

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Head of Planning Services
TO: Planning Committee
WARD: West Chesterton Ward/North Area Committee

MITCHAM'S CORNER MASTERPLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Proposed Submission has designated Mitcham's Corner in West Chesterton as an "opportunity area". Mitcham's Corner is also known as a district centre in the retail hierarchy of the city. An "opportunity area" designation provides opportunity to facilitate development and reinforce as well as create character and identity in key corridors and centres in the city. Improvements to the public realm in such areas can play a significant part in their long term prosperity to the benefit of local residents, businesses and visitors to the city. It has long been held that Mitcham's Corner is negatively impacted by the existing road traffic system and the severance the gyratory creates within this centre.
- 1.2 Draft policy 21 of the Local Plan 2014, requires that a master plan be prepared for Mitcham's Corner. The policy sets out the key elements expected to be included in the master plan. Preparation of the master plan is underway and officers in the Planning Services have been working closely with local residents, businesses and the County Council to scope the issues and options to be considered in preparing such a master plan. In particular, the City Deal project to prioritise public transport along Milton Road has created a significant opportunity to align the objectives of both City Deal and the Cambridge Local Plan to support improvements in this location.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That North Area Committee receive this report as information.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A number of discussions, including one organised workshop, have already taken place involving interested parties in the development of a master plan for Mitcham's Corner. This includes members and officers of the City Council, the Friends of Mitcham's Corner, local businesses, agents of landowners, the Chesterton Road & Mitcham's Corner Coordinator and Cambridgeshire County Council. There is a broad consensus that there is a need to improve the quality of the public realm and the public highway system in Mitcham's Corner for the benefit of all users.
- 3.2 On June 23rd, 2015, a joint workshop was organised at the Victoria Homes Pavilion by the City Council and the Friends of Mitcham's Corner to consider key master plan principles, objectives and ideas. A total of 40 people attended from

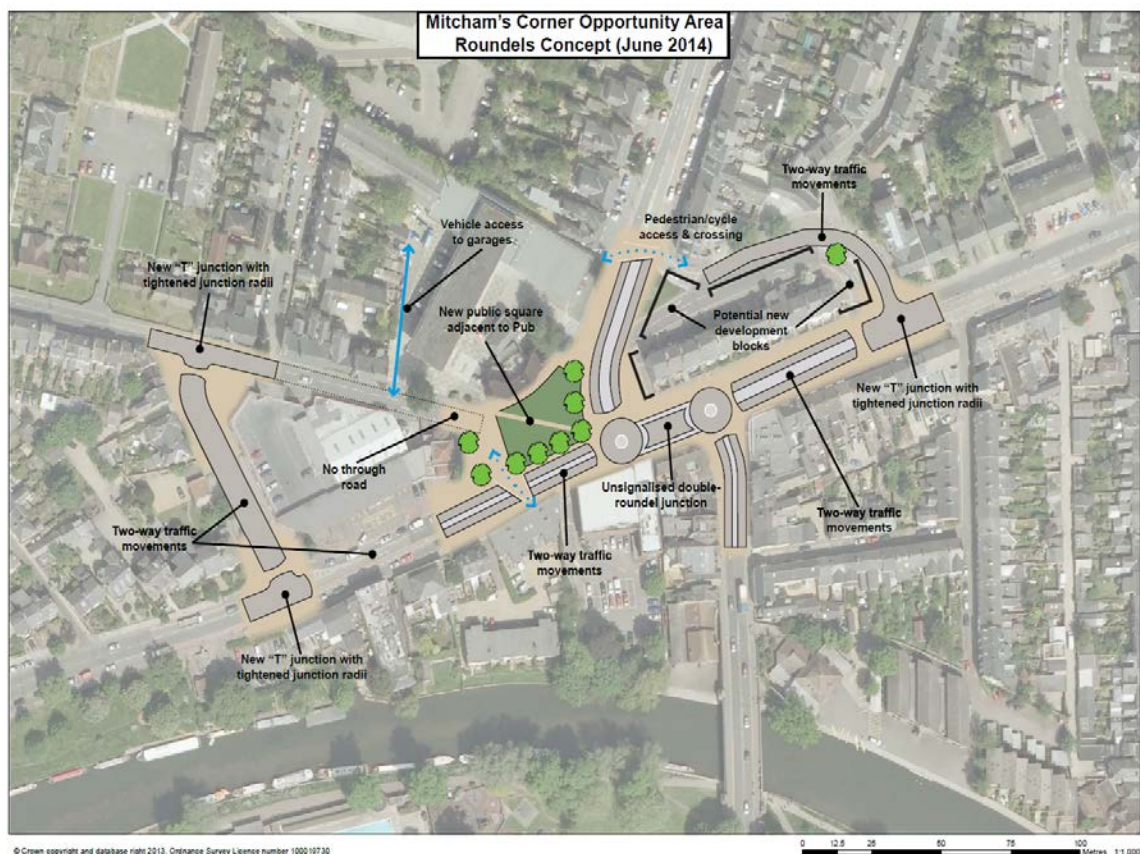
a variety of groups and two key questions were posed to the assembled group: *What improvements at Mitchams Corner do you feel are necessary to help deliver the aspirations as set out in the draft Cambridge Local Plan and to address concerns expressed by the local community? At a more detailed level what changes are needed to existing roads, junctions, open space, etc. to make it both a welcoming place and efficient in transport terms?* A second question asked: *What development principles would be appropriate for the two larger development sites in the Opportunity Area (Staples Site and Henry Giles House)? Do you have any other suggestions for other sites/parts of Mitcham's Corner that may help guide its future form of development?* A considerable amount of feedback was generated and the ideas written up in an "event record". The feedback from the workshop will be extremely useful in developing a master plan for the area and the event was summarised on the Friends of Mitcham's Corner website at: <http://www.friendsofmitchamscorner.org.uk/Meetings.html> .

