



West Northamptonshire Council

Northampton Town's Fund Business Case

Abington Street Public Realm Works

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- Appendix 1 – Northampton Town Investment Plan
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Sign Off:

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STRATEGIC CASE

This Strategic Case sets out the rationale for the proposed investment in Public Realm improvements to Northampton Town Centre, as set out previously in the Northampton Town Investment Plan. The Strategic Case includes the following:

- Evidence of need
- Key policy context
- Overall vision and objectives including those specific to the project
- Option for investment and how it was identified
- How option will help achieve objectives
- Key stakeholder groups and business partners
- Proposed investment
- Outcomes and impacts

Introduction

This public realm project forms part of the Towns Fund programme for Northampton and directly responds to the need to support the repurposing and rejuvenation of the town centre particularly in response to the impact of the pandemic on the High Street. The project aims to increase footfall into the town centre in response to extensive consultative and survey work undertaken by West Northamptonshire Council.

This project has been developed by West Northamptonshire Council and directly aligns with the Northampton Town Centre Masterplan and the vision to repurpose the town centre with new experiences and businesses; increasing footfall, enhancing cultural opportunities, with locations and assets better connected.

This strategic case sets out the rationale for the investment of £4,610,625 from the Towns Fund. The project seeks to deliver public realm improvements in Northampton Town Centre, covering Abington Street and Fish Street. This project will revitalise the pedestrianised areas of Northampton's main shopping streets with improvements enhancing the experience for pedestrians and families.

The project complements proposals for Market Square and Emporium Way by extending the areas of the town benefiting from public realm improvements and improving the links between a number of key locations. It will connect with wider TIP investments, increasing their transformational impact.

The streets that will be the focus of this project centre are;

- Abington Street - which is the main 'high street' and while some of the larger retail stores on this street have closed this remains the area with the highest number and quality of retailers in the town.
- Fish Street – which is fully pedestrianised and is the main link between St Giles' Street and Abington Street as well as linking the Town Centre to the Cultural Quarter.

Project Objectives

The public realm project builds on and takes forward a priority area identified in the Northampton Town Centre Masterplan and Town Investment Plan. The project has three core strategic aims derived from the Towns Investment Plan, which are:

- Improve the accessibility and attractiveness of key routes
- Increase footfall in the town centre

- Improve the perception of the place by residents, visitors and businesses

These aims will be achieved through the delivery of a range of project specific SMART objectives, each directly contributing to the project outcomes. The spending objectives will address the effectiveness (by improving the quality of public services in terms of delivery) as the driver for intervention and spend:

Project Outcome	Project Indicator	Project Outputs
Increase footfall in the town centre	Footfall counts	5%
Improve the perception of the place by residents, visitors and businesses	Delivery of new public spaces	5651m2
Increased retail offer and stronger business community	No of businesses supported	70
Increased greenery and visible commitment to the climate emergency	Number of trees planted	30
Finger post installations (local indicator)	Number of finger post installations	10
Artwork (local indicator)	Number of artwork installations	3

Critical Success Factors (CSFs)

The scheme's Critical Success Factors include

- Strategic fit – against the scheme objectives and wider policy and strategy aims (e.g. delivery of a mixed-use comprehensive scheme as per the planning allocation)
- Achievability – likelihood of deliverability based on resource and skills requirements
- Supplier capacity and capability – ability of potential delivery bodies to deliver the proposal
- Affordability – likely availability of funding and financing to deliver the proposals
- Potential value for money – ability to maximise social value against cost and risk

The Proposed Investment

A total investment of £4,610,625 is sought from the Towns Fund. The project seeks to deliver public realm improvements in Northampton Town Centre, covering Abington Street and Fish Street. This project will revitalise the pedestrianised areas of Northampton's main shopping streets with improvements enhancing the experience for pedestrians and families. The focus of the project is to create high-quality areas that are attractive and inviting to shoppers and visitors. To achieve this:

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- Footpaths will be widened with resurfacing for better access to all.
- There will be more and improved seating that will promote active uses of the streetscape and increase dwell time.

- Improved wayfinding and signage will aid navigation, improve connectivity and help instil a sense of identity.
- External lighting, tree planting and soft landscaping will increase biodiversity and improve safety in the town.
- Pedestrianisation at key road crossings.
- Public art developed in partnership with the Guildhall Road Arts Hub.
- Pop-up market stalls at Abington Street with service points which could also be used for entertainers.

Evidence of Need

Northampton town centre is underperforming and not satisfactorily serving local residents or businesses, footfall is declining year on year. Long term sustainable growth of the town requires a vibrant and welcoming town centre that better serves all residents, businesses and visitors.

Public realm investment will complement wider TIP and other investments – improving links between the town's core and gateway locations encouraging footfall into the town.

Investment is a priority from the Town Centre Masterplan and directly responds to community priorities.

The Masterplan states that 'Northampton town centre is in decline. It is failing to meet the needs of residents and businesses and is not keeping pace with other regional town centres and retail destinations, including Milton Keynes and Rushden Lakes. Vacancy rates in the primary shopping area are 15%, and the town has seen a year-on-year decline in footfall of 14%.

The loss of major national retailers has left large vacant premises that have no viable alternative uses creating large disjointed and inactive areas. The importance of high-quality amenities to high value employers, particularly professional services firms, is well established. The weakness of the town centre is a major barrier to Northampton re-establishing itself as a regionally significant business hub within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

The decline of the town centre is also one of the primary concerns of our residents, evidenced through our community consultation. A high proportion of respondents within 20 minutes-walk of the town visited the town less than once a month (34%) and many described the town centre as 'scruffy' with vacant units, and high levels of crime and homelessness. The lack of a quality retail offer and town centre attractions, plus competition from other areas are the key reasons why residents are not making better use of their town.

However, residents recognised the potential for Northampton to re-establish itself by building on its rich history, beautiful architecture and artisan culture. Northampton can be a real destination within the region, building on a good night-time economy offer and creating events spaces within the public realm. Residents feel Northampton can become a modern thriving market town. Covid-19 has accelerated many of the long-term negative trends affecting high streets across the UK, including Northampton. The need to strengthen and diversify the town centre is more important than ever'.

COVID-19 has greatly reduced visitors to the town centre with post lockdown footfall down on average circa 20% on pre -pandemic numbers. Lockdowns saw Northampton (along with all other towns) residents encouraged to shop online or locally for only essential items, leaving Northampton town centre empty and the hospitality and tourism sector forced to close their doors. Town Deal funding presents an opportunity to 'build back better' beyond the operational resources available to the Council to support the town centre economic recovery and revival post the lockdowns imposed as a result of COVID-19.

The project will address 3 of the key challenges identified in the Town Investment Plan, this includes:

Challenge 1. Creating a Vibrant and Welcoming Town Centre

The decline of Northampton town centre is a major challenge facing the town and public realm improvements were considered the highest priority as identified by the TIP public consultation. The consultation also found –

- Many people living close to the town (less than 20-minute walk) visit the town less than once a month.
- Residents described the town as ‘scruffy’ with vacant units and high levels of crime and homelessness.
- The lack of quality retail and town centre attractions, plus competition from other areas are a major factor behind residents not making better use of their town.
- From a business perspective, the Council also know that high quality amenity space is a key factor influencing the investment decisions of high value businesses - particularly office-based employers seeking a town centre environment that is attractive to their workforce.

Challenge 2. Creating a Town Centre that benefits all of our communities

The online consultation also found that residents wanted their town centre to be open to everyone – with those living more than 20-minutes away putting a large importance on walking routes, signposting and wayfinding around the town centre.

This investment directly supports both of these challenges through:

- Improving perceptions of the town centre
- Improving movement and wayfinding between gateway and core locations (including Abington Street and Market Square)
- Increasing footfall and dwell time – reactivating spaces and improving perceptions of crime and safety

Challenge 5: Creating a town centre that benefits all communities

- Residents want the town to be open for everyone – with an emphasis on walking and cycling routes, signposting and wayfinding.
- There are challenges in Northampton relating to unemployment and deprivation.

Delivery of the project will also complement wider Towns Fund investments – such as 35-39 & 41-45 Abington Street – enhancing the value of these developments. It will also support the growth and resilience of retail, food & beverage and other town centre businesses, providing new employment opportunities and ultimately support inward investment into the town.

It will contribute to the following Investment Principles:

- A vibrant heart to the town centre – improving the town centre experience and driving footfall supporting new town centre activity.
- Building on our cultural and heritage assets – improving links and connections between historic buildings, maximising the benefits of our historic streetscape and providing new outside spaces for cultural activity.
- Inclusive economic growth – improving access for all of our residents.
By improving the resilience of our town centre it will also support new retail and employment,
- Enhancing the town’s green spaces and adopting low carbon principles – providing new planting to enhance biodiversity in the town centre. Low carbon principles are set out below.

The investment will also make a strong contribution to the following objectives:

- OB1: driving regeneration and improving the visitor experience
- OB2: transforming the town centre to provide a strong sense of identity and belonging for our communities
- OB3: investment in high quality public realm
- OB4: providing a distinctive town centre experience – providing space for new cultural and leisure uses and complementing wider investment
- OB8: new functional spaces that help tackle crime, fear of crime, and antisocial behaviour
- OB9: direct investment to improve town centre vitality, health and wellbeing.
- OB10: delivered in line with clean growth principles.

