

CABINET– 17th MAY 2022

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PLACE

CULLOMPTON HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE – HIGHER BULLRING PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

Responsible Officer Richard Marsh, Director of Place

Reason for the Report: To approve the Cullompton Higher Bullring public realm enhancement concept design for public consultation, and to handover to Devon County Council for design development and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION:

- I. That the concept public realm enhancement design (developed as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone project) for the Higher Bullring area of Cullompton, as set out in Appendix 3, be approved for public consultation;**
- II. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Place (in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Regeneration) to finalise the material and arrangements for public consultation;**
- III. That approval is given to instruct Devon County Council to take forward the project through to implementation, to facilitate timely delivery of their design development work, informed by the concept design, and;**
- IV. That delegated authority is given to the Director of Place (in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Regeneration) to work with Devon County Council to incorporate views resulting from public consultation (to relate to layout and design of street furniture such as benches, planters and cycle parking), where possible.**

Financial Implications: Historic England has awarded a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) grant fund to Cullompton, following a successful bid by this Council. The administration of the HAZ programme of works rests with this Council through to March 2024 and includes public realm improvements around the Higher Bullring (with Devon County Council).

The funding for the Higher Bullring Public Realm Enhancements was agreed in the original bid by this Council to Historic England. In addition to Council funds and the Historic England grant funding, it includes contributions from Cullompton Town Council and Devon County Council (DCC).

Budget and Policy Framework: The Cullompton High Street HAZ project brings money in the form of a grant from Historic England, match funded with cash and 'in-kind' contributions from MDDC, DCC and Cullompton Town Council.

A public realm design consultant team were appointed in September 2021 following a competitive tender process. A report on the procurement process went for Cabinet approval on the 3rd August 2021.

Following MDDC sign off of the concept design intended to be achieved through this report, the design is to be passed to Devon County Council for detailed design development, any necessary Traffic Regulation Orders, and tendering. Construction work would also ultimately be undertaken by the County Council. This is set out in the original budget as set out in the successful funding bid to Historic England. Devon County Council would continue to work closely with Mid Devon District Council as lead partner, and Historic England as funding partner, in taking this project forward.

Legal Implications: It is anticipated that the proposed public realm works would fall under Permitted Development Rights (Part 9 and/or Part 12 of the Town and Country Planning [General Permitted Development] England Order 2015).

Notwithstanding this, a two-stage public consultation is set out, similar to the process as set out in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (July 2020). The first stage of public consultation concluded last year and this forms the basis for the initial design to pass through Stage 2 consultation process.

Risk Assessment: The Higher Bullring public realm enhancement is a key project with regard to the High Street HAZ programme. It is part of the agreement with Historic England, and any delays to it could have a detrimental effect on the partnership with them.

The work of the HAZ builds on work undertaken as part of the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan, which identifies public realm enhancement works to the Higher Bullring and Fore Street areas as key projects and opportunities.

Further, the newly adopted Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAMP) has identified the Higher Bullring as a key character area, with a historic streetscape, significant historic buildings, and a listed War Memorial and feature trees. It has identified that the redesign and reinvigoration of this space is Management Plan Principle 7.

Failure to support regeneration of the Cullompton Town Centre could lead to deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, less coordinated development and uncertainty over essential infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic has further introduced a long term risk to economic prosperity. The masterplan will need to take into account this change in economic circumstances; confirming the need to complete this work as being ever more vital.

Key risks associated with the Higher Bullring public realm enhancement project include:

- The challenging timeframe set out as part of the original High Street Heritage Action Zone successful bid, which requires the design completed and all associated works undertaken by March 2024. This is requiring all project partners to work together proactively to meet the necessary timeframes;
- The risk to the project resultant from the delays to the proposed Cullompton Eastern Relief Road have been considered and where possible mitigated. The original HSHAZ project programme allowed for the Relief Road to be operational ahead of the Higher Bullring enhancement works. However, the consultant design team were asked to design a scheme that could be delivered in advance of the Relief Road while still meeting original project objectives, and could be expanded in the future.;

- Fluctuation and uncertainty around construction costs with current market conditions over the remainder of the project lifetime. These costs will continue to be monitored and reviewed with partners.

The recommendations set out within this report seek to secure approval to progress the scheme that has been developed over the previous months with the professional team having developed proposals based on technical analysis, public engagement and member discussions. As set out later within the report, it has proved challenging to balance competing interests within the town and around the Bullring/War Memorial site given the considerable number of activities that take place within a small geographical area of the town. However, despite this, the option developed and proposed for delivery is considered to best balance those competing interests whilst realising the broad objectives of the project; to deliver an enhanced Bullring space.

Should approval not be given to proceed with the scheme, the timetable for delivery and expenditure of the funding means that it will be difficult to progress an alternative within the lifetime of the available grant funding. This would mean that the funding would have to be returned to Historic England as it cannot be deployed to other aspects of the project. Furthermore; any alternative scheme would also face similar challenges in balancing competing uses for the Bullring space and, with this in mind, the proposed scheme is recommended for approval and progression.

