

Station Yard Regeneration Project

Successive Southwold Town Council (STC) administrations have long held an aspiration for developing Station Yard, the area behind and adjacent *Hurren Terrace*, on Station Road. The site, now largely derelict and unsightly, has attracted national funding; time constraints for regeneration determine that monies be spent by a specified date.

In 2014 STC's then administration, commissioned a concept design study for the front of town, that included this site, in the knowledge that businesses trading there had lease expiry dates terminating by the end of 2019; an opportune time for radical decision-making.

From this point on, there was engagement with stakeholders, and the wider public, and plans were adapted, revised and subsequently honed for a business plan to be produced. This became the essence of a submission by a newly formed Coastal Community Team, working with the Business Enterprise Team at the District Council, to the MHC&LG Coastal Communities Fund, for the regeneration of the Station Yard site.

In September 2019, the scheme was granted almost £1m for capital and revenue aspects of the proposal that would secure new opportunities by April 2021, by which time all monies had to be spent. It is important to stress that the Town Council was clear in its determination not to lose the Grant from MHC&LG and will continue, where possible, to hone proposals in the light of research evidence, relating to the current business climate.

Subsequent delays, not all attributable to the Coronavirus pandemic, brought into question the time-frame for the project and it was not until June this year that funds were transferred to East Suffolk Council(ESC) as the accountable body for the project. ESC has now confirmed that the date for funds to be utilised and building completed, has been extended until April 2022.

As a next step, contamination remediation of the site will take place, as a necessary condition for reconstruction, and should be able to be effected by the end of this year.

At the June 2020 meeting of the Town Council, it was unanimously agreed that a Project Manager, working at a strategic level, be appointed for the regeneration scheme as soon as possible. The Manager will be supported by the Economic Development Team at ESC in respect of both the capital and revenue elements of the project. It is expected that a Project Board will be set up comprising STC representation, and representation from ESC as the accountable body. This will enable additional and specific competencies to be brought in as and when required. The last acknowledges concerns that the Town Council will require such expertise to bring the project to fruition.

Procedural management arrangements with ESC are being finalised, but it is anticipated that the Project Manager/Director will report to the Project Board and that, as part of her or his role, consideration of the business model will take place to ensure its appropriateness post the Covid-19 pandemic.