

	Cabinet 11 November 2019
	Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment
Inclusive Growth in Harlesden Town Centre	

Wards Affected:	Harlesden
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key
Part Exempt:	<p>Yes, Appendix 1 (Exempt): Breakdown of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)</p>
No. of Appendices:	<p>Eight:</p> <p>Appendix 1: Breakdown of capital expenditure [Exempt] Appendix 2: Community Consultation Appendix 3: Picture Palace concept drawings Appendix 4: Harlesden Methodist Church concept drawings Appendix 5: Long term proposals Appendix 6: Designworks concept drawings Appendix 7: Map of Harlesden sites Appendix 8: Guidance Notes, Town Centre property acquisitions</p>
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s):	<p>Report Authors:</p> <p>Kaya Chatterji Economic Growth Snr Manager Email: Kaya.chatterji@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 6673</p> <p>Matt Dibben Head of Employment Skills & Enterprise, Email: Matthew.dibben@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1815</p> <p>Tanveer Ghani Project manager (Property) Email: Tanveer.ghani@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1722</p>

Consultees:

- Nigel Chapman - Operational Director - Integration and Improvement
- Glenn Miller - Head of Property
- Sadie East - Head of Transformation
- Pascoe Sawyers - Head of Strategy and Partnerships
- Stephanie Wilson - Libraries, Arts and Heritage Manager
- Lois Stonock - Executive Director, LBoC

Contents

Section title	Page number	Paragraph reference
Purpose of Report	4	1.0
Recommendations	4	2.0
Detail	4	3.0
Background	4	3.1
Current Day Harlesden	5	3.5
Vision for the future of Harlesden	5	3.8
Analysis of current needs	6	3.14
Responding to demand	8	3.16
Phase 1: current projects	8	3.19
Phase 2: short term proposals	9	3.20
Picture Palace	9	3.21
Harlesden Methodist Church	10	3.33
Phase 3: long term proposals	11	3.39
Designworks	12	3.41
Strategic alignment	13	3.49
Funding for phases 2 and 3	13	3.50
Guidance notes for acquisitions in Town Centres	14	3.55
Next Steps	14	3.59
Financial implications	15	4.0
Legal implications	16	5.0
Equalities and Diversity	17	6.0
Appendix 1: Breakdown of capital expenditure [EXEMPT]	n/a	n/a
Appendix 2: Community Consultation	n/a	n/a
Appendix 3: Picture Palace concept drawings	n/a	n/a
Appendix 4: Harlesden Methodist Church concept drawings	n/a	n/a
Appendix 5: Longer term proposals	n/a	n/a
Appendix 6: Designworks concept drawings	n/a	n/a
Appendix 7: Map of Harlesden sites	n/a	n/a
Appendix 8: Guidance Notes - Town Centre property acquisitions	n/a	n/a

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out an aspirational vision for Harlesden to create a town centre fit for the future, supported by an evidence base of need and delivered through excellent design, capital investment, and local capacity building.
- 1.2 To illustrate how both short and long-term capital investment can unlock a range of holistic benefits for Harlesden, building on existing services, programmes and investment delivered by the council and local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to date.
- 1.3 Setting these proposals in the context of wider aspirations for Harlesden, to ensure a coordinated approach to investment and the development of the local offer for the community, businesses and visitors.
- 1.4 To share the strong evidence base of need in Harlesden that has been compiled following significant community consultation and specialist urban design research.
- 1.5 To propose a new guidance document which provides a decision making framework for property acquisitions in town centres that can support diversification of Brent's high streets.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To approve the release of council capital investment to deliver inclusive growth in Harlesden. Details of the total sum and the breakdown of the capital investment are contained within Appendix 1.
- 2.2 To approve £0.5m of revenue to take forward capacity building in Harlesden Town Centre with the local business community and stakeholders. [Note that the council has bid for an additional £0.5m from the GLA Good Growth Fund to increase this capacity building fund].
- 2.3 To support the Methodist Church to bid for £0.5m of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL). [Note that the council has also bid for £0.5m from the GLA Good Growth Fund to increase the project fund to £1m to deliver the full scope of the proposed project for this asset.]
- 2.4 Without these sources of funding the proposed works to the Methodist Church cannot take place. If part of the total required funding is not secured, then work will need to be undertaken by the Church to select which works are prioritised.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 This paper sets out a proposed programme for creating long-lasting positive change to the town centre for the benefit of the communities that live there. It has been developed with the input of officers from across the council – including Libraries, Children and Young People (CYP), Property, Finance, Regeneration, Strategy & Partnership, London Borough of Culture (LBOC) and Employment, Skills, and Enterprise.
- 3.2 In 2017 Cabinet agreed to prioritise nine town centres in Brent, with a view to focusing resource and investment where it was most needed to stimulate socio-economic growth.
- 3.3 This Cabinet paper agreed that investment in these town centres should be based on a clear need for diversification, to encourage mixed high streets supporting workspace, social