Equality Impact Assessment: The appointed public realm design team are required to ensure their design is *'fully accessible and inclusive to everyone, including in terms of mobility and visually impaired'*. An overarching project aim is to ensure that the enhancement design *'delivers a coherent and unifying design for the whole study area that meets the current and future needs of the community'*.

DCC would undertake all necessary highways safety audits during the course of their work and would also need to satisfy their own equality standards.

The Stage 2 consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in the adopted Mid Devon Statement of Community involvement (July 2020).

Impact on Climate Change: The appointed public realm design consultants are considering how the design proposals can help to mitigate impact on climate change, and how the design can support Mid Devon to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone project contributes to all of the Council's corporate plan priorities: Homes, Environment, Community and Economy.

1.0 Introduction: Background

1.1 The High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, which is being delivered by Historic England, is a £95 million programme to unlock the potential of high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery and breathing new life into high streets for future generations. Approximately 60 high streets have been offered funding to give them a new lease of life. The lead partners in each place (mostly local authorities) are working with Historic England to develop and deliver schemes that will transform and restore disused and dilapidated buildings into new homes, shops, work places and community spaces, restoring local historic character and improving public realm.

2.0 The HSHAZ Public Realm Enhancement Project

- 2.1 The Cullompton Higher Bullring public realm enhancement project, delivered as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone, has the following objectives as set out in the original Delivery Plan agreed with Historic England:
- Enhance the heritage setting of the town centre;
 - Reduce the dominance of motor vehicles;
 - Provide an extended space for community events and cultural activities while providing a focus for civic pride.
- 2.2 The focus for consultants appointed was to develop a deliverable and standalone first phase funded as part of the HSHAZ project focussed around the War Memorial which would facilitate longer term improvements to the town centre. Therefore the consultants were also asked to consider a vision plan for the whole town centre as part of their work so that key dependencies across the study area were understood. This would build on the Town Centre Masterplanning work. It was also important that the HSHAZ funded first phase did not compromise flexibility and ability of future traffic management options to respond to the town's growth. The HSHAZ funded phase needed to be standalone in delivering clear benefit while supporting the longer term town centre objectives.
- 2.3 The consultants are developing the first phase of works using the HSHAZ funding, and it is expected that work will proceed ahead of any future delivery of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road (CTCRR).
- 2.4 The purpose of this report is to set out the concept design undertaken and seek approval to proceed to the next steps of the project.

3.0 High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Project Update

- 3.1 At the meeting of Cabinet on 7th March 2019 it was resolved that delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Housing to submit a further Expression of Interest (or equivalent) if the opportunity presented for the regeneration of Cullompton's historic High Street through the Heritage element of the Future High Streets Fund and to determine the financial amount sought under the fund.
- 3.2 The Expression of Interest submitted to Historic England for Cullompton was successful, and included a public realm enhancement project around the Higher Bullring area of Cullompton, a building grants scheme, a Cultural Programme and other associated projects.
- 3.3 The successful Expression of Interest led to the appointment of a High Street Heritage Action Zone Project Officer and to the establishment of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group. This group has also overseen the development of the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan, which is also an important document to support the HSHAZ project.
- 3.4 MDDC acts as the lead partner and accountable body for the programme. The scheme is managed under our financial and legal regulations.

- 3.5 The HSHAZ Higher Bullring Public Realm Enhancement Project includes a contribution from Historic England of approximately £610,000, with an MDDC contribution of c.£150k, and further contributions from Devon County Council and Cullompton Town Council of £100k and £25k respectively. This funding pot is ring-fenced for the public realm enhancement project in the Higher Bullring area of the town, and is separate to the other HSHAZ associated projects. These reflect the currently agreed arrangements with Historic England.
- 3.6 At the Cabinet meeting of August 2021, agreement was given to appoint a consultant design team to take forward concept design of the Higher Bullring public realm enhancement project.

4.0 Stage 1 Public Consultation: Introduction

- 4.1 Due to the close synergies between the projects, Stage 1 consultation on the public realm enhancement project took place at the same time as a consultation on the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan. The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 4.2 Officers from the Council undertook the consultation in Cullompton between the 28th June and 13th August 2021. In terms of the HSHAZ public realm project, the consultation was to gather initial views on the Higher Bullring (and Fore Street) space and how the community would like to see them enhanced.
- 4.3 Between 28th June and 13th August, comments on the public realm enhancement project were invited through the following approaches:
- Interactive map;
 - Online and paper questionnaire.
- 4.4 Permanent exhibitions were made available at the Cullompton Community Centre and the Hayridge Centre (with the ability to submit questionnaires / observations). All the associated documentation (including exhibition boards, online questionnaire and interactive map) were made available on the Council's website for viewing, downloading or for submitting comments.
- 4.5 Additionally, three face to face public consultations took place when Council Officers undertook the following staffed events:
- Farmers Market in Cullompton - 24th July 2021;
 - Art Week at The Walronds - 26th July 2021;
 - Tesco's car park in Cullompton in the late afternoon - 26th July 2021.
- 4.6 The public realm design consultants, once appointed, reviewed the feedback received and undertook additional public consultation over the course of the autumn alongside Council Officers to build on the previous Stage 1 consultation, including:
- 'Autumn Fest' Farmers Market in Cullompton on the 9th October 2021;
 - A 'walkabout' and plenary discussion of the Cullompton Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group – 19th October 2021;
 - A Town Centre Traders and Businesses Open Evening at the Hayridge Centre – 17th November 2021.

