

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	Unitary Development Plan Advisory Panel Cabinet
Date:	10 th July 2003 15 th July 2003
Subject:	Draft Town Centre Development Strategy
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Chief Officer:	Chief Planning Officer
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Planning, Development and Housing and Best Value
Status:	Part 1 (Schedules A & B are listed under Part II of the Agenda by virtue of the fact that they contain exempt information, as defined under Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) in that they refer to the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by the authority under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services).
Ward:	Greenhill
Enclosures:	Appendix A - Draft Town Centre Development Strategy Appendix B - Harrow on the Hill Station Brief Appendix C - Schedule A (Part 2) (see paragraph 6.1) Appendix D - Schedule B (Part 2) (see paragraph 6.1) (Appendices A and B have been circulated in the Supporting Documents Pack)

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Town Centre Development Strategy (TCDS) is intended to set out the Council's vision for Harrow Town Centre for the next 10 years. While the Strategy will stand on its own, it has very close links with the UDP, the Town Centre Management Strategy, the New Harrow Project, the Economic Regeneration Strategy and the Cultural Strategy. There is now the opportunity to bring all of these strands together in a fully integrated way within an area specific framework.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the UDP Committee:

Consider the draft Town Centre Development Strategy and Harrow on the Hill Station Consultants Brief and refer any comments to Cabinet.

2.2 That the Cabinet:

Approve the draft of the Town Centre Development Strategy for consultation and approve the brief for the Harrow on the Hill Station site and the recommended funding sources.

REASON: To progress the Town Centre Development Strategy in accordance with the Council's Corporate objectives for the Environment & Economy.

3. Consultation with Ward Councillors

Ward Councillors and all other Councillors have been invited to Member workshops and feedback sessions throughout the formulation of the Strategy.

4. Relevant Previous Decisions

4.1 Cabinet 12th November 2002, Harrow on the Hill Station and Adjoining Land; Cabinet on 17th December 2002, in considering an item on Capital Investment Monitoring 2002-03, agreed spending for the Town Centre Development Strategy.

4.2 UDP Panel on 3rd February 2003 considered a report on Harrow on the Hill Station and adjoining land (Proposal Site 6).

5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

5.1 This report addresses the Council's stated priorities of enhancing the environment of the borough and developing a prosperous and sustainable economy.

6. Background Information

6.1 The Strategy highlights the critical need for the Council to take a strong leadership role in the future development of the Town Centre. The Town Centre plays a major role in providing services and employment for the Borough, as a centre for transport, leisure and commercial activity. In all respects the Town Centre is in a competitive situation and there are clear signs that its position is starting to slide. Unless this is addressed, across a broad range of fronts, there is the danger of decline, loss of status and a downward spiral of private and public investment.

To halt any potential decline, it is imperative that the needs of the Town Centre are seen holistically, and that initiatives to improve management and maintenance and renew the public infrastructure go hand in hand with provision of development opportunities. The Town Centre Development Strategy and its implementation is an important component but will only fully succeed if the complementary measures and initiatives are put in place.

The overarching aim of the TCDS is to 'transform Harrow Town centre into a thriving, distinctive and adaptable centre, which meets the long terms needs of the community.' This aim is to be secured though meeting 6 key objectives:-

- To promote activity in the centre that meets the needs of a modern economy and contributes to the overall aim of making Harrow special and distinctive.
- To ensure effective transport and pedestrian access to and within the centre.
- To make the centre look and feel attractive and safe.
- To celebrate the history, diversity and greenery of Harrow town centre.
- To make the centre feel more alive with people.
- To promote more community and civic activity in the centre.

The Strategy sets out measures to achieve each of these objectives, some through ongoing work already in progress, such as the Strategic Area Treatment submissions to Transport for London, some through planning policy development, some through Council service provision and improvement, and some through the facilitation of development on key sites.

The Council has a major role to play in the implementation of the Strategy. Central to taking the Strategy forward will be decisions on the future use of the Council's own landholdings, particularly the 2 car parks in Greenhill Way, Gayton Road car park and library, the car park in St John's Road, and, in association with other landowners, the land around Harrow on the Hill Station. Decisions on all of these sites, which can provide development and facilities to reinforce the strength of the Town Centre and funding through disposals, will be required over the next 12 – 18 months. These decisions will be heavily dependent upon and influenced by the strategic directions adopted by the Council for the Town Centre, as well as by decisions on the provision and location of its services.

