



To: Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places: Councillor Carina O'Reilly  
Report by: Head of Planning Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Customer and Community Services Committee 11/7/14  
Wards affected: All

**LOCAL CENTRES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME  
Non-Key Decision**

**1. Executive summary**

1.1 At its meeting on February 27, 2014, Council agreed to create a programme to improve selected local centres in the city. The program will run from the 2014/15 financial year and include a total budget of £635,000.00 to 2017/18. At least three projects will be undertaken for completion by 2018/19). The purpose of this report is to set out the planning policy background to local centres; proposed criteria in the selection of projects; and expected approval and consultation arrangements for the programme.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve the proposed approach to the Local Centres Improvement Programme for the years 2014 to 2020 as set out in this report, specifically:
- a) the audit criteria and approach to the selection of local centres;
  - b) the need for a report back to the October 2014 meeting of the Customer and Community Services Committee with the outcomes and recommendations from the local centres audit and selection process
  - c) the creation of a Project Board to oversee the projects once agreed by the Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places

### 3. Background

- 3.1 Local centres play an important role in the retail and social make-up of the city. They provide a range of local services and community facilities that serve the day-to-day needs of residents and visitors. They support “walkable neighbourhoods”, help reduce car usage, and help build community cohesion through events, community spaces and casual or organised social meetings. In addition they are an important part of planning new housing development in that new housing in close proximity to local centres support “sustainable” neighbourhoods. The Cambridge Local Plan 2014 – Draft Submission at Section 2, Policy 6, and Section 8, Policy 72 sets out the important role that local centres play in the economic and social life of the city for both residents and visitors alike. The draft plan now includes three categories of centres: district, local and neighbourhood (previously, in the 2006 Local Plan, there were only two categories, specifically district and local). District Centres are characterised by a range of shops and facilities that would appeal to a larger catchment than local centres, and include at least either a supermarket or large convenience store in addition to other shops and services. Local centres provide clusters of shops and community facilities that satisfy local needs and are accessible on foot. Finally, neighbourhood centres include six or fewer retail units which serve a limited local catchment. The list of district, local and neighbourhood centres is attached as Appendix A, along with a map showing their location as Appendix B.
- 3.2 The environmental quality and contribution of some local centres in the city can be improved. Some were constructed at a time of city expansion some 50-60 years ago and have had little investment or improvement as regards to the condition or appearance of the public realm within them. Some centres include development opportunities that could help deliver more housing or other facilities. The programme could help address these issues in selected local centres. It should be noted that environmental projects of this nature can be costly, hence it is considered that it is best to undertake fewer projects to a higher standard rather than more projects to an average scale or standard. The selection of centre will need to evaluate the potential for delivering the greatest impact against selection criteria.
- 3.3 The remit of this programme as approved at full Council is to improve the quality of the public realm at specific, to be agreed, local centres. The programme should aim to support economic prosperity and equality, inclusion, and help lift pride in the environment for residents and traders. It should also encourage parallel investment in private businesses.

3.4 It is expected that once the programme is established it will deliver at least three schemes with likely capital expenditure (including project delivery and management costs) of approximately £200K per scheme. Each scheme will be subject to full public consultation.

3.5 The programme will be integrated, where possible, with other funding such as City Deal, Growth Area Community Infrastructure Levy, and developer contributions to ensure the greatest public benefit. The new Programme will be funded through increases in Direct Revenue Funding (DRF). Anticipated expenditure across the lifetime of the project will likely be as follows:

- 2014/15 - £20K Urban Design and Project Management Work
- 2015/16 - £205K Capital Expenditure (including project delivery costs)
- 2016/17 - £205K Capital Expenditure (including project delivery costs)
- 2017/18 - £205K Capital Expenditure (including project delivery costs)
- 2018/19 - no additional budget allocation: anticipated completion of all schemes during this budget year

NOTE: Actual budget allocation by Full Council differs slightly to the anticipated expenditure above as £50K was approved in 2014/15 for project management and £195K for capital expenditure in the three following financial years. The difference owes only to the anticipated need to spread project management costs across all years of the programme.