infrastructure, and cultural activity, with less singular reliance on traditional retail. The paper's recommendations included exploring capital investment in these priority town centres.

- 3.4 Harlesden was identified as one such priority town centre, and the council has since invested in the creation of a Town Centre Manager post and the Harlesden Hub to provide holistic, joined up support to local businesses and local residents respectively. These resources have delivered multiple and varied successes, and more can be done to support the town centre achieve its full potential.

Current day Harlesden

- 3.5 Harlesden is an area of urban density within Brent and is still one of the most deprived wards in the borough according to the indices of multiple deprivation: low wages, unemployment, crime, living environment, barriers to skills and training and housing are all still challenges experienced by many residents of Harlesden. These factors make Harlesden communities particularly susceptible to rising land values and subsequent gentrification, exacerbated further by the potential emergence of new housing, transport infrastructure, and retail development at Old Oak Common.
- 3.6 Harlesden also suffers from a poor public realm, with a lack of greening, lighting, and outdoor civic space. Poor public realm can exacerbate anti-social behaviour making Harlesden residents more vulnerable at night or in the evenings.
- 3.7 Nonetheless, Harlesden's reputation for tolerance and diversity means it has become home to a resilient, entrepreneurial, and diverse population who emanate from across the globe but are now firmly embedded in local life and communities. The communities' aspirations reflect their desire for positive change and a diversified town centre with more leisure and cultural facilities, more community meeting space, enhanced facilities for young people, and more workspace for businesses that create local opportunities.

Vision for the future of Harlesden

- 3.8 The council's vision is to respond to this aspiration by creating the social and physical conditions for the community to thrive. Harlesden will be a place where the unique local economy is flourishing, where young people will receive the support they need to succeed, and where the cultural and leisure facilities reflect the area's rich history and current day vibrancy.
- 3.9 This vision will be delivered through a comprehensive programme of enhanced service provision, phased capital investment, and local capacity building. Considered and evidence-based investment in town centres can respond to demand, community aspiration, and the need to accommodate services in the town centre. It also delivers improvement to the physical fabric of the town centre, its look and feel, reduces vacancies, and creates a welcoming urban environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.
- 3.10 Much of this programme of work is already underway, with plans to support homelessness via Crisis' relocation to Challenge House, plans to support young people with a new Alternative Provision School and an enhanced wrap-around youth offer in Roundwood, improved facilities for adult education through a new centre for learning and enterprise at Morland Gardens, and the launch of the Family Hub from Fawood and Curzon centre pending Cabinet approval in October.
- 3.11 The council has also begun articulating the long-term vision for the town centre, in the form of a re-developed community facility on the council-owned site of the current Designworks (a site that the council acknowledges is soon coming to the end of its useful life). Early stage concept

designs by Adjaye Associates for a multi-use community and cultural centre on the site illustrate the intention to reframe the narrative of Harlesden to one of aspiration, excellence, and world class urban design.

- 3.12 In order to create the conditions for that long-term vision to be achieved, the council is mindful of the need to take a phased approach to delivery to ensure that growth is sustainable and genuinely reflects the needs of the local community.
- 3.13 This papers sets out a methodology for doing this, by building on existing work done to date, considering the future of existing public and VCS services in the town centre, analysing the gaps that still exist, reviewing the assets available to the council, and making recommendations for how capital investment can bring these elements together for the benefit of the town centre.

