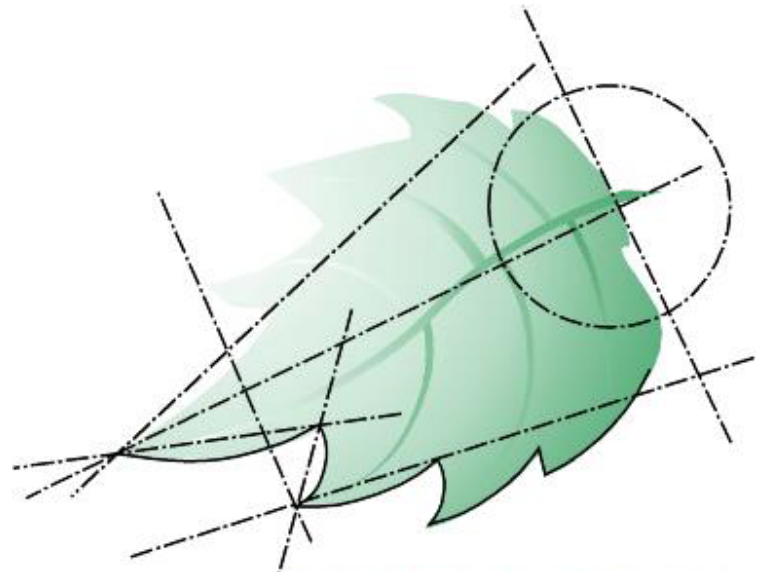


# The Future of Harrow Town Centre

**Client: London Borough of Harrow**



DMS CONSULTING

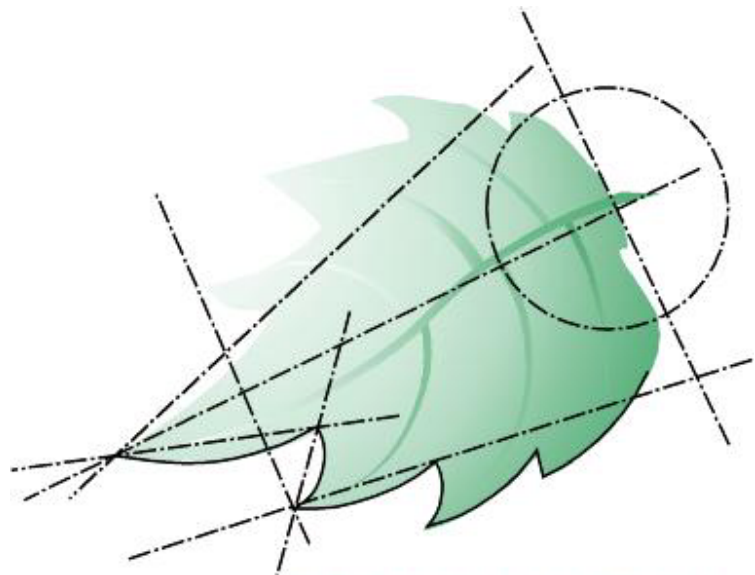
**Lesley Punter  
David Scott**

# The Future of Harrow Town Centre

Prepared by: **Lesley Punter**  
**David Scott**

**DMS Consulting**  
**77 Oxstalls Lane**  
**Longlevens**  
**Gloucester**  
**GL2 9HR**

**Tel: 01452 540180**  
**Fax: 01452 540185**  
**Email: [DMSbiz@aol.com](mailto:DMSbiz@aol.com)**



**DMS CONSULTING**

**May 2003**

# THE FUTURE OF HARROW TOWN CENTRE

Harrow Town Centre has many good features and is rightly considered a major and important London centre. It is compact with a wide range of shops and services, and superior public transport connections. Close to the town centre, there are some beautiful open spaces, including historic Harrow on the Hill.

Though Harrow has been and remains a relatively successful shopping centre, it must respond to rapid changes in services, lifestyles and economic activity so that it is fit for the future. At the same time, it needs to stay true to, and develop, its own character and identity. Places that will do well will be those that people remember for their distinctiveness as well as for the quality of their facilities.

