

Dover Priory Station Approach – Detailed Design Concepts

A report by Katherine Putnam, Regeneration & Projects Manager, Regeneration & Economy, Environment & Regeneration Directorate to the Highways Advisory Board on 4 March 2008.

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Highways Advisory Board on scheme progress to re-configure Dover Priory Station forecourt and the easterly section of Folkestone Road (from the railway bridge to Effingham Street junction), Dover. The report presents the detailed designs including the art interventions, examines traffic and environmental issues, feedback from the consultation process, clarifies funding sources and outlines the delivery programme.
2. The Board is asked to support the detailed designs and subsequent procurement process for reconfiguring Dover Priory Station forecourt and the easterly section of Folkestone Road into a quality urban space that acts as a key 'gateway/arrival space' into Dover town centre, and recommend to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Supporting Independence that the scheme goes out to tender along with all the necessary approvals.

Background

3. The Dover Pride Regeneration Strategy, Dover's town centre Masterplan and the Public Realm Strategy are key drivers in transforming the perception of the town centre. The improvement of the public realm is an integral part of an overall strategy for Dover town centre, which builds on the 9 major projects outlined in the Public Realm Strategy (July 2006) for Dover town centre.
4. Throughout the extensive consultation process to date many stakeholders, interest groups and local residents have recognised that Dover town centre's current transport infrastructure presents physical and psychological barriers that sever the town centre from its environs. The current road network hinders a comprehensive approach to outward and connected expansion that should place a strong emphasis on high quality public transport, a safer walking environment (for both the able bodied and the disabled) and safer cycling routes rather than car use.
5. A comprehensive and innovative approach to implementing high quality design to all new and existing areas of public realm, public open space and traffic/pedestrian management within Dover town centre is acknowledged as a high priority by Dover Pride. The quality of improvements to the public realm will be critical in setting the context and a benchmark for the transformation of the town centre, whilst at the same time avoiding abortive work.
6. More importantly, if not implemented, it is unlikely that businesses, developers and new residents will be attracted to the town in sufficient numbers to achieve this transformation. Development sites would remain empty, external investment will be harder to attract and the town centre will not improve.
7. The Dover Pride Board on 14 July 2006 considered a report on the Public Realm Strategy and its 9 major projects, and agreed to the importance of preparing concepts and detailed designs for Dover Priory Station Approach and the easterly section of Folkestone Road, the first major project emerging from the Public Realm Strategy (July 06).

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8. The first public realm project needs to create a positive identity, and act as a visible sign of Dover Pride's commitment to transforming Dover town centre. This area is currently secluded and isolated from the town centre despite being a key gateway to the town centre. When emerging from the station there is little sense of arrival and routes between the station and the various town centre facilities are not immediately obvious. There is an opportunity through this proposal to create a stronger sense of place and arrival, and change perceptions of this area of the town centre, and set a benchmark for future works elsewhere. The expenditure has been well planned over a number of years and only recently has the contribution from Network Rail been confirmed, thereby allowing the project to proceed to the next stage. This public realm project fits well with the longer-term aims and recommendations of Dover Pride's Regeneration Strategy, the town centre Masterplan and the Public Realm Strategy.

Scheme Concept

9. In overall terms, this project is very much an exemplar and innovation project, which aims to radically change the station's external environment. The scheme has a number of aims and objectives, which can broadly be summarised as below:
 - increasing 'connectivity' by creating better links between the railway station (to be linked to the CTRL in 2009 when the rail passenger usage by local people as well as visitors to Dover will increase considerably above existing levels by some 400,000 per annum), the docks, the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods such as Tower Hamlets (one of the most deprived areas of east Kent);
 - tackling the road network and creating a pedestrian & cyclist friendly environment;
 - ensuring a positive sense of arrival by train and/or bus at key nodes, including the railway station forecourt as an external reception space whilst providing adequate parking for commuters, where a high quality entrance to the town centre is required; and
 - improving public safety and help reduce crime in the locality.

Urban Design

10. This scheme goes beyond the requirements of a traditional highway design by incorporating the facets of good urban design in order to deliver high quality public realm which will compliment the future development aspirations in the town centre. There is considerable overlap and interaction between the public highway space, the station forecourt, existing links to adjacent neighbourhoods, nearby development opportunities, and the mutual benefits are highlighted below:
 - **Character** – a place with its own identity.
 - **Continuity** – a place where public & private spaces are distinguished but complimentary.
 - **Quality** – a place with attractive and successful public realm and outdoor areas.
 - **Ease of Movement** – a place that is easy to get to and move through.
 - **Legibility** – a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand.
 - **Adaptability** – a place that easily changes.
 - **Diversity** – a place with variety and choice.
11. The proposals are exciting and traditional highway standards cannot be applied in the normal way. As the detailed designs have developed, a balance has been struck between the purist urban design aspirations and the operational, buildability and maintenance aspects, and all alongside innovative and high quality.