- 3.3 The City Deal project for Milton Road will be pivotal to the success of any desired improvement to Mitcham's Corner. Mitcham's Corner represents the "gateway" to Milton Road at its southern end and is one of a few key radial routes in Cambridge providing links to important destinations such as the city centre, the new rail station at the former Chesterton sidings, and the Science Park.
- 3.4 As members will be aware, tackling delays to buses on Milton Road is part of a wider City Deal package to improve the reliability and attractiveness of bus services on key routes into and across the city. Milton Road is heavily used by cyclists and pedestrians although current conditions are poor often requiring the sharing of narrow footways. Providing comprehensive solutions for buses, cyclists and pedestrians through the reallocation of highway space and other measures should create the right conditions for encouraging more sustainable trips, providing more capacity for an increasing travel demand and improving road safety. Improvements to Mitcham's Corner (in effect the southern "gateway" to Milton Road) could greatly assist in meeting these objectives, however the objectives of improving public transport AND the public realm improvements need to be progressed together to avoid repeating the over-engineered highway solutions of the past to the detriment of non-motorised users. Meeting this twin objective is the key challenge in developing the public realm component of a master plan for Mitcham's Corner.
- 3.5 The timelines for producing the master plan will follow the timeline planned to agree a future solution for Milton Road as part of the City Deal. The Mitcham's Corner master plan will be prepared and consulted upon during early 2016 and thereafter refined and completed in June 2016, the same time as a preferred option for Milton Road will be considered by the City Deal Executive Board. The master plan will not comprise a formal Supplementary Planning Document though it is planned to present, and seek agreement for, the final draft master plan with both North Area Committee and the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport (in consultation with the Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places) so that the master plan will carry weight in the consideration of future development proposals within the master plan area. It is important to note that the master plan will include guidance on the future redevelopment of two key sites (referred to in paragraph 3.2 above), namely the Staples Site and the Henry Giles House (the second being an allocation for 48 dwellings in the new draft Cambridge Local Plan, site reference R4). The

owners and/or agents of those sites are aware of the on-going master plan work and in one case participated in the workshop organised in June, 2015.

3.6 For information only and to illustrate one possible concept which could deliver the objectives of the Local Plan policy cited earlier, the drawing below illustrates one possible approach to how the public highway and public realm could be improved. This “roundels” concept is based on a highly successful scheme delivered in Poynton, Cheshire, which prior to improvements had many characteristics similar to Mitcham’s Corner (heavily trafficked road system, severance of retail shops and open spaces, unfriendly to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, etc.). A very informative video of the scheme can be found at the following web link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzDDMzq7d0>

3.7 Note this concept has not yet been tested in terms of the detailed impacts on the surrounding road network, whether positive or negative, hence significant further development of options, testing, design, budgeting, etc. will be necessary. Officers of the City and County Councils are starting to working closely on developing options and testing such options to ensure any impacts on the highway network are clearly understood (which may give rise to the need for a significantly different solution or solutions) and importantly to ensure any future proposals are aligned with the objectives of both the City Deal and the Cambridge Local Plan:



Next Steps

3.8 A project steering group is being created in order to help inform and oversee the preparation of the master plan. Officers are in discussion with the relevant

members and Executive Councillors to ensure appropriate representation on this group and further meetings/workshops will be planned over the coming months.

4. Implications

Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no significant financial issues arising from the preparation of the master plan. Staffing resources are already committed through budget and service planning processes. Funding for consultation is allowed for as part of existing consultation budgets.

Staffing Implications

- 4.2 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. The development of the master plan is already included in existing work plans. Close working with local residents, land owners, shop owners, the Chesterton Road & Mitcham's Corner Coordinator, and the county council means that a significant "resource" is available to develop the master plan options and ideas.

Equality and Poverty Implications

- 4.3 The master plan, once agreed, should help deliver a solution which will have a positive impact by ensuring this district centre is better integrated into the wider area to the benefit of all residents and visitors. New development within the site should provide access for people with limited mobility.

Environmental Implications

- 4.4 The environmental improvements for Mitcham's Corner should be positive in that the objectives of the master plan are very much about the delivery of an improved environment, for the benefit of all users including those using public transport, pedestrians, cyclists, and the disabled, but also motorists.

Consultation

- 4.5 Consultation arrangements are set out earlier in this report.

Community Safety

- 4.6 One objective of the master plan is to make Mitcham's Corner safer for all users.

5. Background papers

- 5.1 These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Proposed Submission (as amended)
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-review-proposed-submission-consultation> See Policy 21 (Mitcham's Corner Opportunity Area)

- Event record of “Planning for Real Workshop” June 23rd, 2015, prepared by Cambridge City Council with assistance from the Friends of Mitcham’s Corner.

6. Inspection of papers

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

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