

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 35

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	London Road Central Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)		
Date of Meeting:	9 November 2009		
REPORT OF:	Director of Environment		
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Wards Affected:	St. Peter's and North Laine		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The report advises on the results of the London Road Central Masterplan consultation held in June 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To note the results of the public consultation exercise, which will inform the contents of the final version of the London Road Central masterplan SPD.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Work on drafting a supplementary planning document (SPD) for the central London Road area (the masterplan) has progressed in stages since the summer of 2008. Earlier this year (28 April) a pre consultation draft version of the masterplan was the subject of joint workshop for the Environment and Community Safety and Culture Tourism and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committees. The results of this, together with other events, helped to inform the content of the draft masterplan.
- 3.2 Permission to undertake public consultation with regard to the document was subsequently granted at the Environment CMM on 7 May. Following this, a six week public consultation exercise was held between 25 May and 6 June, resulting in sixty five responses by email or post. One of these responses, from the 'Another London Road' (ALR) campaigning group, included representations from an additional fifty seven individuals. During the consultation period a three day exhibition, staffed by council officers, was held in the former Co-op department store building on London Road (4 – 6 June). This was attended by over a thousand individuals and generated an additional four hundred and ten written comments, provided by visitors on the comments board in response to the masterplan information provided in the exhibition.

- 3.3 As is common with area-based consultation exercises, a wide range of comments on a broad spectrum of topics was received. Many respondents made comments in respect of the area without having read the actual masterplan document, although demonstrated a desire to see the quality of the area improved in various ways which are in line with the objectives of the masterplan. A detailed report on the results of the consultation is provided in the members' rooms. It should be noted that the issues raised by members last April at the joint scrutiny workshop (referred to above in paragraph 3.1) were also largely reflected in comments from the subsequent public consultation exercise.

Main themes arising from respondents' formal representations

- 3.4 The sixty five responses posted directly to the council were from a range of individuals, groups and organisations. These responses revealed the following:
- Ninety three per cent of respondents welcomed the document.
 - Twenty six per cent of respondents registered no significant concerns over document content.
 - Seventy two per cent of respondents raised concerns regarding particular aspects of the document, half of whom focused on a single aspect of the masterplan. The majority of these included businesses based in New England House, seeking the removal of the option for demolition of the building, on the basis that this could result in breaking up its existing resident business community.
 - Other popular themes emerging from the consultation responses were requests for the document to address the following:
 - provision of low-rent/affordable space in the regeneration area for small, local, and independent businesses;
 - a reduction in traffic and traffic-related noise and carbon emissions;
 - preservation of the area's distinctiveness and character in the process of regeneration;
 - better, more permeable routes and improvement of facilities for pedestrian and cyclists; and
 - no new large retail and/or supermarket outlets in the area.

Main themes arising from exhibition comments

- 3.5 The four hundred and ten comments posted at the exhibition reveal the following:
- Twenty two per cent would not welcome a Tesco development in the area;
 - Fourteen per cent would like to see more and/or better pedestrian and cycling facilities/priority/links;
 - Fourteen per cent would like to see local/small, independent, creative/ sustainable businesses supported;
 - Thirteen per cent objected to new large retail/supermarket outlet in the area; and
 - Ten per cent thought the area is in need of regeneration.

Main themes arising from Another London Road feedback forms

- 3.6 The fifty seven feedback forms the 'Another London Road' campaign comprised 'prompted' representations, provided on pro forma provided and pre-formatted by the organisation in order to elicit responses on specific issues felt to be of importance by ALR. Of these particular responses:
- Ninety per cent of respondents would support priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and/or smaller-scale improvements rather than ambitious large-scale developments;
 - Seventy per cent of respondents would support traffic reduction and/or encouragement for occupation of empty shops;
 - Twenty five per cent of respondents would like to see local/small, independent, creative/sustainable businesses supported; and
 - Nineteen per cent would like to see special buildings retained and highlighted in the street scene; provision of an improved and greener public realm; reduced traffic and/or strategic traffic solutions to tackle traffic problems in the area.
- 3.7 The top five themes emerging from the consultation are shown below. These reflect the issues considered to be of most importance by all three sets of respondents (i.e. the letters posted directly to the council, the exhibition responses and the ALR-prompted responses). A proposed response from the council is provided below each issue.

The need for improved facilities and/or priority for pedestrians and cyclists.

- 3.8 This was seen as a key issue for many respondents. The objectives of improving pedestrian and cycle accessibility are already important aspects of the masterplan, which proposes the removal of unnecessary road barriers and clutter, provision of some areas of central reservation on London Road and improved conditions at major nodes such as Preston Circus. These would be combined with improved facilities for cyclists. Such measures will need to be carefully planned and managed and have been achieved in other countries, as well as elsewhere in the UK, on busy through routes, without resulting in increased traffic congestion.

General opposition to additional supermarkets in the area and particular opposition to the possibility of a large superstore.

- 3.9 A high proportion of respondents were opposed to additional supermarkets in the area and were particularly opposed to the possibility of a large superstore. These comments related largely to proposals by St James's Investments in 2008 for a new Tesco store in the area. It should be noted that a superstore does *not* form a proposal of the masterplan. Any potential planning application for a superstore in London Road would need to be considered on its merits and assessed against local and national retail policies. This would require a retail impact assessment to be undertaken as part of any planning application for a retail development in excess of 2,500 sq m, in order to assess its effects on existing shops and shopping centres in the surrounding area.

