

***AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET***

<b>Report Title:</b>	Town Centre Public Realm Enhancements
<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 December 2025
<b>Report Director:</b>	Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Partnerships and Wellbeing
<b>Ward Relevance:</b>	All (Specific to Benn & Eastlands Wards)
<b>Prior Consultation:</b>	Town Centre Working Group, Climate Emergency Work Group, Town Centre Programme Board and Council Officers, Finance and Performance
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Chief Officer Leisure & Wellbeing
<b>Public or Private:</b>	Public
<b>Report Subject to Call-In:</b>	No
<b>Report En-Bloc:</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	No
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	<p>This report relates to the following priority(ies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Healthier Rugby – To support people to live healthier, longer, and more independent lives.</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Thriving Rugby – To deliver a thriving economy which brings Borough-wide investment and regenerates Rugby Town Centre.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> A Greener Rugby – To protect the environment and ensure the Borough adapts to climate change.</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Fairer Rugby – To reduce inequalities and improve housing across the Borough.</li></ul> <p>Corporate Strategy 2025-2035 <input type="checkbox"/> This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but</p>
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>This report outlines proposed expenditure for the delivery of town centre public realm enhancements to support an attractive and thriving town centre as part of the continued delivery of town regeneration funded by the Town Centre Reserve.</p>
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	As detailed in the main report.

<b>Risk Management Implications:</b>	Risk management implications include the potential non delivery of capital projects should recommendations and budget requests not be approved.
<b>Environmental Implications:</b>	<p>Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment has been completed.</p> <p>The introduction of Living Pillars is an innovative method to introduce biodiversity back into streets where pavement space is limited. Supporting long-term planting, they support nature in the urban environment and can be integrated with insect and bird boxes, giving both important fauna, but also a visual commitment about biodiversity.</p> <p>The manufacturer conducted research with Greenwich University to evidence the benefits to air quality of planting resulting in a small decrease in temperatures, a reduction in CO and NO2 levels in the Living Pillar reference location</p>
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	Appropriate permissions will be confirmed for the relevant town centre infrastructure that is not Rugby Borough Council property.
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as appendix B.
<b>Options:</b>	<p>1) Agree to the spend and recommendations as set out in the report</p> <p>2) Not agree the spend and recommendations as set out in the report</p>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT –</p> <p>(1) a supplementary General Fund Revenue budget of £0.066m for 2026/27 be approved to fund new public realm street enhancements, to be financed from the Town Centre Reserve; and</p> <p>(2) a supplementary General Fund Capital budget of £0.233m for 2025/26 be approved to fund new public realm street enhancements, to be financed from the Town Centre Reserve.</p>
<b>Reasons for Recommendation:</b>	To support the town centre’s public realm, improving quality of places, building civic pride and

attracting visitors to dwell for longer periods in the town centre as outlined in the Council's Corporate Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan 2025-2026.

The capital budget request ensures efficient and effective financial management for capital expenditure approval related to recommendations to the Town Centre Working Group for the delivery of public realm enhancements.

**Cabinet - 1 December 2025**

**Town Centre Public Realm Enhancements**

**Public Report of the Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing**

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT –

- (1) a supplementary General Fund Revenue budget of £0.066m for 2026/27 be approved to fund new public realm street enhancements, to be financed from the Town Centre Reserve; and
- (2) a supplementary General Fund Capital budget of £0.233m for 2025/26 be approved to fund new public realm street enhancements, to be financed from the Town Centre Reserve.