Case for Change

The case for change is based on a logic chain which builds on the key challenges set out in the Town Investment Plan.

Northampton town centre is underperforming and not satisfactorily serving local residents or businesses. Footfall is declining year on year. Long term sustainable growth of the town requires a vibrant and welcoming town centre that better serves all of our residents, businesses and visitors.

The decline of the town centre is also one of the primary concerns of residents, evidenced through community consultation. A high proportion of respondents within 20 minutes-walk of the town visited the town less than once a month (34%) and many described the town centre as 'scruffy' with vacant units, and high levels of crime and homelessness.

The lack of a quality retail offer and town centre attractions, plus competition from other areas are the key reasons why residents are not making better use of their town. However, residents recognised the potential for Northampton to re-establish itself by building on its rich history, architecture and artisan culture.

Residents and stakeholders have commented during the consultation phase that Northampton can be a real destination within the region, building on a good night-time economy offer and creating events spaces within the public realm. Residents feel Northampton can become a modern thriving market town. Covid-19 has accelerated many of the long-term negative trends affecting high streets across the UK, including Northampton. The need to strengthen and diversify the town centre is more important than ever.

Investment in public realm will directly respond to the challenges and opportunities above. Key outputs will include new and enhanced public realm which will be accessible to Northampton's residents, businesses and visitors and upgraded walking infrastructure. The project will ensure that the Market Square visibly offers a quality befitting of a Town Centre.

Public realm will facilitate a refocused town centre providing new spaces for cultural activity and encouraging footfall towards the core retail and F&B areas of the town. Investment through the Towns Fund will also improve the connection between central Northampton and its residents, encouraging greater numbers to visit Northampton rather than competing retail destinations in the region.

Investment will also secure a number of outcomes which are sought by the local community, this includes improving perception of the town by residents, visitors, and businesses. Increased footfall will help raise expenditure in the retail core and attract increased visitor numbers to our arts, culture and heritage sites, again increasing local expenditure. Importantly the project allied to other Towns Fund investment will help arrest a decline in footfall and improving perceptions will help to drive up land values within the catchment area of the town as it becomes a more desirable location to live and work. This will in-time promote further investment.

The project meets with the priorities that were established through the community consultation and will enhance the Town Centre environment, making it a more welcoming and high-quality space which will attract greater footfall and in time private sector investment in the town's retail heart.

The Theory of Change

Context:

Northampton town centre is under-performing and not satisfactorily serving local residents or businesses. Footfall is declining year on year. Long term sustainable growth of the town requires a vibrant and welcoming town centre that better serves all of our residents, businesses and visitors.

Potential to create a town centre that better benefits all communities.

Strengthen the retail core, driving new footfall and spend.

Address current community concerns about the perception of crime and safety.

Provide a link to other TIP investments such as Emporium Way and 35-39 Abington Street and 41-45 Abington Street.

Activities:

Public realm improvements providing a significantly enhanced environment within the Town Centre.

Improvements to the walking infrastructure.

Outputs:

Enhanced public realm expanding Market Square to the north.

Significantly updated walking infrastructure.

Improvements to the streetscape.

Impacts

Investments will improve perceptions of the town by residents, visitors, and businesses.

Improved land values.

Increased footfall in the town centre.

Outcomes:

Increased perceptions of the town centre leading to:

- Increased footfall
- Increased expenditure
- Increased visitors
- More desirable place to invest/work/live

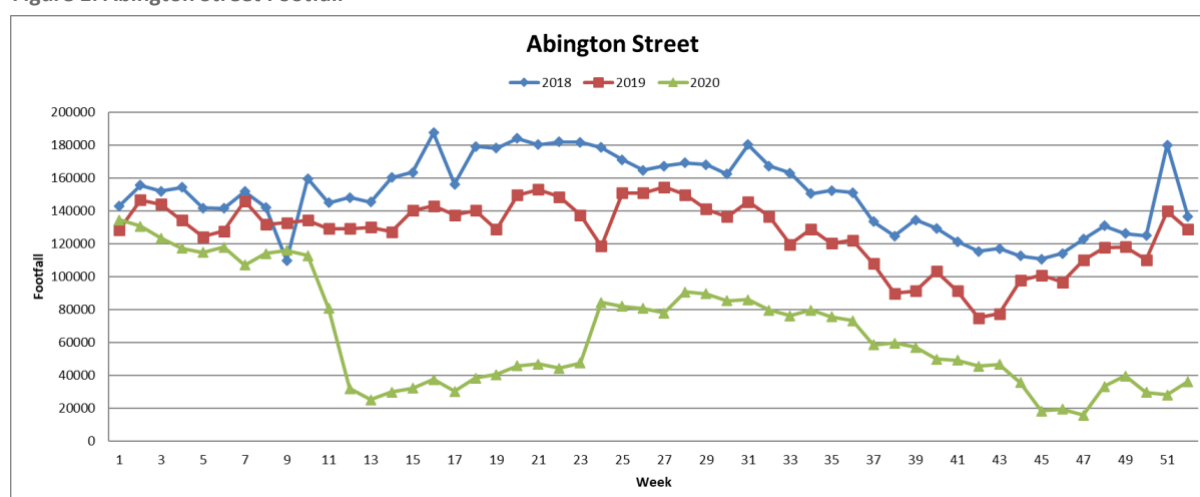
Addressing Market Failure

Market failure, is defined as a situation defined by an inefficient distribution of goods and services in the free market. In market failure, the individual incentives for rational behaviour do not lead to rational outcomes for the group. Public Realm underpins the fabric of High Streets and in some senses does not follow the traditional definition of market failure. The decline of town centres across the country represents a market failure over recent years, with the town offers not meeting residents and visitors' requirements. Northampton has experienced this downturn, particularly in areas such as Abington Street. The market failure has been created by a combination of factors, including the departure of major retailers from the Town Centre, such as Marks and Spencer and major retail closures such as British Homes Stores and Debenhams

alongside a limited amount of funding available for public realm improvements, which are the traditional domain of local authorities due to austerity which has led to funds being focused on statutory services. The impact of these challenges has reduced the appeal of town centres, which has translated into reduced footfall which, in turn, creates a viscous circle for retailers who are less able to trade effectively and profitably. The development of Government policy such as the Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal recognises the market failure and subsequent changes our Town Centres are experiencing. Northampton has the opportunity through schemes such as improvements to Abington Street and Fish Street to begin to create a change in perception and address the market failure in the longer term by creating a more welcoming and vibrant town centre which will help encourage new investment in future.

In line with the wider Northampton Town Centre, statistics specific to Abington Street highlight that footfall has declined between 2018 and 2020, with the additional impact of the pandemic having unprecedented effects on footfall. This is illustrated in Figure 3, with figures almost halving between 2019 and 2020.

Figure 1: Abington Street Footfall



The Centre for Retail Research has commented that; ‘the reopening of non-essential stores after Lockdown III restarted town-centre shopping and produced greater use of city centres, though this is running at only 75% of that seen in 2019. There has been an increased use of physical stores to purchase goods - though at a much lower rate than 2019. This has meant that online retailers have lost some of the trade they gained because of the closure of most non-food stores in the Lockdowns’. Using this advice as a benchmark the projected outputs of the intervention aim to increase footfall by 5%. This is considered to be modest and realistic forecast for the project’s impact.

Project Beneficiaries

There are a range of people that will benefit from the project during delivery and on completion:

Delivery beneficiaries

- Local supply chain; supplying and installing interventions.
- Artists and designers involved in the design, creation of the artwork installation. Engaging the cultural sector in a significant and exciting project to support the wider place marketing of Northampton.
- Local stakeholders involved during the design and specification process; ensuring engagement, buy in and local support to the project.

Project Completion beneficiaries:

- Visitors benefitting from significantly improved wayfinding and experience and therefore improving the perception of the place.
- Businesses and destinations, benefitting from potential spend from increased footfall.
- Council departments responsible for ongoing maintenance and operation of the new infrastructure – more efficient and easily maintained assets i.e. finger posts.
- Young people inspired by the art installations
- People looking to establish or trial a new business idea

Stakeholders

The project responds directly to the wide public consultation and engagement undertaken by Northampton Forward. Recognising the opportunity and impact public realm can make to the aims and ambitions set out in the Town Investment Plan. Those consulted in developing the project included. This group comprises:

- Northampton Forward
- Town Deal Board Representative – Vice Chair
- West Northamptonshire Council Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth
- West Northamptonshire Council Ward Members
- Town Centre Business Improvement District
- Town Centre Retailers representatives
- Hospitality representatives
- Northampton Civic Society
- Guildhall Road Arts HUB

The views gathered through this process determined the public realm project as a priority for investment and identified the opportunities and interventions that could be implemented to deliver against the towns fund outcomes and aims of the Town Investment Plan. Once this was identified and agreed, detailed work was undertaken to assess the deliverability and affordability of the long list of options to determine the preferred option through an appraisal process.

Consultation

The development of the Town Investment Plan was guided by community and stakeholder consultation. The TIP builds on the initial consultation work undertaken to inform the development of the Town Centre Masterplan which seeks to address many of the challenges outlined in the TIP. The consultation exercise for the Masterplan informed the early development of the project longlist.

i) Online Consultation

Online consultations on the potential TIP proposals were held in September 2020 to determine the community's priorities for investment, gain feedback and opinions on a range of proposed investment areas and determine the challenges / opportunities for the town.

