

16 February 2016

Policy, Finance and Resources

Brentwood Town Centre Action Plan

Report of: *Gordon Glenday*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, "Vision for Brentwood" highlights the need to develop a Town Centre Action Plan to link key development opportunities, including William Hunter Way. The Action Plan should also take into account the wider themes of quality of design, community/landowner engagement, heritage, economy, and the deliverability of the overall plan.

1.2 In order to bring forward a high quality Action Plan for the Borough's major town centre, it is proposed to appoint high quality planning and development consultants to help officers prepare the plan. To make sure the Council gets the right Plan and the best value for money, it has been agreed to work with one of the country's leading experts in this field, the Design Council, to prepare a high quality tender brief for the work. This brief will be used to procure the consultancy for the Brentwood Town Centre Action Plan. A timeline for taking this forward has now been proposed to take the Action Plan forward as a key Council priority (see Table 1).

2. Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

2.1 Agrees the proposed timeline for the preparation of the Brentwood Town Centre Action Plan outlined in Table 1 of this report.

2.2 Agrees to establish a cross-party working group to focus on the design and requirements for the Town Centre Action Plan. This group will comprise 4 Conservatives, 2 Lib Dems and 1 Labour. The group will be chaired by Cllr John Kerlake.

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Although there have been consultation exercises in the past relating to specific sites in the town centre, such as William Hunter way, that Administration considers it more appropriate to develop a comprehensive Action Plan for the whole of Brentwood Town Centre.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Action Plan will be to create a robust strategy for environmental, economic and social improvements to the town centre. To take this forward, the Council needs to begin by agreeing a clear and detailed brief for the preparation of the Action Plan. To do this, the Design Council, widely acknowledged as national experts in this field, will help prepare the brief.
- 3.3 Once the brief is agreed, it is proposed to go out to tender to appoint planning and development consultants to take forward the preparation of a Brentwood Town Centre Action Plan. A proposed timetable for the appointment of consultants and the subsequent preparation of the Plan is outlined in Table 1 of this report.
- 3.4 By getting additional capacity and expertise on board to help develop the brief and the final Action Plan, the Council can be assured that it will get value for money and a suitably robust and deliverable strategy for the Brentwood Town Centre to shape its development over the next 10 years.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 In taking forward a comprehensive Action Plan for Brentwood Town Centre, there is a need to appoint external consultants with capacity and expertise in planning and property development. To make sure the most cost effective consultants are appointed, a clear and detailed planning brief needs to be prepared so that the final Action Plan reflects exactly what is needed for Brentwood Town Centre.
- 4.2 By working in partnership with the Design Council, the Council will be assured to get a tender brief that will reflect its corporate ambitions for the preparation of the final Action Plan. A proposed timetable for the preparation of the initial tender brief and the subsequent Action Plan are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Indicative Timelines (subject to input of the Design Council and the Consultants to be appointed):

1. Appointment of Design Council to help prepare brief– started Jan 2016
2. Inception Meeting and Site Walkabout with Design Council – completed Jan 2016
3. Strategic Visioning Workshop (key members and officers) – Feb 2016
4. Detailed brief development workshop and public engagement (as stage 3 above plus key landowners/stakeholders) – March 2016
5. Send agreed brief to market/consultancies to prepare bids – April 2016
6. Consideration of Final Briefs/interview consultants – May/June 2016
7. Appoint Consultancy to prepare Action Plan – June 2016
8. Internal Member/officer review and discussion - October/November 2016
9. Committee approval of Action Plan – December 2016

Additional stages for adoption of Action Plan as statutory document

10. Formal Public consultation on Action Plan (statutory process) – Jan/Feb 2017
11. Amend Plan in light of comments/Local Plan issues – March/June
12. Adopt Action Plan as a statutory document e.g. Supplementary Planning Document of Local Plan – June/July 2017 (this needs to align with Local Plan process).

- 4.3 Although the Action may not be agreed formally by the Council until December 2016, planning decisions in the town centre can still be informed by the draft Action Plan as it progresses towards its final approval. By having the Action Plan process up and running, it will also highlight to landowners and developers in the town centre that the Council regards this area as a key opportunity for which the highest standards of development will be expected. Officers will also be in a stronger negotiating position when considering planning applications.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The future planning of Brentwood Town Centre requires a holistic approach to its development to maximise the benefit for local residents and businesses. To do this, the Council needs to appoint experienced planning and development consultants to help undertake this task. To make sure that the best consultants are appointed, a clear and detailed tender brief needs to be prepared to procure this work. By engaging the Design Council in this process, the Council will ensure that the initial tender brief and consultants subsequently appointed to develop the Action Plan will be of the highest calibre.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The preparation of the tender brief will include the setting up of workshops with members, officers, local residents and key stakeholders to make sure that the brief reflects the needs and aspirations of the community and land owners. Once consultants are appointed to prepare the Brentwood Town Centre Action Plan, there will be a series of consultation events to inform the final Action Plan. If it is agreed that the final Action Plan should form part of the statutory Local Plan, further consultation will be needed as outlined in stages 9 – 12 in Table 1.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 There is a specific reference to the need for an Action Plan for Brentwood Town Centre in the Corporate Plan “Vision for Brentwood 2016 – 2019. Within the section on Economic Development, there is a clear commitment to developing a Town Centre Action Plan to better link key development opportunities including William Hunter Way.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 8.1 The development of an Action Plan will contribute to the wider improvements and economic viability of Brentwood Town Centre. The costs of the action plan will be met from the money set aside for the William Hunter Way development.

Legal Implications

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- 7.2 This report relates to an ongoing process. As such, at this stage there are no legal implications.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

7.3 No other implications are identified.

8 Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

8.1 None.

9 Appendices to this report

9.1 None.

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