

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 4 APRIL 2017  
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

HATFIELD 2030+ RENEWAL PROJECT

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council has long expressed its aspiration and intent to regenerate Hatfield.
- 1.2 This report summarises the vision and policies in the emerging Local Plan and the vision and objectives in the Hatfield Renewal Framework. It sets out a proposal to prepare and submit a planning application and secure funding from Herts Local Enterprise Partnership for the construction of a multi-story car park on The Common car park site. It explains how this project will unlock the potential to redevelop other town centre sites for high density housing, commercial and leisure/community uses that will help to revitalise the area. It also informs that a Transport Strategy is being prepared to ensure that all key destinations are better served by public transport and walking and cycling routes and that proposed development at Stanboroughbury and Symondshyde will be fully connected and integrated into the town.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Members affirm their commitment to the renewal of Hatfield by endorsing the vision and policies in the emerging Local Plan and the vision and objectives in the Hatfield Renewal Framework.
- 2.2 That Members agree to give delegated authority to the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources and the Executive Member for Business, Partnerships and Public Health to submit a funding bid to Herts Local Enterprise Partnership for £6 million to support the development of Hatfield town centre projects.
- 2.3 That Members authorise officers to prepare and submit a planning application for the construction of a multi-storey car park on The Common car park site.
- 2.4 That Members acknowledge that officers will investigate and make future proposals in respect of the wider implications of the construction of a multi-storey car park.
- 2.5 That Members acknowledge that future reports will seek authority to prepare and submit planning application for development on other council-owned sites.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 This Council has long expressed an aspiration and intent to regenerate Hatfield, and has sought to do so by compulsorily purchasing land in the town centre to enable major redevelopment, by acquiring over £4 million worth of assets from St

Modwen in 2014, by investing £4.65 million in town centre projects to refurbish retail and residential units and improve the public realm and by progressing redevelopment projects such as 1-9 Town Centre and High View neighbourhood centre. The improved liveliness of the town centre is testament to the on-going success of these efforts.

### Local Plan

- 3.2 The emerging Local Plan sets out a vision for the future of Hatfield which aims to retain its pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit by investing in its town centre and neighbourhood centres, building new housing and leisure facilities, improving transport connections and strengthening it as a destination for employment and higher education. It contains a specific vision to work with partners to regenerate the town centre as a place where people want to shop, work, live and relax. It also contains policies to strengthen the economic prosperity of the business park and university campuses and anticipates some 3,200 new homes for Hatfield being built over the period to 2032, including a large urban extension at Stanboroughbury and a new village at Symondshyde to the north-west of the town.

### Hatfield Renewal Partnership

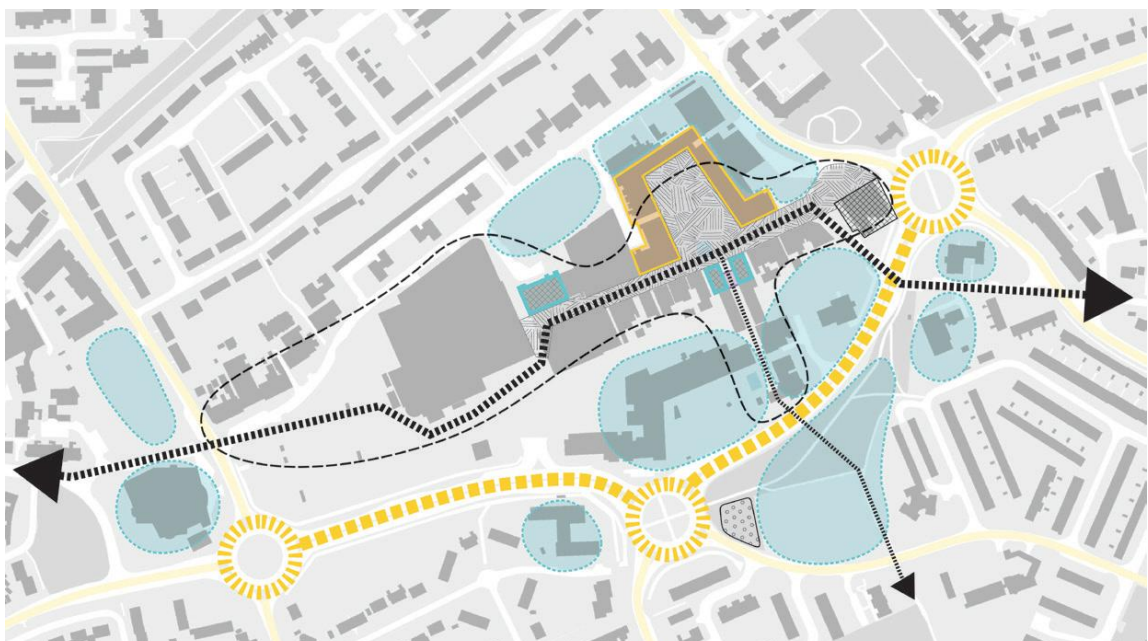
- 3.3 Many of the ambitions of this policy are now being taken forward by the Hatfield Renewal Partnership. This group formed in 2015 to bring together stakeholders including this Council, University of Hertfordshire, Oaklands College, Hatfield Town Council, Finesse Leisure, Goodman Business Park, Gascoyne Cecil Estates, Herts Local Enterprise Partnership and Hertfordshire County Council. It now meets quarterly under the title of the Hatfield Renewal Partnership Board and is chaired by Professor Quentin McKellar, who is the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire. It is attended by Cllr Bernard Sarson as Executive Member for Business and Partnerships and officers from the Council's planning and corporate property teams.
- 3.4 The partnership began its work by commissioning consultants to devise a long-term plan for the future renewal of Hatfield to 2030 and beyond. As a result the consultants spent autumn 2015 and spring 2016 engaging with key stakeholders, businesses, community groups and residents under the 'Hatfield 2030+' branding and website ([www.hatfield2030.co.uk](http://www.hatfield2030.co.uk)) to better understand the town's potential, its future challenges and to identify solutions.
- 3.5 This work resulted in the publication of Hatfield New Town Renewal Framework (in July 2016) which proposes the following vision:
- “A well-connected, distinctive and multi-centred town with a renewed ‘New Town’ pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit. A town that re-balances economic growth and world class education assets with new and rejuvenated housing, excellent community, culture, retail and leisure facilities and a series of connected urban centres.”*
- 3.6 It is an ambitious document which advises that the achievement of the vision requires an organised and wholly supported strategy for change, a commitment to partnership working and a clear set of agreed priorities and projects.