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Scheme Design

12. An Integrated Design Team (IDT) has been set up to deliver the project, with our consultants Jacobs UK Ltd (Maidstone office). This team includes engineers, landscape architects, a Public Art Project Manager (Sarah Wang) and a Lead Artist (Jacqueline Poncelet), both of whom are of international repute. Building on an Art Plan for the project, Public Art is an integral part of the engineering design; it also includes specifically commissioned art works in appropriate spaces created by the scheme design; and an outreach project to engage with the local community. All members of the IDT work closely together with the ultimate goal that the scheme be a well-balanced multi-functional project of the highest standard.
13. The need to de-clutter, make safe, minimise road signage & markings, improve wayfinding, introduce better landscaping, use quality materials and create an enhanced and widened public realm for increased social interaction has been maintained throughout the scheme development.

Design Principles

14. Over a period of months, an outline design scheme/masterplan has evolved in close consultation with the Client Group and wider stakeholders. Elements intrinsic to this concept design include:
 - the concept of a “arrival space” onto the main station forecourt where there is better balance between the pedestrians, buses, taxis and motorist;
 - improved access, facilities and service penetration for buses and taxis within the station environs and beyond, to strengthen the overall transport hub;
 - an improved pedestrian and cyclist environment enhancing existing routes and facilities between the station and the town centre, and adjacent communities such as Tower Hamlets (including improvements and realignment of the southerly section of the Priory Steps footpath (a Public Right of Way) as phase 1), and landmarks such as Western Heights;
 - opening up views into and out of the station environs, to enhance visual links and sightlines in all directions, in order to aid navigation, improve actual and perceived safety and security within the area, through the regrading of the embankment;
 - improvements to signage and wayfinding, street furniture and features that help to define routes and links to nearby landmarks;
 - improvements to lighting generally (both strategically and detail), tree planting and pavement improvements along Folkestone Road;
 - removing any unnecessary clutter and general clearance (including large advert boards and self-seeded trees for example); and the
 - removal of outdated traffic and pedestrian management schemes including a reconfigured entrance/junction arrangement with Folkestone Road.

Detailed Designs

15. This concept design/masterplan has evolved further, and the detailed designs are being finalised in preparation for procurement at the end of March 2008.

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Delivery Programme

16. Advanced vegetative site clearance works have been carried out during January and February 2008 to satisfy ecological restrictions regarding nesting birds. Advanced works are also being carried out to the Priory Steps to improve the footway surfacing and lighting to this vital pedestrian link to the Tower Hamlets area.
17. The main works delivery programme aims to go out to tender at the end of March 2008 and award a contract by early June. On-site construction is estimated to take approximately nine months, from July 2008 to the end of March 2009. This programme takes into account all the approvals required through Network Rail, Dover District Council and Kent County Council.

Traffic & Road Safety

18. A new drop off/pick up facility has been incorporated close to the main station entrance and the car park layout has been improved. The taxi rank has been moved closer to the station entrance adjacent to the improved Port Bus stop area. On Folkestone Road, the signal controlled crossing has been moved to allow for better direct access, and an additional bus stop has been introduced

Environmental Issues

19. The proposal will help reduce reliance on the private car and promote other more environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling, and use of passenger transport including rail & port. Reduction of traffic speeds into and from the forecourt, will create a more pedestrian friendly environment.
20. The existing landscape structure will also be radically altered, and the proposed introduction of new landscaping, a new and more formalised public open space and the use of quality materials will provide notable benefits to the overall street scene environment. The scheme itself also provides an opportunity to stimulate appropriate development opportunities (in the long term) and will therefore provide benefits for social, cultural, physical and visual connection.

Community Safety

21. The scheme will change the whole perception of the station forecourt and surrounding links by creating a quality public open space, with improved accessibility, lighting, landscaping, and close-circuit television. Increased usage will result in better natural surveillance for both pedestrians and cyclists.
22. Community severance has been a problem for many years and the lower section of the Priory Steps is known as a crime hot-spot for burglaries, drug use and serious sexual assault (during the period of 2002 - 2005 there were 150 reported crimes and 2000 calls to Kent Police related to crime and disorder incidents). The creation of a new pedestrian access between the Priory Steps and the station forecourt, combined with the removal of vegetation and upgraded lighting will improve public safety and help to reduce crime in the locality, and is supported by Kent Police, Dover District Council and the local community. These improvements will reinstate and reconnect this key space and access route with surrounding neighbourhoods. In overall terms, it is anticipated that the scheme will enhance community safety and usage, and deter anti-social behaviour along with its undesirable consequences.