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. As part of Rugby Borough Council's commitment to regenerating Rugby town centre and delivering the Corporate Strategy priorities, the Council is progressing key public realm improvements. Projects so far have included cleaning and restoration works to St Andrews Church which is due to start imminently, painting and cleaning of RBC and WCC assets (e.g. lampposts, information boards, etc.), refurbishment of the taxi shelter and the provision of shop front grants for local business improvements.
- 1.2. The next public realm enhancement project which is the focus of the paper relates to greening of the town centre through the introduction of living pillars and the provision of additional seating including planters in identified appropriate locations.
- 1.3. The project aims to deliver identified approved Public Realm Masterplan recommendations for a series of hard and soft interventions, including specific public realm improvements related to street furniture. By creating a palette of street furniture, it is possible to produce visual cohesion and support and enhance the town's character and identity.
- 1.4. The project further aims to introduce a new planting scheme through an innovative solution to urban greening, trademarked as Living Pillars. The Living Pillars are designed as a logical next step in the quest to introduce biodiversity back into streets where pavement space is limited and services under our pavements prohibit planting. With long term planting they provide a sustainable and colourful opportunity to help Nature back into the urban environment using lamp posts.

## Scope of Works

- Living Pillars throughout the town centre
- Additional seating and planting combinations along Sheep Street and High Street

## Financial Overview

- Capital costs: £0.233m
- Revenue Costs: £0.066m
- Total Project Cost:£0.299m

1.5 The Climate Emergency Working Group and Town Centre Working Group have received the project proposal and have formally supported the use of the Town Centre Reserve to finance the full programme of public realm improvements as set out in the report to support the continued development of the town centre.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Strategy sets out a clear, ambitious vision for a Greener, Thriving, Healthier Rugby. The regeneration of the town centre directly contributes to a Thriving Rugby the outlined programme of enhancements supporting the delivery of:
- A thriving town centre with a mix of retail, leisure, residential and community spaces.
  - Support and grow pride in everything great about Rugby borough
  - Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation.
  - Link places together with good quality, green infrastructure and improve biodiversity across the borough
- 2.2 The Corporate Strategy sets out that "A thriving and attractive town centre with an improved public realm" will be a key measure of what success will look like.
- 2.3 In March 2025, the Council published its Public Realm Masterplan (PRM) which was produced by Planit I.E Limited (specialists in landscape architecture and urban design). The PRM sets a vision to transform the town centre as a destination with accessible, high quality public realm to promote growth, encourage new experiences, attract visitors/workers/residents increasing dwell time and build on civic pride.
- 2.4 The Masterplan analysed the key opportunities and identified a shortlist of priority projects that would help revitalise the wider town centre over a 10-15 year period. The masterplan is the long-term vision for the town centre however the council is looking to bring forward a programme of short- and medium-term projects. Projects so far have included painting and cleaning of RBC and WCC assets (e.g. lampposts, information boards, etc.), refurbishment of the taxi shelter, the provision of shop front grants for local

business improvements and cleaning and restoration works to St Andrews Church which is due to start imminently.

- 2.5 The Masterplan sets out seven opportunities and outcomes, including:
- Re-imagining the town centres public realm will make it function more as a unified place and allow people to more easily enjoy the different amenities and experiences it offers such as shopping, culture and leisure activities and local events.
  - More spaces in which people can gather, socialise, hold events and linger longer will strengthen it as the heart of the Rugby community.
- 2.6 Within the Masterplan, a series of hard and soft interventions are outlined, including specific public realm improvements related to street furniture. By creating a palette of street furniture, it is possible to produce visual cohesion and support and enhance the town's character and identity.
- 2.7 This report therefore seeks the approval for the establishment of a capital budget for a programme of town centre public realm enhancements in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy and Town Centre Public Realm Masterplan.
- 2.8 A fully costed programme of public realm enhancements has been scoped and presented to Climate Emergency Working Group and Town Centre Working Groups respectively.
- 2.9 The enhancements proposed include new seating and planter combinations and the installation of living pillars

### **3. LIVING PILLARS**

- 3.1 A living pillar is an innovative way to introduce planting to street lighting columns. Solar powered with re-circulating irrigation, they are a sustainable solution to the challenges of planting in high streets.
- 3.2 Designed as a logical next step in the quest to introduce biodiversity back into streets where pavement space is limited and services under our pavements prohibit planting. With long term planting they are a sustainable and colourful opportunity to help Nature back into the urban environment using lamp posts.
- 3.3 The pillars are planted using a combination of hardy perennials and shrubs for all year round interest with attractive foliage and colour.
- 3.4 They also provide the opportunity to house insect and bird boxes, when they are not providing homes for our fauna, they give an important visual message about biodiversity.
- 3.5 Embracing modern technology, Living Pillars utilise solar powered technology that monitors the plants and re-cycle the irrigation water and using smart sensors can alert maintenance teams for additional irrigation,

helping plants survive in the challenging street environment and enhance sustainability.

