

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD1392

Title: Commissioning Fund – Feltham Implementation Plan and Project Scoping Studies

Executive Summary:

Approval was obtained in the High Street Fund report to IPB in January for a £400,000 'Commissioning Fund' to develop a pipeline of projects in areas of London where there is strong growth potential.

This decision concerns one project as part of this fund – A Feltham Town Centre Implementation Plan. This work will draw together various existing but isolated pieces of work into a coherent strategy, supplemented with additional studies, and propose a detailed public realm and placemaking approach for the town. In addition, a series of projects will be identified to realise the proposals in the short, medium and longer term.

Decision:

The Executive Director approves:

- Expenditure of up to £50,000 to grant fund the London Borough of Hounslow to produce the Feltham Town Centre Implementation Plan and associated project scoping studies.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Fiona Fletcher-Smith

Position: Executive Director Development
Enterprise and Environment

Signature:



Date:

26/10/2015

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Approval was obtained in the High Street Fund report to IPB in January 2015 for a £400,000 'Commissioning Fund' to develop a pipeline of projects in areas of London where there is strong growth potential.
- 1.2. This was signed off in MD1469, which encompassed the decision to delegate allocation of the fund to the Executive Director Development Enterprise and Environment.
- 1.3. The project brought forward in this decision is the Feltham Town Centre Implementation Plan (£50,000), including associated project scoping studies.
- 1.4. The scope and justification for the project has been presented and approved by the Chairman of the Mayor's Design Advisory Group.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. Commissioning Fund

- 2.1.1. The general criteria for selecting projects for funding, in order to identify suitable areas of London in which to develop pipeline projects, follows that described in the Accommodating Growth in Town Centres report. The report identifies three characteristics for areas to receive regeneration funding. They should have the potential for intensification, be under threat of decline as a result of structural change and there should be a local commitment and capacity to deliver intensification.
- 2.1.2. It is likely that priority areas for intervention will be Major or District Centres that form the middle category which retail research suggests is vulnerable to restructuring. Further indicators would be persistently high vacancy rates for retail floor space, a worsening retail offer, a high proportion of comparison goods relative to the size of centre, retail rents that are low by sub-regional standards and are stagnant or declining, a poor qualitative experience, high levels of secondary office space, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) potential for residential development, high levels of public transport accessibility and planned transport improvements that might improve accessibility.
- 2.1.3. Prior to presenting projects for the commissioning funding, the GLA's Regeneration team has spent time with boroughs in the areas identified to develop a series of project proposals for future rounds of high street funding and for bidding to other funding streams.
- 2.1.4. The type of support that is proposed to be provided through the commissioning fund varies depending on the degree to which development work has been developed by the borough, local business or community organisation, from town centre strategies to more focussed place specific development projects aimed at addressing the threats and opportunities outlined above.

2.2. Feltham – LB Hounslow

Background:

- 2.2.1. Feltham is a district centre in the west of the London Borough of Hounslow, serving a suburban hinterland with a population circa 65,000. The commissioning fund contribution is to fund an implementation plan and associated project scoping studies, for the town centre both socially and economically.

