

The Stow Neighbourhood Centre Design Framework
Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Statement

July 2016

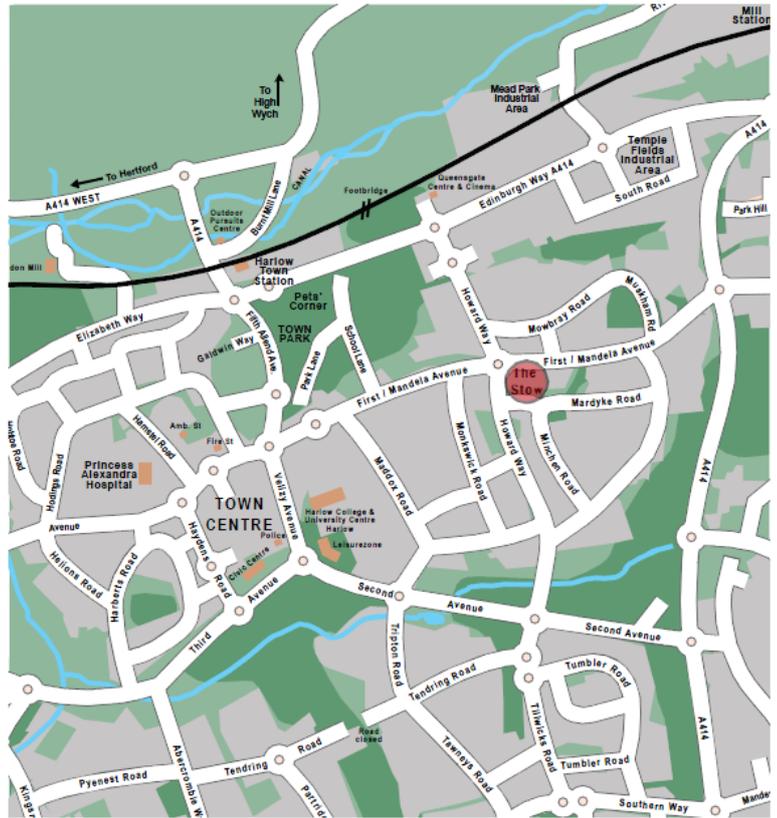
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1. Background

1.1. The design framework was produced to help guide future developments and improvements to The Stow Neighbourhood Centre. The Design Framework is being led by Harlow District Council with assistance from Place Services at Essex County Council.

1.2. The purpose of this study is to evolve the 2013 'Live, work, shop and play' masterplan into a clear, robust and deliverable Design Framework which can be adopted as planning policy in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document. It will promote and guide development opportunities, whilst identifying how funding, reinvestment and planning gain might be used to improve existing buildings and the public realm, as part of a combined regeneration package for the area.



The Stow in relation to Harlow Town centre

1.3. The key proposals of the 2013 'Live, work, shop and play' masterplan are themed around:

1.3.1. **Refocussing**

Creating new and improved public space as a focus of the new development.

1.3.2. **Reconnecting**

Improving access and vehicle routes to increase passing trade.

1.3.3. **Revealing**

Improving the visibility of The Stow and its signage and decluttering key street scenes.

1.3.4. **Restoring**

Ensuring all new development keeps to the principles and styles of The Stow such as the extension of feature tiling and replacement curtain walling above Dorringtons.

1.3.5. **Redefining**

Reviewing the future retail offer in The Stow and how it can serve local need.

1.4 The Stow was the first of the neighbourhood centres, situated in the Centre of Nettleswell and Mark Hall wards, it was designed as a shopping and social space for residents. It fronts both First Avenue and Howard Way and is very well connected to the town centre for both public transport and pedestrian/cycleways. The green space

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to the immediate south of The Stow provides the neighbourhood with green amenity space and recreation space.

- 1.5 The Stow primarily supports the surrounding residential areas, providing both convenience retail shopping and a range of services. The Stow has gradually declined as a result of changing habits to both shopping and social interaction.
- 1.6 As of July 2015 the tenure type in The Stow was 74 percent Council tenants (42 properties) and 26 per cent private tenants or owners (15 properties).

