capital programme for 2017/18. It may be possible to use the District Community Infrastructure Levy funds for this purpose, in view of the significance of the Covert as a route for shoppers, tourists and office workers, many of whom come from outside the Town area.

- 2.7 Based on the above formula, the enhancement scheme could be funded as follows:

Item	Estimated Cost
Phase 1 & 2 Delivery Cost, including professional fees/charges (rounded up)	200,000
Funding Source	Budget Contribution
Town Account – existing identified allocation for scheme delivery	30,000
Town Account – proposed additional allocation 2017/18	30,000
General Fund Capital Programme – proposed allocation 2017/18	140,000
Total Funding	200,000

- 2.8 There would be an outstanding requirement for £105,000 if Members wished to deliver Phase 3 at a future date. This would need to be subject to a further discussion, informed by the success of the first package of works in Phases 1 and 2 and the appetite for further enhancements.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 If Members are committed to delivery of Phases 1 & 2 of the enhancement scheme, there will be a need to procure the various works listed at Appendix 1. These range from operational changes such as improved street cleaning to the construction and installation of a new gateway. The project team (see section 4 below) would determine the options for each of these and follow the appropriate corporate procedures. For example, the lighting strategy would need to be commissioned from consultants, whereas changes to the frontage of the Market Lane toilets will require action from the Hampshire Cultural Trust which has curatorial responsibility for the display in the window.
- 3.2 There are a number of legal issues associated with the ownerships and leaseholds around the Covert which have been taken into account by the architects. These include a restrictive Covenant. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed the Covenant and provided advice to the ScottWhitbyStudio who were commissioned to produce the enhancement scheme. There is no legal covenant included in the deeds by which the Council acquired the Covert which prevents commercial use of this space although, in the past, the Council's practice has been to only allow charities

and other non-profit making organisations to use the space, in respect of the fact that this was historically a church.

- 3.3 As set out in the brief for the design scheme commission, there is a covenant which requires the land to be maintained as an open space – the erection of noticeboards, display boards, seats, shrubs, flower beds, monuments, exhibits or boundary walls included. There is also a requirement to provide a footway and other public space, and to allow the public to pass across the land on foot.
- 3.4 Putting some form of permanent building up would be a breach of the covenant, and the Church Commissioners could pursue this with the Council if it did so. Officers are already in contact with the Commissioners, and will continue to liaise with them about the design scheme to ensure that the appropriate permissions are in place for any permanent works.
- 3.5 In view of the good quality of the work carried out by the ScottWhitbyStudio in producing the enhancement scheme, including proactive working with stakeholders and the wider community and a good understanding of Member aspirations, it is proposed that they should be the architects contracted to deliver the first package of enhancement works, from planning to completion, at a cost of £15,000 + VAT (included in the costs for fees and charges in section 2 above). This would ensure best value in terms of the Town Forum's investment of £10,000 in the commission to produce the design scheme, enabling ScottWhitbyStudio to draw on a detailed working knowledge of the site and of local stakeholders, and also previous contact with professional officers within the Council.
- 3.6 In normal circumstances, officers would be required to seek three competitive quotes to commission these architectural services. Officers therefore seek a direction under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4a for authorisation to negotiate with ScottWhitbyStudio only, in this instance. All other services would be procured in the usual way.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The project, if progressed from the design stage to the delivery stage, would need to be managed by officers in consultation with Members and stakeholders, in a similar way to the Casson Block enhancement scheme.
- 4.2 A wide spectrum of officers have been involved from the early stages of this project, ensuring that their professional interests have been considered and any proposals in accordance with technical and corporate requirements.
- 4.3 Given the multi-faceted nature of the proposed scheme, there will be a need for a corporate project team. It is also proposed that the current Town Forum Member Group (which includes key stakeholders such as the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID), Debenhams, the Wessex Hotel and the Church Commissioners) be retained and form an advisory group to the project team.