The need for traffic reduction as a means of reducing pollution, noise and carbon emissions.

- 3.10 There are no existing council plans to reduce the volume of traffic flowing through the area. The masterplan therefore assumes that existing traffic flows will be maintained for the foreseeable future (in line with the London Road/Lewes Road Regeneration Strategy). Should the council implement wider strategic transport measures that provide the opportunity to reduce volumes of through traffic, such as park and ride, further attention could be paid to the possibility of altering existing routing in the London Road area, including the possibility of reducing traffic volumes and carbon emissions. The scope and key objectives of the draft masterplan already recognise and allow for this possibility.

The need to safeguard space for small, independent, low-rent, sustainable businesses

- 3.11 Support for these types of businesses is highlighted in the masterplan document. However, this will be further emphasised in order to reflect the large number of respondents raising concerns over this issue.

The need to prioritise the re-use of existing buildings and/or empty shops.

- 3.12 The principle of refurbishing and reusing existing buildings is already an important aspect of the masterplan. Additionally, the reuse of buildings as a sustainable development option is already covered in council planning policies and documents as well as the emerging LDF Core Strategy. These policies are relevant to any development proposals in the London Road masterplan area. A reference for the need for developers to consider re-use of existing buildings before options for redevelopment will be added to the masterplan. There are instances, however, where the masterplan has highlighted opportunities where replacement buildings of high quality design, improved configuration and more rational building height could secure some of its key objectives (including accommodating additional land uses, improving the townscape and providing a more legible and accessible built environment).
- 3.13 In addition to the above, the masterplan provides a framework to guide environmental and public realm improvements in order to improve the appearance of the area, encourage investment in existing building stock, reduce vacancies in business properties and generally turn around the fortunes of London Road which has suffered a long term economic decline.

Other issues arising from the consultation

- 3.14 Overall, the consultation process has revealed very strong support for the principal of improving the environment of London Road and the objectives of the masterplan in bringing these about. A number of changes are being made to the document where practicable, to reinforce certain issues, in response to various concerns raised. In essence, the changes are minor in nature and are being added to further emphasise the following issues:
- encouragement of a wide mix of shop types and sizes including local, independent, affordable businesses;
 - the needs of cyclists;
 - archaeological considerations;
 - urban design issues;
 - improvement in the noise climate;
 - reference to council's ambition to achieve Urban Biosphere Reserve;
 - removal of reference for potential to provide for a new St Bartholomew's Primary School as part of the wider regeneration of the area;
 - minor textual and layout changes, including a glossary of technical terms, to increase clarity of the masterplan for readers of the document.

Next steps

- 3.15 The results of the consultation and a detailed council response to the issues raised will be reported to Environment CMM on 17 December, with a recommendation that a suitably revised version of the masterplan be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the council's emerging Local Development Framework. There is clearly a strong desire by the majority of respondents to see positive change in the area and in addition to the above changes an implementation plan has been drafted to provide a means of identifying individual projects. The existence of the masterplan will provide a basis for future funding bids and it will be important for the council to continue to engage with the community (businesses, landowners, residents and other stakeholders) in helping to realise the masterplan's objectives.

4. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 4.1 Direct costs for the production of the SPD and consultation have been included within City Planning's budget allocation. Should Brighton and Hove City Council be required to comply with the SPD the financial implications will be included within a report to the relevant service committee.

Legal Implications:

- 4.2 Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2008 requires that SPDs must be subject to formal public consultation prior to adoption. Regulation 18 of the 2004 Regulations provides that planning authorities cannot adopt SPDs

until they have considered any representations made within the consultation period. Planning authorities are also required to prepare a statement summarising the main issues raised in the representations and saying how these have been addressed within the SPD the authority intend to adopt. The SPD has been advertised in accordance with the legislative requirements. No adverse human rights implications have been identified as arising from the report.

Lawyer consulted: Hilary Woodward. Date: 27 October 2009.

Equalities Implications:

- 4.3 Local Development Framework Core Strategy Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) issues relevant to this SPD have been considered. Monitoring and implementation measures have been put in place to evaluate the impact of this SPD as a result.

Sustainability Implications:

- 4.4 Sustainability issues inform all of the measures promoted in the draft SPD, which has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 4.5 The masterplan seeks to draw increased users into and around London Road and help provide for a safer environment in the area through a range of measures including the identification of new development opportunities, public realm improvements and the promotion of other urban design interventions. The document also identifies community measures to help result in a more safe and secure environment for all.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 4.6 None identified.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 4.7 Along with Lewes Road, improvements to the London Road area are fundamental in realising the objectives of the London Road & Lewes Road Regeneration Strategy (LR2). This AIF-funded study was approved by the former Policy & Resources Committee on 26 July 2007. Lewes Road and London Road are key gateways to the city and their regeneration is regarded as an important component in promoting and sustaining the long term economic growth of the city.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. London Road Central Masterplan SPD Public consultation report: summary of responses.