2. The Stow Neighbourhood Centre Design Framework SPD Consultation

Background

- 2.1. Public consultation is an important part of the planning process and the Council is committed to involving the community in the preparation of all local planning policy documents, in accordance with national legislative requirements and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement¹ (SCI).
- 2.2. A pre-engagement open event was held on Thursday 04 September 2014 at the Annexe, Moot Hall, The Stow. This was a drop-in event in which business owners and local residents could give their views. Following this additional feedback was received via email and an online questionnaire.
- 2.3. Reoccurring public feedback and comments from this process was then used, along with a range of other evidence, to produce a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Other evidence included the 2013 'Live, Work, Shop and Play' document, existing national and local planning policy, an analysis of the historic environment, current land use and a 'walk and talk' event involving key stakeholders which took place in August 2014.

Viewing and Commenting on the SPD

- 2.4. The public consultation on the draft SPD ran from Monday 01 June 2015 to Monday 29 June 2015. During this period paper copies of the draft SPD could be viewed at Harlow Civic Centre, Harlow Central Library and Mark Hall Library which is located in The Stow. The documents were available online via the Council website. An unmanned exhibition also ran in the Civic Centre reception from Friday 05 June 2015 until Monday 29 June 2015. This presented a selection of the plans and images from the SPD.
- 2.5. Respondents were encouraged to submit their comments through the consultation portal via the Council's website. Alternatively comments could be emailed or posted into the Council. There were some hand written comments submitted on the exhibition day on Thursday 04 June 2015.
- 2.6. When responding to the consultation, respondents had to provide their contact details, as anonymous responses could not be accepted. This ensured that the process was fair and transparent.

¹ At the time of the Emerging Strategy and Further Options consultation, the extant SCI was adopted in 2007. A review of the SCI has since been finalised and adopted following a period of public consultation, meaning the SCI: Review is now the adopted SCI for Harlow. The revised SCI reflects changes in national legislation and consultation best practices since 2007.

2.7. Respondents could also speak to Council Officers in person or by telephone for advice, but only written representations could be considered.

Public Exhibition

2.8. On Thursday 04 June 2015 an exhibition was held at 22 The Stow, an empty retail unit, to allow members of the community and other stakeholders to come and view the documents. Visitors were able to discuss their opinions with the representatives of Harlow Council and Essex County Council. Over 80 people attended the exhibition and were given the option to leave written comments.

Consultation Materials

2.9. The table below details the consultation materials and their availability:

Material	Availability
Main consultation document	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hard copies available for viewing at the Civic Centre, Harlow Central Library, Mark Hall Library and exhibition.• Downloadable from the Council website.
Summary maps and images	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On display during exhibition.• On display in at the Civic Centre between 05 and 29 June 2015.• Downloadable from the Council website.
CD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtainable from exhibition and on request from the Council

2.10. The consultation document set out information on:

- The background policy and initiatives.
- A baseline analysis.
- An outline of three possible development options.
- Details of previous and planned consultation.

Notification Methodology

2.11. A letter was sent out to all addresses within 80 meters of the study area inviting them to participate in the consultation and notifying them of the exhibition date and location. This included all unit owners and occupiers.

2.12. A letter or email (dependent upon previously collected preferred methods of contact), was also sent out to relevant groups. These included local residents associations, Harlow Area Access Group, Councillors, the Harlow Youth Council, Utility Companies, Fire and Police Services, charity groups such as Age Concern, Essex County Council, the Civic Society, the Harlow Chamber of Commerce, local transport providers and national organisations including Historic England and Natural England.

Appendix B

2.13. A press notice and press release were both printed in The Harlow Star newspaper prior to the exhibition and five notices were placed up at strategic points around The Stow area advertising both the consultation and exhibition.

3. Analysis of responses

- 3.1 Of the 15 responses received 12 were in favour of The Stow being redeveloped to some extent. The key issues brought up by the consultees and the opinions on potential solutions are explored below.
- 3.2 The full comments are available from on the Harlow District Council website. A link to the comments can be found on The Stow SPD page or by following the link below. <https://harlow.jdi-consult.net/ldp/readdoc.php?docid=14>
- 3.3 Text from all of the consultation responses was used to create the below word cloud. The larger the word the more commonly it was used in the comments received. Notably the words 'parking', 'park', 'road' and 'car' were commonly used- indicating the issues around the movement and parking of traffic in the area. 'Shop', 'shops' and 'service' also stand out as common themes.



Issues Identified

- 3.4 Safety and concern for anti-social behaviour was highlighted as an issue. Respondents made reference to the poor behaviour and drinking habits of young people. It was stated that a problem is “youths congregating to annoy residents”. The safety of children was questioned and safety of pedestrians walking into the Stow was also a concern.