Analysis of current needs

- 3.14 In order to take a holistic view of needs in Harlesden, officers undertook significant community consultation and commissioned specialist urban design experts to understand the following:
 - 1. What is already being delivered in the town centre?
 - 2. What is missing, and what are the gaps?
 - 3. What physical assets are already being maximised by the council?
 - 4. What other assets are within the town centre but underutilised? What are their relative merits and potential from a spatial and place making perspective?
- 3.15 The responses to these questions are outlined in Table 1 below. For more detail on the in-depth community consultation that informed the responses, please see Appendix 2.

Table 1

Needs analysis question	Responses from community consultation, officer consultation, and urban design research
1. What is already being delivered in and around Harlesden?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of VCS organisations delivering interventions for other local residents – e.g. Somali groups for young people and the elderly, Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum, Crisis homelessness prevention, Harlesden Town Gardens, Food Bank, the BEAT radio, and more. • Active Business Association who reflect the diversity of Harlesden, support local economic development, and seek to mitigate the impacts of gentrification on the town centre. • Range of council-led services including the Harlesden Hub, Harlesden Library, Brent Start adult learning, Roundwood youth provision, and Childrens Centres.
2. What is missing, what are the gaps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things for young people to do – e.g. cinema, gym, places to meet others both formally and informally. • Greening, lighting, and safer streets including support for homeless people, street drinkers, and tackling ASB. • Cultural amenity – places to perform, participate in, or create cultural output. • Workspace – space for local businesses to expand and provide more services to the community. • Civic space – particularly shared, secular space for community groups to meet and hold events.
3. What physical assets and services are already being maximised by the council?	<p><u>Core town centre</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harlesden Library which also houses the Harlesden Hub and some Brent Start adult learning provision. • Challenge House – with CYP officers due to relocate in order to accommodate Crisis homelessness charity. <p><u>Surrounding area</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundwood Centre – Alternative Provision School and enhanced youth offer to provide excellent educational and wrap-around services for young people. • Fawood and Curzon Childrens centres – proposed Family Hub pending October Cabinet decision. • Morland Gardens – planned redevelopment pending Cabinet decision to deliver a centre for learning and enterprise.
4. What other assets are within the town centre but underutilised? What are their	<p><u>Core town centre</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designworks – owned by the council. Currently workspace but with potential to deliver an aspirational civic and cultural centre for Harlesden in the long term.

relative merits / potential?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture Palace – former cinema and pub, vacant for 2 years. Large town centre footprint with art deco façade. Potentially at risk of private development into residential flats, but listed in Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan as a potential asset of community value. • Methodist Church and Windrush Hall – location of significant (secular) community activity, with more demand than can be accommodated in current building. Significant impact onto high street due to the size of frontage and its run-down appearance. • Harlesden Plaza – currently a carpark. This is the site with the largest single footprint in Harlesden and identified as a key development site in new Local Plan and the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan.
------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Responding to demand

3.16 The table above highlights the ways in which the council is already taking steps to leverage its own assets to support wider service delivery in Harlesden.

3.17 The council recognises, however, that even more must be done to make significant and lasting change for Harlesden. To that end, the following section outlines the proposed approach for delivering a set of interventions that respond to local need, and make the town centre a more vibrant and appealing destination for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

3.18 The council also recognises that not all demand can be met from the council's existing portfolio. This paper therefore proposes capital investment in other sites, to increase capacity in the town centre for community, VCS, cultural and commercial uses. Some longer-term projects cannot be delivered without further feasibility and design work, and so this paper proposes capital investment to come forward in three phases as follows:

- **Phase 1** projects are those which are already ongoing and delivering outcomes for Harlesden.
- **Phase 2** proposals are those which are considered to be deliverable in the short-medium term (12-24 months). They are also considered to provide a wide range of benefits that respond to many of the key themes that emerged from the engagement process.
- **Phase 3** proposals are those which will ultimately have the most significant and lasting impact on the town centre. They are also, inevitably, those which will take longest to come forward and require further detailed design and feasibility work.

