

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16th March 2009

Agenda item:

Wards: Merton Park, St Helier, Ravensbury, Cannon Hill, Lower Morden

Subject: Regeneration of Morden Town Centre

Lead officer: Sarah Tanburn, Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Diane Neil-Mills, Member for Regeneration

Forward Plan reference number: 721

Contact officer: Paul McGarry, Manager, Physical Regeneration

Recommendations:

- A. Cabinet note the responses to the moreMorden draft vision consultation, undertaken in September 2008.
 - B. Cabinet endorse the strategic vision for Morden.
 - C. Cabinet agrees to consult on three framework options (development scenarios) for Morden commencing in July 2009.
 - D. Cabinet note the options available to the Council to deliver regeneration in Morden and that the project group will come back to Cabinet in late 2009 with more detailed advice on these options.
 - E. Cabinet note the implications of the Economic Development Strategy (also presented to this Cabinet meeting) in the context of regenerating Morden.
 - F. Cabinet endorse the programme of complementary initiatives.
 - G. Cabinet note the next stages of the moreMorden project.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report considers the future regeneration of Morden Town Centre, following on from the moreMorden draft vision consultation in September 2008. It reports the outcome of the consultation, together with discussions with key stakeholders.
- 1.2. The report also proposes a strategy both to enhance and protect the current economic base and to position Morden for future investment through a series of complementary initiatives.
- 1.3. Linkages between the moreMorden project and Merton's emerging Economic Development Strategy are noted, highlighting the challenges facing Morden in the current economic climate.
- 1.4. The report also highlights the next stages of the moreMorden project including a further round of consultation focussing on development scenarios for the town and developing a masterplan and Area Action Plan as part of Merton's Local Development Framework.

2 DETAILS

Report on Community Engagement:

- 2.1. The draft vision for Morden underwent extensive public consultation in September 2008. The details of the consultation programme and analysis of responses are set out in the Report of Community Engagement, Appendix A to this report.

Vision for Morden:

- 2.2. In June 2008, Cabinet agreed on a draft vision for Morden, which was subject to public consultation in September 2008. 80% of respondents thought that the aims and objectives of the vision were right for Morden. (32% Strongly Agreed, 48% Agreed, 9% Neither agreed or disagreed. Only 8% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed)
- 2.3. Cabinet members are now asked to endorse the strategic high level vision for Morden as set out below.

Vision Aim:

- 2.4. Our aim is to change the perception of Morden, from somewhere people *have* to be, to a place people *want* to be.
- 2.5. This can be achieved by regenerating Morden to be a sustainable town centre, important transport node and through generating a renewed sense of civic pride.

Vision Objectives:

- 2.6.
- Re-define the role of the suburban centre, creating an economically sustainable and viable town centre for the future by building on Morden's assets.
 - Re-enforce Morden's leisure, cultural, educational and civic opportunities.
 - Improve the quantity, quality and mix of commercial, residential, retail uses.
 - Intensify development on underdeveloped sites by making more efficient use of land incorporating higher density housing and commercial opportunities that exploit Morden's excellent public transport links. Intensifying the centre also helps protect the character and distinctiveness of the adjacent suburban neighbourhoods.
 - Enhance the accessibility between the town centre and its suburban hinterland and open spaces. (This can be achieved by reducing severance caused by through traffic and greening Morden through tree planting and improved pedestrian route).
 - Achieve high quality urban design, architecture and public realm incorporating high quality spaces and streets with pedestrians as the priority.
 - Provide more opportunities for the community to meet, socialise and make better use of their town centre through provision of attractive, safe and accessible public spaces and community, social and leisure facilities.

Development Framework Options:

- 2.7. Morden Town Centre has significant capacity for growth and a major regeneration project provides opportunity to provide additional residential development that would not only revive the town centre but also contribute to the borough's housing targets. Merton's housing targets, as set by the Greater London Authority seek to deliver 5500 new homes between 2010-2026.
- 2.8. The moreMorden consultation in September 2008 asked the public's view on the scale of development that would be appropriate for Morden. Three key questions, relating to building heights, scale of development and density have informed three development scenarios that we hope to consult on further in summer 2009.
- 2.9. It is proposed that we consult on three broad development scenarios with differing quantum of development for commercial and residential uses. These scenarios will demonstrate how the vision's aims and objectives could be achieved through different scales of development, each with varying levels of benefit to the town. The development scenarios outlined below are set in response to Q18 and Q27 of the consultation where the majority of respondents were pro-development and suggested increasing capacity and building heights. Therefore development scenarios will focus on a range between 500-2000 dwellings
- 2.10. The development framework options comprise of:
- Low scale scenario: 500 residential units
 - Med scale scenario: 1250 residential units
 - High scale scenario: 2000 residential units
- 2.11. Quantum for commercial and community floorspace will be proportional to the level residential development and details would be determined at the masterplanning stage of the project.
- 2.12. Cabinet members are asked to consider these scenarios and approve the proposal to consult with the public on these development framework options. Each option may generate its own character and vision for Morden, which will be explored further in the next round of consultation and the masterplanning stage of the project. Following consultation, the preferred framework would form the basis for a masterplan and Area Action Plan in Merton's Local Development Framework. As the moreMorden project and the LDF evolve, consideration will be given to Morden's secondary retail parades and their function and interrelationship with the town centre.

Delivery and Development Strategy:

Development Delivery Vehicles

- 2.13. As planning authority and land-owner in Morden, the council has a significant opportunity in the regeneration process to:
- Manage the planning process through the creation of policies in the LDF and Morden Area Action Plan, and;

- To maximise its influence on delivery, through intelligent use of council assets and pro-active development management.
- 2.14. There are a number of development delivery options open to the council, ranging from the council becoming a 'master developer', who would sub-contract projects to the market or the council forming a development partnership or consortium.
- 2.15. The moreMorden project group seek approval to commission a study to examine options available to identify the risks and rewards related to different delivery strategies and vehicles. (Subject to the property and financial markets) This study will be in parallel to ongoing discussion with key stakeholders, in particular TfL.
- 2.16. Cabinet members are asked to agree to the procurement of external expertise regarding development delivery strategies. This can be funded by existing capital resources allocated to 'unlocking development potential in Morden town centre'. If approved, the project group will report back to Cabinet in late 2009 with more detailed advice.

Complementary Initiatives

- 2.17. A programme of complementary initiatives has been prepared to contribute to the enhancement of the town centre alongside development work towards its broader, more far reaching physical regeneration. These initiatives will be progressed over the next year and beyond.
- 2.18. The objectives of the complementary initiatives are to:
- Upgrade the public realm and infrastructure
 - Instigate transport improvements and enhance connectivity
 - Provide a safe environment
 - Improve local shopping and other facilities
 - Support local enterprise and employment
 - Provide town centre management
 - Introduce a programme of community events
- 2.19. The initiatives can be grouped under four main headings, although some cut across more than one heading. It should be noted that much of the public realm in Morden is the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL).
- 2.20. Some initiatives have already been completed or are firmly planned for completion this financial year:
- 2.21. Public Realm
- Enhancement to civic centre piazza including new street furniture, (bins and lamp columns) and pedestrian way-finding information funded from streetscene and public realm Capital.
 - Re-paving of Morden Court Parade (London Rd) funded by TfL.
- 2.22. Support to Local Enterprise

- One shop front improvement grant is currently being progressed funded by Capital.
- An interim town centre manager is now appointed and has organised Christmas carols and the Valentine's Day event.
- Promotional brochure to be produced including advertising by local businesses.
- The markets manager will seek to recruit new market stall holders.

2.23. Community Facilities and Programme of Events

- Community Toilets – discussions with local businesses indicate that 2 businesses are willing in principle to participate in the scheme and arrangements are being made to identify one more alongside the council. The contribution towards cleaning would be met from Revenue.
- Christmas carols with local schools.
- Valentine's Day event including sponsorship by local businesses.

2.24. Transport

- Living Streets survey completed and is informing the development of complementary initiatives.
- Freight loading initiative – leaflet distributed to local businesses locating waiting restrictions in the town centre to assist them with deliveries to shops, funded by TfL.
- Pedestrian signage to Morden Road Tram Stop now installed funded by TfL.
- Partial removal of guardrails along the main road approved and funded by TfL; assessment of scope for further removal in progress.
- Cycle parking – additional stands being provided to replace the guardrails funded by TfL.
- Loading scheme being developed for the alleyway in the Aberconway and Abbotsbury Roads area funded by TfL.
- Draft proposals to relocate stands for 1 – 2 bus services from Morden station being considered in discussion with TfL and London Buses.