3.5

Council Officer Comments: The Community Safety Team have dealt with reports of anti-social behaviour in The Stow for the past five years. Some (including a complaint made in summer 2014) were relating specifically to the activities of young people. Essex Police carried out patrols as result of this and 2015 so far has seen a reduction in the number of complaints received about the area.

In addition to Police patrols diaries were issued to shops to help monitor issues and visits were carried out by the Community Safety Team; however, no diaries were returned.

3.6 The current range of shops was found to be disappointing for some residents. Some lamented the loss of a bank while several feel that the Service Bays are “overrun with fast food outlets. We could do with less of these and more shops and services that might be useful”. Several respondents made reference to the fact that there were empty units within The Stow.

3.7

Council Officer Comments: The Service Bay Area has been investigated by the Environmental Health team over recent years. The team understand that in terms of best practise the takeaway restaurants in the Service Bays would not be there- mainly due to concerns over food safety. However, it is acknowledged that it is unlikely that small businesses can afford best practice.

The team have received complaints from at least one resident of St Andrew House, the building to the rear of the Service Bays. This was in relation to noise and smell however the investigation did not find that there was formally a nuisance.

In terms of the compliance of food outlets all have been inspected by the Environmental Health Team within the past 22 months. Based on the results from these last inspections, 75 per cent of outlets were broadly compliant with food hygiene standards. This is below the percentage for Harlow overall.

3.8 Several respondents made reference to a perceived lack of support for local business. One shop owner was concerned with the lack of discussion prior to the draft SPD being presented. Many were concerned that big businesses and chains would be given priority over independent shops and used Aldi as an example of this happening: “How is one shop so powerful as to dictate what happens to the whole area, if they

cared about the Stow then surely they would have integrated somehow into the shopping area rather than segregating themselves.”

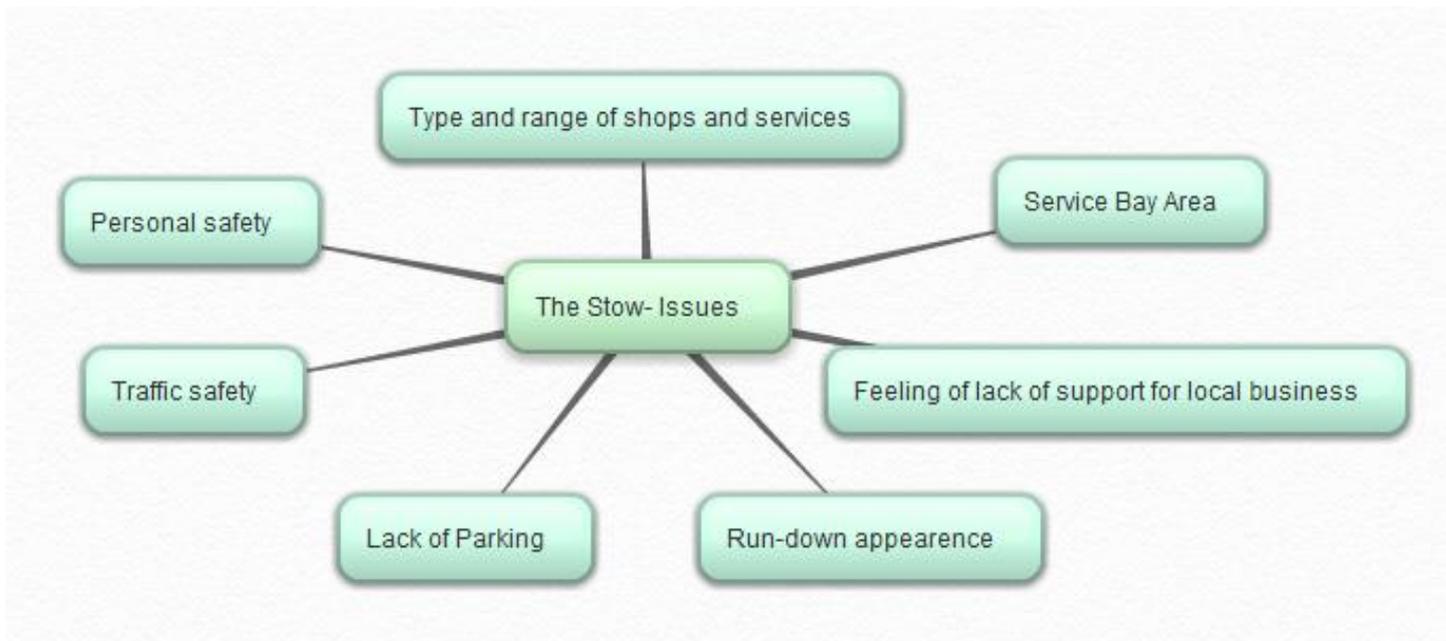
3.9 Other issues that were raised by residents and business owners on the day include negative attitudes about the visual appearance of the Service Bay Area. Some of the business owners raised the need for the Service Bays in allowing local people to run small businesses at a relatively low cost.

