

THE EXECUTIVE

24 MAY 2005

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT

DAGENHAM HEATHWAY REGENERATION STRATEGY AND PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME		FOR DECISION
<p><i>This is a strategic issue concerning regeneration in Dagenham which is within the remit of the Executive.</i></p> <p>Summary</p> <p>This report seeks the Executive's approval for the Dagenham Heathway Regeneration Strategy in order to strengthen and improve the retail offer for local residents. The Strategy identifies a range of interventions and improvements across a broad range of areas, including planning policy, public transport investment, environmental / public realm improvements and new civic facilities. The Strategy will help to realise the full potential of the centre as a focus for retail, services and community facility provision for local residents and businesses and also identify development opportunities and guide future investment decisions.</p> <p>Wards Affected - River, Village, Heath, Alibon, Parsloes, and Goresbrook</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>The Executive is recommended to agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Dagenham Heathway Regeneration Strategy for the purpose of consultation within the Local Development Framework (LDF); and2. The design of the first phase of the Public Realm Improvement Programme for the Heathway (Parloes Avenue – Dagenham Avenue). <p>Reason</p> <p>To assist the Council in achieving its Community Priorities of <i>"Regenerating the Local Economy"</i>, and <i>"Raising Pride in the Borough"</i>, to assist in the good planning of the area and to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 Dagenham Heathway is an important district shopping centre within the Borough. A Regeneration Strategy is required to strengthen and improve the retail offer for local residents. This will identify a range of interventions and improvements across a broad range of areas, including planning policy, public transport investment, environmental / public realm improvements and new civic facilities. The strategy will help to realise the full potential of the centre as a focus for retail, services and community facility provision for local residents and businesses and also identify development opportunities and guide future investment decisions.
- 1.2 In preparing the Regeneration Strategy the consultant team carried out extensive research into the needs of the local residents and businesses and identified the wider economic and social challenges and threats facing the centre. A selection of the results of this analysis are contained in the final report, extracts of which are attached as Appendix 1. A full version of the Regeneration Strategy and Public Realm Improvement Programme is available in the Members Rooms at both the Town Hall and the Civic Centre.

2. Regeneration Vision and Priority Areas

- 2.1 The challenges that face the Heathway are self evident in the quality of the retail offer currently available to residents. The comparison between the Mall, with its good, if traditional appearance and demand for premises from multiples, and the high street with its inferior quality of unit and environment, is striking. The lack of modern retail units and development opportunities, allied to the quality of the public realm, together with changes in retail habits i.e. greater use of outer or edge of town shopping, have caused the Heathway to slip down the retail hierarchy and lose out to more vibrant centres such as Barking and Romford. The private sector alone is unlikely to significantly invest in the area without assistance from the public sector. It is therefore essential that the Council lead on developing policy and specific interventions which will stimulate development activity and ensure the long term sustainability of the Heathway as a valuable local town centre. The Regeneration Strategy proposes the following vision for the Heathway:

To maximise the potential of Dagenham Heathway by transforming the Centre into a sustainable, attractive, vibrant and safe town centre where people want to, and are able to live, work and access high quality public transport, shopping and leisure facilities.

- 2.2 The content of the Regeneration Strategy and the individual improvements and actions have therefore been developed to deliver this vision. In addition to the analysis of the background economic reports, the proposed improvement actions have also been informed by a comprehensive programme of public consultation which has included a household survey on shopping expenditure patterns, a business survey and a community street audit carried out as part of Urban Design week. For the purposes of this report the proposed improvements have been set out on a thematic basis as identified in the analysis.

Retail

2.3 The Strategy acknowledges the strength of the Heathway lies in the comparison goods offer, but recognised that the lack of a large food store is undermining the centres vitality and long term viability. The lack of investment over the past 20 years in the fabric of the current retail units and their irregular shape and size has not made them attractive to major retailers, who generally are looking for single units of 500 sq m. The Strategy identifies the need to increase the amount of time people stay in the centre, therefore adding to the vibrancy of the centre. The Regeneration Strategy proposes the following interventions to address the retail challenge:

- An urgent need to provide a food supermarket in the centre.
- Identification of opportunity sites that can be developed to provide high quality mixed use retail and housing schemes.
- The provision of larger modern retail units to meet the demands of multiples through the identification of development sites that can be promoted via the LDF process.
- A programme of environmental/public realm improvements for the Heathway, with the shopping core established as the first phase.

Housing

2.4 The Strategy recommends that, in line with Government policy, the Council should promote the development of high density housing at the Heathway through the development and re-use of previously developed land. The success of the Housing development at Reede and Blackbourne Roads have illustrated that there is a strong demand for new housing in this area. However, because of the shallow depths of many of the units on the Heathway there is limited scope to realise significant housing redevelopment without considerable site consolidation. This consolidation requirement has been reflected in the identification of housing development sites, many of which are backland sites.

Potential Development Sites

2.5 To support the delivery of the wider regeneration strategy the consultants carried out an extensive analysis of potential development sites in the Heathway core. This is attached as A26 in Appendix 1. This includes an analysis of each opportunity site, setting out individual development objectives, information on the site such as size, the current use and ownership. It then proposes a development mix for each site informed by the overarching development objectives of the Regeneration Strategy. The provisional timetable indicating a programme of development for the sites including phasing is set out in A37 in Appendix 1.