Approximately 434 individuals replied to the questionnaire creating a total of 1,495 pieces of project level feedback. The responses were evenly split between males and females. 18% of respondents were aged under 35 and 15% were over-65.

Overall, the majority of responses were positive about how beneficial the projects would be to improve the town centre. The main challenges highlighted were a lack of quality goods offered in the town centre, poor appearance of the town centre and competition with other areas. The main opportunities were bringing disused buildings / public space back into use and improving the public realm. The initial survey was followed by more detailed questioning of a web community across three days.

This builds on over two years of consultation completed on the ground and through all media channels. The online consultation completed for the Town Centre Masterplan in 2019 informed the development of the longlist of projects developed for this tip.

Key local priorities identified at that stage include the restoration and upkeep of historic buildings, improving the quality of retail, the quality of public realm and greenspace in enhancing the town centre, pedestrianization In the town centre, and the potential to accommodate new homes.

ii) Consultation Workshops

A series of consultation workshops were completed in October 2020 focusing on urban regeneration; deprivation and inequality; and business, enterprise and skills. Approximately 150 stakeholders were approached to take part in the workshops. Workshops were attended by key stakeholders in Northampton including local businesses, social enterprises (Northampton Social Enterprise Town), Community Town Safety Teams, Northampton Digital, Northampton Arts and University of Northampton.

Engagement with private sector bodies aided understanding of growth barriers and helped to ensure the plan remains responsive in uncertain times.

The consultations produced a number of themes for the Town Investment Plan including improving connectivity between areas of the Town Centre. re-energising cultural and historic assets, diversifying the housing offer to match the needs of the community, make the town centre feel safer and upgrade / improve management of key public spaces.

iii) Stakeholder Engagement Plan

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed to accompany Northampton's Town Investment Plan. This document sets out commitment to develop ongoing relationships with key stakeholders to ensure implementation of the Town Investment Plan remains responsive to the overarching needs of the town.

Further consultation was undertaken with local businesses in October 2021, for those who would be directly affected by the proposals along Abington Street and Fish Street. The design proposals were displayed on A1 boards and businesses were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals. Following this engagement, an online version of the survey and proposals was made available and was issued to businesses in the town centre.

The businesses who took part in the consultation were in favour of the proposals and were supportive of the investment.

The results can be found in Appendix 8.

Project Activities

The project timelines and milestones for the project is.

- Business case approval – February 2022
- Detailed design to RIBA 4 – Winter 2022 (this will depend on approvals)
- Planning and highway approval - Winter 2022
- Approvals - Winter 2022
- Procure principal contractor – Spring 2023
- Appoint principal contractor – Spring 2023
- Works commence – Summer 2023
- Completion – Spring 2025

Policy Context

National policy recognises that despite several years of national economic growth the major benefits have accrued in cities and towns have fared less well. The Towns Fund is designed to rebalance the economy promoting growth in towns particularly within specific regional growth plans. The funding is to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills, and culture.

The Public Realm project is aligned with the aim of national policy as it aimed at increasing the vibrancy and environment of key town centre streets in Northampton, this reflects national policy which states;

'The Government's [Build Back Better High Streets Strategy](#) sets out the government's long-term plan to "support the evolution of high streets into thriving places to work, visit and live".

A major part of this Strategy is several funding schemes designed to help high streets and town centres redevelop and to support local economic growth. These include the High Streets Fund, the Towns Fund in England (with similar schemes in Scotland and Wales), the Community Ownership Fund and Levelling Up fund UK-wide.

The project aligns with the priorities set out in the West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan, to achieve a green and clean environment and wellbeing, thriving towns and economic development in terms of growth and prosperity. The project aligns with the strategic objective to create a stronger economy and build a resilient community. Beneath these strategic objectives the project aligns with the following objectives the Council has established.

- Increased animation of the Town Centre making it a more attractive destination for tourists and local population
- Creating a thriving, vibrant town
- Keeping the town and people safe
- Culture, history and heritage - Increase tourist/visitor numbers by highlighting the Town's heritage/cultural offering

The Northampton Town Investment Plan (TIP) builds on its role within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and turns the results of a policy review and extensive public consultation into a plan for investment that is based on three cross cutting principles for investment and ten objectives. The principles are:

- A vibrant heart to the town centre
- Building on outstanding cultural and heritage assets
- Inclusive economic growth and

The investment will further contribute in the following ways:

- A vibrant heart to the town centre – improving the town centre experience and driving footfall supporting new town centre activity.
- Building on our cultural and heritage assets – improving links and connections between historic buildings, maximising the benefits of our historic streetscape, and providing new outside spaces for cultural activity.
- Inclusive economic growth – improving access for all our residents.
By improving the resilience of our town centre, it will also support new retail and employment,
- Enhancing the town's green spaces and adopting low carbon principles – providing new planting to enhance biodiversity in the town centre. Low carbon principles are set out below.

The project also contributes to the Town Investment Plan objectives in the following ways:

TIP Objective	How addressed
Town Centre Regeneration	Major improvement works along the main retail core in Northampton, complementing the Market Square works and acting as a catalyst for wider regeneration in the town centre.
To address deprivation and inequalities by investing in and supporting assets within the town centre to improve the vitality, health and wellbeing of the local community	It will provide new pedestrian routes which will help broaden engagement and provide new opportunities for residents, increased greenery supporting the Council's climate pledge and increased event space.
Transform the heart of the town by investing in high-quality and attractive public realm that reflects the ambition and pride of Northampton.	Major improvement works along the main retail core in Northampton, complementing the Market Square works and acting as a catalyst for wider regeneration in the town centre.

Sustainable design and construction practices will be adopted that exceed minimum compliance standards. Renewables will be used as a source of energy for street lighting and popup shops. Alternative methods of travel such as electric scooters, electric bicycles and other mobility aids will be provided. Biodiversity and the use of local materials will underpin the design principles throughout the scheme. Designs can be found in Appendix 2.

COVID-19 Recovery - The public realm proposals were developed during the pandemic in response to public survey results highlighting the need for an improved public realm and biodiversity. The outcomes that can be derived from public realm enhancements include improved wellbeing, a reduction in crime and increased visitor footfall. All of these are priorities in the Town Centre Masterplan, Place Marketing survey and TIP survey.

Town centres have been negatively affected by COVID-19, which has accelerated many long-term trends and the need for intervention. These proposals attempt to reverse these trends by encouraging new footfall into the town and providing and enhanced pedestrian and visitor amenities – the investments can help to change the nature of the town and support its long term resilience. Complementing wider TIP and Masterplan investments the project will support a strengthened smaller, but higher quality urban core. It will also build on recent trends which indicate that towns such as Northampton have seen a reasonable bounce back of visitor numbers (pre-November lockdown) as residents are more likely to shop locally. This investment will help capture and retain that demand.

9. Options considered

In terms of identifying Options, the Council has focussed on delivering maximum outputs with the Towns Fund money available, particularly following the overwhelming support for Public Realm improvements being received through the public consultation. There were originally three proposals that were developed for Abington Street and Fish Street (Appendix 8) these were then taken through public consultation event with businesses in the town centre. The results from the consultation detailed that the preference was a blended option between proposal one (dynamic street) and proposal two (green street.) Early consideration was given to extending improvements beyond Abington Street and Fish Street, into St Giles' Street and Drapery. However, when calculating costs for the improvements of the wider area, the Council quickly found that the budget would not extend to the additional improvements. The option to deliver

wider improvements was then scaled back to Abington Street and Fish Street. In terms of the economic appraisal, two options were therefore considered.

i) Do Nothing Scenario

In a do-nothing scenario both Abington Street and Fish Street would continue to receive incremental public realm improvements when funding would allow. This would create a piecemeal approach to investing in the area and inevitably deliver a less than optimal solution.

ii) Do Maximum Scenario

A do maximum scenario would be based on delivering high-quality environment via the Towns Fund. This would deliver a comprehensive package of measures which would change the streets' environment and complement other Towns Funds investment within the Market Square.

9.1 Option for investment and how it was identified

The do maximum scenario was identified as the preferred option through the public consultation and through scoping the project with CS2. The project has been fully developed and has been presented as either 'do nothing' or 'do maximum' with the funding available from the Towns Fund.

Risks, Constraints and Interdependencies

The key headline risks for this project are;

Risk	Mitigation	Implications
Increase in costs of materials	Early engagement with supplier has already begun on cost estimates and inflation risks determining what can be delivered with the funding. A healthy contingency and optimism bias of 20% has been applied the costs to cover for inflation.	Action has been taken to obtain cost estimates, where costs rise further a value re-engineering will be made to enable the budget to be protected
Delay in product delivery / installation to due impact of covid	Early engagement with suppliers to ascertain current lead time which had informed the programme	Delay will lengthen the delivery timescale of the project. There is scope within the timetable to cover potential periods of lockdown should they be encountered again
Interface of improved streets with neighbouring areas	Engage with property owners to either ensure compatibility or investment in adjacent areas.	The appetite for improvement will rest with neighbouring property owners. It is anticipated that the impact on values will provide encouragement to owners
Planning objections	Ensure that there is widespread awareness of the project to address any concerns that may arise	Objections will delay the projects delivery
Designs do not meet the aspirations of those commenting during the public consultation	Consultation has been undertaken to ensure there is wider understanding of the proposed public realm improvements. This will be further increased as the scheme comes to delivery phase.	Mis-matched visions may impact upon the number of users of the newly improved areas

The risk register has been developed to review and quantify the risks, constraints and interdependencies relating to the project. The register sets out mitigation that may be required and ownership of the initial risk.