The Council has carried out a number of surveys and studies of the centre over the past 4 years (See Appendix 1). From these, it is clear that Harrow Town Centre could provide more of what residents, visitors and business expect from a modern London centre. Action is needed to bring it up to date and provide the special ingredients that makes a place memorable and sparks affection.

The Council has been thinking about what Harrow Town Centre should become over the next 10 to 15 years. We are determined to take action that will create an attractive, interesting and successful town centre. We want to co-ordinate action that will ensure that the centre becomes more than the sum of its individual parts. Whilst the Council intends to lead this process, everyone with an interest in improving the centre needs to become involved and make a contribution. Having a long term plan will ensure that everyone is working towards the same idea of the future.

A Town Centre Management Strategy is currently being prepared and this highlights several problems that need to be tackled immediately to improve the maintenance, appearance and attractiveness of the centre. The Council has also prepared a Cultural Strategy that includes ideas designed to make all of the Borough, including the town centre, a vibrant and exciting place. There are other Council strategies and policies, which affect the future of the town centre. They are not repeated in this document but reference is made to some of them within the text. Appendix 2 lists other documents produced by the Council.

When considering the way forward for Harrow Town Centre, the Council has adopted the vision and approach to town centres in the government's Urban White Paper and the Mayor's Plan for London. This includes:

- Strong local leadership and partnership
- An integrated approach based on a clear vision
- Attention to good design and master-planning
- Encouraging mixed use development and high densities, especially near public transport hubs

The remainder of this document contains a snapshot of the character of Harrow Town Centre in 2003, then a vision and proposals that will help guide change in the centre, making it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have identified some immediate improvements but also some other initiatives that will take longer to carry out. The strategy includes plans that show key sites and illustrates some of the ideas outlined below.

For each of our proposals, we suggest how they could be achieved. In most cases, the Council's powers as landowner, provider of public services, and its planning and traffic management powers are crucial to the delivery of most of our ambitions.

We believe that people should be optimistic about the future of Harrow. Whilst there are challenges that need to be addressed, the town centre can be improved in a way that will make it attractive for residents, businesses, visitors and investors. These improvements will need to tackle the problems set out below.

Despite improvements in recent years (St. Ann's/St George's shopping centre) Harrow is not fulfilling its retail potential. The range of shops, particularly in the critical areas of fashion, clothing and shoes, is not as wide as one might expect in a centre serving a potential catchment in excess of 200,000 people. There are other centres that, because of their proximity, will always draw trade away from Harrow Town Centre, so in this strategy we propose action to encourage people to shop in Harrow.

The town centre environment is outdated, lacks quality and does not present a particularly distinctive or strong identity. The town centre is relatively compact and this could be a major advantage in the competition with other centres. Unfortunately, several important and heavily used pedestrian routes cross roads that have moderate to high flows of traffic. Traffic is still using parts of the town centre which are from a business, retailing and pedestrian point of view, highly sensitive. The presence of cars detracts from what

should be a relaxed atmosphere and prevents Harrow from offering the sort of experience that people generally look for in a modern shopping centre.

Harrow is very fortunate to have rail, tube and bus stations so close to the centre and very close to each other. Unfortunately, these advantages are undermined because the route between the bus station and the tube/rail station is not attractive. It is also difficult for buses to get to the bus station and within the station itself space is tight. The pedestrian route between the stations and the shops on the other side of College Road gives priority to vehicles rather than the very high numbers of people on foot wanting to cross the road.

Experience has shown that Harrow centre is not attractive to major large office employers. Its employment strengths in future would seem to derive from small, local and new businesses and perhaps public sector or institutional type services. The centre has a wide and interesting range of small and independent retailers and businesses that already make an important contribution to the vitality and economy of the centre. These could provide a strong base from which to grow.

Some of the strengths that the centre does have, such as Harrow's history and the beautiful greens spaces nearby, provide opportunities for changing the way people regard the town centre. The town centre could also become a more vibrant centre, especially in the evenings and on weekends, if the growing numbers of people living in the centre are catered for. A larger resident population would also start to give the centre a positive image in the minds of investors and businesses.

The strengths and possibilities that the centre possesses override its weaknesses and the threats it faces. We believe that Harrow Town Centre could become much more attractive to a wider range of activities and uses than at present and become a dynamic and interesting place, rightly regarded as one of the major centres in London.

