



To: Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places: Councillor Carina O'Reilly  
Report by: Head of Planning Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services 16/10/14  
Scrutiny Committee  
Wards affected: All

## LOCAL CENTRES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – OUTCOME OF AUDIT

### Key Decision

#### 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on July 11, 2014, Committee agreed that an audit be prepared which would examine all local centres based on specific criteria and for a report to be brought back with the outcomes of that audit. Funding has been agreed already by resolution of full Council in February, 2014, for targeted improvements to select local centres with a total, phased-in budget of £635,000.00 to 2017/18. The purpose of this report is to set out the results of that audit and the proposed centres to be included in the programme. An update on the Mitcham's Corner District Centre will also be included.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to note the findings of the Local Centres Improvement Programme audit and to approve the following, specifically:
- a) the selection of Cherry Hinton High Street and Arbury Court centres for inclusion in the Local Centre Improvement Programme for the reasons set out in this report;
  - b) the retention of a third priority project to be added to the programme at a later date pending the outcome of progress with planned work related to the Mitcham's Corner District Centre as part of City Deal implementation, and:

- c) that the detailed funding, design and delivery of improvements to Cherry Hinton High Street and Arbury Court be the subject of Project Appraisals to be approved by the Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places at a future committee meeting.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The list of district, local and neighbourhood centres being the subject of the audit are attached as Appendix B to this report. As set out in the committee report on this subject in July 2014, criteria have been used to “rank” all such centres in the city. The criteria used for the evaluation are set out and explained in detail in Appendix A. As an outcome, the use of criteria seeks to ensure the prioritising of investment where it will deliver the greatest benefit. The criteria used in the audit include the following:
- environmental quality/health check
  - Local Plan policies (supporting policy and proposals sites near to a centre)
  - Population catchment within an 800 metre walking distance
  - Potential for and/or known investment from other sources
- 3.2 The outcomes of the audit were then summarised and given a summary ranking of “low”, “medium” or “high” potential for inclusion in the programme. As a rough summary, many centres simply “fell out” of the ranking because of their low potential for delivering the greatest impact against selection criteria.
- 3.3 While not a specific criteria that has been scored, consideration may also be given to the Council’s Vision in considering which centres to include in the programme. This includes reference to sharing in the city’s prosperity. Some of the centres that ranked high are in areas which are known to enjoy less prosperity, such as Arbury Court. It should be noted that the audit does not include proposed centres planned on Areas of Major Change, specifically at the Station Area (cB1), North West Cambridge and Darwin Green (centres 15, 16 and 17 respectively in Appendix C - Designations Schedule of the Draft Cambridge Local Plan (2014) as well as the planned centre in Clay Farm (no. 32)). Additionally, the Wulfstan Way neighbourhood centre (no. 30) has not been included as this centre was only recently the subject of environmental improvements.

3.4 Those centres that ranked “high” in the ranking include the following:

1. Cherry Hinton High Street
2. Histon Road
3. Mitcham’s Corner
4. Barnwell Road
5. Adkins Corner
6. Arbury Court
7. Chesterton High Street

3.5 Several centres were assessed as medium or low due the fact that they were already identified as part of new Opportunity Areas in the Draft Local Plan, are assessed as being in relatively good condition, or have low population thresholds. In cases of centres with already low population thresholds, it is assumed that environmental improvements would likely do little to change overall footfall which is a key determinant of “health” of the centres. These are listed in Appendix B and the results explained.

3.6 For those that rank highest, the following is a brief summary of each (with the “scorings” shown):

- Cherry Hinton High Street Score  
  
This centre ranks high because there are clear benefits to twinning the improvements under this program with a project (£92K budget) already in the design stages for Rectory Terrace (the terrace supporting a parade of shops in the middle of this centre). In addition there is a proposal by the County Council to target £250K for cycling and walking improvements for the street. The terrace and High Street are well used but there are several over-engineered parts to the street that could be de-cluttered and improved. In addition, the centre scores highly because there are several large proposals sites as identified in the Draft Local Plan in close proximity. High(9)

- Histon Road

This centre ranks highly because it's environmental quality is poor overall and it is bisected by Histon Road itself. It also enjoys a very high population threshold in the surrounding area and is well used, particularly the Aldi and Iceland stores on the west side of Histon Road. A large part of the area also comprises car parking for the aforementioned stores or the forecourt of a petrol station.

High (12)

- Mitcham's Corner

As noted in the July report on this project, the Budget Setting Report approved by Full Council 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 implementation of the City Deal 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. Members may recall these points were discussed in detail at the July committee meeting and it was resolved to select only two centres until such time that there is further clarity on the funding of Mitcham's Corner improvements as part of City Deal. Hence, only two projects are put forward at this time, the specific funding for which will be further reviewed as part of the detailed Project Appraisals.