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET £635,000

3.6 The programme will be reviewed in the year prior to the scheduled end of the 5-year programme and any recommendations can be picked up in the budget cycle at that time if appropriate.

3.7 In order to select the local centres to be the subject of this programme, an audit of all local centres in the city and prioritised centres on the basis of selection criteria will be undertaken. This audit will be “light touch” but will enable priorities to be identified. The recommended priority criteria include:

1. Existing condition of the external environment of a local centre (with the poorest quality in terms of physical appearance being prioritised for the programme)
2. Potential for parallel investment either in the form of planning obligations funding from local development sites or other sources

(based on known or potential investment by the private or public sector in or around the local centre)

3. Local centres with an observed strong level of business activity and within a convenient walking catchment for the surrounding population (in order to benefit the most number of residents/visitors)

A report will be brought back to the October 2014 Customer and Community Services Scrutiny Committee with the audit outcomes and recommended programme.

- 3.8 It is suggested that a Project Board be set up to include the Executive Councillor for Public Places and to include cross-party representation and at least one member of the public along with officers from the Project Delivery and Environment and the Urban Design and Conservation Teams. Once projects are agreed for inclusion in the programme, the Project Board will oversee the approval of design work, consultation exercises and scheme procurement before they are implemented.
- 3.9 The Budget Setting Report approved in February of this year noted that Mitcham's Corner would be a first priority for this programme. There is however opportunity to deliver the improvements to Mitcham's Corner as part of the City Deal bid for improvements to the Milton Road/A10 corridor. In addition, the works envisioned in the Cambridge Local Plan 2014 – Draft Submission at Policy 21: Mitcham's Corner Opportunity Area are extensive in nature and include reversion of the gyratory highway system back to a more traditional two way traffic calmed, street environment. These works are likely to cost several million pounds to deliver. Therefore it is more likely that other, more significant funding sources will be necessary to properly deliver works to Mitcham's Corner. The audit report on scheme recommendations will fully address all factors in the scheme evaluation.
- 3.10 In order to ensure local buy-in to any schemes brought forward, public consultation will represent an important part of the programme. Proposed public consultation arrangements will likely include hands-on design workshops or "planning for real" type sessions. Draft designs will be further scrutinised by local residents, traders and other stakeholders together with the Project Board before being agreed and procured with a successful contractor to deliver. Officers of both Urban Design and Conservation and Project Delivery and Environment Teams will be involved in the consultation and design stages, however the delivery of projects will be managed by the Project Delivery and Environment Team. This process was followed to deliver improvements to Wulfstan Way between 2009 and 2010,

and has resulted in a successful improvement to this local centre in Queen Edith's ward.

3.11 The timelines for the program include:

- i. an audit of all centres to take place in Summer 2014 with project recommendations in Autumn 2014;
- ii. setting up of a Project Board in September 2014;
- iii. the first local centre consultation to take place in early 2015 followed by design work and first scheme approval by the Summer of 2015;
- iv. Procurement would take place thereafter with likely completion of the first scheme in 2016.
- v. The second and third local centres would follow a similar process, with the second local centre work starting in 2015/16 and terminating in 2018, and the third starting in 2016/17 and terminating in 2019.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

Funding has already been earmarked for the programme as noted herein.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

Officers in the Urban Design and Conservation Team and Project Delivery and Environment Team will be leading the work. Funding is provided for covering required in-house officer time across all projects or for consultancy support.

### **(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The improvement of local centres is considered positive in terms of helping promote equal opportunity and economic prosperity through improved quality of environment in selected local centres for all, regardless of economic status, age, ability or orientation.

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

The environmental implications of the programme are considered to be positive as they support the quality and continuity of the city's neighbourhoods through the improvement of selected local centres

and will be positive for residents, the local economy, businesses and tourism alike.