- 4.4 It is proposed that the project sponsor be the Assistant Director (Economy & Communities) who has led the project so far.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The enhancement project is for a public space largely owned by the Council, and Estates officers have been involved from the outset. The scheme takes into account a great many of the issues and opportunities raised during the evidence-gathering phase of the project, as well as thinking about the space in a more holistic way as an 'outdoor living room' for the city. Measures range from an improved street cleaning regime for the Covert and the creation of storage for commercial bins to the creation of a shared surface across Market Lane to the Wessex Hotel and the introduction of fixed seating. A itemised list of the proposals and their estimated associated costs can be found at Appendix 1, and an illustration of the enhanced Covert area at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 In developing the scheme, ScottWhitbyStudio have taken into account ownerships, access arrangements, leases and restrictive covenants. The Church Commissioners (England) have been helpful in proposing some 'tidying up' of historic arrangements. The site currently remains legally consecrated and subject to the Church Faculty Jurisdiction, but officers are in conversation with the Diocese in the hope that these effects can be lifted by Order of the Bishop.

6 CONSULTATION AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Emphasis has been placed on community engagement from the development of the commissioning brief for the design scheme to delivery of the proposed scheme by the ScottWhitbyStudio. The commissioning outcome given on the specification for the work was:

"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."

- 6.2 The project has been overseen by a working group of Members from Town Forum, but was rapidly expanded to include representatives of the Winchester BID, Debenhams, The Wessex Hotel and The Church Commissioners (England). Greggs have also been invited to all meetings, and the architects have visited the store in person to foster communications.
- 6.3 Since the appointment of the architects, the following research and engagement activities have taken place:
- A stakeholder 'drop in' day at the Wessex Hotel (officers, Members and external stakeholders) to gather up issues and opportunities
 - Face to face interviews with shoppers and other users of the city centre

- Studying film and CCTV footage showing how people use the Covert
 - Research into the history of the site, including St Maurice and the church building
 - A series of live ‘test’ activities in the Covert, including the inclusion of a coffee stall, relocation of the flower stall, and the opening of the tower for public visits as part of Heritage Open Days in September 2016
 - A presentation to Winchester Town Forum at its meeting of 21 September 2016, followed by an exhibition of the proposals in the Tourist Information Centre for the following four days
- 6.4 A further stakeholder drop in session is scheduled for 30 November 2016 in the Council offices. This is intended to ensure that technical, legal or other concerns about the proposed scheme have been addressed with the relevant officers and agencies before the project moves on to a delivery phase.
- 6.5 The commissioning brief for the design scheme included specific reference to equalities impact, with evaluation marks awarded for “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).
- 6.6 Many of the proposed improvements will have a direct benefit for individuals from the range of groups named under equalities legislation: for example, the removal of street clutter and improvements to lighting will be beneficial for those with visual impairments. The addition of fixed seating may be helpful to older people and pregnant women. The aim of the proposed plinth is to allow ramped access up through the tower, improving access and movement through the Covert for wheelchairs and prams.
- 6.7 Winchester Area Access for All Forum has been invited to send representatives to the drop-in session on 30 November 2016. It is not considered that any of the proposals would have a negative impact on any other minority groups.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Property / Community Support</i> Enhancements may be considered by some residents to detract from this public space (exhibition feedback “Why does everything have to be made more modern)	Active programme of community/commercial engagement to build understanding and support for the design scheme	Further engagement potential in delivery stage – eg involvement of residents/businesses in the commissioning of the lighting strategy

<p><i>Project capacity</i></p> <p>The project office has a number of major projects in hand at present, and this would add to the workload.</p>	<p>This is not a 'major' project so it would be possible to draw on officer capacity from other parts of the Council to create part of the project team – which in turn would be a positive development opportunity for colleagues</p> <p>There is no fixed pressure of time to deliver these enhancements, and they can be delivered in a way that maximises use of 'pauses' in other major projects</p>	
<p><i>Financial / VfM</i></p> <p>There was some Member concern about expenditure on the Casson Block enhancement scheme. Delivery of the Covert scheme will be of a similar order for phase 1. Equally, some members of the public may feel that this is not a priority for Council funds at the present time.</p> <p>There is no direct 'return on investment' for the project, so it may be difficult to articulate value for money.</p>	<p>Members of Winchester Town Forum have been involved throughout the process and are supportive of it. The Informal Group has reviewed indicative costs and considers them to be reasonable. Members have been present when attempts have been made to secure funding from commercial stakeholders to reduce the burden on the Council.</p>	<p>The completion of the Casson Block enhancements may provide visual 'evidence' of the value of this kind of expenditure on Winchester's public realm.</p>
<p><i>Legal</i></p> <p>Failure to respect the tenancies, leases, Covenant and other constraints on the site may lead to a legal challenge to the Council.</p>	<p>Research and consultation has been ongoing since development of the commissioning brief to ensure that all such legal considerations are appropriately accommodated within the scheme, and the relevant permissions sought.</p>	<p>The project provides an opportunity to review the Church's interest in the site as consecrated land, leading to simpler processes in the future.</p>

<p><i>Reputation</i> Potential for reputational damage to the Council if the project is not delivered successfully, or is not considered value for money or fails to observe legal constraints.</p>	<p>Full project management process proposed to oversee delivery of enhancements.</p> <p>For other mitigations see above.</p>	
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8 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

8.1 Background

As part of a package of measures to enhance the commercial centre of the city, Winchester Town Forum allocated a budget to improve the presentation of St Maurice's Covert on the High Street. The Covert is part of the site of the former church of St Maurice, between Debenhams and Greggs.

Members felt that the potential of the Covert – as a linking route between High Street and Cathedral, as a shelter and as a covered space for community activities or cultural performances – was not being fulfilled. There was a concern that its appearance actively deterred wider usage, and invited antisocial behaviour.

With the support of an Informal Member Working Group drawn from the Town Forum, a commission was advertised for consultants to research and develop a design scheme for the Covert. A budget of £10,000 was allocated from the Town Account for this design work – now all but complete – and a further £30,000 to support delivery of the new scheme.

8.2 Recent Developments

The objectives set for the design scheme were as follows:

- a. to 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. to 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. to minimise visual and physical clutter;
- d. to 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. to be of a form that requires minimal ongoing expenditure on maintenance and repair.

The commission to produce the scheme was won, following a competitive procurement process, by ScottWhitbyStudio from London. A full presentation was given by the architects at the [meeting of Winchester Town Forum](#) on 21 September 2016. This set out the proposed design scheme, explaining the considerations behind the various elements of the scheme and suggesting (as anticipated) a phased approach to delivery to make the most of available funding.

The final draft scheme with estimated costings has now been received by the Council, subject to feedback from technical officers, stakeholders and Members at the drop in session on 30 November 2016.

The scheme seeks to achieve the following:

- to create a new 'urban room' for Winchester, which is a place to stop and a place to enjoy city life;
- to establish a new connection, joining up views and drawing footfall between the High street and Cathedral;
- to add value to the local economy by celebrating existing businesses and institutions (eg local charities) and by helping more business to be transacted;
- to highlight to history and heritage of the tower and the historic route to the Cathedral.

The scheme includes actions such as:

- decluttering the site and cleaning the floor and walls
- installing a plinth to improve access for wheelchairs and pushchairs through the site
- creating market street furniture for charities and the public
- to provide storage/screening for the bins
- to introduce a new 'gateway' to the Covert
- to integrate appropriate lighting

The full Enhancement Strategy can be found with the Background Papers to this Report.

8.3 Member Decisions

At this point in the process, Members now need to determine:

- a) Whether there is a commitment to moving on to the delivery of the project. Officers suggest phase 1 only at the current time, with phase 2 to be considered again by Members once this is complete;
- b) Whether to allocate funding for phase 1 delivery (potentially from CIL funds at both Town and District level), over and above the £30,000 identified in the Town Account budget or simply to carry out the enhancements that can be funded from this identified budget of £30,000;
- c) Whether to stop the project at this point to focus on higher priority areas of work for the Council.

