Committee: Cabinet  
Date: 16th March 2009  
Agenda item: 12  
Wards: Lavender Field, Figges Marsh, Pollards Hill and Cricket Green

Subject: Regeneration of Mitcham Town Centre
Lead officer: Sarah Tanburn, Director of Environment & Regeneration  
Lead member: Diane Neil-Mills, Cabinet Member for Regeneration  
Forward Plan Reference Number: 720  
Contact officer: Rod Lyons, Interim-Head of Sustainable Communities

Reason for urgency
This report must be considered by Cabinet on 16 March because of its relevance to the production of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The LDF Core Strategy is a statutory document that has a complex timetable underpinning the various stages of its development. A delay would cause that timetable to be significantly disrupted.

Recommendations:
A. Cabinet notes the content of this report and particular the progress made in respect of the programme of Complementary Initiatives, aimed at delivering short-medium term improvements to the town centre including; the new market square, Laburnum homezone and access improvements to Mitcham Eastfields station.
B. Cabinet notes the progress made regarding specific discussions with the landowners, residents and businesses in the core area of Mitcham.
C. Cabinet note the options available to the Council to stimulate regeneration in Mitcham and the project group will come back to Cabinet in early 2010 with more detailed advice on these options.
D. Cabinet note that the key opportunities available in the wider Mitcham area to provide for family housing and instruct officers to promote the connectivity provided by Eastfields Station.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report considers the regeneration of Mitcham Town Centre following a public meeting with some of the landowners, businesses and residents in the core area of the town; the changing and uncertain property market and ownerships within the town and ongoing discussions with key stakeholders.

1.2. The report considers the options for enhancing the town centre through the series on Complementary Initiatives and identifies a positive way forward for the town’s physical regeneration. Initiatives include new gateway signage, innovative streetscaping for Laburnum homezone and new pedestrian wayfinding signage.
1.3. The project team has created a very detailed Mitcham Development Action Plan that has informed key conclusions opposite the capacity of the wider Mitcham area to provide regeneration across a variety of land uses.

1.4. The approach taken in this report is and will remain consistent with Merton’s emerging LDF and the borough’s emerging Economic Development Strategy.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Summary of June 2008 and October 2008 Reports and plan to date:

The key outcomes of the June 2008 and October 2008 reports were to:

- Clarify the progress being made on the comprehensive regeneration of the town centre,
- Put in to the public domain a far more realistic timescale for the regeneration process,
- Clarify that an OJEU pre-qualification process is more than likely to be required if a preferred developer is to be selected,
- Present a series of complementary initiatives that are being pursued by the Council.

2.2 The Economic Development Strategy for Mitcham

Elsewhere on this agenda is the proposed first part of a new Economic Development Strategy for the borough. This identifies four key objectives for Merton’s local economy:

i. To improve the average levels of productivity, gross value added and pay for jobs in Merton

ii. To promote economic resilience in Merton through a diverse local economic base which does not rely too heavily on any one factor for its continued success

iii. To build on Merton’s strengths in location, attractiveness, safety and expertise to promote its economy

iv. To do these things in a way that supports other values and objectives, notably bridging the gap between the east and west of the Borough and protecting the environment

These objectives and accompanying strategy need to be tailored to meet the specific demands of Mitcham as an area with particular challenges. The key aim of economic development activity in Mitcham is proposed as:

…..the provision of a District Centre in the core area of Mitcham with quality shopping, quality housing, a quality environment, good transport links and improved community facilities.

The Council’s objectives to deliver this vision are to work with the local community and partners to:

- Create an economically sustainable and viable town centre through improved quality and quantity of commercial, retail, residential and community uses;
• Create a socially and environmentally sustainable locality with vibrant and attractive public spaces;
• Achieve high quality urban design, architecture and open spaces, providing a greater quantity and mix of land uses in the town centre;
• Enhance accessibility to and around the town centre, whilst promoting sustainable transport patterns;
• Ensure measures contribute to the Mitcham low-carbon zone, with major development contributing to low and zero carbon design and technologies.
• Encourage the creation and growth of new business, as well as celebrating some of the little known existing success stories of the existing business community.
• Encourage office use in the centre
• Encourage more people to live in the core of the town centre

2.3 The Action Plan

Since October 2008 officers have been working to an Action Plan covering four principle areas of work:

i) Complementary Initiatives
ii) Transport
iii) Arts & Culture
iv) Physical Regeneration

i) Complementary Initiatives

A programme of complementary initiatives has been prepared to contribute to the enhancement of the town centre and promote its attractiveness as a place to shop and do business. Some of these initiatives were included in the previous report and some will be completed by the end of March (2009) as summarised below, with others being progressed over the next year and beyond.