- 2.2.2. Feltham Town Centre has the potential to support housing growth and jobs. The town benefits from fast rail access to Waterloo and proximity to Heathrow (part of the Heathrow Opportunity Area). The local economy is characterised by the Leisure West entertainment complex, a town centre focus on convenience retail, a light industrial cluster of small & medium businesses and logistics companies benefiting from the proximity to the airport. Whilst these diverse uses at the heart of the town are key assets to build on, they very much feel like distinct, insular and fractured elements. As such, the town lacks a considered civic heart, associated legibility and the considerable agglomeration benefits of better uniting these elements.
- 2.2.3. The central high street is currently defined by dominant road infrastructure which fails to develop a sense of place – a real economic and social core – yet equally falls short as a piece of pure highway infrastructure. Rail infrastructure and associated crossings further undermine connectivity and legibility between the high street, key residential areas, local airport business park and surrounding green space.
- 2.2.4. The town still suffers from a somewhat negative public image, with the airport and young offenders institute synonymous with the area, and an ageing population.
- 2.2.5. The borough has secured £300,000 from TfL towards the design of their £14.8m Feltham Major Scheme. As per any schemes on the TfL LIPs Major Scheme Programme, it is subject to standard assurance process and the release of the £8.5m funding sought by the borough, for implementation, as part of the bid, will only be released once final design would have been agreed by TfL. The proposals focus around improvements to the high street and removal of the level crossing connecting the town with key residential areas. This removal is favoured by Network Rail which would unlock proposed investment in a platform extension – both scheduled to begin delivery phases in 2017. A cycle and pedestrian bridge would therefore be required on a tight site to maintain the key desire line. The proposals were recently reviewed by Urban Design London with clear concern over the design of this new connection and its relationship to the high street. In addition, the approach to the high street was seen as a purely pragmatic highway improvement scheme which failed to adequately unite key local assets, develop the sense of place and set an aspirational precedent for development that would follow.
- 2.2.6. In parallel, the borough has also produced a high level Feltham Vision and Concept Masterplan (FVCM). This was commissioned by the LB Hounslow in November 2014 in response to the LB Hounslow Corporate Plan 2014-2019 commitment to develop a masterplan for Feltham Town Centre. The FVCM has been produced by urban design and masterplanning Consultants, Urban Initiatives. The final document was launched in September 2015 and analyses the key challenges and opportunities to accommodating growth in the town centre. This is a high-level exercise intended to inform a more detailed strategy for Feltham's future that the Council will then seek to deliver. The Vision and Concept Masterplan has been consulted on, locally, and will ultimately form the key part of the evidence base of a West of the Borough Plan that the Council is bringing forward next year to sit alongside the new Local Plan. This will be a Development Plan Document (DPD) and will be subject to a formal consultation process during 2015-16. The FVCM was produced with respect to, and should be considered alongside, the following borough-wide documents:
- Hounslow Local Plan – Adopted by the Borough Council in September 2015, the Local Plan forms part of the development plan for the borough and provides the planning framework until 2030. It includes various planning policies and strategic site allocations.
 - Hounslow Urban Context and Character Study – Guidance that aims to ensure development responds to local character and heritage to ensure distinctive places. There is a specific section detailing Feltham.
 - All London Green Grid – A GLA policy framework to promote the design and delivery of green infrastructure across London.

2.2.7. The highway improvements are led by Hounslow Transport and represent a predominantly highways led approach. There is some synergy with the concept and vision masterplan, but there remains a distinct lack of thinking about how these pieces of work can better deliver a successful and distinctive place with a strong identity and diverse, thriving economy.

2.2.8. There is further work required to fill this gap, and explore the significant opportunity to reveal and improve local assets, encourage more people to dwell in and around the town centre, integrate and diversify the local economy and accommodate new housing, in a way that could tie disparate elements together and maximise growth potential. The timing represents a clear strategic opportunity to shape future investment and development and set a clear and ambitious precedent for future development.

2.2.9. The proposed Implementation Plan and associated project scoping studies (this funding) will draw together various existing but isolated pieces of work into a coherent strategy, supplemented with additional studies, and propose a detailed public realm and placemaking approach for the town. In addition, a series of projects will be identified to realise the proposals in the short, medium and longer term.

2.2.10. LB Hounslow are set to focus investment on the town in the medium term. Alongside transport improvements mentioned above, there is likely to be a forthcoming housing zone bid and £400,000 has been ring-fenced for local park enhancement. There is recognition within the Borough of the value of producing the work associated with the proposed implementation plan and using this to shape future decision making. There is associated commitment of resource from within the council to support the work and embed into ongoing existing projects.

2.2.11. The project objectives in the longer term are to realise the development potential of key town centre sites, intensify development in Feltham town centre, improve connectivity and create a civic heart for the town through a considered and detailed public realm strategy. The desired outcomes are high quality development in a key town centre location, to develop a real mixed use economy, improve local job opportunities and local amenity and to increase the number of residential units in the town centre in an appropriate way.

The study and its outputs:

2.2.11 The Feltham Implementation Plan will undertake four distinct tasks for Feltham town centre:

- A. Prepare a detailed public realm and placemaking strategy for Feltham town centre that develops the strategic urban design principles contained within the Feltham Vision and Concept Masterplan (FVCM) into tangible proposals and solutions. This will include, but not be limited to;
 - i. Exploration of how these principles should be applied to on-going highways and transport infrastructure improvements as part of LB Hounslow Traffic and Transport Major Scheme.
 - ii. The consideration of key assets and opportunities (of both civic and development value)
 - iii. The development of a palette of appropriate materials and guidance for their use
 - iv. An approach for establishing the high street as an active civic heart for the town and further exploring its connection to key assets and existing or proposed employment residential and leisure opportunities.
 - v. An approach for embracing the role of local employment land in future growth, based on work conducted in point (ii).
 - vi. Tangible ideas to build on the vision for Feltham presented within the FVCM in the form of detailed design concepts for specific interventions to RIBA Stage 2, some of which will be related to the Major Scheme being delivered in collaboration with Network Rail, as well as defining a broader approach to public realm design across Feltham town centre, see (iii)
- B. Conduct an industrial/employment land review study and economic strategy for growth that develops a better understanding of industrial uses within the town centre. This will:

- i. Assess the current relationship between supply of and demand for employment land, forecast future needs for such land and consider a strategy to intensify key locations or mix existing uses with new residential growth in innovative ways.
 - ii. Provide a fine grained, qualitative understanding of the businesses operating in the area and the scope of activities taking place
 - iii. Reveal and promote local assets as part of the placemaking strategy
 - iv. Inform ideas for deliverable projects aimed at supporting existing businesses and facilitating future growth, with the potential to be the subject of future funding bids to bodies like the GLA or HLF, or through CIL receipts
- C. Identify and prioritise eight (8) projects with the potential to underpin future funding bids. These project ideas will be deliverable, detailed, costed and make reference to the urban design analysis and objectives found within the Hounslow Local Plan, All London Green Grid, Feltham Vision and Concept Masterplan, and Hounslow Urban Context and Character Study. Aspirations include better access to open spaces and waterways, improved legibility within Feltham town centre, enhancements to heritage assets and the Feltham Town Centre conservation area, and a better 'civic heart' within the town centre. The ability for projects to be scaled, with small 'catalyst' projects testing the feasibility of larger, longer term interventions, will be illustrated. Individual projects will be organised into a project timeline, with short, medium and long term initiatives identified.
- D. Plan and implement a public engagement and participation strategy that meaningfully informs the public realm strategy, industrial/employment land review, and various project ideas, and also provides a link to the Council's wider engagement programme. A minimum of two (2) stakeholder events will be delivered as part of this.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Through their existing public sector duties and via the requirements which will be set out in the funding agreement, the Council must ensure that they give due regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out this project.
- 3.2. The following issues have been considered specifically:
- Design (project) proposals: All design (project) proposals will be assessed in terms of accessibility to ensure we minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a protected characteristic. age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation.
 - Documents and publications: all documents produced will comply with Mayor of London branding guidelines, it being based on guidance from the Royal National Institute of Blind People. Where possible accessible formats will be available.
 - Events: all events will be open to all and, where possible, we will encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in any activity in which their participation is disproportionately low.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. Key risks and issues:
- 4.1.1. Key risks and their control measures will be reported to BPR as part of the regular updates and performance management.
- 4.2. Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities:

4.2.1. The Implementation Plan will support key Mayoral priorities to support jobs and growth in the capital. By strategically directing the intensification of both housing and employment opportunities within the town centre; ensuring a successful mix and maximising agglomeration benefits, the work will maximise the value of accommodating growth in the town over the coming years. By improving the implementation strategy for projects 'underway' such as transport improvements, the work will add value to support the Mayor's priorities to improve public spaces.

4.2.2. The Commissioning Fund has been developed to support London Plan policies with regard to Town Centres, Retail, Lifetime neighbourhoods, public realm and urban design. It also supports the ambition set out in *Action for High Streets* to make high streets better places to live in, work in, and do business in.

4.3. Impact assessments and consultations:

4.3.1. As part of the tender process for consultants and contractors on the project, tenderers will be asked to provide details of their equality policy and environmental impact policy.

5. Financial comments

5.1 Approval is being sought to grant fund LB Hounslow up to £50,000 in 2015/16 to procure a consultant to produce the Feltham Town Centre Implementation Plan and associated project scoping (to be governed by funding agreement).

5.2 The revenue cost of up to £50,000 will be funded from the High Streets Commissioning Fund.

6. Legal comments

6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Director fall within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of the economic development and wealth creation in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 In taking the decisions requested of her, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 of this report.

6.3 Sections 1 & 2 of this report indicate that the contribution of up to £50,000.00 to the London Borough of Hounslow amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payment for services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities policies and in a manner which affords value for money in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code.

6.4 Officers must also ensure that funding agreements are put in place between and executed by the GLA and London Borough of Hounslow before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The Feltham project is to be delivered by LB Hounslow through a grant agreement, administered by the GLA Regeneration Team.
- 7.2. How the project will be delivered, and the outline timetable is set out below:

Feltham Implementation Plan:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of consultants	Oct 2015
Concept designs for priority projects	Nov 2015
Public Engagement Event	Nov2015
Interim Draft Plan	Dec 2015
Draft Plan	Dec 2015
Final Plan / Report and Project Closure	Jan 2016

Appendices and supporting papers:

None

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form –NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

James Parkinson has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Debbie Jackson has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

M. D. Ollie

Date

23.10.15