

St Austell Town Council



Contract for: Rooftop Garden –
Professional Services Principal Design Team:
Technical studies, design and feasibility work
May 2023

Tender Brief

“St Austell is a historic town with a proud heritage, wonderful people and an exciting future. As Chair of the Revitalisation Partnership, I am proud to work with our community, business and democratic representatives who share a strong desire to revitalise the town centre for future generations.”

Sandra Heyward, Chair of St Austell Revitalisation Partnership 2022

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General Overview

Introduction

The St Austell Revitalisation Partnership supported by St Austell Town Council and Cornwall Council has reviewed the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the town centre and developed a Vision and Masterplan for its revitalisation.

The Masterplan was informed by extensive community and stakeholder engagement and is strongly supported by St Austell Town Council, Cornwall Council and a Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership made up of democratic, community and business representatives.

The Masterplan includes a project to repurpose a disused rooftop car park to create a rooftop garden / park and a pavilion / restaurant building. Extracts from the Masterplan relating to this project are provided at Appendix 1. On page 13 of the Masterplan it is suggested that the project should, "Capitalise on the qualities of the vacant asset to provide managed public access to the roof space. Create an accessible, flexible, town centre green space and covered garden to facilitate all year / all weather use and recreation. Potential for community growing / community group use, social prescribing, private commercial use (conference / weddings / events). Simple regeneration also facilitates significant bio-diversity net gain and sustainable water management, etc."

On page 50 of the Masterplan it states "This project seeks to create an exciting roof top garden with fantastic views over the town and a contemporary structure for all year round pop-up business and events". For more detail see Appendix 1.

Assistance is sought to refine the concepts identified in the Masterplan into a practical, deliverable and viable destination which will help to revitalize St Austell town centre.

This document identifies a number of potential actions suggested by the partnership but these are not prescriptive and the Town Council and partnership will be guided by the views of consultants.

Revitalisation Vision and Criteria

The vision for St Austell includes the following extracts: *"In 2030 St Austell aims to be an inspiring town that reflects its historic past but has adapted and embraced the future... It will have a lively, vibrant town centre with a range of facilities making it a welcoming, engaging destination for visitors and local residents."* (Cornwall Council - St Austell and surrounding Parishes Town Framework – March 2017)

The Partnership ethos is for the revitalisation of St Austell Town Centre to be built on:

- Emphasising the town's rich history and geography
- Arts, culture and ceramics with people at our core
- A thriving retail, leisure and food offering
- A greener, safer and more environmentally friendly town
- Consultation/engagement with the community and stakeholders

- Creating a vibrant economy with the creation of better paid jobs, improved education, quality housing and ease of access to the town centre
- Wherever possible, local individuals and organisations will be involved in the delivery of our desired outcomes.

Background

St Austell town centre must be ready to capitalise on any programmes of funding for revitalisation which may be announced by central or local Government or any other body. Historically, the town has missed out on regeneration opportunities particularly over the last 5 years because it was unable to respond to calls for suitable projects as it did not possess a Masterplan or have projects ready to progress.

St Austell Town Council and the Revitalisation Partnership have identified 25 projects within the Masterplan but have agreed to focus initially on one priority project. This is a potential project to create a rooftop garden and pavilion on a disused car park in Old Vicarage Place and assistance is sought to progress this project from concept stage to "shovel ready" stage. Cornwall Council has granted funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund (also known as the Good Growth Fund) for feasibility work to inform the design and eventual delivery and operation of this facility.



PHOTO 1 – Aerial view of site.



PHOTO 2 – Aerial view of site

The site is privately owned by a supportive landowner and access for inspections, surveys etc is easily achieved. The area is known as either Old Vicarage Place or Vicarage Place.

St Austell in its environment

St Austell sits in the centre of Cornwall and is the county's largest town. Work is underway on improving transport links to the main A30 which is the arterial road through the county. It is served by a bus station and a mainline rail station connecting it to the north, midlands and London.

The town is surrounded by many key tourist and leisure attractions and is close to the coast and beaches of Pentewan, Duporth, Carlyon Bay and Par. The attractive harbour resorts of Fowey, Charlestown and Mevagissey are nearby, as are a variety of gardens and the world famous attractions of Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan.

The town centre is built on a hill and is composed of 4 contrasting environments: the main historic Fore Street leading to the old town and the 13th century Holy Trinity Church, the modern White River Place shopping complex built in 2005, Aylmer Square and Old Vicarage Place. In addition the town has a number of small secondary trading areas comprised of Truro Road, High Cross Street, Biddicks Court and Duke Street. The north and south of the town are linked by 3 opes or passageways which provide access from Fore Street to Aylmer Square, White River Place and Old Vicarage Place.

St Austell strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Successful town centres are always evolving and adapting to market forces and changing environments. It is therefore essential that St Austell town centre evolves to provide more reasons for people to visit, stay, be entertained, have fun and engage in cultural, artistic and other experiences.

Its strengths include its people, their love of the town, their enthusiasm and skills in ceramics, art and cultural activities. The town is surrounded by world class tourist attractions, beautiful harbours and beaches. 55% of traders are independent compared to the South West's 34% and a national average of 39%. New independent traders are continuing to set up in the town especially in Old Vicarage Place and the Market House. It has good access by public transport and accessible car parking. The town has a large, modern cinema, a county-wide known bowling alley and a very successful gym.

Its weaknesses include a loss of national traders in recent years including Dorothy Perkins, Burtons, Edinburgh Woolen Mill, Frankie & Benny's, Prezzo, Store 21, Peacocks, Baker Tom and others.