5.0 Findings of Stage 1 Consultation and Summary

- 5.1 For the summer consultation events, in total 12 online survey responses were received, along with 7 paper copy responses. A further 42 comments were received on the interactive map. Detailed findings and verbatim comments received are presented in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 A summary of the qualitative consultation held at Autumn Fest, the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group 'walkabout', and the Traders Open Evening is provided at **Appendix 2**.
- 5.3 The conclusion of this consultation demonstrated strong support for public realm enhancements around the Higher Bullring, with 89% of respondents to the survey stating that the Higher Bullring needed improving.
- 5.4 Key issues identified in the consultation that the designers needed to address included:
- Reducing the impact of the town centre traffic in that area;
 - A desire to see an enhanced, larger area for town centre events;
 - Improved materiality, condition and maintenance;
 - Improving the pedestrian experience.
- 5.5 These key findings supported the original project aims agreed between MDDC, DCC and Historic England as set out in 2.1 of this report.
- 5.6 These issues, and the wider consultation feedback, have been considered alongside the findings of the recently updated Conservation Area Appraisal which has identified:
- The War Memorial and Higher Bullring area as a key character area, with a historic streetscape, significant historic buildings, a listed War Memorial and feature trees;
 - Key negatives identified in the area include the domination of car parking, the volume and nature of traffic, and the cluttered street furniture which has grown over time;
 - The War Memorial is a key land mark but is compromised by car parking and uncoordinated street furniture;
 - The redesign and reinvigoration of the Higher Bullring area is a Management Plan Principle.
- 5.7 Further to this, the draft Town Centre Masterplan identifies enhancement of the Higher Bullring area as a key project and opportunity for the town centre, with objectives to consider:
- Redesign of the space as a larger, level multi-use area;
 - Review parking provision and reconfiguration to give more space to active town centre uses;
 - Coordinate the space with a comprehensive approach to surfacing, materials, street furniture and utilities, to facilitate a range of day time and evening uses including outdoor seating to contribute to the level and activity and vibrancy in the town centre;
 - Improve the pedestrian environment;
 - Improve the setting of the historic buildings.
- 5.8 In order to ensure the consultation feedback fed into a concept design appropriately, the consultant design team included experts from a range of disciplines in addition to

landscape architects, and included a heritage expert, traffic engineers, consultation experts and cost consultants.

- 5.9 In addition, advisors from Historic England and highways officers from DCC have worked closely with MDDC and have been closely involved in the design process from the outset.
- 5.10 DCC has provided the following statement to demonstrate its engagement in and support for the project *'Devon County Council, as Highway Authority, has been engaged and informed throughout the development of proposals for the Cullompton Heritage Action Zone scheme. As such Devon County Council is content with the outline proposals which have been presented to date.'*
- 5.11 Historic England has provided the following statement to demonstrate its engagement in and support for the project *'Historic England, as a sponsoring partner of the HSHAZ, has been involved in the project throughout its development process and is pleased with the progress being made. The proposals which are emerging show much promise and while further refinement is likely we anticipate being happy to confirm funding for the eventual scheme.'*

6.0 Concept Design for Stage 2 Consultation

- 6.1 Following the Stage 1 consultation activity and consideration of its findings, the consultants have developed a concept design focussed on the Higher Bullring area presented as **Appendix 3**.
- 6.2 The consultants were asked to consider the most appropriate area within the Higher Bullring to focus the available HSHAZ funding, while allowing a phased approach to future works. They were required to consider a scheme that could be delivered in advance of the Relief Road while still meeting original project objectives as a stand-alone phase, and which could be expanded in the future should circumstances allow. This resulted in a focus on the area to the west of the bullring, around the War Memorial site.
- 6.3 Key considerations in the course of the design included the War Memorial, the street trees, the bus stop, facilitation of loading and unloading and the parking in the area. All these issues were considered together.
- 6.4 Members will appreciate that, with such a multitude of uses occurring within a relatively small area of the town centre, this creates a challenge for the project in terms of managing competing uses whilst staying true to the original aims of the project to deliver improved and enhanced public realm. Nowhere is this demonstrated more than in relation to the car parking currently accommodated within the western section of the Bullring and focused around the War Memorial.
- 6.5 In order to realise the project aims of improving the setting and quality of the public realm around the War Memorial, re-accommodate an improved bus stop and continue to facilitate deliveries within the area, it has been necessary to seek to remove the parking currently located in the area – this equates to the loss of approximately 10 car parking spaces.
- 6.6 Analysis undertaken by the consultancy team has concluded that sufficient parking exists within the town centre to accommodate parking need generated within the town. As such, the loss of these 10 spaces is deemed to be both necessary and desirable in order to facilitate a high quality public realm intervention around the war

memorial and to facilitate the continuation of other key activities within this area, such as the provision of an improved bus stop, continuation of loading and unloading and continuation and expansion of the successful market events.