(e) **Procurement**

Procurement of selected local centres will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procurement rules.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

Consultation will be a key part of the Local Centres Improvement Programme. Bespoke workshops and follow up meetings with stakeholders, traders and local residents will be undertaken as standard for each of the local centres progressed.

(g) **Community Safety**

Safety will be an important aspect of the improvement of any selected local centres. Depending on the local centre there may be an identified need to improve lighting, visibility into or from key spaces, and involvement of community safety expertise to assist in finding solutions to identified local concerns.

## **5. Background papers**

Minutes of February 27, 2014, Council meeting including Budget Setting Report 2014/15 (Version 3)

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A – List of district, local and neighbourhood centres

Appendix B – Map of centres taken from Proposals Map in the Cambridge Local Plan 2014 – Draft Submission

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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Appendix A – List of district, local and neighbourhoods centres (as taken from “APPENDIX C, DESIGNATIONS SCHEDULE: Neighbourhood, district and local centres (Policies 6 and 72)” of the Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Draft Submission

| ID | Centre Type             | Centre Name  | Ward                         |
|----|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 01 | District Centre         | Arbury Court   | King's Hedges                |
| 02 | District Centre         | Cherry Hinton High Street  | Cherry Hinton                |
| 03 | District Centre         | Histon Road  | Arbury                       |
| 04 | District Centre         | Mill Road East   | Romsey                       |
| 05 | District Centre         | Mill Road West   | Petersfield                  |
| 06 | District Centre         | Mitcham's Corner   | West Chesterton              |
| 07 | Local Centre            | Arbury Road/Milton Road  | West Chesterton              |
| 08 | Local Centre            | Barnwell Road  | Abbey                        |
| 09 | Local Centre            | Cherry Hinton Road East  | Coleridge                    |
| 10 | Local Centre            | Cherry Hinton Road West  | Coleridge                    |
| 11 | Local Centre            | Hills Road   | Petersfield ,<br>Trumpington |
| 12 | Local Centre            | Hills Road/Cherry Hinton<br>Road   | Coleridge                    |
| 13 | Local Centre            | Newnham Road   | Newnham                      |
| 14 | Local Centre            | Trumpington  | Trumpington                  |
| 15 | Local Centre            | Station Area (CB1) (centre<br>boundaries to be fixed once<br>development is complete)  | Trumpington                  |
| 16 | Local Centre            | NIAB 1 (centre boundaries to<br>be fixed once development is<br>complete)  | Castle                       |
| 17 | Local Centre            | University of Cambridge's<br>North West Cambridge Site<br>(centre boundaries to be<br>fixed once development is<br>complete) | Castle                       |
| 18 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Adkins Corner  | Coleridge                    |
| 19 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Akeman Street  | Arbury                       |
| 20 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Campkin Road   | King's Hedges                |
| 21 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Carlton Way  | Arbury                       |
| 22 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Chesterton High Street   | East Chesterton              |
| 23 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Ditton Lane  | Abbey                        |
| 24 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Fairfax Road   | Romsey                       |
| 25 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Grantchester Street<br>(Newnham)   | Newnham                      |
| 26 | Neighbourhood<br>Centre | Green End Road   | East Chesterton              |

| ID | Centre Type          | Centre Name  | Ward                    |
|----|----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 27 | Neighbourhood Centre | Hawthorn Way   | West Chesterton         |
| 28 | Neighbourhood Centre | King's Hedges Road   | King's Hedges           |
| 29 | Neighbourhood Centre | Norfolk Street   | Petersfield             |
| 30 | Neighbourhood Centre | Wulfstan Way   | Queen Edith's           |
| 31 | Neighbourhood Centre | Victoria Road  | Arbury, West Chesterton |
| 32 | Neighbourhood Centre | Clay Farm (centre boundaries to be fixed once development is complete) | Trumpington             |



# Appendix B – Map of Centres