3.10

Council Officer Comments: In terms of visual appearance the Waste Team suggested that the rear of the shops were particularly unsightly. The shop owners do not have storage behind their units to store containers and other waste and so these often sit out on the pavement before being collected.

Both the Waste Team and the Area Housing Team made reference to the problem with pigeons in The Stow.

3.11



Comments on Proposed Framework

3.12 Positive comments included support for new service bay proposals with one comment stating that this was “long overdue”. The proposals for extra parking received a positive response, however one comment did stress the need for “a minimum of two parking spaces per dwelling”.

3.13 There was general agreement from respondents that the frontage of Moot House needs to be made more presentable, but concern over its future use. One

respondent was concerned that using this as a market space may not be an appropriate or successful use of the space.

- 3.14 A response was received from the Harlow Art Trust who were broadly supportive of the aims of the draft SPD. The organisation made clear that they would wish to be involved in the procurement of new public art in order to embed proposed works within the wider collection. They believe that the existing pieces of sculpture should be regarded and positive and their setting be enhanced.
- 3.15 Historic England were mainly supportive stating that “Many of the proposed newly created views and well-designed new buildings would enhance the setting of designated heritage assets”. These assets include the Church of our Lady of Fatima and the Moot Hall.
- 3.16 More negatives views were received regarding whether extra trees would be properly planted and maintained and one respondent questioned the plans for car parking, suggesting that a dispersed parking strategy may stop a larger car park just becoming an Aldi overflow.
- 3.17 On the day of the public exhibition there was much debate over the possible re-opening of the through road. Some visitors were open to the idea, suggesting that it may lower rates of anti-social behaviour. However the comments received were mainly against the idea of reopening the road as it may become a rat run or may be dangerous to pedestrians. One visitor to the exhibition in The Stow suggested that a half way approach may be possible with a small amount of parking allowing customers to visit shops for a short period of time.

Other Suggestions and Solutions

- 3.18 Short term solutions suggested in comments included the need for more seating areas. One local business owner put forward a range of smaller short term solutions including removing rubbish, improving paths and kerbs, pruning of trees and grass cutting. Historic England also focused on smaller scale changes and emphasised the need to consider the ‘user experience’. This would include street furniture, lighting and planting. They went on to suggest the preparation of a design guide for the shop fronts to ensure consistency and for planting, street furniture and paving in the public realm.

3.19

Council Officer Comments: The Area Housing Team also picked up on a range of shorter-term needs that would benefit residents in particular. These include improving the appearance of the communal areas to the flats- this could include new handrails and railings, better lighting on the stairwells and nosing on the steps. In relation to the pigeon issues proofing of the windows that overlook the precinct would be welcomed by the residents it was suggested.

- 3.20 The need to reopen public toilets was a comment made by several respondents.
- 3.21 In terms of safety comments from residents suggested that there should be more police patrols and more or updated CCTV cameras. One resident suggested that bylaws should be put in place such as no drinking in the area or no cycling on footpaths.
- 3.22 Traffic safety was a reoccurring theme with two suggestions that there was a need for traffic lights at the junction of Michen Road and Howard Way. Also that the zebra crossing on Howard Way needs addressing, the suggestion being that traffic lights may be the solution here too.
- 3.23 Parking issues prompted a variety of ideas and solutions; one comment suggested that roads could be widened to create more parking for flats. A current business owner thought shops owners should be able to park outside the ancillary buildings to create more parking.
- 3.24 Short to medium term improvements suggested were primarily aesthetic with the desire to improve the look of the flats above shops high on the list.

