

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

EXECUTIVE - 7 JANUARY 2004

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

REPORT TITLE : NEASDEN TOWN CENTRE

FOR ACTION

NAME OF WARD: DUDDEN HILL

FP REF: ES-03/04-6

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a framework for the regeneration of Neasden Town Centre, reports proposals for planning briefs within the town centre area, and reports the agreement of CPZ proposals for that area. It also reports on tenders received for a contract for de-pedestrianisation, repaving and landscaping, and discusses options for funding the proposed contract for these works.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members:
- 2.1.1 Adopt the Neasden Town Centre Regeneration Framework
- 2.1.2 Note the proposals for planning briefs related to the Regeneration Framework, the progress made in taking these forward, and the agreement of proposals for a CPZ for the Town Centre area
- 2.1.3 Consider the cost of the lowest tender received for the de-pedestrianisation, repaving and landscaping works and the options for taking these forward and agree the temporary allocation of £350,000 of capital from the contingency budget to fund the contract and the associated fees and planting costs, noting that the full allocation will not be spent in the 2003-04 financial year.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This scheme has been developing over a number of years. Members first agreed the scheme as part of the 2001/1002 Capital Programme with a total budget of £700k phased over three years. Some preliminary works have been undertaken at a cost of £102,000 leaving a capital budget of £598,000 for the main contract works.
- 3.2 The phasing of the costs has now changed and the total costs, following receipt of tenders, has increased beyond the budget available. The total costs of the remaining work amount to £891,000 so additional funding of £293,000 is required to complete the scheme. The part of the costs that will now fall in the 2003-04 financial year can be met from the existing agreed budgets.
- 3.3 In order to bridge this gap a £350,000 bid for further resources was submitted for 2004-05. However, this will not be considered and agreed until Full Council agrees the 2004-05 budget which will be too late to accept the tendered contract price. An allocation of £350,000 is therefore required this year before we can accept the contract. .

- 3.4 At the 10 November meeting of the Executive, the position on the Council's overall Capital Programme was considered. The programme is forecast to end the year with a surplus of £1.25m. Members agreed to retain the balance as a contingency to meet unforeseen expenditure or to protect against any failure to meet the disposals target.
- 3.5 If Members wished they could temporarily allocate £350k from the contingency budget noting that the full allocation will not be spent in 2003-04. The 2004-05 bid could then be used to re-instate the present position if agreed by Full Council.
- 3.6 Members also have the option to instruct officers to reduce the scale of the work and bring the costs in line with the agreed budget.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific staffing implications.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The scheme is designed to bring about a significant improvement in the quality of the local environment within Neasden Town Centre. In addition to improvements to the built environment, the introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone will result in better conditions for buses within the centre which should encourage the use of public transport. Improvements to the vitality of the centre will also give sustainability benefits as more people are able to use a local centre for a greater proportion of the needs.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The estimated value of the contract for the works referred to in paragraphs 8.8 and 8.9 is over £500,000, so under the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, the contract must be tendered. However, this contract is a Medium Value contract and Executive approval is not required for either the tender or the award of the contract. The contract is below the EU threshold of £ 3.8million for works contract and therefore is not subject to the application of the European Public Procurement regulations.
- 6.2 This contract was tendered in accordance with the two stage process under Contract Standing Orders
- 6.3 The Council's Standing Orders do not prevent the tender validity from being extended beyond the original validity period.'
- 6.4 Any demolition and rebuilding of property will require planning permission. The grant of such permission will be decided by the Council's planning committee on the planning merits of the application
- 6.5 The "pay and display" and permit parking methods of parking control and parking prohibitions (waiting and loading restrictions) comprised in the CPZ were made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
- 6.6 The Council will be responsible for the grant of licences permitting licensed premises to sell alcohol under the Licensing Act 2003. The Licensing Authority will be required to make an publish a Licensing Statement, which sets out its policies and procedures regarding the issuing of licences and any licensing issues from the consultation should be fed into the statement consultation process.

7.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed works will include dropped curbs at crossing points and tactile paving where necessary. They will replace the existing surfaces which are in poor condition. The proposals contained in this report, have in other respects, been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no diversity implications

8 DETAIL

Neasden Regeneration Framework

- 8.1 Neasden Town Centre has suffered a very significant decline in its vitality in the decades since the widening of the North Circular Road, the construction of the vehicular underpass and the gyratory system, and the pedestrianisation of part of the centre. The range of retail facilities has declined and the proliferation of licensed premises has created problems which are chronic and sometimes acute. Inadequate maintenance of the public infrastructure including pavements, signs, raised beds and planting has led to a general decline in the quality and character of the centre.
- 8.2 To address the lack of investment particularly in the pavements £700,000 Capital funding was originally agreed over a three year period from 2001-02 to 2003-04 for repaving and general environmental improvements to Neasden Town Centre. Initial consultations with residents and traders made it clear that, in their view, the range of problems that had led to the decline in the centre needed to be addressed if any such investment was to have any lasting benefit.
- 8.3 The Council produced a draft Regeneration Framework which, by considering the problems in the area and ways they might be addressed, set out the context for these improvements. The draft framework which is attached as Appendix 1 proposes a vision for the town centre which addresses the key areas that need attention. It proposes
- ◆ a well managed local shopping centre
 - ◆ an accessible and well connected centre by bus, car and on foot
 - ◆ a safe and welcoming centre
 - ◆ an distinctive and attractive centre with wide pavements and tree lined streets
 - ◆ a centre with a higher profile on the North Circular Road.