- 6.7 As can be seen from Appendix 3, the proposals have set out the creation of an enhanced, expanded and decluttered public realm focussed around a new square, framing the War Memorial and providing a central focus using high quality materials.
- 6.8 In terms of associated highways elements, these would be subject to further refinement during detailed design led by DCC. However, in summary the key changes are:
- Carriageway width – this has been reduced to enable the creation of the enhanced public realm, sufficient to maintain the current traffic flows as advised by DCC;
 - Bus stop – this has been moved south of the St John Court access, freeing up the setting of the War Memorial;
 - Pedestrian crossing – this has been realigned slightly to reflect the new kerb alignments;
 - Disabled parking bays – these have been realigned to enable the offset pedestrian crossing to function safely;
 - Market access – the space has been designed such that the market may continue to access the space to facilitate set up/ drop-off on event/ market days, and indeed the creation of the larger public realm allows for future market expansion.
- 6.9 The consultant team have worked hard with officers to continually refine and develop proposals for the scheme and, as a result of invaluable engagement with ward members, revisions have been made to the scheme to deliver further improvements.
- 6.10 The proposed scheme is felt to strike an appropriate balance between competing uses and is felt to enable the delivery of a scheme which can deliver benefits to the town, its residents and businesses, whilst also allowing the project to proceed on a very tight timescale. It is also felt that the proposals do reflect and address the comments received during the first stage of public consultation, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 6.11 With the above in mind, Cabinet approval is sought to progress the concept design shown within Appendix 3 with this design progressing through a Stage 2 public consultation process.
- 6.12 The consultation is proposing to invite the community to provide comment on many aspects of the design proposed, including around layout and type of street furniture including benches, planters and cycle parking. There will also be the opportunity to combine the consultation with the Creative Cullompton cultural consortium activities, including engagement regarding their public art project.
- 6.13 Engagement material will focus on the history of the Higher Bullring as a key space within Cullompton, and as a heritage-led project it is considered to be important to show how the proposed design has drawn on the historic uses and appearance of the space for inspiration.
- 6.14 The Council will endeavour to ensure ‘hard to reach’ groups are contacted, including younger demographic groups where possible. In fact, preliminary discussions have already taken place with Cullompton Community College to consider how it might be

possible to engage students in the consultation process – with a desire to involve students in the finalisation of the project. The College have confirmed a willingness to accommodate such discussions.

- 6.15 The focus for the consultation will be on the HSHAZ funded phase focussed around the War Memorial. In addition, the work undertaken by the consultants also included considerations around the wider context. Longer term environmental enhancement and traffic management measures will be developed by DCC in due course and the consultants' contextual options that they have provided can form a useful contribution towards this work. The public will be invited to provide comment on this work.
- 6.16 Subject to Cabinet approval of this report it is also proposed that delegated responsibility be given to the Director of Place (in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Regeneration) to work with DCC to incorporate any final design changes to be agreed following this public consultation, to enable them to continue to develop detailed design.

7.0 Cullompton Town Council presentation

- 7.1 An opportunity was provided for Cullompton Town Councillors to attend a presentation delivered by the consultants on the project on the 7th March 2022.
- 7.2 A variety of issues were raised by the councillors present on the call. The matters included issues relating to planting for the scheme, access for vehicles servicing the market stalls on market days and matters relating to the day to day management and function of the space. These comments were helpful and resulted in further refinements to the layout. Officers committed to continuing discussions with the town council on these operational matters as the scheme development continues.
- 7.3 A request for a further presentation was made and officers have arranged to attend the Town Council meeting on the 28th April 2022.

8.0 MDCC Planning Policy Advisory Group

- 8.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group met to consider the scheme on 14th March 2022. Consultants and officers presented the project proposals and background at this meeting.
- 8.2 A variety of points were raised by the group. These matters included the longer term maintenance of the materials on the space, to ensure over time the high quality materiality proposed is not diminished by lower quality repairs. Officers committed to work with DCC to develop a maintenance strategy that would reflect the joint desire to ensure the quality of the space is not eroded over time. In addition, the possibility of ordering excess paving material if budgets allow for DCC storage to help with future repairs is being investigated.
- 8.3 In addition, Councillors queried the location of some of the cycle parking elements, which has since resulted in a further refined layout. Options are available for alternative cycle parking locations and this is something that will be consulted on during the summer consultation.
- 8.4 Councillors present at PPAG also reiterated the importance of a meaningful consultation including with younger demographic groups within the town. Officers have committed to ensuring a variety of staffed events are held including as mentioned at Cullompton Community College to seek a wide range of views.

8.5 Notwithstanding the above, Councillors at PPAG were supportive of the project and its intention as the first phase of longer term enhancements to the town.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The proposed scheme for consultation has been the subject of a considerable amount of technical work drawing on previous consultation, and it is considered to represent a positive basis for further consultation.