It lacks a buoyant evening economy and has a limited café and restaurant offer. The town looks and feels tired with old public realm furniture, limited and unclear signage and wayfinding and a number of buildings which are poorly maintained and no longer fulfill their original purpose.

There are a number of complex needs establishments and temporary housing in or close to the town centre which have contributed to a perception that the town centre is, at times, unsafe. Increasing footfall will help improve the perception of safety.

St Austell is well placed to take advantage of the opportunities afforded as the UK comes out of the pandemic. The Government's ongoing commitment to revitalise town centres and boosting economic performance should lead to well overdue investment opportunities. A strong partnership ethos exists within the town with organisations such as the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership, St Austell BID St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF), local authorities all keen to see the town centre revitalised. There appears to be renewed enthusiasm from local people to see the town thriving once again and Cornwall Council has identified St Austell as a priority for future investment.

While the rooftop garden is only one of a number of projects identified in the Town Centre Masterplan and will not revitalise the town centre on its own, it is seen as an exciting "game-changing" project which could transform a key part of the town centre.

This project is part funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Cornwall Council has been chosen by Government as a Lead Authority for the fund and is responsible for monitoring the progress of projects funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Required deliverable outcomes from consultants

The appointed consultants will be required to test the feasibility of the creation of a rooftop garden or park and pavilion/restaurant/community building on the disused car park area at Old Vicarage Place, St Austell. This will include business planning, surveying, structural and civil engineering assessments, architectural and landscape design and planning processes and other professional services as required of a project of this nature. The Town Council and Town Centre Partnership will be guided by consultants but wish to find a solution which will provide an exciting, attractive, eco-friendly, economically viable feature in the town centre to encourage residents and tourists into St Austell town centre and increase footfall and local spend.

Funding has been obtained from Cornwall Council's Shared Prosperity Fund to undertake feasibility and design work and take this idea from concept stage to "shovel ready" or RIBA 3/4 stage with a validated planning application submitted to Cornwall Council (see Volume 1 – Instructions document for more details).

The Town Council will be guided by consultants but envisages that the works might include:

Feasibility and business planning

Surveys

- Measured building/topographical
- Structural appraisal
- Mundic block survey
- Asbestos
- Noise/acoustic survey

Civils

- Above and below ground drainage
- Foul drainage

Structural

- Car park deck reinforcement/strengthening
- Design for pavilion
- Bridge/ramp designs

Architectural

- Building design
- Design and access statement
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Formation of brief
- Architectural visualisations
- Access/equalities consultancy

Landscape Architecture

- Landscape designs
- Formation of brief
- Maintenance guide

Mechanical Electrical and Plumbing (MEP)

- SBEM designs/calculations for the pavilion
- Mechanical designs
- Electrical designs
- Renewables
- Lifts – passengers/goods
- Fire engineering

Planning consultancy

Project management and cost consultancy

Other appropriate professional guidance as identified

Key deliverables and outputs from the appointed consultants will include:

- Produce a realistic business plan for the operation of a rooftop restaurant/pavilion and garden with research into various operating models informed by expertise in catering, hospitality, leisure and gardens.
- Adequate surveys and reports to support a planning application and permit development of a practical design.
- Solutions for sewerage and drainage.
- Structural engineering assessments and reports in respect of the former car park area and access routes.
- A building design, access and landscape designs and architectural visualisations.
- Designs for Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing services
- Plans and costings for building works
- Project timings and timescale for completed project subject to appropriate approvals.

- A design and access statement.
- If required by the Planning Authority, an heritage impact assessment.
- A planning application, including plans, reports and images in accordance with the requirements of the Planning authority.

Key Information

St Austell Background Data

Largest population in Cornwall

Population circa 27,000 mid 2018 pop projection (2011 Census 25,000)

4.8% of Cornwall population

Circa 9500 jobs provided by 700 businesses

40% of jobs are part time (26% UK)

99% of business are micro or small

Main employers are retail, health, accommodation and food services

25% of population have no formal qualifications (22% Cornwall)

20% of population have Level 4 or above qualification (25% Cornwall, 27% UK)

St Austell Town Centre is in 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Office for National Statistics Reports 2019)

Retail offer 210 units

White River 18 Units

6 independent café/restaurants and 1 national coffee shop

705 business premises across St Austell (not just town centre area)

55% of retail is independent stores compared to 34% South West Average and 39% UK average (BID data 2022)

90% retail occupancy (91% South West, 88% National) at January 2022 (BID)

18 units unoccupied at January 2022 (BID)

4 main car parks: Priory 259 spaces, White River Multistorey 550 spaces, High Cross Street 50 spaces, East Hill (60 spaces tbc)

3 new housing developments with circa 3000 houses are in the process of being built at Trehiddle Farm, Gwallon Quay and West Carclaze.

A new road linking the A30 the main road running through Cornwall with the A391 will take people around the town and enable access to the town centre. It is due for completion in 2025.

St Austell Business Improvement District (BID), a public and private CIC has been the key organization working across the town centre since 2010. It delivers improved cleanliness, safer town centre, a range of events and activities including the annual Christmas Festival. It leads the St Austell Events Group.

St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF) have been active in creating a brand for St Austell focused on Greening, Culture (Ceramic/Arts), Active and Innovation. They have provided important art works to improve the town centre and greened large areas of access to and around the town.

St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Masterplan completed December 2023.

Appendix 1 - Extract from Masterplan

Appendix 2 – Plan of Old Vicarage Place Roof

Appendix 3 – RIBA stages summary