Phase 1: Current Projects

3.19 Phase 1 projects are ongoing and already set to deliver significant benefits to the town centre, its residents, and communities. The council is considering how careful use of local assets can further support its services, as follows:

- a) Harlesden Hub is currently delivering a holistic and responsive service from Harlesden Library, but is restricted by the current space that is insufficient to

cope effectively with service demand. The council is considering longer term options for relocation of the Hub into alternative premises. The capital proposals outlined later in this paper are all being considered as new locations for the Hub alongside the council's other assets in the town centre.

- b) There is an option for Children and Young People (CYP) officers currently based in Challenge House to relocate, making space for Crisis Skylight homelessness charity to take on a 10-year commercial. The homelessness service will be located in the heart of town centre, allowing them to be more visible and create closer links with other VCS organisations in the vicinity which will help to alleviate some of the immediate issues on that core stretch of the high road.
- c) There are plans for an Alternative Provision School based at Roundwood Centre, to be complemented by an enhanced youth offer to provide excellent educational and wrap-around services for young people in Harlesden.
- d) The Family Hub offer is being developed and will be based in the Curzon and Fawood centres subject to Cabinet decision in October. Opportunities for outreach in the 'core' town centre would add value to the offer. The capital proposals in Phases 2 and 3 (outlined later in this paper) should therefore be considered as locations for this outreach activity in the future.
- e) Proposals to develop the Morland Gardens site and deliver additional social housing and a new centre for adult learning are underway, subject to a Cabinet decision.

3.20 **Phase 2: short term proposals**

There are two Phase 2 proposals which are being put forward for consideration. Both of the proposals have been selected from a much longer list of possible interventions because:

- a) they best met the range of community demands that came out of the consultation;
- b) they are deliverable within a relatively short term time period; and
- c) because physically they are significant buildings whose improvement would have a positive knock-on impact on the look and feel of the town centre as whole.

1. *Picture Palace acquisition and fit out: providing workspace and/or cultural amenity in the town centre*

3.21 Despite Harlesden's rich cultural legacy and its diverse community, the town centre lacks workspace and affords no opportunity for cultural activity. Its physical cultural assets – including a former dance hall and cinema – are now vacant or converted to other uses. There is no cinema, no performance space, and nowhere to rehearse or record music. As the home of the London Borough of Culture's (LBOC) 'No Bass Like Home' project, securing a cultural space to house future events, galleries, or cultural workspace would enable the LBOC legacy to take root in Harlesden. Provision of workspace would also serve to support Harlesden's growth and wider commercial function through increased footfall and day-time usage of local shops and eateries.

- 3.22 The former Picture Palace on Manor Park Road has been empty since the beginning of 2017, having previously served the community as a pub and a cinema over the past decades. Site analysis identified the building as a dormant cultural asset in the town centre due to its size, prominent location, and historical significance as a place of entertainment. There is also scope to provide a reasonable quantum of workspace, which could accommodate creative studio spaces for the digital arts and local film/radio production, and an open plan space for shared resources and facilities. Concept designs can be seen in Appendix 3 – attached.
- 3.23 The Picture Palace is owned by JD Wetherspoons, and the council is in active discussion with JD Wetherspoons with a view to acquiring the freehold of the property. It should be noted that the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum is seeking to nominate Picture Palace as an ‘Asset of Community Value’ within the recently adopted Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan, which supports the council’s proposal for the building as outlined below.
- 3.24 If under council ownership, the Picture Palace has the potential to become a significant cultural anchor for the community. The proposal is to lease the building, following an intensive process of engagement with the market, encouraging prospective tenants to put forward ambitious, inclusive, and creative proposals, ideally that host workspace as well as cultural uses.
- 3.25 In addition, increasing footfall at Picture Palace has the potential to mitigate anti-social behaviour through more regular and active use of this street. Principles of ‘designing out crime’ and ‘contextual safeguarding’ will be used to ensure the front of the building integrates with its surroundings, reduces areas of poor light, and minimises opportunities for fly-tipping or other activities.
- 3.26 Post-acquisition it will take several months to complete a detailed design specification, undertake market warming, and commence works to refurbish the space.
- 3.27 The current planning use of the premises is A4 drinking establishments which includes public houses, bars etc.
- 3.28 In order to change the use, planning policy requires evidence that the property is unviable as a public house and that it has been marketed for a period of two years without an A4 user making a suitable offer. Evidence is being compiled regarding the long periods of vacancy in order to evidence that a change of use is required, and the current owner Wetherspoons has agreed to provide evidence that the public house they operated was unviable.
- 3.29 If this evidence is not sufficient to secure the change of use the council will be seeking, then mitigation will be sought via mixed-use premises and / or seeking a meanwhile use for the building whilst the council undertakes to market the space to an A4 operator.
- 3.30 Pending the outcome of the ongoing discussions with JD Wetherspoons, this paper is seeking approval to pursue the acquisition of the Picture Palace.
- 3.31 Learning from the uses of the Picture Palace building can inform the purpose and uses of Designworks, a longer term project outlined in phase 3 below.
- 3.32 **Cost:** a breakdown showing the anticipated purchase price, fit-out costs, and Good Growth Fund contribution is provided in Appendix 1.

2. *Harlesden Methodist Church halls: providing more community and civic space in the heart of the town centre*

- 3.33 Thorough community consultation sessions and urban design studies found a distinct lack of public outdoor spaces and neutral indoor spaces to host community groups or civic events. Numerous local groups and individuals spoke of their desire to deliver more socially focussed interventions, run clubs, or put on local events for the community but were unable to find the appropriate space to do so.
- 3.34 Harlesden Methodist Church and Windrush Hall (formerly Tavistock Hall) are located in the heart of the town centre, facing onto the high road and backing out onto Harlesden Plaza. The site footprint on the ground floor encompasses a church, 2 large meeting halls, several smaller meeting rooms, WCs, and a nursery, all joined by a long central corridor behind the main church building. The first floor holds Windrush Hall, which has recently been re-decorated, WCs, and more individual meeting rooms.
- 3.35 The building currently accommodates a varied secular function as well as being used regularly as a church and for related events (funerals, weddings etc.). A number of different residents, businesses, and community groups use the building – including a Somali after-school club, food bank, local TV producer, and Mahogany Carnival costume designers – but there is more demand for the space than they can provide. The Church council is keen to expand the secular and community function of the building and accommodate the demand from the community for a more multi-functional space in the heart of the town centre, but the building is not fit for purpose and requires urgent refurbishment to accommodate demand from local community groups.
- 3.36 Architects have drawn up concept designs – see Appendix 4 attached – which provide the following benefits:
- New forecourt extension with glass panels facing onto the main high street, to improve a currently poor public realm and activate this stretch of the high street near to the Jubilee Clock. This also presents an opportunity to utilise ‘Designing out crime’ principles to improve the safety in the high street of Harlesden through increased usage and footfall, as well as considering improved lighting and reduced areas for ASB.
 - Re-alignment of internal partitions to create significantly increased quantum of floor space. Changes include enlarged atrium, halls, and open plan design with partitions to allow safer, more flexible spaces for community use and workspace. Note that no investment is proposed for the Church Hall itself, only for the meeting space and halls to the rear of the building.
 - New lift and accessible entrance on Tavistock Road to allow disabled access.
- 3.37 This project would primarily serve the function of enhanced community and civic space, and the Church have indicated in writing their willingness to partner with the council on this programme. The council would have no ownership or lease over the Methodist Church and would not benefit from any capital appreciation. The Church would be required to fund any and all revenue commitments needed to support the management of the newly created space.
- 3.38 **Cost:** Initial costing shows a total of £1m will be needed to fund the refurbishments. Recognising that this will not come via the council’s capital pipeline, this paper proposes that an NCIL application is made by the church, which can then be used as match funding to lever

in external funds from e.g. the GLA. This includes estimated costs of design and project management.

Phase 3: long term proposals

- 3.39 There are a number of other proposals that have emerged from the engagement with the community and the evidence base that has been compiled. Whilst a full list of potential long term proposals is listed at Appendix 5, most require further design and feasibility work and are not in a position to be brought forward at this point.
- 3.40 The most viable long-term project to bring forward is the proposal for Designworks – where early concept designs have already been produced. It is important that the learning is not lost and momentum is maintained to deliver these wider aspirations. The phased approach to delivery outlined in this paper would ensure that proposals for the future Designworks site are able to build on learning and increased demand generated from the Phase 2 projects to deliver an aspirational multi-functional, cultural and community centre for Harlesden that complements the other uses.

Designworks

- 3.41 The Designworks was originally acquired and refurbished by Brent Council in 1993. The council, recognising that the Designworks building is coming to the end of its useful life, appointed Adjaye Associates to prepare a feasibility and concept study for the site which assumed complete demolition and rebuild. Please see Appendix 6 for concept drawings showing the potential of the site to deliver a revitalised public realm, and host a range of community activities, leisure, workspace and cultural space.
- 3.42 Two engagement sessions were also undertaken to raise awareness about the potential of this project, listen to the views of local community groups and understand how Brent residents could get involved in the project.
- 3.43 The feasibility study included research into the site history, engagement sessions, and massing studies to develop concept sketches. The sketches seek to deliver on a range of overarching objectives for the project that have been identified so far. These will need to be further refined as the project progresses:
- Create a unique place that inspires aspiration
 - A civic space for a diverse local community
 - Instilling genuine community ownership and belonging
 - Address issues around the lack of space for the Brent youth
- 3.44 The Designworks project therefore builds on the same principles as the Phase 2 proposals outlined above. To that end, the Phase 2 proposals outlined above will act as test beds for the kinds of interventions and spaces that will work in the future Designworks site.
- 3.45 In the interim, the council will finalise the specification of the various community spaces and refine the operating model for the new Designworks. It will do this by taking learning from the short-term projects outlined in Phase 2 above (Picture Palace and Methodist Church) and by involving the community to benefit from the diversity of ideas and assessing these to ensure the business case remains robust.

- 3.46 The concept designs for Designworks include public realm alterations, including its relationship with the side alley. Designing out crime principles will be adopted to consider how best to reduce anti-social behaviour through investment in the building and public realm.
- 3.47 This report proposes that funds are allocated from the council's Capital Programme in order to procure an architectural led design team and other pre-construction services for progressing a robust planning application submission for the Designworks redevelopment. These initial works can be funded from existing capital reserves and details of the estimated costs are provided in Appendix 1. Members should note that the estimated total value of the project is circa £23m. This sum is liable to change due to a number of matters including the views of the advisory group as to the specification of the various community spaces the operating model, and due to the further work of the design team.
- 3.48 It should be noted that there are no immediate financial implications arising from this decision, however the granting of a detailed planning application is expected to significantly enhance the value of the Designworks site. In the longer term, a more substantial capital outlay may be necessary should the council decide to implement the plans that come from the work of the design team and the conclusions of the steering group.

Strategic alignment

- 3.49 The benefits accrued by the proposals outlined above meet a number of strategic objectives in the council's Borough Plan. These include:
- A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all
 - A great place to do good work
 - Promotes diversification of high streets
 - Explores options to make direct investment in the provision and operation of workspace
 - Make Brent a place where culture is celebrated and vibrant
 - Community-led outcomes for positive opportunities for diverse communities

Funding for Phase 2 and Phase 3 proposals

- 3.50 A detailed breakdown of the capital investment to deliver workspace, cultural uses, and more community space for the town centre is provided in Appendix 1. Table 2 below outlines what services and initiatives will be run from each proposed venue, alongside the existing services run by the council. The map at Appendix 7 shows the location of all existing assets as well as those being put forward for proposed investment.
- 3.51 Following short term capital investment, it will also be important for local businesses and community leaders to take forward plans to enrich the Harlesden offer, economically, culturally and environmentally.
- 3.52 Strengthening the local business base is also key to ensuring that Harlesden retains its unique identity and authenticity, and continues to serve the local community despite increasing land values and pressure as new shopping destinations emerge in Old Oak Common. This is particularly true as the range of businesses in Harlesden reflect the diverse mix of communities

living locally, and provide important cultural resources to the Afro-Caribbean, Somali, Brazilian, Eastern European communities and more.

3.53 **Cost:** the final funding requirement is therefore to provide a revenue funding source of up to £0.5m for local capacity building and businesses support. The fund will support:

- a) capacity building to support local governance and future programming of newly created or enhanced facilities. This could be led by a consortia of the numerous active community groups in the town centre including the business community, which will be capable of pushing forward with wider plans, such as for a street market, and a cultural events calendar to maximise use of the new assets that are proposed including the workspace, cultural space, and new community space. Harlesden businesses are already seeking to establish themselves as a Community Interest Company (CIC) so could coordinate fundraising, cultural events, and marketing for the town centre and wider community.
- b) micro-loan scheme aimed at the local business base to support them with investment that will support investment in digital presence and diversification of their businesses all with the aim of helping them to reach a wider consumer audience and ‘future proofing’ against competition from OOC and wider trends away from traditional retail.

3.54 If the council provides revenue funds for the micro-loan scheme, it is possible the council could secure capital from the GLA’s GGF as ‘match’ to provide a mixed funding stream. There is precedent of other local authorities in London securing funding from the GLA for grants and micro-loan schemes: Tottenham secured funds under the Opportunity Investment Fund and Croydon Council recently won Good Growth Funding to roll out a grant scheme for local businesses to support diversification on the high street.

Table 2 – ‘Sites surrounding Harlesden’s core town centre’, summarises nearby sites to ensure complimentary uses of assets.

Site - peripheries of Harlesden	Ownership	Current function	Future function	Capital funds being requested?
Roundwood Centre	Council	Youth provision such as Connexions	Alternative Provision School	No
Morland Gardens	Council	Brent Start adult education	Brent Start adult education	No
Fawood and Curzon centres	Council	Children’s Centre	Family Hub	No

Guidance Notes for acquisition in Town Centres

3.55 The council has developed Guidance Notes, see Appendix 8, to frame decision making by the council around acquiring properties in town centres.

3.56 It is proposed that these Guidance Notes are used to support consideration of property acquisition on a case by case basis, related to the merits of the acquisition either commercially, to enable development of new homes or workspace, or to bring a property back into use or to change use to enhance the town centre.

- 3.57 A strong evidence base of need is required to enable each acquisition, whether that be an identified requirement to respond to new homes or jobs, or to respond to a local gap such as workspace, cultural amenity, or community space.
- 3.58 Decisions will be made according to existing delegated authority, relating to property value.

Next steps

- 3.59 Investment in Harlesden’s social and capital infrastructure will unlock many wider benefits as outlined above. This paper seeks a recommendation to release the capital expenditure to deliver on the proposals as outlined above, as well as seeking out external funds where appropriate for refurbishment and fit out, e.g. the GLA’s Good Growth Fund (GGF).
- 3.60 If this approval is granted, next steps and key milestones are envisaged as follows:

Table 3

Milestone	Timescale
Good Growth Fund Stage 1 application submitted	14 th October 2019
Cabinet approval sought	11 th November 2019
Good Growth Fund Stage 2 deadline	February 2020
GGF awards announced	March 2020
Detailed designs commissioned and Planning permission sought	March-July 2020
Delivery agreements signed with the Methodist Church	March 2020
Delivery of Phase 1 commences	August 2020

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 This paper requests the release of capital funds from the council’s capital resources, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 In addition, the Methodist Church aim to apply for £0.5m of NCIL matched with £0.5m of GLA Good Growth Funding in order to deliver their proposed project.
- 4.3 The report also requests £0.5m revenue funding to support the objectives outlined in 3.52 above. This could potentially also attract £0.5m GLA match (capital) to bring the overall capacity building funding pot to a total of £1m.
- 4.4 The costs noted above are currently indicative and may fluctuate once more detailed design and costings have been commissioned. It is also worth noting that a valuation is being commissioned for Picture Palace before a formal offer can be made to the current freeholders.
- 4.5 Initial estimates have been included to cover development fees and the development of more detailed designs.
- 4.6 Under current proposals, the Council would have no ownership or lease over the Methodist Church and would not benefit from any capital appreciation. The Council would be reliant on the delivery partner to maintain the asset. There is precedent in the council for managing capital projects where the council does not own the assets (e.g. Academy capital programmes). Service Level Agreements or Memorandums of Understanding would need to be agreed with partners to ensure the capital works are committed to by both parties upon

receipt of the capital finance, and that they also commit to the management of the space to mitigate risk of empty public facing spaces.

- 4.7 If Cabinet approves the acquisition of the Picture Palace, the council would benefit from the capital appreciation associated with the proposed improvements. It is anticipated that the building will generate some ongoing revenue income from leasing the space but this will vary depending on what the usage is.
- 4.8 It is estimated that the Picture Palace building could generate a rental income of between £0.05 - £0.08m per annum, based on ensuring affordability for a community led use. This could be workspace, a cultural use, or combined use.
- 4.9 The conditions attached to any external GLA funding and any deadlines for on-site completion are not yet known and will be reviewed before releasing any council capital.
- 4.10 Any local grant funding would need to be carefully managed to ensure that funds were appropriately used and spend could be monitored by the council.
- 4.11 The council capital contribution could be taken from the Land and Property acquisition fund of which a provision of £45m is currently held within the capital pipeline schemes approved by Cabinet.
- 4.12 If agreed, adequate revenue provision will need to be set aside from the Corporate revenue budget for the proposed £0.5m seed funding.
- 4.13 While the Picture Palace is vacant there will be revenue costs for security checks on the building as well as business rates. This may be mitigated by a 'meanwhile use' of the building for event based activities prior to completion of final building designs, planning approval, and the competition to lease the building.
- 4.14 Taxation has not been considered at this point and VAT advice may need to be sought at a later date.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Regarding the acquisition of the Picture Palace building, Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Council may acquire by agreement any land whether situated inside or outside the Brent area for the purpose of a) any of its functions allowed by statute b) the benefit, improvement or development of its area.
- 5.2 The Methodist Church are eligible to bid for NCIL. NCIL receipts have to be applied support the local area by funding the provision improvement replacement or maintenance of infrastructure and anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area. The Council is to engage with communities to determine how these funds are to be allocated.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Council bid to the GLA's Good Growth Fund to secure capital funding. The precise detail of the GLA's Good Growth Fund grant agreement will need to be agreed with the GLA. Any grant funding received will be subject to certain conditions such as, match funding by the council; grant money is spent on capital; the schemes will be delivered to programme to agreed dates. Failure to adhere to such conditions could require the Council to refund some or all of the grant received.

5.4 The Council will be responsible for ensuring that any funding awarded will be spent in accordance with all applicable legal requirements, to include state aid, public procurement law, wider public law (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and planning law.

6.0 Equalities Implications

6.1 These proposals seek to increase capacity for workspace, community space and civic space in Harlesden town centre. It is important to recognise that new interventions of the kind specified above can have negative equality implications if the access to and benefits from the new facilities are not equally distributed amongst the various communities and groups who currently live and work in Harlesden.

6.2 Negative perceptions of gentrification can occur if the impression is given that the new facilities are aimed at newer, more affluent arrivals to the town centre, even if that is not the reality. There is also a genuine risk that the primary beneficiaries of workspace and cafes in particular are a more affluent resident group who do not accurately reflect the diversity of the ward/town centre.

6.3 To mitigate this risk, the council has taken a comprehensive and proactive approach to engage with a wide range of stakeholders in the research and development phase of the project (see Appendix 2). This ensures their voices have been heard when designing interventions that reflect the needs of a range of community groups from across a cross-section of society. It also means that a wider range of people will feel ownership over the new facilities and therefore feel they have permission to use them.

6.4 Finally, where more formal partnerships are required to bring spaces back to use, programming is being agreed with local groups wherever possible to ensure that existing groups, residents, and businesses are the primary beneficiaries of the new facilities.