The objectives of the complementary initiatives are to:

• Upgrade the public realm and infrastructure
• Instigate transport improvements and enhance connectivity
• Provide a safe environment
• Improve local shopping and other facilities
• Support local enterprise and employment
• Provide town centre management
• Introduce a programme of community events

By the end of March 2009 the following initiatives will be completed or under way:

3

285
Public Realm

- 5 Mitcham Gateways – provision of signage at five key locations and associated improvements to the public realm following consultation on the detailed design with the Mitcham Society, funded from Investing in Deprived Areas Capital
- Street Furniture: Four bins and three seats were supplied. The clock tower has been refurbished. One electronic and two standard notice boards erected, funded from London Development Agency Mitcham Means Business project
- Six lavender planters were refurbished and Fair Green grass resurfaced and worn grass replaced in other areas of the town centre, funded from London Development Agency Mitcham Means Business project
- Work with Thames Water and British Telecom to resolve flooding and drainage issues in the town centre
- Provision of the new market square in Fair Green

Safety

- Patrolling by the Police Community Support Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens continues alongside monitoring of CCTV cameras

Support to local enterprise

- Relocation of market to new, 650m2 market square commenced on 5 January 2009, with the formal opening on 5 March 2009. Twenty wooden posts erected on the periphery of market to prevent car access and three telescopic bollards installed to allow access for traders during approved times. Three power bollards, to provide power to market traders, installed. The stallholders appear reluctant to have new stalls and only want new coverings and anchor points, which are now being progressed. Work funded from Investing in Deprived Areas Capital.
- Five applications have recently been processed for shop front improvement grants funded from Investing in Deprived Areas Capital. One requested a supplementary loan to be funded from the Merton Loan Fund.
- Three shops have been identified and the owners approached, twice offering funding from the Deprived Areas Capital funding for temporary improvements to derelict empty shop fronts with murals and/or demountable displays.
- Completion of London Development Agency funded Mitcham Means Business project with all targets exceeded in relation to beneficiaries receiving business advice and employment support, jobs safeguarded etc and additional outcomes achieved including five new start-up businesses, twenty seven individuals gaining full time employment including at the new M&S store, twenty nine going into further education and seven on work placements
• Associated business support provision by Merton Chamber (networking and a peer group club) has a further nine months to run, funded from previous LABGI allocation

• A town centre manager continues to be supported to work with businesses

**Community facilities and events**

• Community toilet scheme – discussions continue with possible participants in the town centre with a view to setting up a scheme as early as possible in the new financial year. The contribution to cleaning costs will be met from town centre management funding.

• An external gym facility is being provided on Figges Marsh and local residents have been consulted on the equipment to be installed, funded from Leisure development capital and S106.

• A programme of events, funded under the LDA Mitcham Means Business project, was organised in Enterprise Week in November focussed around Mitcham including a networking/training event for local businesses, the official launch of the Generator Business Centre, a Merton Junior Dragon’s Den event and a taster market for new traders.

Over the next 2 years further planned initiatives include:

• Further public realm improvements and decluttering in line with the design provisions in the new Public Realm Strategy

• Support to local enterprise (see

• The Economic Development Strategy which is reported elsewhere on the agenda) such as shop front improvement grants,

• temporary improvements to derelict empty shop fronts with murals and/or demountable displays

• Town Centre Management will continue to be supported

• Merton Chamber is currently funded to continue to provide business support until September 2009; there are proposals to extend the Mitcham Means Business Programme in conjunction with partners.

**ii) Transport**

The following projects will be completed or underway by the end of March 2009

• ‘Legible London’ style pedestrian wayfinding signage on Fair Green

• pedestrian improvements on St Mark’s Road at the junction with the open air car park and the school funded from Capital.