9.2 The heritage led enhancement of the Higher Bullring area provides an opportunity to create an extended and attractive space for community events and cultural activities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of Public Consultation – summer 2021

Appendix 2: Public Consultation: Summary of Other Events

Appendix 3: Proposed Concept Design for the Higher Bullring

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Background Papers: Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone webpage:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/cullompton-high-street-heritage-action-zone/>

Cabinet 3rd August 2021

Circulation of the Report: Members of the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) and Ward Members

Appendix 1: Summary of Public Consultation – summer 2021

Questionnaire Responses

Stage 1 Public Consultation: Initial Activities

Initial Stage 1 consultation on the Higher Bullring public realm enhancement project took place at the same time as a consultation on the Draft Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan. The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Officers from the Council undertook the consultation between the 28th June and 13th August 2021. In terms of the HSHAZ public realm project, it was presented as an initial Stage 1 consultation, i.e. to gather initial views on the space and how the community would like to see it enhanced.

Between 28th June and 13th August 2021, comments on the public realm enhancement project were invited through the following approaches:

- Interactive map;
- Online and paper questionnaire.

Exhibitions were made available at the Cullompton Community Centre and the Hayridge Centre (with the ability to submit questionnaires / observations in paper form). All the associated documentation (including exhibition boards, online questionnaire and interactive map) were made available on the Council's website for viewing, downloading or for submitting comments.

Additionally, three face to face public consultations took place when Council Officers undertook the following staffed events:

- Farmers Market in Cullompton - 24th July 2021;
- Art Week at The Walronds - 26th July 2021;
- Tesco's car park in Cullompton in the late afternoon - 26th July 2021.

The questionnaire comprised of the following questions:

- Do you like or dislike the Higher Bullring as it currently is? If so, why?
- What enhancements or improvements would you like to make to the Higher Bullring?
- What do you think are the key issues with the Higher Bullring area currently?

Of 19 responses:

- 16 stated the Higher Bullring needed improving
- 1 said they disliked it
- 1 said they liked it
- 1 said that they liked it and it needed improving

The questionnaire also asked:

- Do you like or dislike the Fore Street as it currently is? If so, why?
- What enhancements or improvements would you like to make to the Fore Street?
- What do you think are the key issues with the Fore Street area currently?

Of 19 responses:

- 15 stated the Fore Street needed improving
- 3 said they disliked it
- 1 didn't respond to this question

In addition, there was 42 individual comments on the interactive map which asked respondents to click on the map on a point of their choosing in the town centre area and answer the following questions:

- How do you feel about this place?
- What do you think are the key issues with the area currently?
- What enhancements or improvements would you like to make to this area?

It was possible to click on the map in more than one location and so the same respondent may have left more than one response. Of the 42 responses, 17 were located in the Higher Bullring area.

Table 1 below presents verbatim responses to the qualitative questions on the Higher Bullring, aggregated by theme, from both the interactive map and the questionnaire.¹

Table 1: Verbatim Feedback from Consultation Questionnaire and Interactive Map
Theme: Traffic and Parking
From the survey: <i>Excessive Traffic flow. Reduce traffic flow.</i> <i>Traffic free area</i> <i>To much traffic and Traffic fumes. Stationary Buses and Commercial vehicles especially pollute. To many parking spaces. Pathing poor state of repair also out of character with heritage conservation area. Pedestrian crossing at Tiverton Road especially dangerous crossing.</i> <i>One-Way traffic system. Non access trafic restricted during 10.30am - 16.30pm. Electrified public transport vehicles. Cycle paths and secure Cycle rakes.</i> <i>Too much traffic</i> <i>It is a fantastic space but could be better. Parking - makes the road more dangerous and takes away from events there. Too much through traffic The bus stop - gets busy but also feels like it divides the bullring space.</i> <i>Move the bus stop. Remove parking from the bullring side of the road. Incentives to encourage building owners to keep buildings/fronts in good repair. More colour. More plants/hanging baskets. Empty buildings to be used for community purposes until it can be let commercially.</i> <i>I think that this will be improved once traffic is diverted from the area. If the high street is closed and pedestrianised a pedestrian crossing is needed by Costa to get across the side road.</i>

¹ Note that some of the comments have been split up by theme, as some individual comments were quite lengthy and detailed.

Table 1: Verbatim Feedback from Consultation Questionnaire and Interactive Map

Too much Traffic. Bus stop.

Traffic and lack of focus.

Traffic and congestion. Make it access only for those who live there.

It needs a larger 'car free' area for events to develop a market square feel.

Sadly the car is king. We need to be able to utilise this space for people. Also exit from St. John's court is dangerous it needs a wider splay as cars parked in the parking space the other side of the bus stop reduces visibility can this be a bike rack space instead?

I like the Higher Bullring but the traffic is the main problem. The Farmers Market has to set up along one side, and it is quite crowded. It would be good if it felt like a proper square space rather than part of a street with the traffic running through it. Both sides of the road could be incorporated, with space for tables and chairs for outside dining/events. This could be done when the relief road is in place, closing the Higher Bullring to traffic when events take place.

It has no clear identity- it is just part of a busy main road with traffic lights at one end. Too much traffic makes it difficult to cross over to the other side. More outside seating would be good. If the parking spaces were removed during events and free parking provided elsewhere, more of the area could be used for the events. There does need to be free parking nearby though to attract visitors. And there needs to be some loading/unloading spaces in the Higher Bullring for traders at events, etc.

