

A Partnership Project for Helston



HELSTON CULTURAL QUARTER

Design Brief for the Redevelopment of Helston's Market Place, Drill Hall Yard
and access through to Wendron Street

Date: 30th October 2020

Revision: 02

1. Objective of the Design Brief

The objective of this document is to build upon the Project Concept work initially devised by MeiLoci Landscape Architects in 2015 as part of the Public Realm Improvement exercise undertaken by Helston Town Council. The concept has been further developed within the Helston CIC 'Place Shaping Plan' submitted to Cornwall Council in July 2020 and a Client Team has now been assembled to drive the project forward.

This document aims to provide sufficient information to satisfy the requirements of RIBA 2020 Stage 1, forming the Project Brief for the 'Helston Cultural Quarter Project'. It provides a clear, concise project definition to enable the selected Architectural Design Team to develop the project through RIBA stages 2 and 3 – Concept Design (including Scheme Design and Spatial Coordination) and Developed Design.

Subject to successful completion of stages 2 and 3, the scope of the project will then be extended to Stage 4 where a full Technical Design will be developed.

2. Project Background

Helston is the tenth largest town in Cornwall with a growing population of around 12,000 and is one of the Duchy's oldest settlements. The town is also the gateway to the Lizard peninsula, serving approximately 118 square miles across a notable area of outstanding natural beauty. There are 16 villages within the Lizard with an estimated population today of around 15,000. A further catchment area for Helston covering nearby villages such as Porthleven, Breage and Wendron, provides close to another 15,000 inhabitants, making a total for the town and surrounding districts of approximately 42,000.

Although somewhat distant from the coast itself, Helston's location enables the town to access the additional tourist population visiting the area, however this is mostly to the benefit of large, edge of town retail and there is much to be done to enable the town centre to attract visitors and benefit from the tourist economy.

Helston is therefore typical of many rural market towns across the UK, challenged by out of town shopping, increasing levels of empty shop premises and declining town centre footfall.

Helston's recent decline has been rapid. The town has experienced the fastest rate of increase in empty retail premises of any town in Cornwall – a 7.0% decline in the last 3 years leaving Helston at 15.5%. This is 3.5% worse than the Cornwall average of 12.6% (national average 12.9%). A November 2019 survey of town centre businesses showed that trade was worse in 2019 vs 2018 for 42% of these businesses, with 25% seeing no change. These statistics pre-date the coronavirus pandemic which has undoubtedly accelerated this decline.

The town is keen to address these issues and number of recent projects have achieved some notable success. The Museum of Cornish Life based in Market Place has gained much

positive profile since it's devolution to a community managed Trust, increasing visitor numbers year on year. The Cornubian Arts and Sciences Trust (CAST), established in the Passmore Edwards building adjacent to the Museum, has attracted international recognition for its art programmes. The thriving building provides high quality workspace for nationally recognised artists as well as café and film/performance space. Recent refurbishments of the Grylls Monument area and the devolution and refurbishment of Coronation Park close to the town centre have proved extremely successful and attractive to visitors.

To build on these early successes a Place Shaping Plan for the town has been developed, defining a number of key projects aimed at addressing the town's issues. The Plan has gained broad support locally and is gaining support and traction with Cornwall Council.

The Helston Cultural Quarter scheme is one of these key projects. Aimed at developing the historic heart and cultural areas of the town, the project will attract footfall to the town centre, restore civic pride to an area in disrepair and, most importantly, create a clear cultural centre to the town, able to host outdoor activities, events and provide an enjoyable space to meet and dwell.

3. Project Concept

Market Place and the linked areas of the Drill Hall Yard and pedestrian access route via CAST to Wendron Street are at the heart of the original settlement of Helston. The site is surrounded by history with an attractive, enclosed situation between several of the most culturally strong buildings in the town.

It is, however, in a state of disrepair with poor walking surfaces and most areas allocated to car parking and access. Although still attractive the area does not encourage people to dwell and with limited public access it is seen as a difficult pedestrian side route to the town centre.

Market Place itself connects to the area known as the Drill Hall Yard which leads onwards, via what was once a typical Helston 'ope', to the CAST building and car parking areas above.

The surrounding buildings of the Museum of Cornish Life, CAST and the Guildhall, as well as many adjacent listed buildings, provide an extremely strong cultural factor. Although these organisations collaborate, the space around them does not benefit from their excellence and, in fact hides the significance of their work.

The sympathetic refurbishment of the area would provide linkage and coherence between these organisations, creating a joined public space - an outdoor facility for use by the Museum, CAST and other community organisations. Acting as a multi-functional venue able to host a broad range of cultural activities, events and performances as well as markets and a place for the public to simply meet and dwell.

The refurbished space will thereby promote Helston's town centre as a cultural destination with a sympathetic setting for the Museum, Guildhall, CAST and surrounding buildings. It

will highlight some of the town's 'hidden gems' with an improved, bigger civic space welcoming visitors and restoring civic pride.

A new pedestrian friendly link from Church Street to Wendron Street will re-introduce the public to one of Helston's historic 'opes' and create the linkage needed to define a strong Cultural Quarter within Helston.