Other comments

- 3.25 Several other comments were made which did not offer direct suggestions but which are important for consideration.
- 3.26 In relation to the proposals put forward one business owner was concerned about the potential loss of business. Explaining that there are some shopkeepers who are already doing their best to keep the place tidy and neat and that the Council needs to work with these people and not risk them losing businesses.
- 3.27 The question was raised over what will happen to existing Council controlled homes and whether new one will new ones be built.
- 3.28 Finally some comments were made regarding the consultation document. The Mark Hall and Netteswell Community Association pointed out that some of the land use in relation to Moot House and shops was not correct. One resident commented that the maps were difficult to understand. He also felt that the consultation was not well publicised.
- 3.29 A comment for consideration in the final documents, as suggested by Historic England, was that that a map highlighting all listed and conservation areas should be included in the SPD.

4. Summary and next steps

- 4.1 Overall the comments received suggest that residents and other stakeholders are in agreement that some form of redevelopment needs to take place to benefit the users and business owners of the Stow.
- 4.2 The short-term suggestions were well received, in particular the planting. There were numerous other comments relating to the need for street furniture and lighting to be considered as well as safety measures such as CCTV.
- 4.3 It was agreed by the majority of respondents that the Service Bay Area needed some improvement; however the specifics of what should be done here were not clear.
- 4.4 Parking and traffic flows were also key themes with several respondents making clear that any new properties should be allocated sufficient parking spaces.

4.5

Council Officer Comments: The Regeneration Team provided the following comment which provides a clear summary of their stance and ties in with many of themes brought up by the respondents of the consultation.

“The Stow provides a diverse range of enterprise and employment opportunities to the local and wider community. A number of external factors have changed the dynamics and reliance on neighbourhood shopping centres, leading to a lack of investment and redevelopment. As an inward facing centre this is a fundamental drawback in creating an improved, vibrant centre; for many the service areas of the centre are what is seen first and signage of both The Stow Service Bays and shopping centre is poor.

Redevelopment of The Stow should consider its role in providing affordable accommodation for a range of small and start-up businesses as well as the retail and service sector. The area needs to ensure it is a pleasant and welcoming environment that is well maintained to ensure that businesses, employees, residents and the wider community are attracted to the area.”

- 4.6 The next step in the process is a roundtable meeting bringing key Council Officers together to discuss the results of this summary report.
- 4.7 Following in this a final draft SPD will be created.

Appendix 1: List of consultees

- Advisory Council For Education Of Romany And Other Travellers
 - Age Concern Harlow
 - Arriva
 - British Gas
 - BT Openreach
 - Design Council
 - Entec
 - Environment Agency
 - Essex CC
 - Essex Fire
 - Essex Police
 - Harlow and District Chamber of Commerce
 - Harlow Area Access Group
 - Harlow Civic Society
 - Harlow Conservation Volunteers
 - Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella
 - Harlow Homeless Centre
 - Harlow Youth Council
 - Historic England
 - Homes and Communities Agency
 - Homestart Harlow
 - Mark Hall And Nettleswell Community Association
 - Mobile Operators Association
 - National Grid
 - Natural England
 - NHS England - Essex Area Team
 - Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church
 - Quarry Springs Residents Association
 - SM Coaches
 - Sport England
 - St Albans RC Primary School
 - St Andrews Methodist Church
 - Thames Water
 - Transco
 - UK Power Networks
 - Veolia Water
 - West Essex CCG
- As well as this 592 properties which lie within 80 meters of the study area boundary (as shown on the map) were contacted. This included both residential and business properties.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Church of Our Lady Fatima B. Aldi C. Service Industry Bays—see separate map D. St Andrew’s Methodist Church E. St Andrew’s House F. Former council rent office—now vacant G. Car park H. Garages & misc. I. Additional units—see separate map J. Main pedestrian shopping area—see separate map K. The Essex Skipper Pub L. Mark Hall Library | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> M. Moot House meeting rooms N. Moot House social club O. Moot House Halls P. Nuffield House Health Centre Q. St Alban’s Catholic Academy R. Burnt Mill Academy S. The Stow Playing Field T. Stow Leisure Club (above Dorrington’s) ★ Pedestrian walkway — Study area boundary — Boundary of properties consulted (80m from study area boundary) |
|---|---|

Appendix 2: Respondents

Ms Valerie Cullen – Mark Hall and Netteswell Community Association

Mr Walt Tingle – Mark Hall and Netteswell Community Association

Mr Peter Mountsteven

Ms Wendy Rendell

Mrs Lisa Weemes

Mr Tony Batrick

Mr Terence Oliver

Mr Keith Mash

Mr Mick Patrick

Mrs C Seingier

Mr Mark Muncey – Doherty Shoe Repair

Mr Chris Snow – New Town Studio

Mr Davd Grech – Historic England

Mr Alistair Howe- Harlow Art Trust

Appendix 3: Example of notification letter

Forward Planning
Harlow Council
Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow CM20 1WG