## **HARROW TOWN CENTRE IN THE FUTURE**

To ensure that Harrow Town Centre stays a major London centre, this strategy needs to address its agreed shortcomings, as well as looking ahead to identify what will keep it healthy in the future.

The **aim** of this strategy is to set out a path that will:

**Transform Harrow Town Centre into a thriving, distinctive and adaptable centre, which meets the long-term needs of the community.**

To meet this aim, which we will try to achieve in 5 to 10 years, the Council has identified 6 key objectives.

**Objectives 1,2 & 3** deal with concerns about the lack of vitality and interest in the centre and are based on the evidence gathered in the surveys and studies undertaken over the past few years.

**Objectives 4,5 & 6** are designed to give Harrow Town Centre a distinct identity and sense of place.

**Objective 1: To promote diverse activity in the centre that meets the needs of a modern economy and contributes to the overall aim of making Harrow special and distinctive.**

Town centres are places where the social and economic activities of a community come together, and they need to constantly evolve to meet external pressures. Changes in economic activity, such as the proliferation of evening leisure facilities, have a significant impact on these aspects of life. Modern centres should try to provide for this ever-changing range of activity and harness these forces without harming their character. For Harrow town centre to be as responsive as possible, the Council needs to continually review its policies and programmes.

Our proposals provide a clear vision of what the Council wants for the centre without putting unnecessary barriers or constraints in the way of economic change.

To achieve **Objective 1** we will take the following actions:

- Improving the range and quality of shops by:

Holding marketing events to raise the profile of Harrow with new retailers, particularly in the area of fashion and the better quality High Street names.

In partnership with the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, helping local businesses that fill gaps and add variety and character to trade successfully in the centre.

Ensuring that new developments include space suitable for a range of retailers, including local independent businesses.

Raising the standard of new shopping developments and shopfronts through planning policies, design guidance and development control.

- Increasing the variety of businesses on offer in the centre by:

Using Council owned land to promote variety and mixed use.

By focusing relevant Council strategies on business advice and support that addresses opportunities and identifies barriers to relocation or expansion of suitable small local businesses in the town centre.

Collecting regular up to date information about changing demand, and using this information to actively seek out new town centre partners, investors, businesses and activities.

Regularly reviewing planning policy to assess its effectiveness, developing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Master Plans to set out more detailed objectives for particular parts of the centre.

- Promoting and identifying the areas nearest the station to take advantage of their location in order to attract a variety of modern businesses by:

Preparing a Master Plan setting out a comprehensive approach to redevelopment in the station area, indicating appropriate design, access, uses and densities.

- Promoting residential development to increase the customer base in the centre by:

Identifying suitable housing locations, and through regular reviews of planning policy, and SPG.

Releasing Council owned sites in the centre for housing or for mixed-use schemes that include a housing element.

Taking a sympathetic approach towards proposals to change business uses to housing, particularly where the commercial use is causing environmental problems.

- Providing new dwellings that are flexible enough to accommodate the requirements of working from home and related changes in lifestyle by:

Encouraging developers to include purpose designed home working facilities in new housing developments.

Using Harrow's housing strategy and SPG.

- Ensuring the town centre provides affordable housing, including housing for key workers by:

Regular assessments of housing need and key worker requirements, using partnerships, housing and planning powers.



- Ensuring that there are convenient facilities for town centre residents and workers such as food shops and restaurants, education and health facilities by:

Using planning powers, town centre surveys and through developing partnerships with other public bodies such as health authorities, the College and the University of Westminster.

- Encouraging the expansion of the evening economy to support modern leisure activity by:

Identifying suitable locations, regular reviews of planning policy, SPG, and by adapting related town centre access, licensing and management regimes.

- Providing childcare facilities for town centre residents, visitors and/or employees by:

Including such facilities in the new library and council service centre (See Site 2 on Plan 1) and encouraging developers to include them in other new developments.

Co-operating with other agencies to jointly provide such facilities and through the Council's roles as service provider and planning authority.