A full risk register can be found in Appendix 3.

Outcomes and Impacts

Investment through the Towns Fund will deliver improved outcomes for residents and businesses. Public realm improvements in Northampton Town Centre, covering Abington Street and Fish Street. The project will revitalise the pedestrianised areas of Northampton's main shopping street, Abington Street, and improve other key streets aimed at enhancing the experience for pedestrians and families. The focus of the project is to create high quality areas that are attractive and inviting to shoppers and visitors. To achieve this:

- Footpaths will be widened with resurfacing for better access to all.
- There will be more and improved seating that will promote active uses of the streetscape and increase dwell time.
- Improved wayfinding and signage will aid navigation, improve connectivity and help instil a sense of identity.
- External lighting, tree planting and soft landscaping will increase biodiversity and improve safety in the town.
- Pedestrianisation at key road crossings.
- Public art developed in partnership with the Guildhall Road Arts HUB
- Pop-up market stalls at Abington Street with service points which could also be used for entertainers.

This project will complement the proposals for Market Square and Emporium Way by extending the areas of the town benefiting from public realm improvements and improving the links between a number of key locations. It will connect with wider TIP investments, increasing their transformational impact.

The streets that will be the focus of this project centre are;

- Abington Street which is the main 'high street' and while some of the larger retail on this street have closed this remains the area with the highest number and quality of retailers in the town.
- Fish Street is fully pedestrianised and is the main link between St Giles' Street and Abington Street as well as linking the Town Centre to the Cultural Quarter.

Economic Case

Introduction

The Economic Case explores the context framing the investment to deliver significant public realm improvements to Abington and Fish Street in Northampton Town Centre. This section assesses the option to implement the project using Towns Deal funding, against the counterfactual “Do Nothing” case so as to assess value for money and justify the intervention. The Case includes SWOT and economic analysis on the basis of current statistics to project the potential uplift.

Rationale

The option to intervene delivers on the rationale, which itself is predicated on the basis that:

- **Public realm investment is typically the responsibility of the public sector**, as it requires a comprehensive approach with a combination of statutory functions, opposed to the single interests of the private sector that is unable to realise full benefit of intervention.
- **Investing in a high-quality civic space** is necessary to better serve residents, businesses, and visitors
- **The investment would complement other TIP projects** in Market Square, 41-45 Abington Street and 35-39 Abington Street and Emporium Way.

Demand Assessment: Public Realm

Baseline Position

As set out in the Town Investment Plan, Northampton town centre is underperforming and not satisfactorily serving local residents or businesses. Specifically, retail and visitor trade is being lost and the town is not currently providing the range of amenities attractive to business. Recent trends highlight that:

- Vacancy rates in the primary shopping area are 15%
- The town has seen a year-on-year decline in footfall of 14%
- The loss of major national retailers has left large vacant premises that have no viable alternative uses creating large disjointed and inactive areas
- The lack of walking and cycling routes, signposting and wayfinding deters some sections of the population
- COVID-19 has accelerated many of the long-term trends Northampton is experiencing and is a picture that is reflected nationally.

The following sections provide evidence as to how investment in public realm will directly respond to the challenges above. Specifically, as set out in the Strategic Case the intervention aims to increase footfall in the town centre by 5%.

It is important to note that as footfall may continue to decline due to wider trends, the intervention is not the only investment under the TIP to address this matter. Furthermore, reciprocal investments by the public and private sectors can act to arrest decline.

Community Support

Surveys carried out in 2020 indicate a strong support from local residents for this project, with public realm emerging as the highest priority:¹

- This project received the highest average approval score of 8.23/10 out of the 10 proposed Towns Deal projects.
- 71% of respondents believe this project is essential to the regeneration of Northampton.
- Improving the built environment is one of the top five priorities for improving the town centre.
- Respondents reported “Scruffy” and “Littering” as two of the four key issues facing the town centre.

As a result, the opportunity to use Towns Fund monies to improve the current public realm offer is supported by the primary evidence.

Eastern Section of Abington Street

In 2014, the eastern section of Abington Street received significant investment including resurfacing, creating an attractive and well-planned layout, shown in Figure 1. The western section of Abington Street has not received such investment in contrast, as illustrated in Figure 2. This supports the rationale to improve the quality of the western section to reduce the juxtaposition, create a cohesive environment, and capture maximum impact from improvements to public realm.

Figure 3: Abington Street East



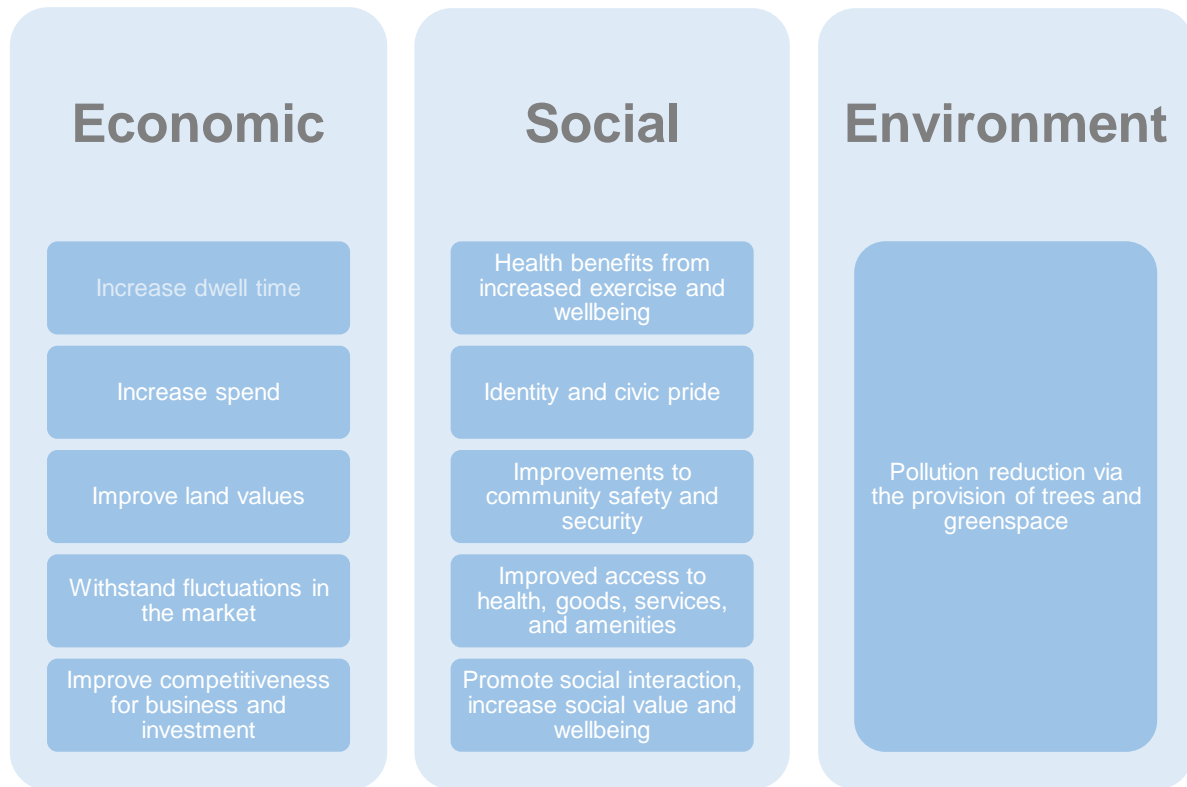
Figure 3: Abington Street West



¹ Towns Fund Research Consultation Findings, Northampton Borough Council & Turquoise, 2020

Benefits Of Public Realm

There are clear linkages between good design and social, economic, and environmental factors. The benefits of good design via public realm development include, but are not limited to²:



Economic Benefits

Therefore, Public Realm can be seen as an essential method in:

- Expanding the offer of town centres to provide a comprehensive space
- Improving perceptions and consequently attraction of the area
- Increasing dwell time
- Attracting wider investment

Use of Public Space as Multi-Functional Areas

Given the ongoing shift to online retailing, with a 11% rise in global online sales recorded in 2021³, it is essential to diversify the offer of our towns beyond historic functions. Creating areas to deliver new attractions and experiences is an essential approach to expanding the offer of town centres, attracting footfall and spend.

In Market Square, Northampton, a family dinosaur event was hosted in 2019. This saw a 42% increase in footfall from week-on-week figures in conjunction with the nearby Grosvenor Shopping Centre benefitting from a 24% week-on-week rise in number of shoppers⁴.

² Economic Value of Urban Design, AMION Consulting, 2009

³ Impact of Covid-19 on E-Commerce, Econsultancy, 2021

⁴ Dinosaurs bring the crowds to Northampton town centre, Northampton Town Centre BID, 2019

The repurposing of Abington Street would provide a multi-functional space with ability to host activities and receive events, in association with Market Square. On the basis of the evidence above this would likely contribute to increased footfall and spend.

Improving Perceptions

34% of survey respondents within a 20-minute walk of the town visited less than once a month, with many describing the town centre as 'scruffy' with vacant units, and high levels of crime and homelessness^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}.

