

28<sup>th</sup> July 2009

**Name of Cabinet Member:**  
**Cabinet Member (City Services) - Councillor Noonan**

**Director approving submission of the report:**  
Chief Executive

**Ward(s) affected:**  
St Michaels

**Title:**  
**Ironmonger Square**

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**Is this a key decision?**

No. It is thought appropriate that this report is considered by the Cabinet as this project affects a prominent location in the city centre and with regard to the large amount of public interest in the proposals.

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**Executive summary:**

The Ironmonger Square project will help transform a run down area of the city centre covering Ironmonger Row, Cross Cheaping and Burges. The proposed works are part of the wider vision for regenerating the city centre as set out in the emerging Urban Design Framework and Jerde Masterplan.

The original scheme for Ironmonger Square was approved by cabinet in November 2007. When work started in Ironmonger Row, the supporting structure, which forms part of Primark's basement, was found to have deteriorated significantly since the original structural assessment in 2003. The initial cost estimate for strengthening the structure using conventional techniques was £1.5M. Specialist consultants have since reduced these costs significantly by adopting innovative repair methods. This has released sufficient budget to enable a revised scheme to be developed retaining not only many features of the original proposal, but to add additional benefits to the scheme thereby delivering the transformation of this part of the city centre.

The revised scheme will provide a new public square in Ironmonger Row, paved in sandstone, with trees and benches. A roadway to the south side of the square will allow buses and taxis to pass from Trinity Street to Burges. A public space with trees will also be created by narrowing the carriageway in Cross Cheaping and the footways and carriageway in Burges will be repaired along with improvements to the link to the West Orchards Shopping Centre. If funding permits, the eastern footway in Burges will be widened. A plan is included in appendix 1.

The original approved budget was £3.634M; the cost of the revised scheme as set out above, together with the structural repairs, is estimated to be £4.113M (at 2009 prices and including a 10% contingency for the remaining works). The additional funding is to be found from the City Centre Environmental Improvement Budget and adjustments to the Local Transport Plan programme. For an extra £479,000 a major structural safety issue will have been dealt with whilst the majority of the benefits of the original scheme will still be delivered.

Work on the structural work has already started and, subject to approval, it is proposed to start work in Cross Cheaping in August with the scheme being completed by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that:

- 1) The revised scheme for Ironmonger Square be approved
- 2) The Director of Finance & Legal Services be authorised to advertise and make the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders and Notices of Intent required to implement the revised scheme, subject to the consideration of any objections
- 3) The existing Traffic Regulation Orders within the general area be reviewed to improve traffic management and enforcement in the city centre with the cabinet member for City Services having delegated authority to authorize the Director of Finance and Legal Services to advertise and make any necessary orders.

### **List of Appendices included:**

Appendix 1: Plan of revised scheme for Ironmonger Square.

### **Other useful background papers:**

'Burgess and Ironmonger Row Environmental Improvements', Report 5 to Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

### **Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009.

### **Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

### **Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Report title:  
Ironmonger Square**

**1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 In November 2007 Cabinet approved a scheme to create a public square in Ironmonger Row and to upgrade Cross Cheaping and Burges as part of a programme of works to regenerate the city centre. Work started in January 2008 when it was found that the condition of the beams to the roof of Primark's basement (owned by the City Council), which lies directly beneath Ironmonger Row, had deteriorated significantly since their original assessment in 2003. The basement is a substantial structure running the full width of Ironmonger Row from Burges House to Primark and measuring 30m across and 8m high.
- 1.2 The original proposal for repairs, using conventional techniques, would have cost £1.5M; this approach would only have left sufficient funding to reinstate the road as it was once the structure had been made safe and there would have been operational difficulties for Primark. Clearly, this was unacceptable for such a significant part of the city centre and the City Council's and Primark's engineers have worked together to develop an innovative low cost solution that will allow the store to continue to operate unhindered; the result is a proposal to repair the structure using the latest carbon fibre technology. The cost for repair using this new technology is significantly reduced and this will leave sufficient budget to allow implementation of many of the features of the original scheme.