2.6 The indicative development phasing sees a number of sites A, A1 & B, being the first to be promoted before 2009 to meet the identified need of a new supermarket and larger retail units. The analysis by the consultant teams sees the remaining opportunity sites being developed out between 2013 and 2019 for a variety of mixed uses. The phasing document does make reference to the provision of the new Dagenham Library and Customer Care facility on Site F being commenced by 2007/8.

Public Realm Improvements

- 2.7 One of the key weaknesses of the Centre is the variable quality of the public realm all the way along the Heathway, with particular emphasis placed on the retail core. The Regeneration Strategy proposes a radical overhaul of the public realm and proposes an ambitious environmental improvement programme. A key part of the public realm improvement programme is therefore the adoption of a greening strategy for the Heathway. The basic concept promotes the idea of the Heathway as a continuous green corridor, using the generous street width and open greens as a key attribute. This would result in a programme of extensive tree planting of a varied selection of trees which would dramatically alter the appearance of the area. It is proposed that London Planes are planted as part of the 1st phase of the improvement programme in the retail core. The further stages of planting along the Heathway to Chequers Corner, will include species such as White Willow, Ash and Hybrid Poplar, which will allow for a mixture of colour and texture, which will change with the seasons and add colour to the street. Further details of the greening strategy is contained in B23 and B25 in Appendix 1.
- 2.8 The improvement programme also proposes a major overhaul of the hard landscape of the Heathway including pavements, kerbs, parking areas, street furniture including lamp columns, bins, seats, and the equipment for statutory undertakers such as public telephones and bus stops. In recognition that the area from the Heathway to Chequers Lane is one of the Mayor's designated 100 public spaces, the overall Regeneration Strategy proposes a major investment in upgrading the quality of the Heathway, which will be reflected in the design and selection of materials. Work has begun with the Council's Head of Arts Service to develop a range of complimentary Artscape projects, based on the experience of the successful A13 and Barking Town Centre Arts Schemes.
- 2.9 The general design principles underpinning the improvement programme seek to minimise the level of street clutter, providing one style of design and a material palette that will applied all along the Heathway. These include the selection of granite setts in the carriageway to delineate parking areas, granite flags on the pavements, and cast stone benches. It is a key element of the design of the hard landscaping scheme that it will be integrated with the tree planting scheme. The overall design will seek to integrate car parking within a remodelled carriageway and provide a dedicated cycle route. Sectional details of the overall design, including junction treatments are contained in B30 and B34 in Appendix 1.
- 2.10 In responding to the priority regeneration objective, to improve the retail core section of the Heathway, the Regeneration Strategy proposes that the Council should promote as the first phase of the improvement plan the section between Parloes Avenue and Dagenham Avenue.
- 2.11 With funding secured from the Thames Gateway London Partnership officers have been able to develop further these concept design drawings for the first phase of the improvement programme. This has included developing the improvement programme up to a pre-contract stage including cost estimates, which has estimated the cost implementing the 1st Phase as £2,254,597 (see Appendix 2).
- 2.12 It is acknowledged that the overall improvement programme for the whole of the Heathway will have to be phased over a number of years, the phasing of which will

be subject to funding being available to undertake the work. However, given the profile of the Heathway as one of the Mayor's 100 public spaces it is considered that this will release significant funds from Transport for London via the Local Implementation Plan and the Thames Gateway London Partnership transport funding. It is proposed that phase 1 of the improvement programme is included as a specific bid in the 2005-10 Borough Local Improvement Plan. It is also proposed that additional funding bids be made in 2005/6 to the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation and the ODPM Sustainable Communities Fund to match fund the LIP bid. It is also anticipated that officers will make a bid for funding in 2006/7 under the Council Capital Programme.

Improvement Plan

- 2.13 The regeneration strategy also proposes a further range of improvements which relate to managerial issues in the Centre. The Strategy recommends that there is a need to facilitate and foster an improved retail environment through partnership with existing retailers and by undertaking environmental improvements and promoting greater town centre management of the centre to deal with issues such as car parking, littering and anti-social behaviour. The full Town Centre improvement plan is attached as A42 – A49 in Appendix 1

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The adoption of the Regeneration Strategy for consultation as part of the Local Development process does not have any direct implications for the Council. The approval of the design for the first phase of the Heathway Public Realm Improvement Plan will result in the further development of the project to a funding stage, the implications of which for the Council will not be known until the outcome of the respective funding bids. There are currently no funds allocated for this improvement programme. Any public realm improvement programme will be subject to a full Capital Programme Monitoring Office (CPMO) appraisal.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The GLA's Architecture and Urbanism Unit have been fully involved in the development of the improvement programme and they have endorsed the broad approach. Internally, the improvement programme has been developed with inputs from Housing, Parks and Leisure, Highways, and the Urban Design Group who have been consulted. This report was also considered at the Council's Regeneration Board meeting on 25 April 2005.

Background Papers

- Dagenham Heathway Regeneration Strategy March 2005
- Dagenham Heathway Public Realm Improvement Programme