Investment in the current public realm provides the opportunity to improve current perceptions held by residents, visitors, and businesses of Abington and Fish Street by promoting a cohesive, modern, and greener environment that serves its community.

This is supported by a case study in Piccadilly, Stoke-on-Trent, that found well-planned improvements to public spaces positively boost footfall and trading. A £10m investment to make the area more pedestrian friendly led to 30% increase in footfall⁵.

Increasing Dwell Time and Spend

The provision of seating, event hosting, and spill over café space proposed on Fish Street provides a sense of destination and place where residents and visitors are able to congregate in groups day into night-time.

Supporting evidence suggests that activities in groups of two or more has been proven to increase dwell time and subsequently improve spend by up to 50%⁶.

Levering Reciprocal Investment

The economic value of good design has the ability to catalyse further investment and development in the vicinity through improving the image, perceptions, and performance of an area.

A similar success story includes Blackburn's Cathedral Quarter which involved pedestrianising routes and access points, the use of quality materials, and art installations that have helped the area compete for businesses and investment, including the £66m redevelopment of Lord Square at the Mall shopping centre⁷.

The proposed public realm scheme is anticipated to complement wider TIP and future investment in the vicinity, providing the opportunity to capitalise on further economic benefit for Northampton.

Social Benefits

High quality public space becomes a destination in itself by promoting the use of an area by a wider variety of people over a greater period of the day. This promotes social interaction which has additional positives in regard to well-being. Additionally, safer environments can be created through well lit, maintained, and populated spaces which reduce perceptions of crime and poor public safety⁷. This is supported by evidence in Birmingham, which saw a 70% drop in theft from shopping bags by increasing the lighting of their street markets and widening footpaths from 2m to 3m to give pedestrians more space⁸.

Environmental Benefits

Abington and Fish Street are located within the Castle ward, this is in the bottom 40% of UK areas for the living environment which takes into consideration aspects such as air and public realm

⁵ The Pedestrian Pound, Living Streets, 2018

⁶ Dwell Long and Prosper, Turley, 2019

⁷ Economic Value of Urban Design, AMION Consulting, 2009

⁸ The Value of Public Space, Design Council, Cabe Space

quality⁹. The proposed investment would help to alleviate these two issues as shown in other areas where there has been a public realm provision. For example, the impact of new green infrastructure has been analysed in Port Sunlight River Park, The Wirral, which demonstrated 90% people felt it positively impacted health and wellbeing¹⁰.

One tree on average converts 150kg of CO₂ into oxygen per year, illustrating the well-known effects of trees on air quality and climate change in the area. The preferred design proposes 27 trees across the street converting 4,000 kg of CO₂ into oxygen annually, which contributes to the uplift in quality of the area's living environment.

Summary

The evidence outlined in this subsection provides justification for an improved public realm offering along Abington and Fish Street, as the development has potential to:



Options Assessment

The options assessment considers the primary expenditure of the Towns Deal monies to determine the preferred approach in terms of Value for Money. This compares the intervention option against the “Do Nothing” option as the counterfactual case, which is used when assessing additionality of the proposed scheme:

- **Do Nothing:** The site remains in its current condition with no investment by the Council
- **Intervention Option:** £3,095 million Towns Fund spend (capital only) to deliver public realm improvements in Northampton Town Centre, covering Abington Street and Fish Street

An assessment of each option's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is undertaken in a SWOT analysis, shown in the table below:

⁹ Indices of Deprivation, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2019

¹⁰ The Economic Value of Our Green Spaces, The Land Trust, 2018

Option - Do Nothing

Site remains in its current condition with no public sector investment

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimal risk profile• No capital expenditure or pressure on the public purse
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not fulfil Council / project objectives• Does not contribute to wider policy context• Council fails to maximise on potential benefits that intervention would realise
Opportunities	
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public spend not utilised• Future regeneration and development projects unlikely to deliver maximum benefit as anticipated without intervention• Juxtaposition between west and east Abington Street increases and perceptions of town and footfall further decline

Option – Intervention

Public realm Improvements at Fish Street and Abington Street

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase footfall in town centre (target of 5%)• Improved perceptions of place by residents, visitors, and businesses• Investment is a priority for the Town Centre Masterplan and directly responds to community priorities• Improved connectivity and synergy in the town centre and leading out of town• Address community concerns about current crime and safety• Significant improvements to walking infrastructure and streetscape• Local supply chain, local artists and designers, and local stakeholder involvement
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complements wider TIP and future investment in the vicinity – improving linkages and encouraging footfall• Respond to Covid-19 recover plan to “build back better” for the town centre• Strengthen the retail core, driving new footfall and spend
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential supply issues from unstable economic landscape – issue facing all development• Delay in product delivery / installation to due impact of covid

The results from the SWOT analysis demonstrate that the Intervention Option is the most favourable at this stage, by generating increased footfall, expenditure, visitors, and facilitating a more desirable place to invest, work, and live.

Accordingly, each option is carried through to scoring assessment against the project objectives as set out in the Strategic Case. The weighting of each objective can be found in the table below, with the largest percentage weighting signalling the higher the priority to the Council.

#	Objective	Weighting (%)
1	Accessibility and attractiveness of key routes	30
2	Increase footfall	40
3	Improved perception of place by residents, visitors, and businesses	30
Total		100

Each option is scored from 0 (very unsuccessful) – 5 (very successful) regarding how well it performed against the objectives overall.

	Do Nothing	Intervention
Objective 1	0	5
Objective 2	0	4
Objective 3	0	5
Total	0	14
Weighted %	0%	92%

The Intervention Option is identified as the optimal solution in terms of primary expenditure to achieve the project objectives and the ambitions set out in the Town Investment Plan. This reflects the potential economic, environmental, and social benefits that accompany the scheme which would not be realised without public sector investment.

As a result, the “Do Nothing” case has been discounted.

Value For Money Assessment

It is important to determine that the investment is in the best interest of the public purse and maximises value for money.

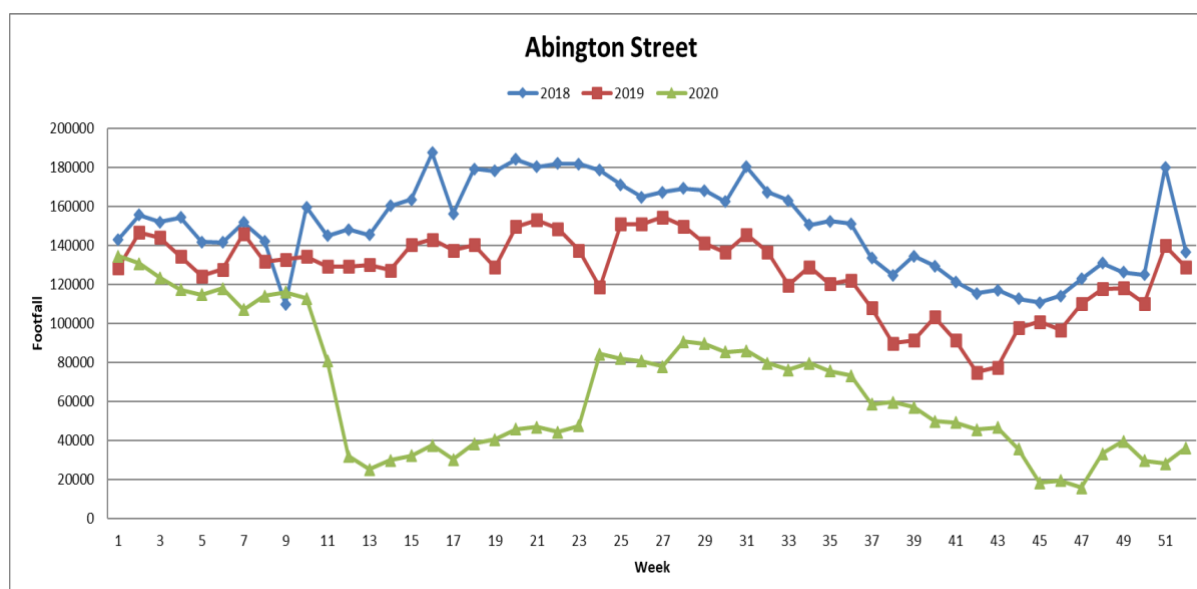
This section assesses the economic benefit of the scheme via assessment of statistics from the Northampton Business Improvement District (BID) in order to project the potential scenario following intervention on the basis of footfall and spend per head, following evidence presented throughout this Economic Case.

Footfall and Spend

In line with the wider Northampton Town Centre, statistics specific to Abington Street highlight that footfall has declined between 2018 and 2020, with the additional impact of the pandemic having unprecedented effects on footfall. This is illustrated in Figure 3, with figures almost halving between 2019 and 2020.

To rejuvenate revenue in the high street, the projected outputs of the intervention aim to increase footfall by 5%. This is considered to be modest and realistic, when considered against case studies outlined previously in this section.

Figure 4: Abington Street Footfall



The economic impact resulting from the intervention are outlined in the following counterfactual cases:

- Do nothing and footfall/expenditure remains at pandemic levels
- Do nothing and footfall/expenditure returns to pre-pandemic levels
- Public Realm and footfall increases by 5% on pandemic footfall levels (2020)
- Public Realm and footfall increases by 5% on pre pandemic footfall levels (2019)

Given the uncertainty of COVID-19, figures from pandemic levels are included to give an indication of the “worst case scenario” under the circumstances of another UK lockdown.