**2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 The opportunity has been taken to reconsider the original proposals for Ironmonger Square and adjoining streets. The outcome of this process is set out in the paragraphs below, with a plan of the proposed revised scheme attached as appendix 1. It has been possible to provide further benefits to the original scheme relating to taxi rank provision, the potential for additional disabled parking and a controlled crossing of Trinity Street.
- 2.2 *Ironmonger Square:* In reviewing the design proposals, CVOne was consulted on the purpose of the square. It was agreed that it has potential for markets and one off events as well as a space for cafes and seating. The potential for the projection onto the rear wall of Primark was also considered although this will be part of a future phase. To future proof the square, it is proposed to include all the necessary ducting for electrical cables and fibre optics to allow for maximum flexibility.
- 2.3 The original scheme excluded all vehicles (with the exception of emergency vehicles) from Ironmonger Row and Cross Cheaping. To meet the needs of the bus operators and their passengers a bus turning area was going to be necessary at the entrance to Ironmonger Row. This would have been located directly on top of the weakest part of the basement structure and this option was therefore dropped in favour of allowing buses and taxis to drive through the square to gain access to Burges where two bus stops will be provided. The chosen route, on the southern side of the new square, crosses the basement where the beams have the shortest spans to minimize repair costs. The roadway has been designed in the light of experience from the schemes at Belgrade Plaza and Ikea; it will be a conventional carriageway with informal crossing points and it has been designed to limit bus speeds to below 10mph.
- 2.4 It is envisaged that the roadway will only be open to buses, taxis (to include private hire), cycles and emergency vehicles. Any requirements to access frontages will require a special permit. However, it is also proposed that there should be a review of Traffic

Regulation Orders (TROs) and signing on roads within the general area. This is to ensure that non-essential traffic does not enter this part of the city centre and that the orders, including those in Ironmonger Square, can be enforced using CCTV. Any changes to the TROs should be introduced at the same time as the new square is opened to traffic.

- 2.5 The square, with the exception of the carriageway, will be paved in sandstone. This will provide a high quality space and will ensure that it has a distinct identity. The need for steps in the main square was reconsidered given the layout changes. To maximize the space available and its flexibility, and in the light of experience of other city centre schemes, it was decided to eliminate the steps. CVOne felt that the slope of the square will be consistent with its use for markets and events. There are encouraging discussions with frontagers in relation to sponsoring a piece of artwork in the new square which will further enhance the sense of place.
- 2.6 *Trinity Street:* A proposal to narrow the carriageway of Trinity Street where it adjoins Ironmonger Square and to treat the surfaces as an extension to the main square has been rejected on the grounds of its £0.5M additional cost. To improve connectivity to the Phoenix initiative, and to respond to consultation with Coventry Access Advisory Group a new zebra crossing is proposed from Ironmonger Square to New Buildings.
- 2.7 *Burges and Cross Cheaping:* These roads are considered particularly important as they form part of the walk link from the city centre to the canal basin and will link into the proposed square (to be created as part of the Axa development) at the bottom of Burges. A variety of options were considered, from the original scheme (modified to accommodate buses and taxis) through to basic maintenance works and a clean up only. The proposed option represents a compromise with a new public space created to the east side of Cross Cheaping and a maintenance programme to Burges. It is proposed to leave the works in Burges towards the end of the project so that if there is any underspend, that money can be used to widen the footway to the eastern side of Burges outside the historic buildings.
- 2.8 *West Orchards link (continuation of Ironmonger Row):* This area has been dominated by car traffic exiting the car park in the past. The proposals for the main square make it necessary to ban vehicles from this section of road (except for emergency vehicles) and this raises the question of how to deal with the remaining road space. The preferred short term solution is to raise the level of the carriageway to the top of the kerbs in tarmac and introduce a lockable bollard.
- 2.9 *Taxis:* To allow the creation of a new public space in Cross Cheaping, it is proposed to relocate the taxi rank to Trinity Street, utilizing the lay-bys to the western side. The current rank in Cross Cheaping is scheduled to rank 12 taxis whereas 16 can be accommodated on Trinity Street thus easing the pressure on taxi ranks. The potential for creating a new evening rank adjoining Millennium Square in Hales Street is also being considered; this could accommodate a further 6 taxis thus helping reduce further pressure on ranks in the city centre. The conversion of the existing taxi rank in West Orchards that is little used in the day time to a night time only rank is also being considered; this space could then be designated for blue badge parking during the daytime.
- 2.10 *Street furniture and trees:* To provide screening to the western edge of the new square it is proposed to retain the large plane tree at the top of Cross Cheaping along with the provision of 13 new trees to help screen frontages and provide shade. CVOne have agreed to maintain the new trees at their expense for the following 3 years. The choice of street furniture reflects that used elsewhere in the city centre and accords with the new Street Design Framework. The aim will be to minimize clutter utilising as few signs as

possible and using wall mounted lighting units to avoid the need for columns. The overall layout of the proposed scheme is as shown in appendix 1.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