Consultation

- 8.4 An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken including questionnaires to more than 3000 local residents and businesses, a series of consultation meetings and a Special Area Consultative Forum Meeting. More than 600 questionnaires were returned. An exhibition was held in Neasden Library and copies of the draft framework were available there and at the Grange Museum. Separate meetings were held with traders and with the Neasden residents Association.
- 8.5 The main points to emerge from the consultation, which are reflected in the draft Regeneration Framework where possible, were:
- ◆ Improving traffic flows through, into and around the town centre including to and from the North Circular Road, around the Grange Museum roundabout, and by removal of the pedestrianised area.

- ◆ The need for a Controlled Parking Zone within the town centre to ensure that parking can be properly managed, and for effective management of parking in the surrounding areas.
- ◆ Improvements to bus access to the town centre and to the pedestrian journey to the station.
- ◆ The need for significant improvements to the pavements, street furniture, and other infrastructure in the centre to create a high quality environment and build confidence.
- ◆ A change in the balance of uses within the centre to reduce the preponderance of licensed premises, particularly those operating late at night, and to increase the range and quality of the shops.
- ◆ Better management of the physical environment including improvements to the management of the service roads and alleyways, management of parking, and management of the operations of shops which impinge onto the highway.

Planning Briefs

8.6 The Regeneration Framework identifies a number of key sites the redevelopment of which could support the aims of the Framework and help bring about some of the longer term improvements in the mix of shops in the area and alleviate some of the impacts of the existing late night uses. Members have already agreed a Planning Brief for the Neasden Lane/Birse Crescent site and further Planning Briefs will be brought forward for the other sites identified in the framework.

Controlled Parking Zone

8.7 The original consultation identified very clearly the need for a Controlled Parking Zone and Traffic Management Scheme within the town centre. A scheme was prepared and consulted on to address the major concerns identified. The committee approved the traffic management parts of the scheme (road layout, removal of pedestrianisation, one way streets, etc.) and all parts of the CPZ scheme except the parking places controls at the Highways Committee in September 2002. Reconsultation was undertaken on the permit and Pay & Display elements of the CPZ only and revisions approved at the April 2003 Highways Committee. to allow the implementation of the scheme. Traffic order making is underway this year. Statutory consultation has been completed and no objections raised. The necessary physical works are incorporated in the contract which is the subject of the later sections of this report.

Repaving and Street Scene

8.8 Following further consultation with local residents and traders over the appearance of the street scene a treatment and set of materials were agreed that would support the aims of the Regeneration Framework by improving the overall quality of the different elements within the public realm including footway paving, carriageways, speed tables associated with the Controlled Parking Zone and traffic management arrangements, street furniture including signs, seats, bollards, gratings etc. This treatment is to a slightly higher standard than the normal specification used by the Council.

- 8.9 The central feature of the changes proposed is the removal of the pedestrianised area and the re-creation of a through road in this area. It is intended to create a “town square” or central focus in this area with new “pleached” trees setting bounds to the highway and creating a distinctive and attractive feel. This new area will add to the on street parking in a managed way and will have the potential to support specialist markets or other activities in the future.
- 8.10 Tenders were sought for the proposed work and were returned in June 2003. The tenders were invited in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders. The lowest tender was submitted by Meeres Civil Engineering Limited. Under the Council's Standing Orders Executive approval is not required for the award of the contract.
- 8.11 Of the original £700,000 approximately £102,000 had been spent by this point on essential preliminary surveys, on consultation and publicity, in seeking professional advice on the viability of the town centre under different scenarios and on the detailed design and specification of the works. This left a capital budget of £598,000. The total cost of the tendered works including landscaping, fees, liaison with statutory undertakers, and contingencies amounted to £891,000. It was not immediately possible to recommend the letting of a contract.
- 8.12 Since July, officers have reviewed the scheme to see whether removal of some of the elements could deliver a viable scheme without causing great disappointment to residents who have engaged enthusiastically in an extended consultation over these proposals. It was concluded that within the context of the existing specification and tenders it was not possible since the majority of the costs relate to the Controlled Parking Zone and the central area of the town centre. Reduction of the scope of the scheme would only be possible through leaving large areas excluded from the scheme and without renewal of their paving.
- 8.13 Officers have also reviewed whether alternative sources of funding could be found to complement the Capital funding. Although a number of potential sources had been identified, all came to nothing. A bid for a further £350,000 of Capital was therefore submitted for 2004-05 to enable the entire scheme to be completed.
- 8.14 Although tenders ran out of validity, the lowest tenderer has agreed to hold his tendered price until the first week of February 2004. Members are asked to agree that £350,000 of capital from the contingency fund be temporarily allocated to this project to enable the contract award to be made whilst this tender is still valid. In the event that the bid for additional capital in 2004-05 is unsuccessful, costs that cannot be accommodated within the currently agreed capital budget would need to be found from Environment's agreed capital programme, and a further report explaining the implications would be brought to Members.
- 8.15 The alternative is for Members to abandon the currently proposed scheme and to instruct officers to re-consult residents about cheaper options for the improvement of Neasden Town Centre. However, residents, in recent informal discussions with officers, have indicated their strong desire to see the proposed scheme progress in its current form.

8.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Details of Documents:

- 8.1 Neasden Town Centre file.
- 8.2 Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Michael Read, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6BZ, Telephone: 0208 937 5302

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