Parking/ traffic/ untidy/ uneven pavements

Traffic, fumes, noise, constructions at street corners, buses and lorries on the pavement at Tiverton Road junction. More sheltered crossing points.

Wider entrance/ exit to Tiverton Road to prevent cars using the pavement as 'extra' space. Make the road 'one way' by using traffic lights at the Lower Bullring, so making it safer for pedestrians and easing congestion due to parked vehicles, lorries etc.

Run down - too much traffic.

Just appears as a busy road, with little for pedestrians/ visitors to do. Also, too much cars parked here.

Too busy with heavy traffic passing two way too close to a pedestrian social area.

The trees and width of space are fabulous. Traffic flow needs reducing.

From the interactive map:

Parking and Appearance. This is short term parking for shoppers occupied by residents. The way parking is managed and charged for needs review.

Parking spaces taking up valuable people space.

Litter, parking with poor visibility.

You can't see traffic when coming out of St. John's court due to parked cars. Can this be a bike rack area instead?

Table 1: Verbatim Feedback from Consultation Questionnaire and Interactive Map

[Tiverton Road] Pavements are far too narrow it's incredibly unsafe. Wider pavements, one way traffic

[Tiverton Road] Traffic junction. Improved access & turning for cars to improve flow and reduce congestion

Need for Flexible space for Events

From the survey:

Encourage more pavement/ courtyard activity, all day/ every day, including Sundays, for locals and visitors.

It is only just beginning to be a focal point for activity, with the improvement of three pubs/ clubs/ restaurants. Needs pavement cafes, more active shops, perhaps even touristy/ gift shop types. It's a wonderful space, needs encouragement to continue its revival.

The trees are excellent - more and better planters. Room for outside cafes.

Space could be better used for pedestrians and weekly markets (including Wednesdays)

Market open space capacity is inadequate.

Improve pavement capacity to enable out door bistro /cafe seating and enable an enhanced market capacity on at least 6 days a week

The market area around the war memorial can provide a public open space for a number of differing events. Doubling its area would be beneficial.

Encourage wider variety of local businesses. Regular markets/events.

From the interactive map:

More of a community feel, enhance the market, and the space

Love the farmers market but it needs more space. More space for stalls and performance spaces for musicians

This whole area to be more people friendly with a proper market square feel more planters and st furniture, public art and places to enjoy local hospitality venues outside.

Need wider pavements less parking spaces. This would allow local businesses to spill out onto the street creating a more pleasant place to eat drink, sit and shop

Poor Materiality and Maintenance

From the survey:

Too shabby.

It needs generally brightening up.

Table 1: Verbatim Feedback from Consultation Questionnaire and Interactive Map

It needs quality paving in one material so it's safer for elderly and disabled people. I'd like to see a water fountain for the community to fill water bottles and benches in suitable spaces.

More green space. Noticeboards to read about history of town. Activities in which to participate.

From the interactive map:

The pavement areas need improvement with addition of more planted areas etc.

Planters throughout the town not well cared for, often full of weeds and late to get around to planting seasonal plants. Plant up regularly with seasonal plants and care for properly.

Recycling bins. Restrict parking next to alleys. Benches for waiting for buses and nurseries.

Scruffy. Could the courts be resurfaced in accordance with new surfacing in the higher bullring?

No hanging baskets. Hanging baskets help make the town more appealing. Again, like the planters when they do appear it is later in the season. Why not have winter and summer baskets?

Movement and Pedestrian Experience

From the survey:

More pedestrianised area.

Enhancing the area to be a space restaurants can use on warmer days or with street furniture so catering businesses can make the most of this area.

More planters, seating and a community notice board.

Obviously this area being large, could be enhanced to feel a welcoming hub to town centre.

Fewer car parking spaces, bigger market area, water fountain, better planting more flower beds or planters, decent quality paving, all building having anti pigeon spikes to protect paintwork etc, wide splays for safer vehicle access to courts, courts being resurfaced some are dangerous and uneven, ornamental gates going back on courts to return the character to places like St John's court, public art, groupings of street furniture, performance area for festivals, moving the bus stop outside chic hairdressers further down the road, the widest part of the street is used for the bus stop which stops it being a place for market stalls, event and performance space.

More outside seating/planting/maintain the nice trees. Give it an identity where you can see the beginning and end of the area. Does everyone know what the Higher Bullring is? Just looks like part of the main street at the moment. Reduce through traffic, make the pavement areas wider during events.

Provision for catering establishments to have outside seating, tables, etc. Would like to see Arts & Crafts affordable starter units in close proximity creating an artisan/cultural area. Be great to have a venue for the arts, visual/performance such as the old cinema.

Public art and decent large areas for flower beds or extra large planters.

Table 1: Verbatim Feedback from Consultation Questionnaire and Interactive Map

Street art and more seating would be nice, cafes with outdoor seating.

From the interactive map:

Nowhere to get fresh water. Can we have a practical but beautiful heritage water fountain so we can fill up water bottles.