## **Objective 2: To ensure effective transport and pedestrian access to and within the centre.**

The Council is aware that people judge whether a centre is good or bad by how easy it is to get to, whether they are driving, walking, taking public transport or on scooters, motorbikes or cycles. They also like to have routes that are easy to follow within the centre once they arrive. Therefore, it is important to make best use of transport facilities and the road space that leads to and around the centre. However, there will be conflict between the needs of different sorts of vehicles and between drivers and those on foot or cycle. Choices will need to be made about access priorities. (Objective 3 deals with access for disabled people)

Current Council policies identify a general commitment to reroute through traffic away from sensitive parts of the central area and set out public parking priorities. We are also developing ideas for environmental and traffic improvements in the centre, using funds from Transport for London.

To achieve **Objective 2** we will take the following actions:

- Agreeing priorities for pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to the centre and for use of the streets in the centre by:

Preparing a Town Centre Access Plan covering traffic management, access and parking that would help secure the aims of this strategy and complement the LTP, UDP and the Town Centre Management Strategy.

- Making better use of existing road space in and around the centre by:

Using traffic management systems and features, cycle routes, taxi ranks, bus stop locations, etc. more effectively to implement the Town Centre Access Plan.

- Reviewing car parking priorities, to make sure parking is in the right places to meet changing needs and that the centre has charging regimes that reflect the objectives of this strategy by:

Re-assessing parking provision in the centre, using Council's powers as planning authority and landowner/car park manager and partnerships with the private car park operators and other stakeholders including the owners of the St Ann's and St George's shopping centres.

- Maintaining and improving public transport access to the centre by:

Lobbying to improve the range and quality of public transport services provided at Harrow on the Hill station.

Building a partnership with Transport for London, the Strategic Rail Authority, government, operators and relevant stakeholders to deliver the Town Centre Access Plan.

- Improving station facilities and access to and from Harrow on the Hill station by:

Including the station in the Master Plan referred to under Objective 1 and through partnership with rail and bus operating companies, adjacent landowners, Transport for London, Strategic Rail Authority and the government.

- Integrating the bus station with Harrow on Hill rail/tube station to create a modern European standard transport hub by:

Carrying out short-term improvements to bus access through highway powers.

Considering bus station location and access as part of the Town Centre Access Plan and also dealing with these issues in the Master Plan for the Station area.

- Making pedestrian links to the surrounding residential areas and entrances into the centre easier and more attractive by:

Providing more pedestrian friendly crossings and making existing footways into the centre clearly signed, properly lit and free of obstructions such as unnecessary street furniture.

- Make pedestrian routes within the centre safe, attractive and convenient by:

Carrying out a program of environmental improvements to enhance the appearance and comfort of areas in Station Road, College Road and St Ann's Road giving priority to the needs of pedestrians. These improvements could include lighting, trees, banners/flags and space for cultural events, outdoor performances and art exhibitions. These improvements could also include a lightweight transparent canopy from St Ann's to Debenhams and towards the new library complex so people can enjoy shopping and using this area with the some protection when the weather is poor. As well as linking parts of the town centre, a covered walkway will help Harrow to compete with nearby centres and provide a feature that, with high quality design, will help to give Harrow a unique identity.

We are already working to secure a new pedestrian route between Harrow on the Hill over the railway lines on a new bridge structure to the town centre. We will also work with landowners around College Road and the service yard to Marks and Spencer off Havelock Place to create a new route from College Road to St Ann's Road for pedestrians.

### **Objective 3: To make the centre look and feel attractive and safe**

Once in a centre, people need to be able to enjoy their surroundings and get around without difficulty, feeling safe and comfortable, no matter what time of day or night. They enjoy attractive buildings and surroundings. They also expect the same level of cleanliness generally found in enclosed shopping malls. Town centres also need to be attractive and accessible for disabled people. Some of these are matters for continuous assessment and improvement, carefully coordinated across services and led by the Town Centre Forum. However, some more strategic ideas for improvement are listed below.