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Finance

23. The total cost of the project is estimated at £2,800,000. As the table below shows, most of the capital funding has been secured from a range of partners/sources, some of which will be committed by the end of 2007/8 financial year on advanced clearance works on the embankment and the Priory Steps. Through the Basic Asset Protection Agreement between Kent County Council and Network Rail, Kent County Council will be the accountable body for the all the funding and delivery of the project. The financial breakdown is shown below.

Source	Year 07/08	Year 08/09
East Kent Partnership	75,000.00	Nil
KCC (Footways Initiative, Regeneration Fund & LTP)	Nil	525,344.00
Interreg IIIB	Nil	85,000.00
Interreg 4B - to be confirmed to cover gap of £134,656.00.	Nil	tbc
Dover District Council	Nil	50,000.00
Nuclear Decommissioning Agency	5,000.00	Nil
Network Rail	Nil	£1.6 million
CTRL (<i>Integrated Kent Franchise</i>)	Nil	£50,000.00
Local Transport Plan (KHS)	Nil	175,000.00
Priory steps only (EKP)	100,000.00	Nil
TOTAL:	180,000.00	2,485,344.00
Total Value of Project: £2.8million.		

24. As well as the build costs, there are financial implications for future scheme maintenance for areas within Kent County Council's ownership, and the public art installations (as Network Rail under the Basic Asset Protection Agreement between the two parties have no responsibility for these features). A working group of officers has been set-up to assess maintenance costs and it is likely that the available budget will be top-sliced to ensure that adequate funding is available for scheme maintenance over the first 3-5 years. After that, it is hoped that a suitable developer tariff system will be considered and adopted by the County Council which will be imposed on town centre development to cover the ongoing maintenance costs of the scheme. The detailed cost implications will be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

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Consultation

25. An extensive consultation process has been conducted including a stakeholder workshop in June 2007 with organisations such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Kent Association for the Blind and other local disability and access organisations. The scheme was well received at this event, as well as at the Public Exhibition held at the Dover Discovery Centre between 1 and 4 September 2007 and the numerous one-to-one liaison meetings; the scheme has also been modified to take on board queries/concerns from the stakeholders who attended, and the Client team. Outstanding issues to be resolved include:

- moving the signal controlled crossing on Folkestone Road, which could have an impact on 4 guest houses; and
- agreeing a maintenance package (including protocols such as registering this project as a special surface and revenue funding) for a defined period for the enhanced materials, landscaping and art installations on the land owned by Kent County Council.

Conclusion

26. The Public Realm Strategy for Dover town centre set the vision, policy context and design principles for a rolling programme of phased works and demonstration projects throughout Dover town centre. The quality of these projects will be critical to providing a benchmark for the transformation of Dover's town centre public spaces. In particular, they are intended to instil confidence and attract business, developers and visitors to Dover, and to reinvigorate a local community and town centre that has been in slow decline.

27. Dover Priory Station Approach will be the first of these major projects to be implemented in the short term, and as a result is very important in leading and altering the way pedestrians and cars use urban space in Dover town centre. The detailed design scheme developed is an innovative and far-reaching public realm proposal that is not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing. It will also challenge conventional ways of building highway and environmental improvement schemes, whilst championing quality urban design and public realm, to the benefit, uplift and regeneration of Dover town centre.

Joint Transportation Board

28. Reports have been submitted to Dover's Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meetings on 26 March 2007 and 8 November 2007, and Dover District Council's (DDC) Executive seeking support for the concept scheme and progression to detailed scheme design. The recommendation from both JTB's and subsequently DDC's Executive was supportive of the scheme concept and progression to detailed design.

Portfolio Holder's Views

29. As both the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence and Chairman of Dover Pride, Roger Gough is strongly supportive of these proposals. The County Council and its partners have already given significant support to the enhancement of the station, and this is an important development for both the station and Dover town centre.

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Recommendation

30. Subject to the views of this Board it is proposed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence that the detailed designs are progressed through the procurement process and the scheme delivered on site within the proposed programme, whilst the future maintenance implications (funding and protocols) of the section of the scheme within Kent County Council's ownership and the public art elements are considered with a further report submitted to the Board.

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Background Documents: *to be added.*

Attachments: *to be added.*