2.25. The programme will include other initiatives for some of which additional funding will need to be identified, including;

Public Realm

2.26. Further improvements funded from Capital stemming from the second phase of Merton's Public Realm Strategy, which will provide conceptual streetscape designs for the borough's town centres.

Support to local enterprise

2.27. A borough-wide programme of business support is being developed. (see Economic Development Strategy report elsewhere on this agenda)

- 2.28. Further shop front improvement grants and offers of funding for the treatment of empty shops funded from Capital.

Community Facilities and Programme of Events

- 2.29. A programme will be organised aiming to increase footfall in the town centre including events in Morden Hall Park.
- 2.30. The possibility of securing funding for projects in the town centre by local artists will be explored.

Transport

- 2.31. Additional provision for cyclists will be considered.
- 2.32. Options to continue to address issues relating to the location of bus service stops and stands in the town centre will be developed.
- 2.33. Proposals to deal with the Morden gyratory system and other major streetscene improvements are being explored through the TfL STEP bid.

Economic Development Strategy:

- 2.34. Members should note the separate report being presented to this meeting on Merton's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and its links with the moreMorden project.
- 2.35. The EDS looks at Merton's town centres, their core offer and opportunities. It sets out some objectives for town centre economic development and either an outline action plan or point towards proposals already underway. The EDS objectives are intended to compliment the draft vision for Morden, which is slightly more focussed on physical regeneration.
- 2.36. Retail has a specific role in offering a unique attractiveness to our town centres. Currently, the retail spend in Morden is dominated by convenience shopping, particularly food shopping and serves only a very local population and some of the needs of commuters passing through the town. One of the challenges for Morden will be to build on those elements that support a unique presence, without assuming a major increase in retail sector in the current economic condition.
- 2.37. Morden attracts a high footfall within the vicinity of the Underground station; one third of these people do not contribute to the economy of Morden, simply using the town as a transport interchange.
- 2.38. Morden also under-performs compared to similar town centres (by size and location on the underground network) Research by Volterra in 2008 found low levels of small business, restaurant and a latent demand for leisure in Morden in comparison to centres in Ealing, Barnet and elsewhere in southwest London.
- 2.39. These challenges are recognised in the draft vision for Morden and significant work in the next stages of the moreMorden project is underway to maximise the opportunities available in Morden and to guide specific intervention aimed at regenerating the town centre.

moreMorden Project, Next Steps for 2009:

- 2.40. Endorse the vision for Morden (as requested in this paper) – March 2009
- 2.41. Engage external advice regarding delivery options to achieve successful regeneration of Morden. – Summer 2009
- 2.42. Consult on development scenarios – July-September 2009
- 2.43. Report back to Cabinet with a preferred development scenario and recommendations on development delivery options – early 2010.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The absence of an overarching regeneration strategy for Morden will mean there will be less co-ordination and consistency between LBM projects and no overall vision or consistent approach to any development proposals that may come forward. Without the regeneration strategy there will be less market interest in Morden and the council would continue to manage retail decline in the town centre.
- 3.2. The council would also be left with a growing property liability on the Abbotsbury triangle and the civic centre sites. Promotion of a regeneration strategy is consistent with the council's duty to pro-actively manage and increase the value of its property assets.
- 3.3. The public realm in Morden is operated and maintained by Transport for London and dominated by through traffic and bus layover infrastructure. This scenario would continue, as without a vision for Morden, the council has little leverage to negotiate public realm improvements with TfL. A regeneration strategy would also provide an opportunity to bid for additional funding from external sources.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. A consultation on the draft vision for Morden took place in September – October 2008. Details of the consultation can be found in Appendix A to this report.
- 4.2. A further consultation on three framework options (development scenarios) for Morden will commence in July 2009 subject to Cabinet approval, set out in recommendation C and paragraphs 2.9 – 2.12 of this report.
- 4.3. The Morden Town Centre Partnership has also been consulted in developing the approach and programme of complementary initiatives.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. If approved, it is proposed that a further round of public consultation will commence in July 2009, reporting back to cabinet early 2010 with detailed options for regenerating Morden.
- 5.2. If approved, The Council will seek external advice to inform development delivery mechanisms, to be reported back to Cabinet late 2009.
- 5.3. The Council will continue with a programme of complementary initiatives.
- 5.4. For details of the next stages of the moreMorden project please see paragraph 2.39 of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The resources required to proceed with the next stages of the moreMorden project include existing officer time in relation to undertaking the preparation and implementation of the consultation process as well as publicity and printing costs.
- 6.2. As the vision for Morden has no statutory planning status. There is no impact from endorsing the vision, on the Council's property interests.
- 6.3. Advice from external consultants may also be required and can be met utilising existing capital budgets allocated to 'Unlocking development potential in Morden town centre'
- 6.4. Revenue and capital funding is available for the projects included in the programme of complementary initiatives. In addition some projects have been funded by TfL to whom bids for further project funding will be submitted as proposals are developed.
- 6.5. The table below outlines current capital budget allocations for the project.