To achieve **Objective 3**, we will take the following actions:

- Adopting a long-term strategy for physical change and improvements in the centre by:

Producing a program of improvements to public spaces based on the ideas in the strategy and illustrated in Plan 2. This Public Spaces Plan will guide future environmental improvements so that a series of attractive and distinctive public spaces are created. It will also identify the shape and size of new town centre developments, enhance the best features of the centre, set the context for site specific Master Plans and complement the Town Centre Access Plan. We will be consulting the public, businesses, retailers and others with an interest in the town centre about this programme of improvements.

Preparing SPG to give weight to the Public Spaces Plan.

- Improving the quality of new development by:

Using development control powers and where the Council owns land and sells it for development, we will require a high standard of design to be achieved as part of the contract of sale.

Ensuring that new Council buildings such as the new library complex achieve a very high standard of architectural quality.

- Making the bus stops, bus station and Harrow on the Hill station more comfortable and secure by:

Making immediate improvements to the facilities for the disabled, improved street furniture, lighting, CCTV, policing, through the Town Centre Management Strategy in partnership with relevant operators and in consultation with users.

Setting up a partnership with the public transport agencies and others that will draw up a long-term strategy to improve these public transport facilities and the links between them, based on the Town Centre Access Plan.

- Improving the comfort and safety of pedestrians when in the vicinity of traffic and cycle routes by:

Improving road safety standards by means of the Town Centre Access Plan.

Recognising that the need for pedestrian safety and convenience should have the highest priority in some parts of the town centre.

- Ensuring the disabled, the elderly and those using pushchairs find the centre easy to use by:

Including mobility features in any environmental improvement schemes, new public spaces, road crossing points and footpath improvements.

Rearranging street furniture from selected locations to aid mobility.

Ensuring that directional signs and visitor information meets the needs of disabled people.

In partnership with the Town Centre Forum, continuing to support and publicise Shopmobility.

- Ensuring that town centre spaces are secure by design, well lit and adequately policed by:

Incorporating these considerations into the design or improvement of public areas using planning and highway powers.

Improving street lighting.

In partnership with the Town Centre Forum, increasing membership of the Retailers Radio Link scheme.

Improving the coverage and effectiveness of CCTV system.

- Increasing the amount and quality of greenery in the centre and improving access to nearby green spaces by:

Including the planting of trees and other landscaping suitable for town centres as one of the most important parts of the Public Spaces Plan described above.

Creating a new pedestrian route between Harrow on the Hill and College Road that will give access to this unique amenity and reinforce Harrow's reputation as the "Green Borough".

One of the most common grumbles about modern shopping centres is that they tend to be very similar and, as a result, uninteresting. People value places that are different and offer a range of interesting experiences. To maintain its role into the future, Harrow Town Centre needs to be lively and interesting with a character of its own.

It is more straightforward to identify the ways to make Harrow economically successful than to find ways to make it an interesting and distinctive place. The following 3 objectives are aimed at developing a centre that is lively and unique. We will use the feedback on this strategy to develop our current ideas for making the centre more distinctive.

#### **Objective 4: To celebrate the history, diversity and greenery of Harrow in the centre.**

The current centre contains little sense of the history and variety of Harrow despite the significant historical associations and cultural diversity that the Borough has. In addition, the green areas around the centre that give the Borough much of its identity are hardly visible from within the centre and are difficult to get to. These are important and distinctive characteristics that should be an integral part of the experience of using Harrow town centre, but are not, at present.

To achieve **Objective 4** we will take the following actions:

- Enhancing existing town centre features that add local distinctiveness by:

Identifying the most important and valued features, and incorporating them into the program of environmental improvements in the Public Space Plan so that they have an attractive setting that enhances the contribution they make to the street scene. This will be done in consultation with residents and others.

Including historic and/or culturally diverse themes in the design of public spaces, street furniture, banners and in publicity materials.

Using the skills of artists to help create distinctive features in the centre that interpret the life and history of Harrow in a unique and attractive fashion. We will co-ordinate this initiative with our “Arts in Public Places” programme.

- Making more of the reputation and physical presence of Harrow on the Hill by:

Using “The Hill” symbolically in communication strategies and publicity material.

Working to create a new pedestrian route between the town centre and “The Hill” so that its unique qualities enhance the town centre more directly.