The Council has developed a strategic walking route from the new Mitcham Eastfields Station to and from the town centre. The majority of this will be substantially complete by July 2009 and funded by TFL station access and Capital. Works include:
• The Laburnum Road Home Zone where the tender process has been completed and the contract awarded to go on site before the end of March 2009. Two of the footpaths have been completed as has the perimeter fencing and the CCTV along with the play area.

• The St Marks Road proposal is currently out to consultation and subject to the outcome will be implemented by July 2009. This proposal also includes a resurfacing element.

iii) Arts and Culture

A group has been set up to develop ways in which the economy and culture of Mitcham can be promoted including seeking external funding. One of the necessary tasks will be to undertake an audit of existing community facilities in Mitcham.

Opportunities include:

• The annual Mitcham Carnival
• Arts and cultural initiatives
• Community initiatives
• Work with the inter-generational centre
• Promotion of Mitcham Common

iv) Physical Regeneration

Particular points to note are as follows:

• The decline in both residential and commercial property markets continues and is expected to last at least to the end of 2010. The delivery of the SPD in a comprehensive manner therefore remains unviable.

• The 210 landowners, businesses and residents in the towns “core area” were approached and a public meeting held on Thursday 4th December. The evening was informally chaired by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the presentation delivered at the meeting is available on the projects web site at www.merton.gov.uk/mitcham

• In both land assembly terms and viability, the greatest chance of success remains to pursue a strategy of piecemeal development within this core area particularly in the current economic climate, although there has been some interest in developing smaller sites in the past three months. Whilst the Council has very limited land ownership and subject to appropriate consultation and scrutiny, its landholdings could be further investigated to see if small scale schemes could be viably planned and promoted by the Council over the next 2-3 years.

• The broad concept is to try and create an opportunity for some momentum in time for when the property market does recover and demonstrate that a positive step change is possible in Mitcham.

2.4 Officers have continued dialogue with key large landowners in the town centre.
2.5 Revcap now control 100% of the share capital of Metropolitan and Suburban Limited and wish to work with the Council. Before these discussions can take place Revcap are seeking to clarify the intentions of Morrisons over the longer term.

2.6 Asda remain the freeholders of the main quarter in the core area and Morrisons have been confirmed as the expected soon to be occupiers of the existing Somerfield store in the town. It is too early at this stage to form a judgement on what will happen over the next few months; a continued dialogue with all parties therefore remains the key action.

2.7 It is also important to look beyond the immediate confines of the town centre. Officers have completed a detailed study of theoretical capacity of the wider Mitcham area. The Council should not only look to its own landholdings but to this wider area to help deliver regeneration. It is also essential for the Council to capitalise and promote the patronage of Eastfields Station and associated improvements the Council has been at the centre of delivering.

2.8 By showing improvement and positive change across this wider area it is hoped this will further encourage sites in the core area to become increasingly attractive and viable for physical regeneration.

2.9 As confirmed in the reports to Cabinet last year, the Council is committed to the vision for Mitcham set out in the Mitcham SPD and Mitcham Urban Village vision. This is expected to be reflected in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, due for further consultation later in 2009. Although this will be kept under review, it remains important to set out the Council’s long-term aspirations for Mitcham to set the framework to 2030, for when the market recovers to position the town to benefit from investment.

2.10 In addition in the context of the Mitcham project and its wider area, important co-ordination and linkage is required between this ongoing project work and the LDF and Economic Development Strategy (as referred to below).

2.11 For clarity, it is the LDF which takes precedence and it is therefore appropriate for the next Mitcham report to follow consideration by Cabinet of the LDF in late 2009/early 2010.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 If the Council were to take no action the lack of investment and decline in Mitcham would continue and perhaps accelerate leading to increased risk of crime and social deprivation.

3.2 The Council could decide to promote its own Compulsory Purchase Order to gain control of the sites identified within the SPD regeneration area but the resources and financial costs of so doing are not considered anywhere near achievable by the Council.