	Footfall (pa)	Gross Spend (pa)	Additional Spend (pa)
Do nothing Pandemic Level	4,427,500	£84,122,500	0
Do nothing pre- pandemic level	6,579,500	£125,010,500	0
5% increase on pandemic levels	4,648,875	£88,328,625	£4,206,125
5% increase on pre-pandemic levels	6,908,475	£131,261,025	£6,250,525.00

Under both scenarios, the figures illustrate the significant increase in annual town centre spend and footfall that has potential to accrue from public realm investment, based on the evidence presented throughout this Economic Case in terms of potential benefit and impact.

Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity analysis is carried out to present various scenarios of how increases in footfall could impact the additional spend. Optimistic and pessimistic scenarios are presented below against both pandemic and pre-pandemic level figures.

The outcome indicates that with just a 2% increase in footfall per annum from current levels as a result of the investment, there is opportunity to realise an additional £1.68 million spend per annum in the town centre.

Footfall	Additional Spend on Pre-Pandemic Level (pa)	Additional Spend on Pandemic Level (pa)
2% Increase	£2,500,210	£1,682,450
4% Increase	£5,000,420	£3,364,900
Base 5% Increase	£6,250,525	£4,206,125
6% Increase	£7,500,630	£5,047,350
8% increase	£10,000,840	£6,729,800
10% increase	£12,501,050	£8,412,250

Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)

A BCR is conducted to further assess value for money of the intervention. A GVA approach has been considered the most appropriate methodology in order to give a fuller appreciation of the likely benefits of the scheme as a non-residential development. This follows previous MHCLG guidance.

All benefits directly and indirectly attributable to the scheme are compared against the total development costs to deliver a BCR. The higher the BCR the better the value for money of the option.

This is calculated on the basis of pandemic-level figures set out in the previous sub-section as a modest approach.

Costs

BCR calculations require an overview of all costs associated with the development and as such are summarised in the following table:

Cost	
Development Costs	£3,095,480
Optimism Bias	£719,096
Contingency and Other Costs	£796,049
Total	£4,610,625

Benefits

Context

The following elements are considered in the benefit calculation for the scheme:

- a) **Public Realm / Amenity Value (Direct)** – The scheme proposes a total of 0.57 Ha of significant public realm improvements to Abington and Fish Street in Northampton Town Centre. The economic value has been calculated consistent with the MHCLG Appraisal Guide which assumes that new open spaces in an urban environment have an economic benefit of £109,138 per hectare per annum¹¹.
- b) **Construction Jobs (Indirect)** – Jobs delivered across the construction period have been calculated on the assumption that 50% of development costs are associated with labour. The construction output per employee in the East Midlands is calculated at £63,785 based on the industry output against employment levels¹². The labour cost is then divided by this output to calculate the total number of construction job years and are then divided by the standard 10 year per job assumption to realise the gross number of construction jobs and GVA expected during development.
- c) **Additional Employment (Indirect)** – Evidence suggests on average 58% of residents are employed locally in Northampton, with 42% working out of town¹³. Additional employment is calculated on the assumption that the instalment of c. 10 market stalls as part of the scheme would benefit local employment. ONS employment statistics including working age population, claimant count, and those in employment are then considered to calculate the gross number of additional jobs.
- d) **GVA per Additional Spend (Indirect)** – The additional spend (as calculated through sections 2.37 – 2.41) is adjusted to account for the relationship between turnover and GVA of the following industry codes; Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Entertainment and Recreation. The aggregate turnover to GVA ratio equates to 0.16¹⁴.

Additionality – Moving from Gross to Net

The assessment of additionality, and the rationale for each field considered within the direct and indirect benefits is shown in the table below. The common measures to be considered are deadweight, displacement, leakage, substitution, and multiplier effects.

Public Realm / Amenity		
Additionality Factor	Factor Applied	Justification and Evidence
Deadweight	0.94	According to BIS factors – “regeneration through physical infrastructure, public realm, research to improve the assessment of additionality (sub regional)”
Leakage	0.83	As above
Displacement	0.61	As above
Substitution	1.00	As above
Multiplier Effects	1.26	As above
Construction Jobs		
Additionality Factor	Factor Applied	Justification and Evidence

¹¹ MHCLG Appraisal Guidance, 2016

¹² Construction Skills Network, Labour Market Intelligence Report, East Midlands, 2021 - 2025

¹³ Turquoise Tows Fund Consultation Research Findings Oct 2020

¹⁴ BEIS (SBS, 2019) and Oxford Economics

Deadweight	0.90	According to BIS factors – “regeneration through physical infrastructure, capital projects, research to improve the assessment of additionality (sub regional)”
Leakage	0.83	As above
Displacement	0.57	As above
Substitution	0.96	As above
Multiplier Effects	1.46	As above
Additional Employment		
Additionality Factor	Factor Applied	Justification and Evidence
Deadweight	n/a	Deadweight is implicitly accounted for in comparison to the Do-Nothing option
Leakage	0.42	Average 42% of residents are employed outside of Northampton
Displacement	n/a	West Northamptonshire is considered to be near full employment with 6% classified unemployed ¹⁵ . Therefore, displacement is likely to negligible.
Substitution	n/a	N/A according to BIS Factors “Practical Guidance on Implementing the Impact Evaluation Framework”
Multiplier Effects	1.1	Factor applied based on the general tone of observations at a subregional level according to BIS factors.
Footfall and GVA from Spend		
Additionality Factor	Factor Applied	Justification and Evidence
Deadweight	n/a	Deadweight is implicitly accounted for in comparison to the Do-Nothing option
Leakage	n/a	All evidence is within Northampton Borough therefore no leakage is expected.
Displacement	n/a	Displaced spend is retained in Northampton accrues to the local area, reserving benefits
Substitution	n/a	N/A according to BIS Factors “Practical Guidance on Implementing the Impact Evaluation Framework”
Multiplier Effects	1.1	Factor applied based on the general tone of observations at a subregional level according to BIS factors.

Net Benefits

The net outputs position is determined by following the additionality logic chain. The calculation set out below is undertaken using all available information.

Values (GVA)	a) Public Realm	b) Construction Jobs	c) Additional Employment	d) Footfall GVA per spend
Gross Outputs	£61,674	2	4	£672,013
Deadweight	0.94	0.90	n/a	n/a
Leakage	0.83	0.83	0.42	n/a
Direct Gross Outputs Deadweight / leakage)	£47,944	1	1	£672,013

¹⁵ Labour Market Profile - West Northamptonshire, NOMIS ,2021

Displacement	0.61	0.57	n/a	n/a
Substitution	1	0.96	n/a	n/a
Net Direct Outputs (B - Displacement / substitution)	£29,246	0	1	£672,013
Multiplier	1.26	1.46	1.10	1.10
Net Outputs (C + Multiplier)	Jobs	n/a	1	2
	GV A	£36,850	£64,190	£55,672
				£739,214

The following table summarises the total direct and indirect benefit as outlined above that are attributable to the outcomes of Towns Fund investment. This assumes benefits are to persist over 10-years, with the exception of construction employment which extends over the 2-year development period.

Metric	Value
Direct	
a) Quantified public realm/amenity value	£368,498
Total Direct Benefit	£368,498
Indirect	
b) Construction Employment (GVA)	£64,190
c) Indirect Employment (GVA)	£556,715
d) Footfall and GVA per additional spend	£8,094,185
Total Indirect Benefit	£8,715,091
Master Total	£9,083,589

BCR

From these inputs the BCR can be calculated, with a breakdown of all relevant outputs of the BCR calculation in the table below, demonstrating value for money

Pandemic level figures	
Present Value (PV) of Total benefits	9,083,589
PV of Direct benefits	368,498
PV of Indirect benefits	8,715,091
Public Sector Costs	0
PV of Total project costs	4,210,625
Net Present Social/Public Value (NPSV)	9,083,589
Net Present Value (NPV)	5,041,978
Total BCR	2.16
Direct BCR	0.09
Indirect BCR	2.07

The total BCR of 2.16:1 represents a strong value for money investment. This primarily owes to the significant indirect benefits attributable to the scheme from additional footfall and resultant GVA per spend.

Sensitivity Analysis

The following sensitivity analysis is carried out to present various scenarios on the basis of fluctuations in development costs and projected footfall, against the base case. From this, vulnerabilities of the project can be deduced.

	Total BCR	Net Present Value (NPV)
Base Case	2.16	5,041,978
15% Increase in Capital Expenditure	1.95	4,612,636
30% Increase in Capital Expenditure	1.77	4,183,295
-2.5% Footfall (from 5% modelled in base case)	1.20	994,855
+2.5% Footfall (from 5% modelled in base case)	3.12	9,089,070
No Multiplier Additionality	1.89	3,932,649

The results of the sensitivity analysis indicate the scheme is robust against fluctuations in footfall and capital expenditure with the project remaining viable across each scenario. Specifically, when considering the worst case of a 30% increase in capital expenditure the BCR remains significant at 1.77:1. In addition, the results of sensitivity analysis upon removing multiplier effects reduce the Value for Money to a medium profile, albeit the scheme remains viable.

Conclusions

The impact of investment at Abington Street and Fish Street demonstrates various benefits to businesses, residents, and the public sector.