This Report is intended to be considered in time to inform the 2017/18 budgeting cycle for Winchester Town Forum and the General Fund.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 9.1 The enhancement scheme for St Maurice's Covert has been shaped by ongoing engagement with Members, stakeholders and the public. As such, a variety of options have been considered and – in some cases – tested along the way. See section 6 above.
- 9.2 Overall, there is not a direct alternative to this project but Members do have the option not to proceed with delivery if they consider other priorities to be more pressing at this time.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[Minutes](#) of the Winchester Town Forum meeting of 21 September 2016 at which a presentation was given by ScottWhitbyStudio of the emerging design scheme

[WTF219](#) – St Maurice's Covert Environmental Enhancement Update, 10 June 2015

[WTF 200](#) - St Maurice's Covert Update, 22 January 2014

[WTF 193](#) – St Maurice's Covert and Other Town Centre Enhancements, 11 September 2013

Other Background Documents:-

Minutes of the Winchester Town Forum (St Maurice's Covert) Informal Group

Commissioning Specification for "Public Realm Design Scheme, St Maurice's Covert, Winchester"

St Maurice's Covert Enhancement Strategy Stage 2 Report, produced by ScottWhitbyStudio

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Proposed list of improvements with estimated costings

Appendix 2 - Illustration of Proposed Enhancements to St Maurice's Covert

6.1 Delivery Plan

Phase 1

Creating a New Urban Room for Winchester

1. Remove clutter from site
2. Clean floor and walls
3. Complete shared surface
4. Install Plinth
5. Create market street furniture for charity stall and public
6. Bin storage element
7. Gateway element
8. Integrate lighting in these elements

£98,000

Phase 2

Improving the wider area

1. Create wall frame for kiosk storage and flower stall display
2. Improve Gregg's door
3. Continue shared surface across road and into Wessex Car Park
4. Clear view to Cathedral: cut crown off trees and remove Wessex Car Park wall
5. Greening site and potentially North wall of Wessex Hotel to create connection to Cathedral Grounds

£67,500

Total : £165,500

Phase 3

Future/Aspirational

1. Reconfigure and install new staircase in tower for public use
2. Relocate stair entrance/exit into tower
3. Make tower part of the heritage tour, and a new view for Winchester of the city and the Cathedral
4. Narrow Market Lane and instigate a new one way system

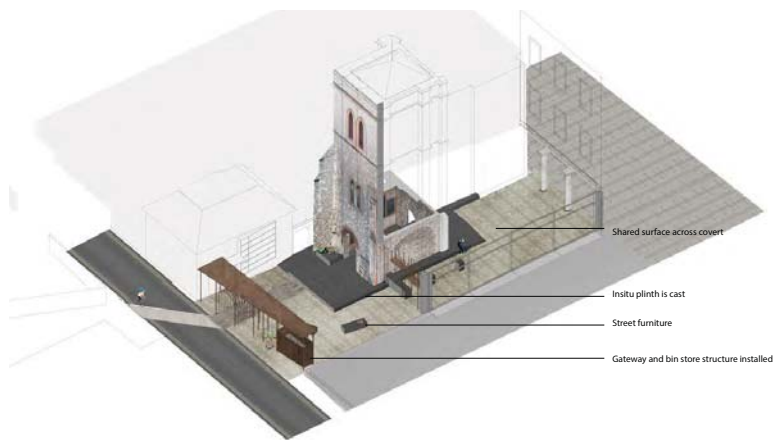
+ £105,000

Professional Fees +£30K

Total : £195,500

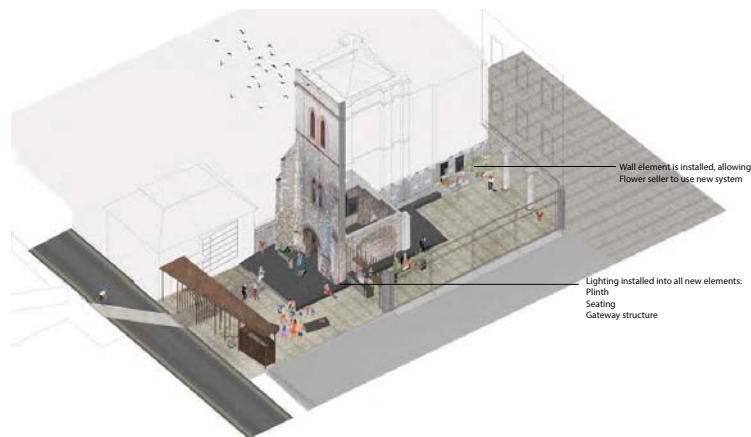
1

Declutter and Unify



2

Wall element + Lighting



Phasing the design will allow the space to be kept open as much possible during the construction process