3.3 The Council could decide to sell or give control of the land it possess to a third party (private or public sector) but this would mean the Council would lose any leverage it may currently hold and seeks to maximise therefore perhaps leading to a decrease in the quality, design and timing of any proposals which may come forward.
Lastly, the Council could revert to its previous desire to see a comprehensive regeneration of Mitcham but in the current economic decline the prospect of ever seeing such proposals implemented has disappeared and may not return.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. The following consultation has or is continuing to take place:

- Consultation on the Gateways has been successfully completed with the Mitcham Society on 21st January 2009.
- Consultations on the Laburnum transport proposals have been successfully completed.
- Consultations continue with Market stall holders about general improvements to the market and its related facilities.
- Consultations are ongoing in respect of shop improvements and the Community Toilet Scheme.
- The Morrisons story "Morrisons to open new store" press release the council initiated was published in 60 newspapers nationwide.
- The web statistics show the council has had 1,419 visits to www.merton.gov.uk/mitcham since October 2008.

5 TIMETABLE

The way forward between now and late 2009/early 2010 is envisaged as follows:

- Complete a urban design exercise to include the LBM landholdings and create some options on what could be delivered on these land parcels.
- Continue with the programme of complementary initiatives and business support.
- Continue to develop short term local transport improvements.
- Continue to manage the project in line with the emerging LDF and Economic Development Strategy.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. The resources required to proceed with the next stages of the Mitcham project include existing officer time in relation to undertaking the work outlined above.
6.2. Advice from external consultants may also be required and can be met utilising existing capital budgets.
6.3. There is no adverse impact on the Council’s property interests in and around Mitcham by undertaking the work outlined above.
## Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Activity</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopment of Mitcham Town Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project management and other consultancy support</td>
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<td>£50,000</td>
<td>£50,000</td>
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<td>Capital programme</td>
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<td>Public Realm</td>
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<td>5 Gateways and associated improvements</td>
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<td>From Investing in Deprived Areas Budget</td>
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<td>Street furniture (bins, seats, clock tower, notice boards, lavender planters, Fair Green resurfaced)</td>
<td>£48,000</td>
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<td>LDA Mitcham Means Business capital funding</td>
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<td>Streetscene</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is a capital sum of £2m in 2008/09 for investment into the street scene on a borough wide basis and an allocation will be made from this. (approximately £200,000) Schemes include spend on bins, signage, and street furniture etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support to local Enterprise</td>
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<td>New market stall covers</td>
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<td>Shop front grants (5)</td>
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<td>£60,000</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
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<td>Investing in Deprived Areas Propose to carry forward £40k – delays because private sector match required and to ensure good design</td>
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<td>Grotty shops initiative</td>
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<td>Propose to carry forward £10k – delays because private sector involvement required</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Laburnum Road Home Zone</td>
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<td>Transport Capital Programme</td>
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<td>Comments</td>
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<td>Support to local enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relaunched market (access improvements, electricity, marketing etc)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>LDA Mitcham Means Business, town centre management revenue budget</td>
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<td>Town centre management</td>
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<td>Business support - Merton Chamber funded to provide network/peer support until Sept 2009</td>
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<td>LABGI</td>
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<td>Further business support</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
<td>Ongoing as part of mainstream budgets</td>
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<td>Community Facilities and Events</td>
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<td>Community Toilet scheme</td>
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<td>£2,500</td>
<td>Proposed from LABGI allocation</td>
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<td>Programme of events</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td>See separate report on Economic Development Strategy</td>
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7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. The proposals set out in this report are in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and relevant regulations and Government guidance.

7.2. Future elements of the wider regeneration programme may be subject to formal EU tendering requirements. Even if there is no formal EU requirement to enter
into a competitive process, the Council may elect to follow a competitive process to select a third party with whom the Council chooses to work. Details of such will be reported back to Cabinet and lead members as and when required.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. At this stage in completing the above work programme there are no human rights or equalities implications.

8.2. With regard to community cohesion, consultation with residents and stakeholders supports the following key priority in the Merton Cohesion Strategy 2006-10:

….."providing opportunities for all our residents to become actively involved in their communities, creating a sense of ownership, feeling valued and increased social capital".

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no implications for the purposes of this report, however as the Mitcham project moves forward all plans and proposals will have regard to designing out crime.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 At this stage there is no business risk at this stage of the project. However, as the regeneration strategy continues to develop, there may be business risks relating to Council and other property interests which will clearly require careful assessment and consideration. The details of any risk implications will be reported to the Members Working Group and appropriate Panels and Cabinet in due course.

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1 None.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 The Mitcham “Frequently Asked Questions” and Presentation to landowners, businesses and residents (a public meeting) held on 4th December 2008 can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/mitcham