The bus stop is taking up the widest part of the street which could be used for markets and festival entertainments to encourage people into the town. Can the bus stop be moved further up the road?

Empty / Poorly Maintained Shopfront

From the survey:

More planters. Hanging baskets. More colour. Empty buildings being used for community projects. Or promotion to get businesses to open in Cullompton.

There's still a few tatty buildings which could look beautiful. The parking also makes the road feel dangerous.

The buildings need decorating. Introduction of more 'local' shops to create unique shopping experience.

Improve quality of building facades.

Some of the buildings need some updating to preserve them and tidy them up

From the interactive map:

China orchid has a unique and well presented exterior. More buildings should embrace some colour and culture

The old cinema. Bring back the old cinema as a cinema/arts centre. We need somewhere to go to in the evening to watch performances etc rather than just go out to eat. Thanks.

Appendix 2: Public Consultation: Summary of Other Events

The public realm design consultants, once appointed, undertook additional public consultation over the course of the autumn with Council Officers to build on the previous consultation, including:

- ‘Autumn Fest’ Farmers Market in Cullompton on the 9th October 2021;
- A ‘walkabout’ and plenary discussion of the Cullompton Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group – 19th October 2021;
- A Town Centre Traders and Businesses Open Evening at the Hayridge Centre – 17th November 2021.

A summary of the feedback received at these events is set out below.

Autumn Festival – 9th October 2021

The Autumn Festival in early October is one of the biggest and most popular festivals in Cullompton.

The objective of this event was to meet visitors, residents and the wider public and to test the identified emerging themes. This included display boards illustrating and explaining the themes.

The Consultant team developed an illustrated feedback survey which sought to understand relative priorities of each theme and also provided an opportunity to provide general feedback and comments on each theme. However, there was also lots of rich feedback from the informal conversations the team had with the public.

Below is provided a summary of the field notes based on the key themes the team made following the event. Following this is a summary of the findings from the survey.

Research Field Notes:

Reduction in traffic

Reducing traffic along the high street appeared to be by far the greatest concern for most respondents. They felt that the congestion, noise, and air pollution caused by the traffic through the high street is responsible for making the Higher Bullring and Fore Street unpleasant places to be. Respondents also noted that the traffic is responsible for the staining of nearby buildings. Some respondents observed that congestion on the high street was often caused by drivers queueing to park. For many, all other priorities for the Higher Bullring and Fore Street (especially having safer places to cross, pleasant, and comfortable places to sit outside local businesses, more multi-use spaces, places to stop and rest, and a healthier and greener high street) depended on addressing the high traffic load through the town centre.

Many respondents see the proposed relief road as the most obvious solution to the traffic problem, but there was some scepticism about when it will be built.

While respondents were eager for through traffic in the town centre to be reduced, many felt that the town should extend its offer of convenient, free, or affordable parking in order to incentivise people to visit and shop on the high street.

A greener, healthier street

Some respondents felt that the retail offer, the poor quality and maintenance of the built form and through traffic discouraged them from visiting the town centre. Some respondents made the point that while the walled garden at the Walronds is a much loved space and an asset to the town, green space in the town is limited and potentially under threat from the development of more road infrastructure. Two respondents suggested making connections between the town centre and the river walkway. Respondents also spoke of the importance of future-proofing the town (including the high street) by improving the drainage system which is currently prone to flooding.

Comfortable places outside local businesses

Some respondents explained that with the exception of the Farmers' Market, the public realm on the high street is a place for passing through rather than stopping and resting. This was in part because they felt there were limited reasons to spend time on the high street and didn't provide a pleasant environment to be in due to the poor maintenance of buildings and public facilities, and because of the noise and fumes created by the passing traffic.

Integration of culture and heritage

Respondents primarily spoke of the town's heritage with regards to its architecture and buildings, feeling that many of the town's listed buildings and historic alleyways have fallen into disrepair as a result of poor maintenance and management. Some respondents felt that over time this had contributed to a loss in the town's sense of heritage and pride.

Safer places to cross

A number of respondents suggested that the high street is not a particularly safe or friendly space for children or older people given the intensity of the traffic and the relative lack of safe spaces to cross the road. Respondents felt that providing safer places to cross the road must come with addressing the traffic problem through the town centre.

More multi-use spaces

Some respondents mentioned that it would be good to see the Cullompton Farmers' market expand, although some questioned whether there was sufficient footfall and reflected on the wider retail offer and the relative 'pull' of the town compared with other local towns.

Places to stop and rest

A number of older respondents commented on how few places along the high street there are to stop and rest, making shopping on the high street less attractive.

Opening historic water channels

While the idea of opening historic water channels in the town centre was cherished by some respondents, others felt that they may pose a health and safety risk due to slips and trips, and were pessimistic about their upkeep, and concerned that poor maintenance would leave the water channels filled with litter.

Survey Responses

There were 27 respondents to the survey (undertaken as part of the Autumn Festival) and they were asked to provide a score between 1- 5 (with 5 being very important and 1 being not all important) to indicate their priorities for High Bullring and Fore Streets.

