

Decision Maker: Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee

Date: 27th March 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: Beckenham Public Realm Improvement Programme

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Chief Officer: Marc Hume, Director Renewal & Recreation

Ward: Bromley Town Centre

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform Members of the Renewal and Recreational PDS of the proposed programme for the development of Public Realm Improvements to Beckenham Town Centre and seeks their views on the potential list of short term improvements.
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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the PDS comment on the potential list of short term improvements as shown in Appendix 1.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy. Local Implementation Plan 2011-14
 2. BBB Priority: Vibrant Thriving Town Centres.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Not identified
 4. Total current budget for this head: £Nil

 5. Source of funding: Not identified
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 6
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: TBC
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable. PDS Report
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Beckenham Town Centre
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Yes.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: NA

3. COMMENTARY

Background and Issues

3.1 A recent health check update of Beckenham Town centre was undertaken as part of the preparation for the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. This provides an assessment of use, value and demand and allows an evaluation of the performance of Beckenham at the present time. Assessed against the indicators set out in Annex D of Planning Policy Statement 4, the following summarises the conclusions of this health check in terms of the vitality and viability of Beckenham Town Centre:

- Whilst there are some vacancies within the town centre, there is evidence of healthy churn and limited long term vacancies. A number of national retailers are interested in taking space within the centre.
- Beckenham has an above average representation of restaurants and bars.
- The range of retail uses provided in the centre is broadly in line with what would be expected from the national average. However, there is an under representation of national retailers in the comparison goods sector and overall comparison floorspace compared to the national average. This is in part a reflection of how attractive the town is seen as a comparison retail centre.
- There is a gap evident in the comparison offer of Beckenham town centre. The presence of eight (8) charity shops representing 13% of comparison floorspace is an indication of weak comparison retailer demand.
- Retail commercial yields are weak as a result of the lack of high profile comparison good retailers.
- Annual footfall counts across the town has illustrated that there has been a continued decline in footfall over the last 3 years.

July 2011 23, 604 average daily – 18% decline on previous July
July 2010 28, 770 - 34% decline on previous July
July 2009 43,767

3.2 The High Street is unusual in that it there are several separate parts to it. There is a common link in terms of the street name, and the retail presence along its full length. However, the 90 degree bend at the High Street/Kelsey Park Road/Manor Road junction means that the north/south section of the High Street is separated from the east/west section. In addition, the east/west section is not straight and the bends split the High Street up further. The disjointed nature of the High Street make it difficult to navigate around, especially for shoppers and casual leisure visitors.

3.3 Although the urban realm is in general good condition, it is beginning to look tired, and feedback from retailers is that it is also a contributory factor in the footfall decline. There is a particular issue with street clutter and a lack of a unified approach, with many different colour schemes and styles in existence. There is little co-ordination between the various sections of the High Street meaning that there is a lack of continuity of design and little sense of arrival. There are also a number of alleyways and parking areas off the High Street which detract from the look of the area and may make the town centre feel less safe to visitors and residents. Wayfinding in the town centre is poor, particularly the link between the station and the High Street.

3.4 Beckenham High Street also forms part of the Strategic Route Network (SRN) and is heavily trafficked, which is recognised as a major problem that is having a negative impact on the economic prosperity of the High Street. According to a 2011 traffic survey carried out by Council Engineer's, the east/west section of the High Street carries between 400 and 450 vehicles per hour on average, making it challenging to design a public realm treatment that would not cause additional congestion on the strategic route. The A2015 (Rectory Road and Southend Road) is also SRN. There is scope to significantly improve pedestrian movements throughout the High Street, however, this may have to take the form of pavement widening and better (and more frequent) crossing and parking/loading facilities, because of the SRN status.

4 **Developing an Improvement Programme**

4.1 There have been a number of previous studies that have examined the issues confronting Beckenham Town Centre and each has recommended a series of improvements. A summary of these improvements and their sources is attached as [Appendix 1](#). There are themes and suggested improvements that are common to each of the studies. It is acknowledged that many of the suggested recommendations relate to improvements to the public realm and could involve significant alterations to the road network. The Council consider that it will be these significant highway/public realm improvements that will make the town centre more attractive to comparison retailers and arrest the continued decline in footfall numbers. In response to this the Council have included in the Borough's Local Implementation Plan 2011-14 submission its intention to develop a future Area Based Improvement scheme for a major highway/public scheme in Beckenham.

4.2 An attempt has been made to prioritise improvements from the list in Appendix 1, identifying those improvements which would logically form part of this larger TfL Bid scheme and those that could form part of a short term improvement package that could be implemented in 2012, subject to funding being identified. The PDS Committee are asked for their views on the suggested list of potential short term improvements and the general approach to the developing the Programme. A comprehensive list of all the suggestions made so far has been included in Appendix 1. It should be noted that officers have not yet considered in detail the desirability, or practical and financial implications, of many of these proposals. The work of assessing the viability of the suggestions made will be taken forward by officers from the relevant departments once the Committee has had an opportunity to review Appendix 1.

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4.4 In order to have the best chance of obtaining funding, the initial Step 1 bid to Transport for London, it needs to be clear what the scheme is trying to achieve and provide a good idea, via a concept design, of how this is to be achieved. The Council has been successful in the past in obtaining TfL's Area Based Programme, based on schemes that have been well thought out, achievable, have clear objectives and an initial concept design. Capital funding of £50k would be required to undertake this concept design work to support the submission of a Step 1 Area Based Bid to the TfL in September 2012. If successful this could lead to detailed design work starting in April 2013 and implementation commencing early 2014.

4.5 The purpose of the concept design will be to:

- Define the area of a scheme
- Set out the issues with the existing area that need to be addressed
- Define the elements that need to be considered (e.g. access, public transport, traffic, parking, loading etc.)
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of a scheme
- Provide a Concept Design to inform a Step 1 bid to the TfL Area Based programme.

The brief for the work will be split into two parts.

Stage 1: Baseline Audit, Analysis & Consultation

There is already a significant amount of baseline information available from work already undertaken by the council, this includes:

- Pedestrian counts;
- Traffic assessment;
- Street Audit;
- Land use and ownership survey.

All of this information will be provided to the successful consultant team upon appointment and it is anticipated that the selected consultancy will work closely with Bromley officers and external partners in the further analysis and interpretation of the baseline data including results from business questionnaires and a stakeholder workshop to inform the next stage of the public realm concept design strategy.

Stage 2: Concept Design Strategy & Outline Costing

It is proposed that the following work is undertaken by the appointed consultant team in partnership with the council and agreed by all key stakeholders:

- Develop a clear concept design strategy, which is complementary to achieving the objectives of 'Building a Better Bromley' and meeting the needs of stakeholders.
- Address the operational requirements of key stakeholders eg. TfL and local businesses for parking and servicing etc.
- The concept design strategy should indicate measures to improve the traffic management of the town centre and also any bus prioritisation or potential re-routing.
- Provide a clear set of plans, detail drawings and specification for approval and outline costing.

Governance and Member Oversight

4.5 The R&R PDS on 26th January 2012 agreed to reform the Beckenham and West Wickham Member Working Party (BWMWP) under the following terms of reference:

“To identify and scrutinise factors which particularly affect the economic sustainability of Beckenham and West Wickham Town Centres and suggest costed action proposals.”

The initial meeting of the Working Party took place on the 9th February 2012 and an initial list of scheme objectives were drafted to inform the development of the TfL scheme and these are attached as Appendix 2. It is proposed that the Working Party will meet once a month and provide the input into the scheme design.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The development of the Improvement Plan and Step 1 Bid are entirely consistent with Policy Objectives set out in Building A Better Bromley 2011 and the Local Implementation Plan 2011-14.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is no identified budget to undertake the list of short term potential improvements listed in Appendix 1, although a Step 1 Bid is being prepared for submission to TfL in September 2012 for 2013/14 onwards.
- 6.2 Several of the items listed in Appendix 1 not only require one-off capital/revenue funding, but also require potentially significant on-going revenue costs that will need to be considered should the one-off funding become available in the future.

Non-Applicable Sections:	LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Beckenham Civic Trust Improvement Plan 2011