The Project Concept was initially defined during the development of options for Public Realm funding in 2015. As part of this activity a number of projects within Helston were defined and presented for public vote. From the vote this project ranked second to the proposed refurbishment of Helston's Gryll's Monument area – a project which was enacted in 2017. As a close second in public voting, there is clearly strong public support for this project.

See Project Concept documents in Appendix 1.

The Project Concept has been further developed by the Client Team and presented to Helston Town Council and Cornwall Council (Directorate Leadership Team) as part of the Place Shaping Plan for Helston. Initial public consultations have been also been held. The Concept has met with broad approval from all quarters.

See project specific Place Shaping Plan documents in Appendix 2.

4. Project Values

The project site is an extremely important part of Helston and it is therefore essential to the Client Team that Project Values are defined so that all design and development works maintain a clear focus with respect to these high-level desired outcomes.

Protecting and Promoting Helston's Heritage

Helston is the second oldest town in Cornwall and the importance of its heritage to both the community and to the town's economic offering cannot be understated. The project must respect the historic nature of the site, emphasising and promoting the heritage of the town.

Broadest possible Community Involvement and Access

The site is currently very challenging in terms of access, especially for the older and less able members of our community. The project must ensure that accessibility and inclusivity are of the highest priority in the finalised design. It is important that a broad range of community groups are involved in the development process and that the project delivers strong community ownership of the end result.

Carbon Reduction and Environmental Benefit

Helston Town Council has declared a climate emergency and the town has developed a Climate Action Plan. The project must not only respect this Plan but also find ways to assist in delivering the Climate Action goals.

5. Objectives for Concept Design and Developed Design Stages

The project incorporates a number of linked objectives aimed at rejuvenating the civic spaces around Helston's original Market Place.

The output of these Design stages should provide both drawn and written information in report format which clearly sets out detailed project proposals which address the following objectives:-:

- a) Improve the visual and functional amenity of the current Market Place area
 - Create a usable, public space which encourages footfall and provides an attractive place for people to relax and enjoy this historic location
 - Create a main central focal point for the community to gather as there is currently no 'town square' in Helston
 - Address the poor walking surfaces whilst respecting the heritage of the location
 - Re-create the 'feel' of a market place suitable for a broad range of town activities
 - Consider the scale of public vs vehicle space whilst recognising the needs of access and function of the adjacent Church Street and its junction to Coinagehall Street
 - Ensure strong linkage with the architecture of buildings overlooking the area
- b) Incorporate the Museum Drill Hall Yard as part of the public space
 - Similarly transform this area into a usable public space, encouraging footfall and providing an attractive place for people to relax and enjoy this historic location
 - Provide a strong visual and physical link to the Market Place area, addressing the poor walking surfaces whilst respecting the heritage of the location
 - Provide an outdoor facility for use by the Museum, CAST and other community organisations. Ensure that the area can act as a multi-functional venue able to host a broad range of cultural activities, events and performances as well as markets and also be a place for the public to simply meet and dwell (see Appendix 4 for draft programme of activities).
 - Assess and define any remedial actions necessary to ensure safe public use of the space
- c) Re-open the link between the Drill Hall Yard and the CAST building
 - Provide an interesting and safe public thoroughfare allowing access and an intuitive link between Market Place, the Museum and the CAST building
 - Ensure good pedestrian linkage to the Wendron Street car park above the CAST building
 - Assess and define any remedial actions necessary to ensure safe public use of the space
 - As this access will likely be via steps (presumably ambulant disability standard), define alternative access routes for less able visitors

- d) Ensure that all elements of the project not only respect the historic nature of the location, but also emphasise this trait, creating a strong visitor attraction and community pride in Helston.
- e) There is an aspiration that, whilst respecting its heritage, it is important to find ways of enhancing the newly created public space in a way which links with and displays the stature of organisations such as CAST and The Museum of Cornish Life. Proposals for this will be initiated by the CAST team and with the approval of the Project Team, should be incorporated into the design solution.
- f) Develop and assess options for the provision of public conveniences in the area
- Existing public conveniences in Market Place are closed and unlikely to re-open due to structural constraints within the Guildhall
 - Consider possible locations and related architectural constraints for single unit public conveniences which comply with latest regulations and are Covid Secure
 - Note that the lower ground floor of Bowden's Hardware building has been tentatively discussed with the freeholders as a possible area to include in the project in order to add value and provide them with a better business return. The potential for public conveniences in this area is one option but other uses could be considered to enhance the overall scheme design.
 - Also, the potential for public conveniences within Penrose Road car park has been discussed by Helston Town Council. Other areas within the site should also be assessed.
 - Consider options for the likely increased level of demand for public conveniences for town events (eg. Flora Day, Christmas Lights etc.)
- g) Undertake any necessary survey and assessment works to ensure that all required remedial works are fully defined to enable all aspects of the project to support safe public access.
- h) Specify any security measures thought necessary for such a public space (eg. CCTV, ability to lock access at night etc.)
- i) With the support of the Client Project Team, liaise with neighbouring property owners and incorporate input wherever feasible.
- j) Identify project constraints including statutory issues (eg. Listed Building Consent requirements, Building Regulation requirements etc.), potential utilities impacts etc. and ensure the outcomes of any necessary statutory consultations are incorporated. Prepare relevant documentation for submission of all necessary consents.
- k) Develop an indicative Cost Plan for the project to a level commensurate with RIBA Stage 3.