1 Declutter + Unify

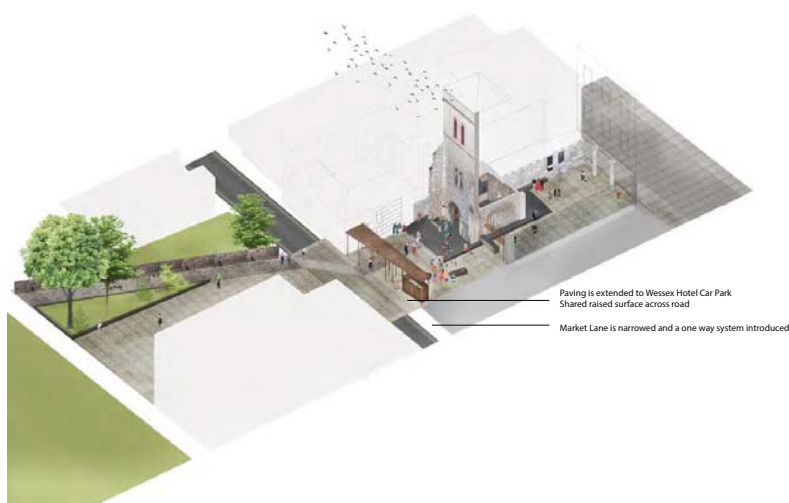
The first move will involve jetwashing the floor to reveal its original stone colour, and removing existing clutter in the space such as bins, lights, bollards etc. The paving is planned to also be taken up and kept to be reused.

A section of the gateway structure will be built first that will house the market bins and declutter the site further. It is possible that this method of screening could continue across Market Lane should appropriate funds be raised.

The insitu cast terrazzo plinth and street furniture elements will be installed and most of the lighting will be incorporated within these elements to minimise visual clutter. Paving using existing York Stone and cobble stones to finish shared surface.

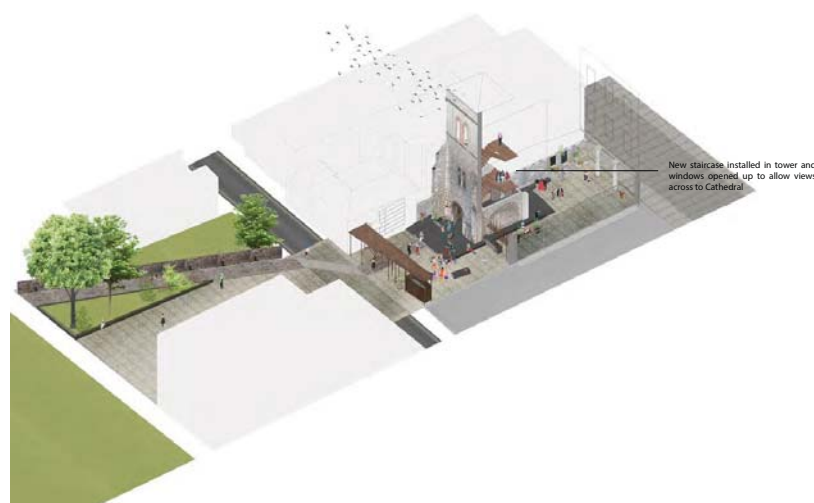
3

Shared surface and works to wider area



4

Open up tower



2 Wall System + Lighting Installation

The panel and frame system will be installed and provide a simple setup for the flower seller including storage. This frame will continue through the tower and onto the rear external side, creating a visual connection between the High Street and Market Lane

Lighting to be installed in all new elements, and also architectural lighting for the tower.

3 Shared Surface across to Wessex Car Park

The paving will continue across to Wessex Car Park and create a shared ground and connection to the Cathedral Grounds. Market Lane to also be narrowed.

4 Tower opened up to Public

The tower could be reconfigured to offer a new view of Winchester and the Cathedral as well as acting still as a fire escape for Debenhams. Stair to be reconfigured, new platform added to the third level (to enable views across) and interior of tower made good.