3.1 The outcome of the original consultation exercise was reviewed and this has helped shape the revised proposal. The following bodies have been re-consulted on this revised scheme:

- Primark
- Centro
- National Express Coventry
- De Courcey
- Stagecoach
- Access Officers
- Other frontagers
- West Orchards
- CVOne
- Emergency Services
- Police Architectural liaison officer

3.2 All are supportive of the revised scheme. An adjacent retail business is interested in the possibility of reopening their basement floor onto Ironmonger Square; this would give a major boost to this area by increasing frontage activity and would help reinforce pedestrian links between West Orchards, the Phoenix Initiative and public transport. The Coventry Taxi Association were consulted about the original proposals and further consultations on the latest designs are taking place.

3.3 All consultations have been through direct contact.

### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

4.1 Given the imperative to restore this area of the city centre and to remove the present eyesore, preliminary work in Trinity Street to build a new bus stop and the structural repairs are already underway. The contractor for the structural works has been set a deadline of completing the repairs by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009 so as not to interfere with Christmas trade at Primark. Once the underground works are complete, work will begin on building the new square above. In parallel with these works, it is proposed to start work in Cross Cheaping in August 2009 with the whole project being completed by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010. It should be noted that this is only 5 months behind the original schedule despite the major structural safety issues with the basement.

### **5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services**

5.1 Financial implications

The original budget for Ironmonger Square, as approved in November 2007, was £3.634M; the revised scheme, including strengthening of the basement, is estimated to cost £4.113M (at 2009 prices with a 10% contingency on remaining works). The additional £479,000 will be found from the City Centre Environmental Improvement Budget and through reprogramming the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Local Transport Plan programme with the contingency element funded from an identified underspend in the corporate capital programme.

- 5.2 With respect to revenue costs, CVOne are paying for tree maintenance for 3 years and are assimilating the costs of maintaining the new square into their existing budgets. With regard to highways maintenance, there will be a medium term gain as all of the areas included within the scheme require substantial investment in maintenance.
- 5.3 Legal implications  
The main legal implications are the need to move the taxi rank which will be undertaken using the Local Government Act, Miscellaneous Provisions, 1976 and the Traffic Regulation Order required to prevent traffic from West Orchards exiting via Ironmonger Row. Both are subject to a statutory consultation/notice process and may attract representations that will need to be considered on their merits and which may result in further modifications to the scheme.
- 5.4 In respect of contracts, there is an extant contract with Tarmac for the purposes of executing the works within Ironmonger Square.

## 6. Other implications

### 6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / LAA (or Coventry SCS)?

*A prosperous Coventry:* Ironmonger Square is a key element of the city's emerging Urban Design Framework aimed at regenerating the city centre.

*Making Coventry an attractive and enjoyable place to be:* The creation of new, high quality, public squares will create space for events, cafes and other activities.

*Encouraging a creative, active and vibrant city:* Creating high quality public areas will promote and encourage creativity and activity.

*Ensuring that children and young people are safe:* The scheme has been designed with support from the police to ensure that public safety and the perception of safety is improved in this part of the city centre.

*Improving the environment and tackling climate change:* This scheme will transform the appearance of this run down part of the city centre. By promoting walking, cycling and the use of public transport the scheme will make a positive contribution to tackling climate change.

### 6.2 How is risk being managed?

A project risk log is maintained on the corporate system and reviewed at every meeting of the project board and team. The 10% contingency reflects the current assessment of risk cost.

### 6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None.

### 6.4 Equalities / EIA

Consultations took place with Coventry Access Advisory Group, a disabled persons forum to discuss in detail the drawings of the original plan. Various comments were made and

amendments to the plan were made. When the redesign of the plans were made in 2008, the chair of this group gave feedback on these plans and these have been incorporated within the design.

## 6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The scheme will improve facilities for bus users and pedestrians and will, therefore, promote the use of sustainable forms of transport with consequent reduced carbon emissions.

## 6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The revised scheme has been developed in partnership with CVOne and bus operators and Centro. All partners are supportive of the proposed scheme.

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## Appendices