Telephone: (01279) 446 897
Email: myharlow@harlow.gov.uk
Date: 27 May 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

THE STOW DESIGN FRAMEWORK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The opening of the new Aldi store at The Stow represents major investment in the area and provides a catalyst for further regeneration. With assistance from Essex County Council, Harlow Council is preparing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for The Stow Neighbourhood Centre to help promote and guide development opportunities as part of its regeneration. The SPD will also identify how funding, reinvestment and planning gain could be used to improve the area.

Last year, an Issues and Opportunities drop-in event was held to find out how the local community, local businesses and other stakeholders would like The Stow to be improved. The views and opinions expressed have helped inform the production of a consultation draft of the SPD, which provides background and analysis of The Stow, identifies strengths & opportunities and details various development options.

Public consultation on the document runs from **Monday 1 June to Monday 29 June**. You are being contacted because you may be interested in the document and/or you live near The Stow. If you do not wish to be contacted again, please let us know.

From the start of the consultation period, the document can be viewed on the Council website at www.harlow.gov.uk/spd, where you can also submit comments. Alternatively, comments can be emailed to myharlow@harlow.gov.uk or posted to the Council at the address above. The document will also be available to view at the Harlow Civic Centre, Harlow Central Library and Mark Hall Library. **All comments must be received by 5pm on Monday 29 June 2015.**

Additionally a public exhibition will be held at **22 The Stow** (next to the Salvation Army charity shop) on **Thursday 4 June from 1pm to 8pm** where Officers will be present to answer questions. An unstaffed exhibition will then be located at the Civic Centre until the end of the consultation period.

By responding, you give consent to the Council to hold & process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your name, organisation & comments may be available for others to view at the Council offices & on the Council website. Data gathered through this consultation will be held up to & probably beyond 2031.

If you have any questions, please telephone 01279 446 897 or email myharlow@harlow.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Dianne Cooper, Planning & Building Control Manager

Appendix 4: Harlow Star news article (4 June 2015)

Harlow Council is seeking views on a document which will help promote and guide future development opportunities as part of the regeneration of The Stow. Consultation on the document, which has been jointly produced with Essex County Council, starts on Monday 1 June.

Councillor Durcan said: “The Stow was the first neighbourhood shopping centre in Harlow and will always have an important place in the town’s history. Today it is still a vibrant place with many local businesses operating in the area and there is some community activity but we know it could be a better place for local residents. Recent investment with the Aldi development gives us the opportunity to regenerate the Stow and we want to put a plan in place to help make that happen. The first, and most important, phase of this work is to get the views of local residents, businesses and community groups so we can start putting options together”.

The draft document can be read and views given at www.harlow.gov.uk/spd from Monday 1 June. The document will also be available to read in the Civic Centre, Central Library and Mark Hall Library.

An exhibition is being held at 22 The Stow (next to the Salvation Army charity shop) from 1 – 8pm on Thursday 4 June, where Officers will be present to answer questions on the document. There will also be an unstaffed exhibition at the Civic Centre from Friday 5 June.

The consultation closes on Monday 29 June.

Appendix 5: Promotional poster

Have your say!

The Stow SPD Consultation

Harlow Council is consulting on a draft Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document for The Stow, which will help promote and guide future development opportunities for the neighbourhood centre.

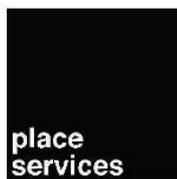


The consultation runs from Monday 1 June to Monday 29 June.

You can read the draft document and make comments by visiting the Council website:
www.harlow.gov.uk/spd

The document can also be viewed at the Civic Centre, Central Library & Mark Hall Library.

An exhibition is being held at 22 The Stow (next to the Salvation Army charity shop) on Thursday 4 June from 1pm to 8pm, where Officers will be available to answer questions.



Appendix 6: Exhibition photos



Representatives of Essex County Council and Harlow District Council discussing ideas with members of the public and local Councillors during the exhibition at 22 The Stow on 4th June 2015.





The un-manned exhibition which was in place in the Civic Centre reception between 05 and 29 June 2015.