High (10)

- Barnwell Road

This centre scores highly in terms of having a high population within 800m walking distance. It is also located at the intersection with Newmarket Road and near several new proposals sites. However, at some stage there may be improvements to Newmarket Road to support public transport into and out of Cambridge. Therefore, including this centre under the programme might be considered premature when it is possible that it could be included as part of a program of transport improvements in the future.

High (10)

- Adkins Corner (corner of Cherry Hinton Rd and Perne Rd)

This centre is very small includes a Budgen's store at its heart. The centre experiences heavy amounts of traffic along with traffic noise. The centre scored high because it close to significant development sites e.g. site R7 in the Draft Cambridge Local Plan, and has a high population within the 800m catchment. It could also benefit from considerable de-cluttering of highway furniture and physical improvements.

High (11)

- Arbury Court

Arbury Court currently has no planned improvements however it is relatively busy, has a good population threshold within 800m and is not part of an Opportunity Area so has no current special planning policy to support its improvement. There are also recent and potential development opportunities in the wider area including the recent approval the construction of a new North Cambridge Academy across the road from the centre.

High (9)

- Chesterton Hinton High Street

High (9)

This centre is very long with no obvious “heart”. It does however enjoy considerable passing traffic and provides services to a relatively high surrounding population density. The challenge of this centre is being able to ensure any improvements can be targeted so as to help bring a coherent approach across some 500m of street.

3.7 Some conclusions may be drawn from the above summary points. While Histon Road does rank in the “top seven” centres, to undertake improvements to this centre may well have limited benefit due to the fact that large parts of the centre are to the rear of a petrol garage, constitute car parking which isn’t likely to change in the near future, and are on private land. Barnwell Road, for the reasons noted above, may be premature for inclusion in the programme owing to potential future investment on Newmarket Road. Given its length, Chesterton High Street would require a considerable investment to justify improvement works, possibly more than the total sum of the program. Finally, Mitcham’s Corner is currently excluded for the reasons noted elsewhere in this report. This then leaves Adkins Corner, Cherry Hinton High Street and Arbury Court as the centres which most highly overall meet the established criteria.

3.8 Officers recommend that given the planned improvements to Cherry Hinton High Street and the fact that a limited budget has been targeted for environmental improvements to Rectory Terrace (£92K) that this centre should be included in the program. The benefit of twinning these budgets is that they can be also be co-ordinated and aligned with some £250K of improvements for cyclists and pedestrians to this same street being put forward by the County Council. Secondly, officers recommend Arbury Court also be included in the programme, principally because the area is large and very much in need of improvement and the fact that there is a relatively good level of activity and surrounding population density to continue to benefit from any improvements. The recently approved North Cambridge Academy will provide a continuing, added benefit to the prosperity of this centre too. The centre also is located in an area of the city with less economic prosperity and so meets the Council’s stated objectives of fairness and sharing prosperity. While Adkins corner did rank well in the audit, it is not considered that it will be able to deliver the potential benefits to the same degree as the other two centres.

Detailed costs for the improvements cannot be provided at this time but will be worked up as design and consultation work progresses. It is suggested that the first centre be Cherry Hinton High Street, given that active design work and planned consultation on highway improvements are now happening, providing a “live” project to support.

3.9 As a reminder of the time table set out in the July 2014 report, the next steps in the program include:

- i. setting up of a Project Board this autumn;
- ii. the first local centre consultation to take place in early 2015 followed by design work and first scheme approval by the Summer of 2015;
- iii. Procurement would take place thereafter with likely completion of the first scheme in 2016.
- iv. 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.

3.10 Subject to the Executive Councillor agreeing the recommended centres above, officers will organise a Project Board comprising the Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places, a local ward member, local residents, local stakeholders e.g. businesses, and officers from the Urban Design and Conservation Team and the Environmental Projects Team. Assuming the first centre to be the focus of the programme will be Cherry Hinton High Street, a Project Appraisal for that centre will be brought forward for the approval of the Executive Councillor in 2015 and for the scrutiny of the Community Services Committee at a later date.

#### **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 as part of the £635K.

(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. As noted in the July 2014 report to committee, 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)

Report and minutes from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting of July 11, 2014 regarding the Local Centres Improvement Programme



## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A – Local Centres Improvement Programme – Explanation of Evaluation Criteria

Appendix B – Local Centres Audit

Appendix C – Map of local 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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