6. Scope of Works

The scope of works for these stages of the project is generally to deliver the objectives listed in 5. above as a technical package of work. However, there will undoubtedly be activities within this work package that will, by their nature, be more appropriately managed by the Client Team.

These include:

- Arrangements for any access required by the Architectural Design Team to private premises or party wall structures
- Liaison with neighbouring properties to consult and discuss project proposals
- Socio-economic research and development of data to define funding sources and support applications for project capital
- Public consultation activity
- Liaison with Helston Town Council regarding the potential amendments and uses of the lower ground floor of the Guildhall

It should be noted that various improvement projects are being undertaken within the Museum and CAST buildings. Information regarding these activities will be provided to the Architectural Design Team as necessary. However, to enable clear scoping of work it should be assumed that any works to the internal elements of these buildings are excluded from the scope of this Design Brief.

Helston Town Council is actively exploring the possibility of relocating staff based in the lower ground floor of The Guildhall, together with the existing public conveniences there to enable the full potential of this impressive public space facing onto Market Place to be realised for the benefit of the wider community. The assessment of the potential of this space is currently excluded from this project. However, subject to agreement with the Client Team and Stakeholders, of a suitable solution to the public convenience requirement noted in this document, a separate Design Brief for this Guildhall space may be developed by Helston Town Council.

Note that the development of a draft construction programme is not required at this stage.

7. Project Updates and Reporting

The Architectural Design Team must ensure that the Client Team is appraised of progress at sensible intervals during this process and that feedback is incorporated into the design outputs.

Note that outputs from this stage of work should include documentation in a format which can be used as part of a public consultation exercise.

8. Client Team and Stakeholders

The Client Team is drawn from a broad range of stakeholder organisations within Helston and each will be responsible for any necessary communication and interface within their respective organisations:-

Martin Searle, Projects Officer, Helston Town Council (Project Leader)
Judith Haycock, Chair, South Kerrier Heritage Trust - The Museum of Cornish Life, Helston
Teresa Gleadowe, Director, Cornubian Arts & Sciences Trust (CAST)
Tim Gratton-Kane, Deputy Mayor of Helston and Helston Town Councillor
Jenny Morris, Chair, Helston CIC
Annette MacTavish, Museum Director, The Museum of Cornish Life, Helston
David Turnbull, Director, South Kerrier Alliance CIC & Helston CIC

Although not represented on the Client Team, the following additional Stakeholders will be involved in appropriate consultation as the project progresses:-

The Godolphin Club, Wendron Street, Helston
Bowdens Hardware Shop, Market Place, Helston
Businesses facing onto Market Place
Businesses and residences sharing the retaining wall structure adjoining the Drill Hall Yard

There is also a wider requirement to inform and consult with the wider community of Helston and also with Cornwall Council. These consultations will be managed by the project team with support from the chosen Architectural Design Team.

9. Property Ownership

The property ownership of the areas included within the scope of the project is as follows:-

- Market Place – public realm space the responsibility for which rests with Cornwall Council
- Drill Hall Yard – freehold owned by Helston Town Council
- Archway entrance to Drill Hall Yard – Cornwall Council have advised that this is the responsibility of Helston Town Council
- Bowden's Hardware Store lower ground floor – freehold held by business owners
- Retaining walls and structures to the east of Drill Hall Yard – ownership unclear but maintenance responsibility likely to fall to the Wendron Street properties above
- The Museum of Cornish Life - freehold owned by Cornwall Council leased to South Kerrier Heritage Trust CIO
- Museum ope (access from Drill Hall Yard to retaining structure below the CAST building) – freehold owned by Cornwall Council leased to South Kerrier Heritage Trust CIO (as part of the Museum)

- Retaining structure between the Museum and CAST – undocumented but may be considered as the responsibility of the Cornubian Arts & Sciences Trust for the purposes of this project
- Areas within the curtilage of the CAST building – freehold owned by the Cornubian Arts & Sciences Trust
- Steps providing access from CAST to Wendron Street Car Park – undocumented but may be considered as the responsibility of the Cornubian Arts & Sciences Trust for the purposes of this project
- All other adjoining properties in private ownership

DT - 30th October 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1. Project Concept Documents

Note that the scope of the project has increased since the initial concept was presented in 2015

Appendix 2. Project Specific Place Shaping Plan

Note that the scope of the project has increased since these Place Shaping Plans were presented in early 2020

Appendix 3. Site Map and Definition of Key Areas

Appendix 4. Draft Typical Programme of Events for Market Place and the Drill Hall Yard
(in preparation – document to follow)

Appendix 5. Supporting Documents for the Town Vitality Fund submission