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Meeting:	Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel (WRAP)
Date:	19 th January 2005
Subject:	Wealdstone Vitality Study
Responsible Officer:	Director of Strategic Planning
Contact Officer:	Senior Professional – Strategic Planning
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan, Portfolio Holder for Communications
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

Recommendations to be made as to how the accompanying Vitality Study is implemented.

Reason for report

To provide initial officer comment on the final recommendations from Bonewells and SPA the consultants employed to write the Wealdstone Vitality Report.

Benefits

It will enable town centre work to be considered as part of the new Neighbourhood Renewal work.

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Cost of Proposals

Proposed actions have not been costed – this will need to happen at a later stage for the Neighbourhood Renewal pilot project.

Risks

1. Complications of dealing with new recommendations at the same time as moving into a new wider Neighbourhood Renewal programme which covers the whole of the two wards, not just the town centre.
2. Expectations may be raised by the report that cannot be delivered because of resource and or other issues.

Implications if recommendations rejected

Vitality report does not get taken forward.

Section 2: Report

Brief History

A group of consultants lead by Bone Wells Associates were commissioned by the Urban Living strategic director in summer 2005. The final report was produced in December 2005.

The consultants' brief was to "advise on what is to be done next to arrest Wealdstone's decline and better its identity and appeal to local residents". This was to include:

- Evaluating previous studies
- Updating vitality profile for town centre
- Evaluating actions taken so far.

The report advises that the changes to experienced in Wealdstone to have been experienced by many small town centres and suburban district centres. It results from the trend for the High Street multiples to gravitate towards larger centres.

It also states that there are local circumstances, which exacerbate the competitive vulnerability of Wealdstone town centre:

- The railway makes a physical barrier
- The number of residents in the two wards i.e. not sufficient
- The proximity of Harrow town centre
- The decline in the numbers employed in manufacturing nearby and so a further decline in the number of potential shoppers

The report concludes that the centre in planning terms should be viewed as a local centre rather than district centre and makes some positive comments about the centre: -

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- It has many independent shops, many of these run by BME business people
- It offers value shopping and so caters for lower income groups
- Vacancy rates are not very high and not concentrated in particular parts of the centre
- Although there is little evidence of investment in retail property, retailers have clearly adapted their businesses to meet the changing market conditions
- The centre offers a number of specialist shops
- It has also become a busy centre for professional and business services especially at the Northern end.

The report suggests that the centre concentrates on ensuring that the local communities are well served by ensuring that there is:-

- Value for money
- Safety for all
- High accessibility to/within the centre by all modes
- A Congenial experience for all users, including high environmental quality
- A Viable operating conditions for all kinds of business
- A good choice of shops and services
- Inclusion of all sections of the community in the benefits of the regenerated centre.

To do this by:-

- Improving the spending power that is available to the centre
- Improving and making easier access into the centre for shoppers
- Improving the public realm of the centre, its attraction, ease of movement and its maintenance.

The report then goes on to make a long list of recommendations. However as the work in Wealdstone and Marlborough wards is moving into Neighbourhood Renewal rather than town centre work, there was concern that this report's recommendations could be lost.

Appendix 1 provides initial comment on the report recommendations wherever possible.

It is recommended that WRAP members use this information to identify priority actions that they can recommend that the Neighbourhood Forum, once established takes forward as part of its Neighbourhood Renewal action plan.

Consultation

N/a

Financial Implications

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None at this stage. Firm recommendations will need to be costed at a later date in order for them to be considered as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal scheme.

Legal Implications

Any alterations to the Council's Local Development Scheme or the introduction of any additional Local Development Documents would be subject to the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

Equality Impact

The work undertaken for Neighbourhood Renewal will help to improve the quality of life for those living in Wealdstone and Marlborough wards so that they are similar to other wards in the borough. This will therefore impact on the equality agenda also.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

Various actions mentioned e.g. town centre management if taken forward will have positive benefits in terms of reduction of fear of crime and crime itself.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Cabinet report 10th November Neighbourhood Renewal Transition Plan