Area of Activity		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	Comments
Unlocking the Development of Morden Town Centre	Project management and other consultancy support, surveys and physical regeneration initiatives	£88,500	£370,000	£370,000	£370,000	Detail of spend to be determined (Dependant on endorsement of the Vision) Spend includes complementary initiatives, research on development delivery options, masterplan preparation and to leverage additional funding from TfL.

Public Realm						
	Enhancement to Civic Centre Piazza	£50,000	-	-	-	Funded from Facilities and Public Realm Capital.
	Street scene	There is a capital sum of £2m in 2008/09 for investment into the street scene on a Borough wide basis and an allocation of £200,000 will be made from this towards Morden. Schemes for Morden include street furniture enhancements (co-ordinated bins, lighting, pedestrian signage and maps in line with Merton's Public Realm Strategy) (Please note that most public realm in Morden is controlled by TFL)				
Support to local Enterprise						
	Shop front improvements	£5,000 (Tbd	Tbd	Tbd	Allocation from capital sum above
	Empty shop initiative		Tbd	Tbd	Tbd	Allocation from capital sum above
Transport						
	Living Streets survey and related work	£16,000	-	-	-	Funded from 08/09 Capital Funding for Morden.
	Morden Town Centre Highway Improvements	-	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	Funded from Transport Capital in conjunction with TfL.

6.6. The table below outlines the current revenue budget allocations for the project.

Area of Activity		08/09	09/10	10/11	Comments
Support to local enterprise					
	Business support and advice		Tbd – from LABGI	Tbd – from LABGI	Proposal in Economic Development Strategy to extend Mitcham Means Business
	Town Centre Management	£25,000 – part-time with Colliers Wood	Tbd	Tbd	See separate report on Economic Development Strategy
Safety	Ongoing mainstream revenue programme				
Community Facilities and Events					
	Community Toilet scheme	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	Proposed from LABGI allocation
	Programme of events	Ongoing	Tbd	Tbd	See separate report on Economic Development Strategy

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The proposals set out in this report are in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and relevant regulations and Government guidance.
- 7.2. Future elements of the wider regeneration programme (but not the endorsement of the vision or consultation being proposed in this paper) may be subject to formal EU tendering requirements. Even if there is no formal EU requirement to enter into a competitive process, the council may elect to follow a competitive process to select a third party with whom the council chooses to work. Details of such will be reported back to Cabinet and lead members as and when required.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. At this stage, in seeking endorsement of the vision for Morden and approval for further community engagement, there are no human rights or equalities implications. However in late 2009 as the vision and regeneration strategy is firmed up and an Area Action Plan is prepared as part of Merton's Local Development Framework, an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out, as a statutory requirement of the strategy.
- 8.2. With regard to community cohesion, consultation with residents and stakeholders supports the following key priority in the Merton Cohesion Strategy 2006-10: "providing opportunities for all our residents to become actively involved in their communities, creating a sense of ownership, feeling valued and increased social capital".

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no implications for the purposes of this report. As the moreMorden project moves forward to the masterplanning and Area Action Plan preparation, the plans will have regard to designing out crime.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. At this stage there is no business risk in seeking approval to share our ideas with the public at this stage of the project. However, as the regeneration strategy develops as an Area Action Plan there may be business risks relating to council property and planning blight. The details of any risk implications will be reported to the Members Working Group and appropriate Panels and Cabinet in due course (dates of which are set out in section 6 of this report).

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix A: Report of community engagement on the draft vision for Morden.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. The moreMorden draft vision consultation material is available to view or download from www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden