

People Scrutiny Panel

Meeting Date: 23/03/2023

Portfolio: Heritage, Culture and Leisure

Key Decision: No

Policy and Budget Framework: No

Public / Private: Public

Title: Overview Report

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive/Corporate Director of Economic Development

Report Number: CS.07/23

Purpose / Summary:

To provide the panel an update on:

- The conservation requirements for the heritage asset
- The investment appraisal
- Building management procedures including Building condition survey
- The handover to the Station Gateway project
- Friends Groups proposals

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- Provide recommendations to Cumberland Council

Tracking

Executive:	Not applicable
Scrutiny:	People 25/08/22
Council:	Not applicable

1. Background

- 1.1. The current Pools facility at James Street comprises of two distinct elements: a 1970's building containing the disused 25m pool, leisure facilities and entrance/lobby; and the historic James Street Baths building, which includes the mothballed 20m and 10m pools and the Edwardian Turkish Baths.
- 1.2. The opening of the new leisure facilities at the Sands Centre redevelopment in November 2022 meant that all leisure and swimming activities transferred from The Pools site to the redeveloped Sands Centre and the operation of the Turkish Baths ceased.
- 1.3. The Pools site forms part of the 'Carlisle Station Gateway' project, which is strategic regeneration project within the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal to revitalise Carlisle City Centre and wider Borderlands region. The Project will improve access and connectivity to Carlisle and the Borderlands region as well as contribute to decarbonisation by encouraging more journeys to be taken by rail.
- 1.4. As part of this project, it is planned that the 1970s Pools building will be demolished, with the Grade II Listed James St Baths building will become standalone facility. As part of the development of the project a feasibility study was commissioned by Cumbria County Council, on behalf of Carlisle City Council, to explore the future potential of the James St Baths building. Whilst the feasibility study does not provide a definitive solution to the future of the building, it investigates and evaluates the feasibility of potential uses of the site and proposes possible schemes of varying levels of intervention and cost.
- 1.5. The feasibility study should also be read in tandem with the Statement of Significance that was also commissioned to support the work and identifies the important characteristics / significance of the James St Baths building.

2. The Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths

- 2.1. The Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths are a group of volunteers that have been campaigning to protect and develop the building as a health and wellbeing centre.
- 2.2. The Friends have set out a vision that proposes to create a new facility that would include an expanded Turkish Baths offer, a new health centre and community hub and laundry service. This would operate as a charity or Community Interest Organisation. Funding has yet to be identified but the Friends have previously indicated that Heritage Lottery Fund funding would be sought.

2.3. The Friends of the Turkish Baths have received funding to carry out a viability assessment for the site. The Friends have provided an interim position on their work in August 2022 and are continuing to work on a full viability study and proposal on a sustainable future use for the site. Once the viability study is complete the Friends plan to apply for funding to commence a development study (RIBA stage 4) of the preferred option during 2023. The Council continues to meet and support the Friends with this work.

3. Management of the heritage asset

3.1. The Turkish Baths are of special historic interest and are Grade II listed as the original internal decorative tiling is of high quality and complete, rendering the building a rare example, with only around 20 remaining in England.

3.2. Investment appraisal. Historic England maintains a Heritage at Risk register which is updated annually and which can be viewed at:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/results/?searchType=HAR&search=carlisle> The list has 22 entries for Carlisle, although Historic England entry qualification (outside London) is limited to Grade I and Grade II* buildings, Scheduled Monuments and places of worship. The City Council holds its own informal database which was last updated in 2018 and any buildings that require adding, such as the Turkish Baths, have been recorded and will be added accordingly.

3.3. GLL have now vacated the property and ownership has transferred to Cumbria County Council to facilitate the Station Gateway project. Prior to the City Council accepting possession back from GLL the property was mothballed and a condition survey undertaken to ensure that the asset was returned to the Council in line with the contractual obligations. The Council then installed security measures and an inspection regime to ensure the building was secure prior to the transfer of ownership to the County Council.

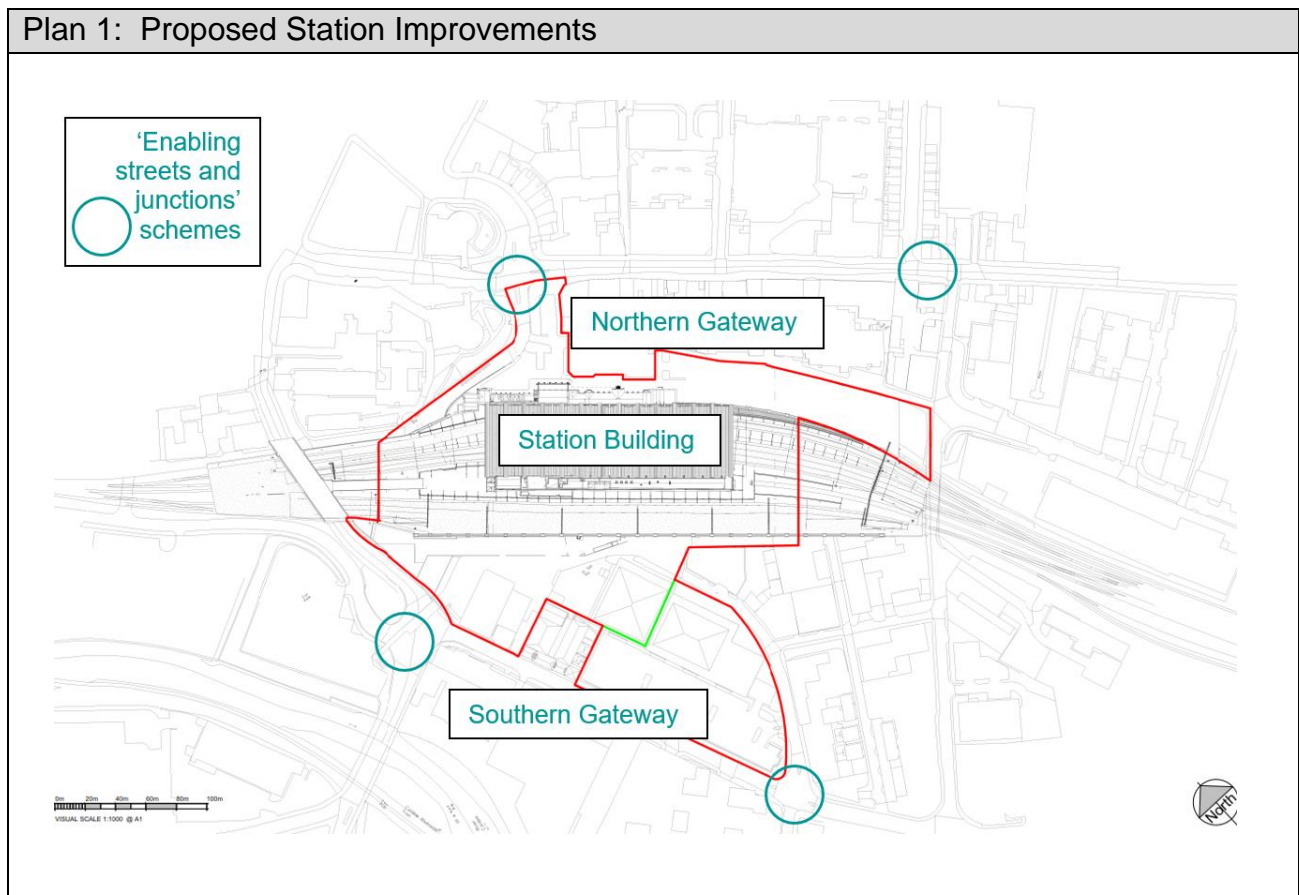
4. Station gateway project implications

4.1. Cumbria County Council, in partnership with the City Council, Network Rail and Avanti West Coast have secured £20M of funding through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal for improvements to Carlisle Railway Station.

4.2. The primary objectives of the Carlisle Station Gateway project are to increase passenger use of the station and to create a more attractive gateway to the city centre. The strategic objectives are:

- Maximising this historic asset by respecting its heritage significance and architecture.
- Encouraging investment by improving the commercial opportunities of the station and the wider city area.
- Supporting passenger growth by improving the station and the facilities for all users.
- Growing the regional role of the station by making the station user-friendly and accessible, improving parking and drop-off facilities, and improving navigation around the facility.
- Creating a gateway by providing high-quality entrance and exits to the station, enhancing historic buildings, encouraging visitors, and better connecting to and showcasing the city.
- Future proofing by making the station accessible by greener forms of transport and making it safer to use.

4.3 The project has been split into four parts as illustrated in Plan 1 below:



- Northern Gateway: partial pedestrianisation of Court Square, enhancements to the space for passengers to enter and exit the station with easy access to ticket purchasing facilities. This will significantly reduce vehicular movements to the North of the station and Court Square and improve connection to the city centre. The Northern Station car park will close for public use and will be repurposed for staff parking and station servicing.

- Station Building and Interior: enhancements to the access to the platforms from the north and the undercroft using an easily accessible stairway. The undercroft will also be enhanced to provide a secure and welcoming entrance to the station from the South. Secure cycle parking, an improved historic entrance from the north, and improved/modernised passenger facilities are also included.
- Southern Gateway: creation of a new entrance and square, 'George Square', to the station together with the relocation of vehicular and parking uses on the Pools site and the Station Retail Park (Staples/Matalan) site, acquired by the County Council, that fall within the red line boundary shown on Plan 1. All public car parking will relocate to the south entrance to reduce the vehicular traffic at Court Square, including disabled, staff and electric bays. Together with the parking, coach services, rail replacement services and additional taxi ranks and pick-up and drop-off will also be relocated to the southern side of the station.
- Enabling Streets and Junctions: junction improvements at Victoria Viaduct / James Street, Water Street, Crown Street and Court Square Brow to improve access to the station, particularly for pedestrians.

4.4 Relevant to the Victorian and Turkish Baths building is the proposed development of the Southern Gateway. As part of this, it is planned that the 1970s building will be demolished to assist with the creation of George Square and new public car park. The James St Baths building will become standalone facility, with funding allocated within the Borderland project to support this.

4.5 Demolition of the Pools is likely to commence July / August 2023, subject to work by Electricity North West to relocate a high voltage running cable under the pools. Planning applications for both George Square and Court Square will be submitted for approval in the summer 2023 with a view to works proceeding in 2024 onwards.

5. Contribution to the Carlisle Plan Priorities

5.1 Identifying a sustainable future use for the James Street Baths will support the successful implementation of the Borderlands-funded Station improvement project. This wider project will support the delivery of vision set out in the Carlisle Plan, which is to enable Carlisle to grow and prosper as the capital of the Borderlands region.

5.2 The James Street Baths has the potential to contribute to the growth of the tourist and visitor economy of the city. Therefore, identifying a sustainable future use for the building will contribute to the priority of delivering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, by increasing visitor spend and making Carlisle a more attractive place for investment.

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**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- **None**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL –

PROPERTY SERVICES

Contained within the main body of the report

FINANCE – The property is now in the ownership of Cumbria County Council therefore the Council has no financial interest or liability associated with the property.

EQUALITY

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE –