

# Town Centre North Development Brief – Final for Adoption



<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	7 September 2023
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Michael Hardware, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Pauline Elliott, Interim Head of Planning and Building Control (01279) 446595
<b>Contributing Officer:</b>	Vicky Forgione, Principal Planning Officer (01279) 446878
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Forward Plan number I016012
<b>Call In:</b>	This item is subject to call in procedures
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Rebuild our town
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Toddbrook

## **Recommended that Cabinet:**

- A** Notes the responses received to the consultation in Appendix B and approves the consequential amendments made to the Town Centre North Development Brief.
- B** Formally adopts the Development Brief as set out in Appendix A to this report.

## **Reason for decision**

- A** To enable the development brief to be formally adopted and used in the determination of planning applications for the Town Centre area, providing encouragement to the private sector to invest and regenerate the area.

## Other Options

- A** Do not prepare a development brief for Town Centre North and rely only on the Harlow Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (HTCM SPD) to help determine planning applications for the area. The HTCMF SPD is not considered detailed enough for each Opportunity Area to help provide specific guidance for applications that may come forward. The development brief is also more up to date in regard to development proposals and applications that have come forward.
- B** Prepare a brief for a smaller area around Market Square, Market House, Post Office Road, Adams House and The Rows. Officers considered preparing a brief for a smaller area but it was considered that the entire northern part of the town centre requires a comprehensive scheme following the boundary of Opportunity Area 3 HTCMF SPD.

## Background

1. The development brief covers the northern part of the town centre from Velizy Avenue to the east over to Haydens Road to the west and from Fourth Avenue to the north to East Gate to the south. This follows the boundary of Opportunity Area 3 in the Council's HTCMF SPD.
2. There were several issues identified in the area which the development brief will address as well as opportunities to capitalise upon. These are set out below:
  - a) Several existing redevelopment and public realm schemes which will begin to stimulate investment and encourage regeneration of this area including the Bus Station Interchange, Strawberry Star planning consent, development proposals and public realm improvements at East Gate. The brief will set out a coordinated approach to delivery and ensure that layout and design principles in the HTCMF SPD are considered.
  - b) The age of the buildings means that some require improvement but there are also buildings which require protection and/or consideration such as the Market Clock and tiles on Adams House and the distinctive placement of windows, balconies and colours at Market House.
  - c) Vacant space especially at Stone Cross Square with opportunity to re-purpose this public realm.
  - d) Poor legibility particularly for pedestrians arriving on the periphery and from the underpasses.
  - e) Poor appearance around the edge of the area.
  - f) Higher levels of vacancies compared to other parts of the town centre.

- g) Lack of green space, trees and landscaping.
3. The following objectives (summarised) have been identified for the area based on the issues and opportunities identified above.
- a) Create an identity for Town Centre North drawing trade northwards, reducing vacancies and bringing the area 'back to life'.
  - b) Improve the appearance of the area through enhancements to the public realm, buildings and spaces.
  - c) Making better use of vacant space especially at Stone Cross Square.
  - d) Protect the area's important architectural values.
  - e) Improve the legibility and movement for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - f) Significantly 'green' the area.
4. The draft development brief comprises of two parts: 1) an introduction and background paper which provides an overview of the area including any constraints, landownership, key buildings and spaces. It also sets out objectives for the area and a delivery strategy including potential infrastructure requirements; and 2) a separate paper which incorporates several specific site briefs for buildings and spaces that have the opportunity for redevelopment or regeneration.

## **Consultation**

5. The draft development brief was published for consultation between Monday 15 May 2023 and Friday 9 June 2023. This is a period of four weeks.
6. The Council complied with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement in relation to the consultation. This included:
- a) Notifications being issued to parties who have expressed an interest in planning documents including statutory consultees;
  - b) Letters being issued to businesses and neighbouring residents as well as landowners where details were available;
  - c) Posts being made on the Council's social media channels to advertise the consultation;

- d) Hard copies of the development brief being available at the Civic Centre, and Harlow Central Library; and
- e) An online version being available on the Council's website.

7. In total, 15 people, organisations or companies responded to the consultation. Appendix B summarises the representations along with a Council response. Where the Council considers amendments are required to the document, this is highlighted in bold. Comments made on the document include the following:

- a) Support from landowners for redevelopment of the Old Cinema for mixed use and a link from Kitson Way to West Square and additional storeys and improved façade at Aylmer House.
- b) Concerns over tall buildings and effects on wind tunnelling in the area.
- c) Support for more sport, leisure and entertainment uses but also responses supporting more shops and a market.
- d) Need for more modern architecture and better quality materials but also protecting features, most notable Market Clock and tiles.
- e) Concerns over traffic congestion in the area.
- f) Additional wording on biodiversity, SuDS and reference to Source Protection Zone 3.
- g) Additional guidance on sites which are potentially contaminated.
- h) Reference to potential secondary school places contribution.
- i) Support for comprehensive approaches, urban park and natural play areas and possible architectural competitions for some sites.
- j) Ensure links across Fourth Avenue to Sainsbury's.
- k) Need for a Heritage Impact Assessment to ensure the listed sculptures are protected and enhanced.
- l) Awareness of the need to find alternative provision for PAH parking needs if developing existing parking areas. This will be required on the existing hospital site until it is relocated but also to support potential future health services in the town centre.
- m) Concerns from Royal Mail over how their operations may affect new residents in potential development sites around them and the loss of parking for them. They wish to be engaged on any discussions regarding potential relocation.

## **Next Steps**

8. The Town Centre North Development Brief will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will also inform pre-application discussions on relevant developments.
9. The adopted development brief will be hosted on the Council's website and hard copies made available upon request.

## **Implications**

### **Equalities and Diversity**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix C to the report.

### **Climate Change**

The redevelopment of the Town Centre North area will be an opportunity to help mitigate climate change by introducing more green spaces and landscaping that provide sequestration, building better quality and sustainable buildings in accordance with the Council's Design Guide Addendum and introducing more sustainable modes of movement through better footpath and cycle route connections and reducing parking provision.

### **Communities and Environment**

The Development Brief will help shape and control the development within the Town Centre North area and as set out in paragraph 3 and the appendix will aim to sympathetically redevelop the area for the benefit of residents and business.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

### **Finance**

The Town Centre North area features as part of the aspirations for improvement and regeneration of the town and funding has and will be included within the Council's financial plans to ensure that the regeneration priorities are delivered.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

The Council is following the procedure for supplementary planning documents set out in section 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 correctly.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Town Centre North Development Brief (Final)

Appendix B – Summary of representations received and Council's response

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

**Background Papers**

[Statement of Community Involvement  
Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document](#)

**Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

HTCMF SPD - Harlow Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document