- Providing opportunities to significantly enhance and extend the amount of trees and plants in the centre by:

Identifying the “green” reputation of Harrow as something that should play a major part in the future of the centre and reflecting this priority in the Public Spaces Plan.

Using landscaping to identify the new pedestrian routes we will be creating.

- Creating or identifying focal points for meeting and outdoor activity in the centre by:

Including the creation and landscaping of focal points in the Public Spaces Plan.

Encouraging developers to include space for activity, exhibitions and cultural events in new developments.

## **Objective 5: To make the centre feel more alive with people**

People have gathered in town centres and markets for centuries. Though most visits have a purpose, they are also part of the social fabric that is part of our culture. However, centres are not attractive for people to visit if they appear empty and unused. This is particularly true after dark.

To achieve **Objective 5** we will take the following actions:

- Encouraging more varied activity in the centre by:

Promoting more diverse land uses in the centre as outlined under Objective 1, and using partnerships and the Town Centre Management Strategy.

- Promoting facilities and uses that operate beyond current town centre opening hours by:

Considering the future of Council services in the town centre, for example, the role of a new library, and through the mechanisms identified under Objective 1 and above.

- Letting more activity spill into public spaces by:

Identifying appropriate locations for outdoor events and entertainment and through the Town Centre Management Strategy under highway and licensing powers.

Protecting the future of market activity in the centre by providing purpose designed spaces for market traders.

- Making the centre a good place to live for existing and future town centre residents by:

Making it attractive and secure as described under Objective 4, using mechanisms described under Objective 1 to improve its facilities and services, and by protecting and improving the excellent public transport access at Harrow on the Hill station

**Objective 6: To promote more community and civic activity in the centre.**

The Council has an important role to play in encouraging events and community activity in the centre. Community and civic-based events or facilities can make Harrow Town Centre distinct from any other shopping centre and will add to the diversity and liveliness of the centre.

Council services can often be a catalyst for the activities of other agencies or groups. They also attract a large number of people. It is therefore important to consider the benefits of a town centre location that is accessible to many customers when considering how best to provide Council services and information.

To achieve **Objective 6** we will take the following actions:

- Using Council land and other resources to provide new or relocated local authority services in the centre by:

Using the council owned site next to Debenhams to build a new library, Council Service and Information Point and flexible spaces that can be used for meetings, small performances/recitals and exhibitions.

- Encouraging other public sector activity in the centre by:

Working in partnership with other public sector agencies, such as Harrow College, the University of Westminster and health organisations to take advantage of the benefits of integrating public sector activity in the town centre. Priority will be given to services that draw users from a wide catchment and could benefit from a central location near public transport.

- Encouraging cultural activity by:

Organising more cultural and civic activities to take place in public spaces and allowing groups to use the town centre for a wide range of events.

Providing an events “toolkit” designed to give encouragement and guidance to community groups wishing to arrange events.

Developing the distinctiveness and profile of the Harrow Arts Festival and Words Live Literature Festival.

Using the areas created by the Public Spaces Plan for outdoor activities of a civic or cultural nature, such as temporary or permanent art installations, performance, community celebrations and play facilities.

## KEY SITES

There are several areas of land that can play a key role in transforming Harrow Town Centre and can be developed in a way that will help to achieve the objectives of this strategy. They are shown on Plan 1 and are as follows:

*Site 1) North side of Greenhill Way (Council owned)*

Currently used as a surface car park and advertising hoardings, this site should be used for housing.

*Site 2) Adjacent to Debenhams, Greenhill Way (Council owned)*

Currently used as a surface car park and for an outdoor market. A well designed building on this site would improve the appearance of the area and could provide space for library facilities, public meeting rooms capable of accommodating small recitals/ performances and exhibitions and a Service and Information point for Council services and/or for other organisations such as the College and University. With careful design car parking could be retained in the development. The market would need to be relocated, perhaps to a more central location in the pedestrianised area.

*Site 3) Gayton Road Library (Council owned)*

Once the library is relocated next to Debenhams, this site could be used for housing.

*Site 4) St John's Road (Council owned)*

Currently used as a surface car park, this site could be used as a restaurant/bar and associated with environmental improvements to the adjacent part of St John's Road to create a new public space.