The economic case has justified that the investment of Towns Deal monies in the public realm enhancements at Abington and Fish Street, with a strong project rationale and significant economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Property Owners

- **Increase Rents**
- **Long-term value enhancement**

Businesses

- **Increase footfall, dwell time, and spend**

Workers / Employers

- **Improve air quality**
- **Enhance recruitment and retention**

Visitors

- **Manage perceptions of crime**
- **Multi-function capability, events etc**
- **Increase footfall, dwell time, and spend**

Residents

- **Improve air quality**
- **Manage perceptions of crime**

Northampton

- **Contribute to TIP objectives**
- **Contribute to Covid-19 Recovery Plan “Bring Back Better”**
- **Improve perceptions of town centre**

Financial Case

Introduction

The public realm project forms part of the Northampton Town Deal Fund, commencing in Spring 2023 for completion within 18 months. West Northamptonshire Council will lead the project and be the accountable body for the funds, to meet DHLUC Towns Fund monitoring and evaluation and funding requirements, coordinate specification, procurement and delivery activity for all areas, including liaising with project statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to support implementation.

The project will revitalise the pedestrianised areas of Northampton's main shopping street, Abington Street, and Fish Street aimed at enhancing the experience for pedestrians and families. The focus of the project is to create high quality areas that are attractive and inviting to shoppers and visitors. To achieve this:

- Footpaths will be widened with resurfacing for better access to all.
- There will be more and improved seating that will promote active uses of the streetscape and increase dwell time.
- Improved wayfinding and signage will aid navigation, improve connectivity and help instil a sense of identity.
- External lighting, tree planting and soft landscaping will increase biodiversity and improve safety in the town.
- Pedestrianisation at key road crossings.
- Public art developed in partnership with the Guildhall Road Arts HUB
- Pop-up market stalls at Abington Street with service points which could also be used for entertainers.

This project complements the proposals for Market Square and Emporium Way by extending the areas of the town benefiting from public realm improvements and improving the links between a number of key locations. It will connect with wider TIP investments, increasing their transformational impact.

The streets that will be the focus of this project centre are;

- Abington Street which is the main 'high street' and while some of the larger retail on this street have closed this remains the area with the highest number and quality of retailers in the town.
- Fish Street is fully pedestrianised and is the main link between St Giles' Street and Abington Street as well as linking the Town Centre to the Cultural Quarter.

The preferred base case option based on the strategic and economic cases is to 'Do Maximum' to deliver the core scheme and enhanced interventions on both Abington Street and Fish Street.

Approach to financial case

The funding for the project is to be secured through the Towns Fund, providing a total budget of £4,610,625

To secure the funding the Council submitted a Towns Investment Plan in September 2021 to set out the interventions the Council proposed to spend the allocation on, under the areas of the scope permitted by the funding. This included activity relating to public realm improvements in key areas of the town centre.

A summary of the funding for the project is as follows;

Type	Source	Total Amount
Public sector	Towns Fund	£4,610,625

Project Costs

The project costs are broken down below by intervention and the development status of the costs included, the budget cost plan can be found as Appendix 4.

The breakdown for the chosen option for the public realm scheme as per the budget plan is detailed below:

Blended Option Construction Costs = £2,541, 446

Project costs additionally include the following:

Activity	Cost (£)
Main Contractors Preliminaries	406,631
Main Contractors Overheads	147,403
Sub Total:	554,034
Total Construction Costs:	3,095,480

To summarise the overall project costs:

Activity	Cost (£)
Construction	3,095,480
Contingency	1,515,145
Total	£4,610,625

The majority of costs have been derived through early engagement with suppliers to ascertain estimates based on supply in early 2022. Some costs are based on procurement undertaken this year on similar products with an inflationary factor of 5% added.

VAT has been included within the forecast costs at the prevailing rate of 20%. There will be no additional costs associated with VAT in line with project estimates.

Contingency has been applied to the project to cover any unforeseen costs. Given the recent high levels of inflation and included for unplanned costs given the volatility of the market at this moment in time.

However, the nature of the interventions which are predominantly product-based means if the final project costs exceed the available budget, the quality of product options could be reviewed without compromising the scheme outputs to bring the project in on budget.

The Council will be adopting a strategy to actively manage the project budget to ensure that the scheme is delivered to budget, without overspend and to timescale. Should an underspend be achieved, the funds will be allocated back to the Towns Fund, should an overspend be experienced the Council will cover these costs, with value re-engineering undertaken to minimize the level of overspend.

Operating Costs

The project will enhance and improve existing infrastructure assets which will reduce the current ongoing operational costs therefore minimizing any additional revenue to the Council;

- Upgraded finger posts to replace current outdated and corroded infrastructure
- New planters and benches

Maintenance of the new assets and planting will be incorporated into existing town centre public open space operational budgets.

Consideration to whole life costing and lifespan of products will be considered through the procurement assessment criteria for each product to ensure longevity and minimize maintenance where possible. Future replacement costs of these new assets will need to be considered in future annual reviews of the Council's capital programme.

Funding and Revenues

The scheme is a predominantly design and installation of new infrastructure for the town centre in Abington Street and Fish Street. Funding for the scheme was identified with having strong alignment to the Towns Fund programme.

Financial profile and funding sources:

Project Costs	2022/23	2023/24
Construction	£847,740	£2,297,740
Contingency	-	£719,096
Optimism Bias	-	£796,049
Subtotal	£847,740	£3,762,885
Total Project Costs	£4,610,625	
Funding		
Towns Fund	£4,610,625	£4,610,625
Total Funding	£4,610,625	£4,610,625

Professional fees have been accounted for in the construction costs.

Commercial Case

The procurement strategy and mechanisms to deliver the public realm project is based on the knowledge and lessons learnt from delivery and operational experience of previous schemes. The preferred procurement route will build in assurance processes to ensure value for money, quality and deliverability for the project within the project timeframe.

Introduction

The Public Realm project will utilise the Towns Fund to procure and deliver a range of core and prioritised interventions focused on both Abington Street and Fish Street. The scheme will be procured and delivered by the West Northamptonshire Council.

The scope of the project has been determined by the funding available and has the potential to be scaled or product quality changed to ensure deliverability and affordability within the funding constraints.

The commercial objectives for the projects are;

- Deliver high quality and robust interventions which produce the place making impact and outputs required
- Ensure value for money through the procurement process to take into account the whole life costing and on-going operational/maintenance considerations.
- That product specifications must meet required quality standards for any permissions and licences required for the project.

Commercial Deliverability

West Northamptonshire Council has a track record of delivering several large public realm schemes over the last decade including:

- Gold Street
- Vulcan Works
- Delapre Abbey
- Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone

The schemes have ranged in scope, and include large scale resurfacing, highway alterations, street lighting, street furniture and planting. Through the experience of previous projects, the Council and partners is able to deploy lessons learnt to inform key commercial decisions to deliver the project; examples include considerations to product specifications, suppliers, installation and ongoing maintenance. For example, there are specific products, materials and plants that the Council have encountered unexpected maintenance issues with, which mean that the Council will reconsider whether it would be appropriate to use for this project.

The Council have been proactive in approaching a range of product suppliers and manufacturers, during the development of the interventions for the project (some the Council has experience of using previously), to check product availability, cost and any supply issues to ensure the interventions are affordable and deliverable.

In accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, a range of procurement mechanisms are available to source the required products including:

Procurement Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Frameworks	<p>Pre-qualification of suppliers already completed.</p> <p>Potential time savings to procure if products required are available.</p> <p>Approved terms and conditions.</p>	Limited product ranges
Invitation to Tender (for products/services over £25,000)	Can select specific/known/wider range of potential suppliers which can result in more competitive pricing	Timescales to complete process 6-8 weeks
Request for quotations (for products/services over £5,000- under £25,000)	Can select specific/known/wider range of potential suppliers which can result in more competitive pricing	Timescales to complete process 3-5 weeks

Any of the above procurement methods will result in orders being placed using the councils purchase order system with agreed payment terms on a cost reimbursement basis at the point of contract award.

Subsidy Control

Subsidy Control Advice has been sought from DWF Law and confirms that no subsidy will be generated by the project. Please see the letter from DWF Law for confirmation (Appendix 6).

Procurement Strategy

The Council have reviewed a range of procurement routes to help achieve the project objectives. The commercial case takes the West Northamptonshire Procurement Plan into consideration in the selection and implementation of procurement options.

The project comprises a series of interventions to be delivered during 2022/23. Due to the bespoke nature of some interventions, there is not one single supplier that could design and deliver the whole project. It will be necessary to procure each intervention in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders to ensure best value and appropriate selection of suitably experienced suppliers to deliver and install required interventions. The project will be broken into work packages and tendered for discreet actions. This will be conducted through the overall project plan to ensure that each phase is completed in a timely manner. All assets are, and will continue to be owned by West Northamptonshire Council, improvements planned related to the street scene rather than individual property under private ownership.

Appropriate weighting will be given in the procurement process to;

- Price
- Quality – product warranties, lifespan, design and product standards (including consideration to sustainable products and supplier net zero policies)
- Product lead times to deliver and install

Procurement risks:

It is recognised that the pandemic and post Brexit supply and staffing issues may impact on the lead times for certain products and materials. Early engagement with suppliers has identified the current lead times which have been built into the programme, however there is a risk this may vary depending on the situation at the point of order.