- 3.6 The installation also has the ability to apply air quality monitoring.
- 3.7 The locations of installation opportunities has been chosen to compliment the existing area and takes into account how many trees are present, traffic restrictions, and footfall. For example, there are fewer living pillars required where there are existing street trees. Planters with planting have been located to bridge the gaps in green corridors where suitable and to bring about the best impact aesthetically.
- 3.8 Restrictions for locations include impact on foot traffic resulting in potential conflict with pedestrians and cyclists and the height of existing lamppost infrastructure being insufficient to accommodate an installation.
- 3.9 Visual examples of a Living Pillar can be seen in the below images:



- 3.10 The locations for the installation of Living Pillars has been mapped in discussion with Parks and Open Spaces and the Major Projects and Regeneration teams and utilise both Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council infrastructure.
- 3.11 It is proposed to replace existing seating and planters in a coordinated approach with the Living Pillars, replacing the hanging baskets where appropriate. For example, as shown in section 5 of this report, limited living pillars are proposed around Regent's Place due to the hanging basket pillars being in place these will be retained.
- 3.12 Due to the reservoir watering system and the sensors that feed information to a dashboard/app, greater control over watering is achievable meaning

reduced operative hours and safer working methods in direct comparison to the current hanging basket method.

3.13 Plants will also be sustainable removing the necessity to replace every 6 months, as with current methods of floral displays, saving on compost, operative time and cost of plants,

3.14 The current hanging baskets utilised within the town centre provide visual impact for a limited 12 week period and are labour intensive to manage.

#### **4. SEATING AND PLANTERS**

4.1 A range of new seating options has been developed and presented to Climate Emergency Working Group and Town Centre Working Group for their consideration and approval.

4.2 It is proposed to replace the existing infrastructure with integrated seating and planting combinations to maximise the utilisation of space and deliver high impact for visual and environmental enhancement.

4.3 The modular systems will be planted with drought tolerant species, producing all year-round interest with a combination of shrubs, small trees and pollinator positive perennials.

4.4 This is in line with the corporate strategy and blends with other planting schemes around the borough. This also aligns with the Corporate Strategy delivery plan action for the consideration and delivery of the national Living Neighbourhoods initiative.

4.5 It is proposed to install a HAGS, modular system that can be provided in a range of sizes and colours to fit the need of the individual identified areas. Only limited seating/planter is proposed through this project due to other ongoing public realm projects also considering seating locations. For example, the Town Centre Traffic Regulation project and the priority public realm project (North Street. Church Street/Clifton Road) will be considering seating/planters for these particular areas. An example of the seating can be seen in the below images:



## 5. IDENTIFIED AREAS AND ASSOCIATED COSTINGS

5.1 There are five identified areas proposed for the installation of a combination of Living Pillars and HAGS modular seating. These are defined as:

- Area 1: North Street and Jubilee Gardens
- Area 2: Market Place and Chapel Street
- Area 3: Rugby Art Gallery and Museum
- Area 4: Sheep Street and High Street
- Area 5: Railway Terrace

