

## **NON-KEY DECISION TAKEN BY A CABINET MEMBER UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

See over for instructions on how to use this form – all parts of this form must be completed. Type all information in the boxes. The boxes will expand to accommodate extra lines where needed.

**1. Title of report and reason for exemption (if any)**

Mitcham Town Centre Regeneration Scheme (2)

**2. Decision maker**

Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environment & Regeneration

**3. Date of Decision**

26<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**4. Date report made available to decision maker**

The report was made available on the 10th September 2013 to the Chair and Members of the Street Management Advisory Committee and the Cabinet Member

**5. Decision**

---

**Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Regeneration:

- A. Notes the content and issues set out herein, related to the implementation of a town centre improvement scheme in Mitcham
  - B. Notes the outcome of the informal consultation conducted in June and July 2013, the issues raised, and officers response to them, in relation to the broad scheme proposals
  - C. Notes the considerations related to the funding, procurement, planning, implementation and legalities associated with the scheme and the steps officers are taking to ensure these issues are appropriately addressed as part of the project
  - D. Agrees that the necessary steps be taken for the implementation of Phase 1 of the scheme including further consultation related to Traffic Management Orders
  - E. Agrees that the steps necessary to progress the outline designs of Phases 2 to 6 of the scheme as set out in this report including further analysis related to cycle provision and traffic impacts are taken forward for further consideration by the Cabinet Member before approval for implementation
-



---

## 6. Reason for decision

Extensive consultation has taken place over the course of 9 months including 2 wide ranging and large-scale formal consultation exercises and the issues raised were considered and addressed in the report. The scheme proposals as set out in Phase 1 are broadly supported and are required to begin implementation in 2013/14 to meet financial constraints. The latter phases (2 to 6) are also supported but there remain specific technical issues to resolve which will require further determination.

## 7. Alternative options considered and why rejected

**Do nothing:** the current viability of the town centre has been identified as a concern for a number of years and a number of proposals have been put forward but none taken forward to fruition. Given the funding available, the decision to do nothing would recognise that the council has no role to play in the physical regeneration of Mitcham in the foreseeable future and rely on a development led regeneration. Such an approach would have to submit to priorities of the developers, which experience suggests, would not chime well with the desires and needs of the local community.

**Widen the scheme:** There have been investigations as part of earlier initiatives into fundamental realignments of the road network in Mitcham, including the removal of the existing one-way system. Whilst this scheme has merits as part of town centre redevelopment, it is likely to require changes to buildings and therefore without a facilitating development, would involve council acquisitions of private property. This would not be achievable within the current budget of Rediscover Mitcham and moreover without a commercial development on line, it would be difficult to justify losing existing local businesses in order to achieve what is effectively changes to roads, rather than emphasising wider town centre regeneration benefits. However, although Rediscover Mitcham does not facilitate removal of the gyratory, equally it does not reduce the possibility of future changes or make it less feasible.

There is also recognition within the scheme design objectives, that there remains an aspiration to encourage appropriate new development within Mitcham and that the existing project should not limit the potential for this to happen. As such, the Rediscover Mitcham scheme supports future development opportunities by ensuring that the public highway changes do not impact development sites and in fact support them by, where possible, extending the available development space. For example, at the junction of Raleigh Gardens and Upper Green West the removal of bus route 200 will create a future development site in council ownership and at the junction of Holborn Way and Upper Green West the

extension of footway space will also allow for a potential future development site in council ownership. .

***Seek to achieve the objectives of the scheme in different ways.*** The main alternative proposal from some community stakeholders is to focus on supporting the shops and market around an improved Fair Green, while also improving accessibility from existing bus stops in the area. This approach seeks to deliver the benefits of the scheme without the perceived 'cost' of buses entering the current pedestrianised area. However in practice this type of approach is not likely to deliver the benefits of increased footfall in the pedestrian areas.

Firstly there is no fundamental change in the reason for people who currently use bus stops outside the Fair Green to access the Fair Green. People must be given a reason to make that crossing. It is pertinent to ask the theoretical question "who has crossed a road simply because the crossing is well designed?" In other words, if people currently choose not to cross into the Fair Green from these stops, improving the crossings without also improving the shopping offer is unlikely to change their behaviour. Secondly, it is suggested, the lack of footfall does not address the core problem, which is attracting new business into the town centre that will provide this reason for people to use the area. However, this view offers no clear justification as to why offering potential footfall from areas around the Fair Green simply by improving crossings, is going to be more attractive to businesses than offering actual footfall by relocating buses. Without the businesses and the activity the scheme will become 'public realm' focused but Mitcham is not an ornamental garden, rather a working town centre which has a local population to serve.

As such officers consider that this proposal in fact is more closely aligned with altering the objectives of the scheme into a 'tidying up exercise' rather than the claimed 'win-win' of offering regeneration benefits without loss of pedestrian space. It simply does not address the fundamental issues of economic decline of the town centre.

***Fundamentally alter the objectives of the scheme:*** The scheme is primarily conceived and funded as a holistic town centre regeneration scheme. This approach therefore integrates different objectives into a coherent approach. As made clear in the report to Street Management Advisory Committee in January 2013, one of the weaknesses of the interventions since the previous development led scheme did not proceed, was the piecemeal approach to the public realm and regeneration. One such approach would be to focus entirely on the improvement of the open space as an 'end in itself'. However this does not address the cycle of decline. It is highly unlikely that an improved Fair Green will, alone, result in significant improvement to the viability of the town centre. Whilst the Fair Green may be a destination to some, unless it is integrated into a more attractive and accessible town centre as a whole, it will become an underused area as local people continue to visit elsewhere. This will then result in the gradual degradation of the area as even the qualitative elements of the scheme are lost over time..

**8. Documents relied on in addition to officer report**

Note of Proceedings of Street Management Advisory Committee 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**9. Declarations of Interest**

None

**10. Publication of this decision and call in provision**

Send this form and the officer report\* to [democratic.services@merton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@merton.gov.uk) for publication. Publication will take place within two days. The call-in deadline will be at Noon on the third working day following publication.

\*There is no need to resend Street Management Advisory Committee reports.