The implementation of the strategy is predicated upon the Council's commitment to take a lead role throughout a programme of activities that include:-

- Immediate action to improve the appearance, cleanliness and safety of the centre.
- Promoting key sites that will unlock the potential of the Town Centre and entering into partnerships for their development.
- Using the Council's landholdings and activities to lead the way.
- Developing traffic management and access schemes, promoting public transport improvements and reviewing parking provision.
- Creating new and attractive pedestrian links between the centre and the surrounding residential areas, including Harrow on the Hill.
- Re-designing existing public spaces and identifying new public space opportunities.
- Major environmental improvement programmes.
- Taking a consistent view on the town centre across all Council strategies and initiatives.

To take this agenda for action forward, a raft of projects need to be advanced, many of which cannot be adequately resourced in-house, either because of the absence of the resources or the necessary expertise. The attached Schedule A sets out the list of projects together with the proposed agency, likely costs and sources of funding (for members only).

Members will see from the schedule that some of the projects have lead consultants appointed, while for others a recommended lead consultant is shown in brackets. In those instances where lead consultants are proposed, it is on the basis of work already undertaken for the Council in respect of the Town Centre. Apart from utilising well-

established expert knowledge, this will also have the effect of significantly shortening timescales to move ahead with this work.

7. **Consultation**

- 7.1 During the preparation of the Strategy there has been extensive consultation with members and stakeholders.
- 7.2 The next stage in the process will be to consult the public and a wider range of organisations on the draft strategy and the results will be reported back to UDP/Cabinet in the Autumn. It will be very important in this exercise to clearly demonstrate that the Council has both vision and commitment to the future role of Harrow Town Centre, and a primary aim of the consultation will be to seek endorsement to the objectives of the Strategy. While there are a range of specific proposals included in the Strategy, these will need further individual consultation in due course as more detailed plans come forward.
- 7.3 Depending on decisions on the New Harrow Project Roll-out, there could be an excellent opportunity to publicise the Council's intentions and commitment for the Town Centre with a combined exercise on both initiatives.

8. **Harrow on the Hill Station and Adjoining Land**

- 8.1 Members will be aware of the proposals for this site, as reported prior to the UDP Inquiry earlier this year. The main objector to the proposals, the Royal Mail as owner of the former Post Office in College Road, withdrew its objection prior to the Inquiry. While the views of the UDP Inspector will not be known until his report is available in late August/early September, in the absence of major objections the project can now be progressed.
- 8.2 For a site of this scale and strategic importance to the Town Centre, the development process will be complex. Fundamental to achieving a successful outcome will be a clear masterplan for the site, which is acceptable to all the major stakeholders. The attached brief is intended to start that process. It will provide the basis for consultant selection and subsequent masterplan preparation in conjunction with the stakeholders. The stakeholders have been invited to comment on the brief and their views will be available for the Cabinet meeting.

9. **Finance Observations**

- 9.1 Schedule A identifies actual and potential funding sources for the proposed projects, and Schedule B sets out the likely availability of funds for the sources identified. Members will note that assumptions have been made in respect of:-
- **S.106 Funds**: £220,000 is currently held for town centre works/projects. The Town Centre Forum has agreed to £100,000 being allocated for the development of strategies, and this is now committed with £10,000 for the TCDS and £91,000 for the development of the Traffic Model. While the use of these funds is a matter for the Council, further consultation with the Town Centre Forum would be appropriate before committing the remainder of the funds.
 - **Disposal Proceeds**: It is considered appropriate to defray the costs of preparing site development briefs and marketing against disposal proceeds.

- New Harrow Project Change Management Reserve (Revenue): This would be the appropriate funding source for a comprehensive review of the scale and location of the Council's own accommodation needs.

9.2 No assumptions have been made regarding potential contributions from third parties towards any of this work. The schedules illustrate that it can all be funded from the Council's own resources, but contributions will be sought from other landowners, service providers and the London Development Agency. However, it is considered that this work is of such importance to the Borough that the Council should take ownership and leadership roles in committing the work to go ahead.

10. Legal Observations

10.1 None.

11. Conclusion

11.1 The approval of the draft Strategy is an important step forward in realising the Council's ambitions for the future development of Harrow Town Centre. Following consultation, it will be reported back to UDP Committee and Cabinet for adoption. In the interim, it will be important to maintain momentum of the future development of the Harrow on the Hill Station site, and the agreement of the Brief will allow this to proceed. This will enable a masterplan for the site to be prepared, which should be ready for consideration by members in Spring 2004. Funds for work to proceed are available from existing sources.

12. Background Papers

12.1 Draft Town Centre Development Strategy
HUDP

13. Author

13.1 Graham Jones, Chief Planning Officer
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