Procurement will be managed by the Regeneration team with product sign off on delivery/receipt by the Head of Regeneration to ensure product quality assurance.

MANAGEMENT CASE

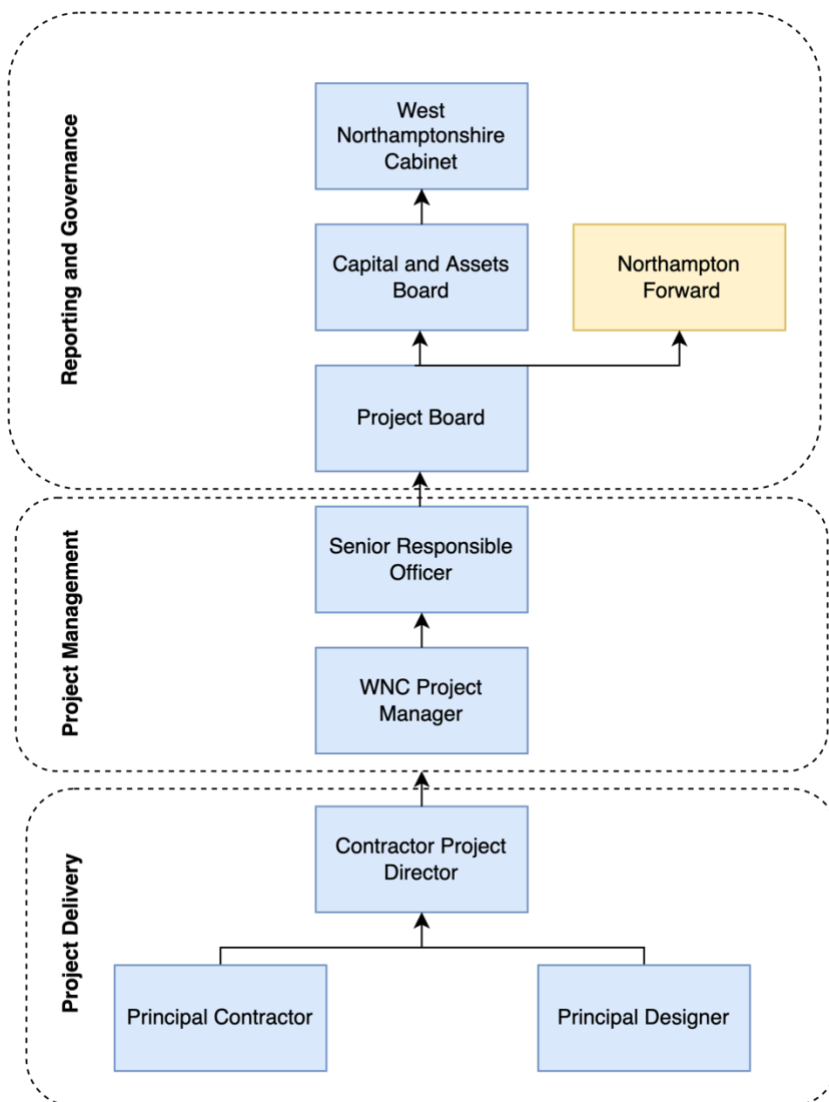
Introduction

The management case for the Public Realm project will outline the approach to deliverability, timescales and responsibilities. West Northamptonshire Council's approach to project management is based on a clear structure with lines of accountability running throughout the delivery team, connecting each part of the team to senior leadership including the project sponsor, enabling monitoring of progress, accountability and the ability to escalate issues where required through to Northampton Forward.

The Council has a track record of delivering similar projects as set out in the commercial case. The Management Case provides assurance that West Northamptonshire Council have the capacity and capability to deliver the project as proposed. It also outlines the indicative programme for the delivery of the scheme including details of risk management mechanisms.

Governance and Project Management

The overall structure for the governance, management and delivery of the Public Realm project is shown in below.



Tier Descriptions

Tier 1: Reporting and Governance

This tier will provide the strategic direction to the project, provide the necessary approvals for the project to proceed at key stages, and hold the project management and delivery tiers to account. High-level governance will be provided by the Project Board. Given the size of the scheme, it is proposed that a dedicated Steering Group be set up to oversee the development and delivery of the project. The Board will meet quarterly to review and monitor progress.

Tier 2: Project Management

This tier will provide ongoing management of the project. West Northamptonshire Council will act as the scheme sponsor and manage the scheme through its existing management arrangements for Capital Programmes. A dedicated Senior Responsible Owner and Project Manager will be appointed, who will be responsible for the implementation of the scheme. The Senior Responsible Owner and Project Manager will report back to the Steering Group at regular intervals and seek approvals from the Steering Group at key decision points within the programme.

Tier 3: Project Delivery

Members of the project delivery team will be responsible for the delivery of the scheme on a day-to-day basis. It is currently envisaged that most of the day-to-day running of the project will be outsourced to the developer once appointed. Whilst the construction of the scheme will be outsourced, West Northamptonshire Council officers will assist with the delivery of the project in a number of support roles, including procurement, financial control, legal and communications.

Assurance, Approvals and Reporting

As shown in the indicative programme, there are a number of key decision-making points at which the scheme will be formally reviewed before it can proceed further. These decision-making points include:

- Approval of the Business Case; and
- Approval of the planning application.

The precise assurance and approvals process to be followed will depend on the type of delivery mechanism funding that is used to deliver the scheme with a developer. West Northamptonshire Council as the scheme sponsor will also undertake regular operational reviews. The operational reviews will form part of project monitoring meetings conducted every month by the Project Manager and Senior Responsible Owner. These outcomes of the operational reviews will be reported to the Project Steering Group, using the Council's internal Traffic Light (Black, Red, Amber, Green) process. Costs or timescales which are not on target will be identified by the Steering Group to look at ways to remedy the situation. In case of major overspends or programme delays, the Steering Group will escalate decisions to the Council's Cabinet.

Scope management

The scope of the public realm is as set out in the strategic case. Any changes to the defined scope set out in the strategic case will be escalated to project Sponsor and the Programme Board to determine whether these are justified for escalation to the Town Deal Board and DLUHC. DLUHC will determine if a project adjustment form is required to amend the scope of the project and approve accordingly.

Programme/Schedule Management

This programme identifies full project completion in Spring 2025.

No other projects are directly dependent on the delivery of the public realm project, however it will provide the foundation to support and provide additionality for other Towns Fund projects that will be delivered including;

- Market Square Public Realm
- 31-35 Abington Street
- 45-49 Abington Street

Alignment with the public realm project will be assured through the Head of Major Projects and Regeneration who has involvement and oversight across the Towns Fund programme and projects.

The key risks for the project are as set out in Appendix 3. If any of these risks require escalation, they will initially go to the Borough Council's Town Deal Programme Board for resolution. If wider engagement is required to make decisions that will have a material impact on the project outputs, this will be raised and addressed with the Town Deal Board.

Indicative programme

- Business case approval – February 2022
- Detailed design to RIBA 4 – Winter 2022 (this will depend on approvals)
- Planning and highway approval - Winter 2022
- Approvals - Winter 2022
- Procure principal contractor – Spring 2023
- Appoint principal contractor – Spring 2023
- Works commence – Summer 2023
- Completion – Spring 2025

Stakeholder engagement

The methodology utilised was largely quantitative based using the same short 5 minute questionnaire (designed in conjunction with the Client) for each project. Individual survey links for each of the projects were distributed via the press and community groups. Respondents were also invited within each survey to give further feedback on other projects to encourage greater participation and engagement.

The consultation took place across 3 days (28th, 29th & 30th September 2019) with respondents able to contribute and respond throughout this period. There were 1495 responses received in total with 1423 received via the links in the press and 72 via those distributed to community groups.

The consultation concluded that respondents believed that the Town Centre Public Realm project was seen to be the most beneficial to improving the town centre with regards regeneration.

The key findings from the consultation phase identified that;

- There is a huge desire from residents and the Northampton wider community for improvements to be made and regeneration to take place and there are certainly proposed projects that are seen to deliver what they believe the town needs.
- Ultimately increasing footfall and essentially 'cleaning up the town' are the key objectives, making use of disused buildings / land and having reason to visit (e.g. having shops and outlets worth visiting) with affordable parking solutions, improved transport options and feeling safe whilst doing so are paramount to residents.
- Collectively the infrastructure & connectivity projects are perceived to be of greater benefit and more essential to the regeneration of Northampton Centre. This is driven by the strength of positivity towards the Town Centre Public Realm project.

Risk Management

Risk Management Processes

The production of a Risk Management Strategy is an integral component of the standard project management procedures that are used by West Northamptonshire Council on major capital projects. During the scheme development stage, a thorough and detailed examination of risks will be incorporated into a project risk register.

The risk register will be reviewed regularly throughout the detailed design, procurement, construction and post-construction phases as a standing item in progress meetings. The Project Manager will have day to day responsibility for managing risks and will escalate any issues to the Senior Responsible Owner. In case of any urgent risk events, the Project Manager will initially seek guidance from the Senior Responsible Owner on behalf of the Project Board. In case of major issues where the risk response would exceed the authority of the Project Board, the Senior Responsible Owner will produce a Cabinet Report to seek guidance and approval from the West Northamptonshire Council Cabinet.

Initial Risk Identification

Appendix 3 provides a high-level overview of the key project risks that have been identified at this stage.

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for the project is set out in Appendix 7.