### Area 1: North Street and Jubilee Gardens



Type	quantity	Price per unit	Total price.
Living Pillars	6	£3,174	£19044

Maintenance of living Pillars per annum( @ £84 per month) = £6048

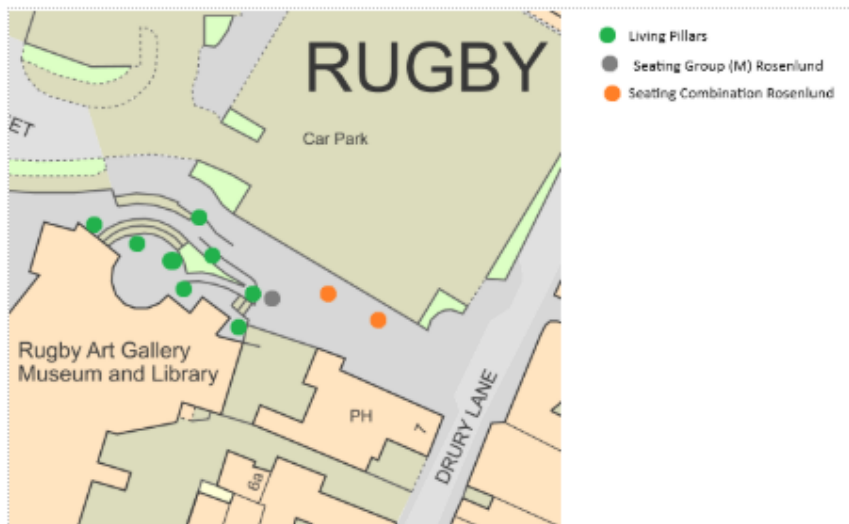
## Area 2: Market Place and Chapel Street



Type	quantity	Price per unit	Total price.
Living Pillars	20	£3,174	£63480

Maintenance of living Pillars per annum( @ £84 per month) = £20160

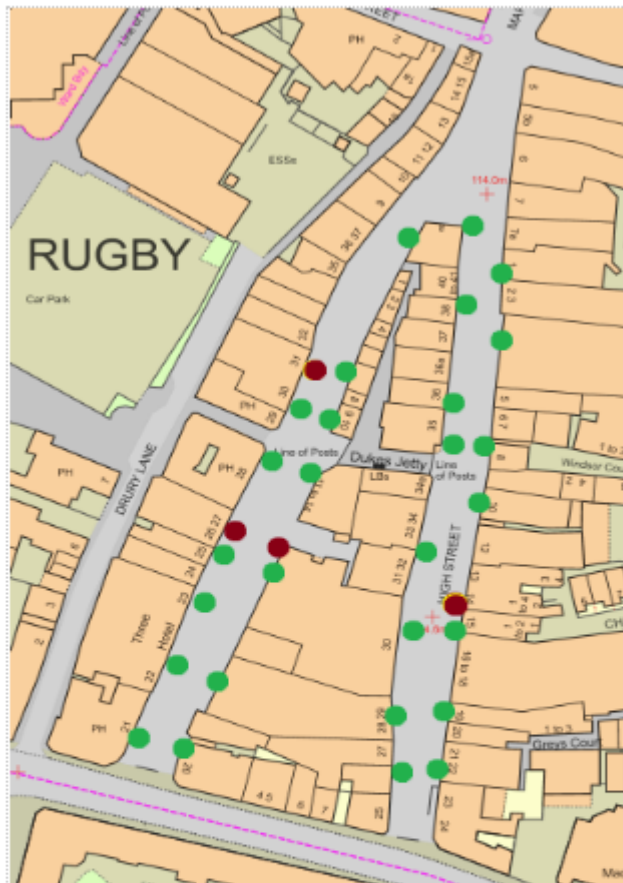
## Area 3: Rugby Art Gallery and Museum



Type	quantity	Price per unit	Total price.
Living Pillars	8	£3,174	£25392
HAGS Seating Group	1	£5787	£5787
HAGS seating combo	2	£3561	£7122

Maintenance of living Pillars per annum( @ £84 per month) = £8064

## Area 4: High Street and Sheep Street



- Living Pillars
- Planter and Seating Group Rosenlund

Type	quantity	Price per unit	Total price.
<u>Living Pillars</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>£3,174</u>	<u>£88872</u>
<u>HAGS Planter&amp; seating group</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>£4452</u>	<u>£13356</u>

