

Chard Regeneration Scheme's Question and Answer Page following the Public Consultation – 16th March 2019

Q1. Is there any provision in the leisure centre for a sports hall for badminton, 5 a side etc.? And if not, why not?

A sports hall will not be provided as part of the leisure centre development. Recently South Somerset District Council (SSDC) conducted a District wide demand analysis. This showed there was sufficient sports hall provision in Chard and therefore providing a new hall might undermine existing facilities.

Q2. Where is the space that children will be allowed to “hang out”? Is there an allowance for somewhere for music/concerts/small performances to take place? Will the acoustic design of the space suit?

The public realm improvements to the site will include outdoor space for people to dwell, a small park/garden and provision for markets and public events. This space could also be utilised for small performances subject to gaining necessary consents.

Q3. What about anti-social behaviour?

The District Council will liaise with Avon and Somerset Police. In addition, the design team will ensure security is designed into the scheme which will include CCTV on the main site.

Q4. Funding - How much will it all cost, has the money been allocated and will the Council Tax go up to pay for it? Also, what happens if the money runs out mid-phase? When will the Old Mill be refurbished and what guarantee is there that this will actually happen?

The final cost of the scheme is not yet known, however, SSDC has allocated an overall spend to the project.

There is a funding strategy in place as follows:

- The design of the leisure centre will minimise costs and maximise income potential to ensure as much of the build and running costs are paid for by the income over the life of the building. It is aimed that most of the build costs will be paid down over a period like a mortgage.
- Including housing and commercial elements in the scheme will help pay the costs of the community facilities and spaces.
- Grant funding is being sought to support the scheme from a number of sources.
- SSDC has allocated some capital funds, paid for from the proceeds of its commercial activities and the securing of business rate funds which otherwise would have gone to HM Treasury.

The Boden Mill and Holyrood Lace Mill form Phase 2 of the scheme and the exact timing is yet to be determined but it is envisaged that, shortly after the Phase 1 Leisure Centre, work will commence on the Mills.

Q5. Are the listed buildings (when converted to residential) allowed to have lifts fitted to meet modern build standards?

Both Mill buildings currently have lifts installed.

Q6. What will the mix of social and private residential housing be? What will the housing mix be within the proposed 'development' of the Grade II buildings and when will this be publically posted?

This will be decided as part of the detailed planning application for the mill buildings in phase two of the regeneration programme.

Q7. Will the centre offer sessions/facilities to meet the needs of the current (aging) demographic i.e. hydro-therapy?

The programme of classes will be agreed with the new operator once they are appointed. SSDC will be looking for an operator that provides for all the community's needs. It is not proposed that the leisure centre will provide hydrotherapy. However, the facilities will provide a range of activities suitable for all ages with specific sessions targeted at specific demographics. These will be determined by the operator but are likely to include a variety of swimming sessions from aqua aerobics to aqua Zumba & lane swims, classes in the studio and specific gym sessions.

Q8. Do you have any thoughts on how to champion/recognise the industrial legacy of the site?

The design of the masterplan has been informed and directed by the history on the site. Key views to the historic listed buildings are being opened up so allow the public to fully appreciate the buildings as well as allowing access in and around the buildings to the public. Landscaping has been designed to provide a softer and more suitable setting for the listed buildings. The materials proposed to be used on site both within the landscaping and the buildings are brick, steel and timber which are all references to industrial setting.

It is proposed to name the newly created spaces on the site with references to the industrial legacy.

Q9. Health centre related questions

Who will build it and when? Why does the provision of a GP surgery come into phase 2 and is a GP willing to take this on? Planning should not have been granted without an agreement that an additional facility will be provided.

As part of the One Public Estate programme, the Council are working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other local healthcare providers in Chard. Whilst we know there is a lot of interest from local surgeries in the site, CCG need to decide their strategy (expected autumn 2019). Therefore plans for the health centre are still at an early stage and yet to be finalised.

Q10. What will building C be?

This is yet to be decided. In summer 2018 we consulted on a range of potential other uses on the site and these are still being explored with different organisations.

Q11. Parking - Disabled spaces at Market Field car park? What is the number of car parking spaces at the leisure centre? Will there be enough?

The parking provision for the scheme will be agreed with the Highways Authority as part of the scheme transport assessment.

The Council will ensure the provision of sufficient parking for the scheme.

Q12. “Supportive of more markets”, but will this mean the Fore St Market will move to the car park? Can there be provision for market stalls – i.e. somewhere much larger than the current area?

The District Council is working with the Town Council to enhance the market provision. This will include the option to hold different markets, such as artisan foods and crafts, in the Market Field car park by installing the necessary infrastructure. No decision has been taken to relocate the current market from Fore Street and any decision to do this would be undertaken with the involvement of the Town Council and the current stall holders.

Q13. What is the garden space timeline?

It has not yet been decided if the garden space will form part of phase one or phase two. This will be considered in the detailed programme plan.