*Site 5) Harrow on the Hill Station*

This area is very well suited to a mixture of uses that would benefit from its superb location on the edge of the present shopping core of the town centre and immediately next to the excellent rail, tube and bus connections. Whilst the development of this site will be a long-term process, it offers a chance to create a new urban quarter that could include housing, offices, retail, leisure and educational uses and so become a very vibrant and interesting addition to Harrow. It also offers a chance to connect the beautiful landscape of Harrow on the Hill to the central area by building over the rail and tube lines so that one of Harrow's most famous and prized assets can directly enhance the centre.

*Site 6) Gayton Road Car Park (Council owned)*

Currently used as a surface car park, this site could be used wholly or in part for housing depending on the results of the review of parking provision.

*Site 7) Havelock Place*

This area is dominated by a very large open area used by lorries to deliver to goods to nearby shops. The only route to this service yard is from Havelock Place from Greenhill Way. This route cuts the pedestrian area in St Ann's Road in two and significantly reduces pedestrian safety and the quality of the shopping environment.

If this area including property fronting College Road was redeveloped to provide some additional retailing, housing and other town centre uses this would create the opportunity to provide an alternative route for the delivery of goods from College Road. Havelock Place could then be pedestrianised where it crosses St Ann's Road so pedestrian flows would no longer be interrupted and the overall attractiveness of the shopping area would be greatly improved. A new public space could be created at the junction of St Ann's Road and Havelock Place and a second small space in the vicinity of College Road.

Plan 2 shows how, together with other initiatives, the development of these sites will shape the centre of Harrow for the better.

## IMMEDIATE ACTION

The transformation of Harrow centre we are proposing is ambitious and will of course take some time to complete. However, there are things that can be done immediately to improve things. These include:

- Improved street cleaning.
- Remove fly posters and graffiti.
- Improve street lighting.
- Remove damaged and unused street furniture including the disused electronic advertising board in St Ann's Road.
- Remove raised brick flower planters that mask shopfronts and inconvenience pedestrians (particularly the disabled).
- Improve pedestrian crossing from Harrow on the Hill Station to St Ann's Centre across College Road.
- Prosecute unlicensed street traders.
- Encourage professional street entertainers.
- Provide some drop off/pick up parking spaces for shoppers limited to very short stay.
- Provide designated unloading/loading bays for businesses in Station Road.
- Improve car parking signing.
- Enforce existing traffic restrictions in Station Road to stop "rat running".
- Improve CCTV and advertise its benefits.
- Promote and advertise Shopmobility.
- Invite retailers, restaurant chains and businesses without premises in Harrow to a marketing event.
- Introduce market stalls or themed markets into pedestrianised areas.

## SUMMARY

To modernise Harrow town centre and transform its image in line with this strategy, the Council is committed to taking the leading role. This involves a programme of activity that includes:

- 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 development partnerships where appropriate
- Extending the range of uses and activities in the centre, including more civic, cultural and leisure facilities.
- Increasing the number of people living in the centre
- Using Council land and activity to lead the way
- Developing town centre traffic management and access schemes and reviewing car parking provision
- Creating new and attractive pedestrian links between the centre, the surrounding residential areas and Harrow on the Hill
- Redesigning existing and identifying new public spaces in the centre
- Major environmental improvements
- Ensuring other strategies are working to the same objectives, especially the UDP, Local Transport Plan, Town Centre Management and Cultural Strategies.



## **NEXT STEPS**

Once the strategy is agreed, a plan of action will be prepared to implement it and co-ordinate everyone's efforts. This Action Plan will be divided into short; medium and long term initiatives and cross-refer to other documents such as the Unitary Development Plan and the Town Centre Management, Transport, Cultural and Regeneration strategies.

So that we can see what difference we are making we will be monitoring what progress we make on the 6 objectives. We will be regularly measuring things like the economic health of the town centre; vacancy rates and also asking residents and businesses for their views on the changes that are made.

We are pausing now to ask whether we are on the right path. Some of our ideas will bring important changes to the town centre and the Council wants to give people the opportunity to express their opinions before starting on some of the bigger projects. We have set out some questions about the town centre in Appendix 4 but would welcome general comments as well.