Maintenance of living Pillars per annum( @ £84 per month) = £28224

## Area 5: Sheep Street and High Street



Type	quantity	Price per unit	Total price.
Living Pillars	3	£3,174	£9,522

Maintenance of living Pillars per annum( @ £84 per month) = £3024

5.2. The total cost of the public realm enhancement programme is £0.233 Capital and £0.066 Revenue and summarised in Table 1:

**Table One**

Type	Quantity	Price Rer Unit	Total Price.
Living Pillars	65	£3,174	£206,310
HAGS Seating Group	1	£5,787	£5,787
HAGS seating combo	2	£3,561	£7,122
HAGS Planter& seating group	3	£4,452	£13,356
<b>OVERALL CAPITAL COST</b>			<b>£232,575</b>
<b>MAINTENANCE FOR LIVING PILLARS (ONE YEAR)</b>			<b>£65,520</b>

## 6. CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION WORKING GROUPS

- 6.1 The programme of town centre public realm enhancements have been presented to both Climate Emergency Working Group and Town Centre Regeneration Working Group respectively.
- 6.2 The programme of supported projects has been confirmed through the working group membership, with additional infrastructure in Area 5:

Railway Terrace following comments received from the Town Centre Regeneration Working Group.

- 6.3 The Working Groups have unanimously supported the project and the proposal to deliver the project through the Town Centre Reserve.

## **7. PROJECT DELIVERY**

- 7.1 The programme of Town Centre public realm enhancements will be taken forward with immediate effect.
- 7.2 Indications from the specialist suppliers indicate installation during Quarter 4 of 2025/26. The seating/planter combinations will be installed once the relevant permissions from Warwickshire County Council are in place.
- 7.3 The Living Pillars is a registered trademark through specialist provider Living Pillars Limited and presents a unique product in the marketplace.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The Town Centre Strategy Reserve was created to fund elements to improve and regenerate the town centre and there is sufficient balance within the reserve to fund the overall total of £0.299m for public realm enhancements.
- 8.2. For accounting purposes, the total works of £0.299m have been split into capital £0.233m and revenue £0.066m.
- 8.3. The revenue budget is associated with the maintenance for the living pillars for one year. During his year the living pillars will be established as permanent assets within the town centre. As reported, some of the hanging baskets will be retained within the town centre in certain locations. Following the one year of maintenance the ongoing maintenance will be subsumed into the normal planting and maintenance budget.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The proposed town centre public realm enhancements continues the Council's delivery of the programme of public realm enhancements across the town centre and outlined opportunities that can support the regeneration of the town centre.
- 9.2 The introduction of the Living Pillar concept will add vital visual and biodiversity benefits whilst modernising the floral display opportunities throughout the town centre. The range of seating enhancements develops both visual and practical improvements, with seating that has a durable, comfortable and timeless design.
- 9.3 It is therefore recommended that the outlined public realm enhancements be approved from the Town Centre Reserve, as supported by the Town

Centre and Climate Emergency Working Groups respectively, to instigate positive change within the town centre.

## **10. OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

### Option 1

Agree to the spend and recommendations as set out in the report.

### Option 2

Not agree the spend and recommendations as set out in the report.

**Name of Meeting:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 1 December 2025

**Subject Matter:** Town Centre Public Realm Enhancements

**Originating Department:** Leisure and Wellbeing

**DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY**  **YES**  **NO**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Title of Document and Hyperlink</b>
	Public Realm Masterplan (2025) - <a href="#">0bea332c-1f99-d800-7759-82cfa91ef38c</a>
	Public Realm Priority Project - <a href="#">Public realm priority projects - Rugby Borough Council</a>
	Town Centre Traffic Regulation Order Project - <a href="#">Proposed changes to Traffic Regulation Order in Rugby town centre - Rugby Borough Council</a>

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A</b>

# Rugby Borough Council

## Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment

### CONTEXT

In 2019 the UK Parliament set a commitment in law to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Achieving this target will require considerable effort with public bodies, private sector organisations, the third sector and individuals working together to take action. Rugby Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, in doing so committed to:

- To move the Council's operations towards Carbon Neutrality by 2030.
- To establish action to tackle climate change as a key driver of all decision-making.
- To provide community leadership in reducing the impact of Climate Change.
- To take action to mitigate the impact of climate change on a Borough wide basis and beyond, through adaptation.