Analysis of results demonstrated the following ranked priorities:

Rank	Issues of consideration
Highest Priority	Reduction in traffic
	A greener, healthier high street
	Comfortable spaces outside local businesses
	Integration of culture and heritage
	Safer places to cross
	More multi-use spaces
	Places to stop and rest
Lowest Priority	Opening historic water channels

Although the survey engaged a small sample of people (27), respondents overwhelmingly indicated that a reduction in traffic, a greener and healthier street, comfortable spaces outside businesses, safer places to cross and integration with culture and heritage were seen as important.

Town-centre Partnership Walkabout & Workshop – 19th October 2021

The Cullompton Town Centre Generation Partnership Groups acts as the Steering Group for the HSHAZ and Town Centre Masterplan projects, and it brings together representatives from a wide range of stakeholders.

It was felt that a walkabout and workshop with this group would bring together a range of individuals with an interest in the design, use and success of Higher Bullring and Fore Street including the town council, retailers, local residents, Creative Cullompton, elected members and local authority officers.

Therefore, the group provided a valuable resource to develop further and diverse insights into the aspirations for and user experience of Higher Bullring and Fore St, to further test and refine the emerging themes and concepts.

The session was split into two sections. The first was a practical exercise, with participants breaking into small groups and tasked with reviewing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Higher Bullring and Fore Street in situ using a tailored process based on the Healthy Streets Assessment Tool.

The second session was run as a facilitated plenary workshop style session. The focus was on feeding back on the findings from the walkabout exercise and to test, review and refine the themes.

Key Findings

There was a general consensus in support of the key themes but there was also additional feedback. Please see below some of the flip-chart notes from the session:

- Desire to see more trees
- Better links and connections to neighbouring areas (e.g. to the leat)
- Improve the arrival experience, wider legibility and signage
- Consideration of the 'World behind the High Street' e.g. alleys
- Parking causes congestion (e.g. people stopping to visit shops in Fore Street)
- Need for more social places not just places to rest - the orientation of seating is important (potential for pocket parks and places that provide shelter).
- Create space for celebration and events - consideration given to develop proposals that can support temporary events and activities e.g. on-street performances
- Need to recognise and celebrate the 'Stunning' Historic buildings
- Opportunity to create a greater sense of identity with street furniture materials (e.g. use of bright colours)
- Importance of 'future proofing' materials - ensure proposals are maintainable and adoptable
- Need to give consideration give to permeable materials
- Need to consider the management of waste within the streetscape
- Need to consider young people in the development of proposals
- Opportunity to integrate public art, stories and narratives

Traders and Business Drop-in – 17th November 2021

Working with local partners and led by MDDC, the consultant team attended a consultation session for traders and businesses as part of a wider drop-in event aimed at businesses and local traders.

The aims of the session were to:

To increase local awareness of the HSHAZ project along with wider MDDC initiatives which could support local trades, providing an opportunity for traders and business owners to ask questions about;

- Higher Bullring/Fore Street public realm enhancement project
- Shopfront Improvement grants
- The Creative Cullompton cultural programme
- Business grants, skills and training opportunities, and projects such as Taste Mid Devon

In terms of the public realm enhancement works for the Higher Bullring, the key focus was:

- To explain the HSHAZ scheme consultation process, and how this consultation fits in with the ongoing consultation process;
- To gain feedback on the emerging themes and initial concepts to identify priorities for the traders and business owners

The format for the session included a number of display boards presenting the key emerging themes and analysis of the study area, using similar material to that presented at Autumn Fest.

The team also utilised a semi-structured question schedule to guide discussions with traders and business representatives. This enabled more qualitative and in-depth discussion with the traders.

In total 8 businesses / traders attended the session. The majority of these were based on or close to the Higher Bullring.

Feedback from the session:

- The trees and listed buildings were seen as key strengths of the town centre
- Allow for expansion of the Farmers Market to be able to utilise more space around the War Memorial, including potentially re-allocation some of the parking spaces. Interest in developing a market layout that would operate in a layout with stalls facing inwards towards a 'street'.
- A number of attendees wanted to see a more decluttered streetscape, with high quality / well maintained materials and a 'shared space' around the War Memorial. One attendee commented "*the pavements are a nightmare*".
- Some respondents suggested moving the bus stop along the road on Higher Bullring to create more space around the war memorial.
- There was a desire to see better management of bins within the public realm to create a more pleasant and safer walking experience.
- Improving the visual appearance of street furniture and also buildings / shop-fronts was seen as important, for example by creating a coherent palette of materials.

- A number of traders highlighted that they needed to receive deliveries from large HGVs through the day and that they would like to see some accommodation for this in the proposals.
- There were also a number of traders who questioned the strategy in relation to parking and charging, with some proposing a longer free parking period for the on-street parking spaces.
- There was a keen interest in how to 'pull' more people into the town-centre and increase footfall with discussion around place marketing, the retail offer and also the 'arrival experience'. Linked to this was a desire to see more consideration given to how to improve signage and links from the M5.

Overall there was a general consensus with the emerging themes presented.

Appendix 3: Proposed Concept Design for the Higher Bullring