Q14. Public realm related questions

Can Holyrood Street be improved? For example, pedestrianisation, temporary closure for markets and events, public realm enhancements, a covered arcade? Can we actively encourage a greater range of high quality, independent shops through better public realm, higher footfall and lower business rates? Can existing buildings and shopfronts be enhanced, especially heritage buildings? Are there any opportunities to create new routes connecting the leisure centre to the high street? Will it detract further from the attraction of shopping and dining in the high street?

Potential improvements to the wider town centre look and environment will all be proposed as part of the wider Public Realm design review. This will include how the leisure centre connects to the town centre and the routes through the Boden Mill site.

The Chard Regeneration Programme aims to include a range of wider measures to help both existing and new businesses. These will potentially include:

- support to attract creative businesses and artisan / independent retailers;
- support to develop the growth of local food producers and food businesses;
- events and promotion

The detailed proposals for this are still being developed.

We aim to have a positive impact on the high street (Fore Street) by creating more reasons for people to visit the town centre, having more people living in the town centre and ensuring better access to the town centre from residential areas of Chard. Put together this should mean more people visiting and spending money with the businesses on Fore Street.

Q15. Have you considered a one-way system?

This will be looked at as part of the overall public realm and transport work which Element Urbanism and Hydrock are undertaking. It does not form part of the proposals for the Boden Mill site.

Q16. Why do we have to move the library? The library doesn't look big enough.

We are relocating the library in order to bring forward redevelopment of the Lace Mill and establish a community hub which links to the rest of facilities within the new site. Our aim is to provide a modern library with a range of other community services and facilities close by.

Q17. Is there a need for two cafes (one in the library and one in leisure centre) and what will be the impact on local cafes?

It has not yet been agreed that the library will have a café facility. We are working with the library service to agree the exact lay out. If the library does have a café facility, it is likely to be a small satellite facility managed by the same operator of the leisure centre café. There will be no direct competition and they will enhance the experience for users which will be a different offer to local cafes.

Q18. Existing roads, for example Fore St, Silver St and Boden St, frequently get congested – will this get worse?

The District Council have employed Hydrock to carry out a transport impact assessment which will form part of the planning application for the scheme. The Highway Authority will advise on mitigations but these are not yet known.

The Council's plans include brining forward proposals to improve access to the town centre, especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

The regeneration programme aims to increase the number of people visiting and using the town centre, to help support it. Therefore, if the scheme is successful it will be busier.

Q19. There seems to be a lot of glass, will this result in hot buildings in summer?

The swimming pool is kept at a higher temperature so heat gains in the pool hall are an advantage.

The leisure centre café area has a combination of mechanical fresh air and opening windows which will keep the space cool in summer. The design of the leisure centre has utilised the feature of a colonnade with a solar shading keep the sun off the glazed pool hall façade.

Q20. Why have two places for the museum?

The District Council have worked closely with the museum in order to determine what their future requirements are. The trustees have agreed that they would not like to fully relocate to the Boden Mill site but would like a satellite taster space to encourage people to visit main museum.

Q21. Can you use the opportunity to plant wild/bee friendly flowers and bird feeders?

We will look at this as part of the landscape design for the scheme. Our ecology specialist has an understanding of local species and they will provide input as the scheme progresses.

Q22. Who is lined up to run the Leisure Centre?

South Somerset District Council will procure a leisure operator six months prior to the centre opening. We have already conducted soft market testing with a range of operators who have expressed an interest in managing the centre.

Q23. What will be the provision for community groups within the scheme?

The library building will provide space for community groups and organisations and future phases of the Boden Mill site scheme may also include space for community groups. We have engaged with many local groups to understand their requirements for the future and will look to provide space if it is viable.

Q24. I cannot understand why this new leisure centre with its large swimming pool is to be 'crammed' into the town centre, when surely it would be better to demolish the closed Cresta centre by Holyrood School and build the new leisure centre and pool on this existing site, where there is also plenty of parking. This would also solve the above problems.

The closed Cresta facility is not big enough to accommodate the scheme proposals. A leisure centre, together with other facilities, on the Boden Mill site will attract people to the town centre and increase footfall. There is ample parking provision for a leisure centre and other town centre visitors within the town centre.

Q25. What about changing places/disabled facilities?

Whilst a Changing Places facility is not proposed for the new leisure centre, we are planning to provide enhanced disabled facilities.

In addition to disabled toilets and family size changing cubicles, it is proposed that the large disabled changing room which is provided for pool users can be accessed by the public on request.

Q26. Why have you chosen this particular facility mix for the leisure centre?

The decision on the facility mix was based on detailed assessment of existing provision and demand within Chard and the surrounding area. The mix seeks to provide facilities where there are gaps in provision and ensure there is a viable business plan for the running of the centre.

Q27. What local opportunities will the project provide?

The main contractor for the leisure centre will be selected on a range of criteria, including their commitment to use local companies and employ local people. The Council will look to maximise the local business and community benefits from subsequent phases of the scheme.

The key performance indicators for the main contractor and the development partner (Alliance Leisure Services) must be a commitment to providing social, economic and environmental benefits to residents, the local community and key stakeholders as part of the project.

The Council and the development partners will engage with local schools and endeavour to employ a local labour force, including apprenticeship opportunities.