The Council's Corporate Strategy (2021-24) [link](#) sets ambitious outcomes in relation to Climate Change. These ambitions must now be progressed through the decisions which the Council makes.

It is therefore important that Rugby Borough Council gives due regard to climate change when making decisions. In the context of the Council's business, Climate Change includes carbon emissions, biodiversity, habitat loss and environmental destruction. When putting forward recommendations for decision, officers must assess how these recommendations are likely to influence our climate change commitments by completing the following Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment.

A copy of this Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment, including relevant data and information should be forwarded to your Chief Officer.

**If you require help, advice and support to complete the forms, please contact your Chief Officer.**

**SECTION 1: OVERVIEW**

<b>Portfolio and Service Area</b>	Leisure and Wellbeing
<b>Policy/Service/Change being assessed</b>	Introduction of Living Pillars and town centre seating with planting capacity
<b>Is this a new or existing Policy/Service/Change?</b>	New town centre infrastructure including the delivery of Living Pillars using town centre lamppost infrastructure
<b>If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment</b>	N/A
<b>Ward Specific Impacts</b>	Benn and Eastlands (Town Centre)
<b>Summary of assessment</b> Briefly summarise the policy/service/change and potential impacts.	<p>Installation new Living Pillars and town centre seating with planting options.</p> <p>A Living Pillar is described as an innovative way to introduce planting to street lighting columns, Solar powered with re-circulating irrigation, they are a sustainable solution to the challenges of planting in urban areas.</p> <p>Living Pillars seek to introduce biodiversity where urban areas have large pavement space prohibiting planting, forming biodiversity corridors. The installations can also encourage the use of insect and bird boxes and provide an important visual reminder for the importance of biodiversity.</p> <p>Living Pillars are solar powered and recycle the irrigation water to truly embrace sustainability with a patented fytotextile system supporting long term plant health, removing the requirement to replace planting in the Winter and Spring.</p> <p>All pillars are planted using a combination of hardy perennials and shrubs for all-year round interest with attractive foliage and colour.</p> <p>The proposed new seating systems have been carefully selected to provide flexible and adaptable seating solutions that are modern and aesthetically attractive for the outdoor environment. The seating combinations</p>

	enable additional ground level planting of perennial planting to increase the palette of urban planting with sustainable planting options.
<b>Completed By</b>	Tom Kittendorf
<b>Authorised By</b>	Tom Kittendorf
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	10/10/2025

## **SECTION 2: IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Climate Change and Environmental Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timescales
Energy usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None – solar powered technology utilised within the Living Pillar technology			
Fleet usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable Transport/Travel (customers and staff)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Living Pillars are a registered trademark product bringing biodiversity and sustainability considerations for the production of the product itself.			
Community leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Would demonstrate RBC's commitment to biodiversity, a living landscape approach and providing greening in an urban area.			

<b>Biodiversity and habitats</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Whilst there are limited biodiversity gains due to the scale of the project, it provides a vital visual message and opportunities for biodiversity impact. Living Pillars conducted an investigation to the ability of plants to absorb air pollution CO<sub>2</sub>, CO and NO<sub>2</sub> with long term effects showing a small decrease in temperatures and a reduction in CO and NO<sub>2</sub> levels using Living Pillar installations</p>			
<b>Adaptation/Mitigation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Impact on other providers/partners</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

### SECTION 3: REVIEW

Where a negative impact is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

<b>Review date</b>	<b>10/10/2025</b>
<b>Key points to be considered through review</b>	Maintenance of the Living Pillars has been considered within the report costings. Installation of the Living Pillars provides both a visual and real time impact for the Council's commitment to biodiversity and delivering key projects within the town centre regeneration masterplan.
<b>Person responsible for review</b>	<b>Tom Kittendorf</b>
<b>Authorised by</b>	<b>T.Kittendorf</b>