

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 10 March 2014

Wards: Merton Park.

Also of interest to; St Helier, Ravensbury, Cannon Hill and Lower Morden.

Subject: Adoption of Morden Station Planning Brief

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration, Councillor Andrew Judge

Contact officer: Future Merton policy planner, Eben van der Westhuizen

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet adopts the Morden Station Planning Brief as a supplementary planning document to Merton's Core Planning Strategy.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. In October 2013, a draft planning brief for Morden Station was published for consultation. The draft planning brief was produced by the council in collaboration with the landowner and site operator, Transport for London in order to attract developer interest and guide any redevelopment proposals on Morden station and its surrounding sites.
- 1.2. The consultation that took place between October and November 2013 received extensive feedback and the council has since prepared a final planning brief which is recommended to Cabinet for adoption at their meeting of 10 March 2014.
- 1.3. The final planning brief for the Morden station site is attached as Appendix A to this report. The brief highlights development opportunities and constraints and provides detailed design guidance to give developer confidence in investing in the site. The site includes Morden station and associated car parks (owned by Transport for London), Newspaper House with Sainsbury's at ground level (owned by a pension fund) and Kenley Road Car Park (owned by Merton Council).
- 1.4. Council officers are meeting Transport for London in March 2014 to explore the delivery strategy for the site.
- 1.5. The Borough Plan Advisory Committee will consider the final planning brief at their meeting on 06 March 2014 and their recommendations will be presented to Cabinet before their meeting of 10 March 2014.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. In 2008/09 the council undertook a major consultation exercise called 'moreMorden' to identify people's views and opportunities for regenerating Morden town centre. Following the moreMorden consultation the Council adopted a strategic vision for Morden Town Centre in 2009, which was supported by 80% of respondents. The project slowed because of the economic downturn and changes to the local planning system. However, since then; the vision for Morden, based on improving the public realm and intensified development in the town centre, was adopted in Merton's Core Planning Strategy (2011).
- 2.2. The Morden Underground Station site was the most popular redevelopment site proposed in the moreMorden consultation. The site, which is the catalyst for the regeneration of Morden town centre, has also recently been subject to four rounds of public consultation (2011-2013) as a proposal site within the Sites and Policies Plan in which it is to be re-designated for housing and an appropriate mix of other town centre uses such as retail, hotel, business and community.
- 2.3. For the past year officers in futureMerton have been working in close collaboration with colleagues in Transport for London's Planning and Property teams (the freeholder of most of the site) to create a viable planning brief that would deliver development on the site that would be the catalyst for the regeneration of the whole town centre. Transport for London is required to make the most of their assets, and the TfL Property team has led on the site's development potential within TfL.
- 2.4. To support the production of the draft planning brief and to ensure that proposals in the planning brief are financially viable and physically achievable, futureMerton commissioned Landholt+Brown to advise on engineering, architecture and commercial viability in conjunction with GVA.
- 2.5. Between October and November 2013, public consultation took place on the draft Morden Station Planning Brief. The consultation documents and each of the responses received are available via Merton's website.
www.merton.gov.uk/morden/moremorden

Consultation summary

- 2.6. The key issues raised at consultation included:
 - building height, improvements to existing style and appearance
 - support for a different retail offer
 - open space: support for extending Kendor Gardens
 - parking
 - housing
 - community facilities
 - support for improving the public realm.
- 2.7. All consultation responses have been considered in drafting the final brief but some of the actions that have been taken as a result of the consultation feedback are set out below:

- (i) **Building heights** - In paragraph 2.3 of the final planning brief it is pointed out that the intensification proposed in Merton's Core Planning Strategy should "...be sensitive to the suburban character of the houses adjacent to the town centre" and in paragraph 6.45 it is pointed out that: "New buildings on the Kenley Road Car Park site and the parts of buildings adjacent to the houses along Kenley Road and Windermere Avenue should therefore respect and relate to the ridge height of the existing neighbouring houses." Furthermore, the Key Diagram now indicates the following relevant constraints: 'Scale of new development to respect that of adjoining residential development', 'New development to respect privacy of gardens adjoining site' and '21m distance from back of houses adjoining site'. The latter is the Mayor's Housing SPG's design guidance for separation distance between windows to habitable rooms.
- (ii) **Parking** - Planning policies support low or car free development in places, such as Morden that are well served by public transport. It is however likely that some short term visitor parking to serve shoppers will be required. The planning brief refers to the relevant parking provision standards and clarifies that the developer will have to make the case, as part of any planning application, why the proposed number and type of parking spaces are appropriate.
- (iii) **Building style and appearance** - There was much agreement that many of the existing buildings appear to be in a poor condition, that the art deco character should be strengthened and that the locally listed Morden Station building should be preserved and enhanced. In paragraphs 6.34 - 6.36 of the final planning brief, under the subheading 'Architectural Quality', numerous references are made to the art deco features within Morden and in paragraph 5.6 it is pointed out that: "Proposals in proximity of the locally listed station building need to ensure that the special features of this building is conserved and enhanced."
- (iv) **Retail** - The majority of respondents were critical of the current retail offer in Morden and either wanted more major brand retail stores or predominantly independent stores; with the majority wanting more major brands. The purpose of this development brief is to set out a clear vision and to provide guidance on the type of development expected on this site. The council has very limited influence on the occupants of retail units. The following guidance in paragraph 6.51 of the final planning brief should ensure the provision of a mix of store sizes: "Bigger shops should not take up unduly large amounts of frontage to the detriment of vitality. This is particularly relevant for food stores which should, as far as possible, be located to the rear of a larger number of smaller units, with their entrance at one or two key locations. A larger number of smaller shops create a greater range of activity, people and visual richness – all of which increases vitality."
- (v) **Open space** - There was support for the extension of Kendor Gardens into the site, the provision of green infrastructure (e.g. trees and green roofs) and improved links to Morden Hall Park and Morden Park. The Key diagram shows a 'Green Link from Kendor Gardens into Site' and paragraph 6.31 in the final brief states that: "Proposals for this major development site should also incorporate appropriate green infrastructure such as green roofs, living

walls and street planting which contribute to urban greening and result in the enhancement of local biodiversity.”

- (vi) **Housing** - There was mixed support for housing on the site, with a small majority supporting the provision of housing subject to a variety of concerns regarding tenure and size mix. Objections to the provision of housing were mainly on the grounds of the quantum of existing housing in the area and the additional pressures that will be placed on the provision of school places. The planning brief is a supplementary planning document which cannot contain new planning policies or contradict adopted planning policy such as Core Planning Strategy policy CS 9 which point out in paragraph 18.41 that it is anticipated for a large proportion (approximately 1,250) of the additional housing growth in the Morden sub-area is to come from the planned regeneration of Morden town centre. The final planning brief also points to planning policies that relate to the mix of dwelling sizes (DM H2) and tenure (DM H3), and the need for the developer to demonstrate that the projected child yield could be met in local schools (DM C2).
- (vii) **Community facilities** – 12 respondents were concerned about the need for additional school places, 8 were concerned about the likely increased pressure on GP surgeries, 5 would like a local gym/health centre and 4 suggested that public toilets should be provided. As pointed out above, the final planning brief states the planning policy requirement for the developer to demonstrate that the projected child yield could be met in local schools (DM C2) and that the impacts of this major development site on local health and wellbeing should be considered through the use of a Health Impact Assessment. In paragraph 6.33 the final planning brief points out that “*A mix of uses is critical for a vibrant town centre, as a good mix of uses attracts a variety of people for a long period during the day and the different uses will support each other commercially. Community and residential use in town centres maintains activity, providing natural surveillance and a sense of safety and attractiveness.*”
- (viii) **Public realm** – There was strong consensus that Morden’s public realm needs much improvement with many references to the existing bus interchange and poor pedestrian facilities. The final planning brief refers to the importance of the public realm on numerous actions throughout the document but in paragraph 5.2 points out that: “*There is an opportunity to make substantial improvements to the public realm at the entrance to Morden station*” if an appropriate alternative solution can be found for the provision of bus stands and in paragraph 6.49: “*All infrastructure in the public realm must be appropriate and functional. It must be well ordered to maximise space for pedestrians and facilitate easy movement for those with physical impairments (refer to TfL’s ‘Streetscape Guidance’).*”

2.8. This planning brief will guide the assessment of any relevant planning applications and provides an opportunity for the council to:

- pro-actively create a vision for the site;
- reduce planning uncertainty for investors through the provision of detailed guidance; and
- co-ordinate the interests of various land-owners.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 If the planning brief were not to be adopted, the council will lose an opportunity to pro-actively shape proposals for the site, offer certainty to investors and lose the ability to co-ordinate the interests of various land-owners.
- 3.2 The alternative option would be to await planning applications from speculative developers which would likely occur (if at all) in a piecemeal fashion, and would be unlikely to deliver the regeneration benefits that a comprehensive approach to site planning would deliver.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. As set out in the body of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The final planning brief will be considered by Cabinet on 10 March 2014, for adoption as a supplementary planning document to Merton's Core Planning Strategy.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The planning brief has been prepared using council resources.
- 6.2. Whilst the preparation and adoption of a planning brief does not have any significant resource impacts; LBM and TfL will formally consider implications for their property assets after the adoption of the planning brief..

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The planning brief (also known as a supplementary planning document) has been prepared in line with provisions in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared in conjunction with this document. The planning brief has also been informed by an on-going Screening Statement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, prepared in parallel with each stage of the plan and used to ensure that the plans deliver social, economic and environmental benefits equally. Some of the objectives that the plans have been appraised against relate to improving community cohesion.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The police have been engaged in the course of preparing this planning brief and advice on designing out crime has been included in the brief.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

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

A. Morden Station planning brief – final version (for adoption) - to be presented at Cabinet on 10 March 2014

B Statement of consultation on Morden station planning brief –summarised within this report. The full statement is a large document, available via Merton Council's website www.merton.gov.uk/morden/moremorden and on request by contacting Eben van der Westhuizen on 020 8545 3814.