3.7 The Framework sets out a package of more detailed objectives which it asserts are central to the town's renewal and have been agreed with the community to bring about the critical change needed to achieve the vision. These are to:

- create a series of thriving centres
- transform the town centre through residential-led regeneration
- build a range of market and affordable new homes
- renew houses in existing residential areas
- integrate greenfield development to the existing town
- manage the impact of student accommodation
- provide space and technological infrastructure for businesses and start-ups
- improve skills and employment opportunities
- use signage and art to improve identity
- connect different areas of the town including overcoming east/west barriers
- improve walking and cycling routes
- create well-connected green spaces
- enable arts and culture
- support healthy living through sport and fitness
- support the social and night-time economy
- create better relations between the resident and student population

3.8 The Framework contains a conceptual framework for the whole town which recognises key destinations such as the town centre, railway station, university campuses, business park and neighbourhood centres and the need to strengthen travel links between them.

3.9 It also contains a strategy diagram for the town centre which concludes that a number of opportunity sites could be redeveloped for high density housing and other uses if a multi-storey car park were built to enable a reduction in surface car park provision. The provision of new housing will increase the number of people using the town throughout the day and evening, making it a livelier place for all.



3.10 The Framework has been formally endorsed by the Renewal Partnership as the vision it would like to see being delivered in Hatfield over the coming years, and the

Board intends to remain in place to help co-ordinate, advocate and act as a critical friend.

- 3.11 It is recognised however that the renewal of Hatfield will be the cumulative outcome of many distinct projects, some of which will be delivered by individual partners based on their own landholdings, and in some cases by partners who also have statutory functions, such as this Council as a landowner and the local planning authority and Herts County Council as the local highway and education authority.
- 3.12 Members will recognise that an incremental approach also has the merit of learning from previous experience that comprehensive schemes are prone to periods of recession. The responsibility of the Council and the Board will be to ensure that individual developments that come forward over the renewal period are carefully planned and designed to look and feel like an integrated programme.

#### Herts LEP funding

- 3.13 At an early stage in its existence the Board made a successful bid to Herts LEP for £6 million of funding under the Government's Growth Deal 2 initiative. This was awarded for the period 2019/20 and 2020/21 but the LEP has indicated that it could be available in earlier years if it can be used to unlock development opportunities for housing and jobs.
- 3.14 Herts LEP has advised that monies will be awarded as loan funding, unless it can be demonstrated that the intended use is commercially unviable, in which case a proportion may be awarded as grant funding. At this stage it is anticipated that a multi-storey car park would be a commercially viable project and would therefore only secure loan funding. Herts LEP have also indicated however that it may be possible to recycle the funding into future projects, and it is intended that officers will continue to explore this opportunity.

#### Multi-Storey Car Park

- 3.15 After careful consideration of the vision, objectives and recommendations in the Renewal Framework, the Board considers that the construction of a multi-storey car park on The Common car park site is a pivotal project that will unlock the scope for existing surface car parks to be redeveloped for other uses.
- 3.16 At this stage it is anticipated that a five storey steel structure with about 500 spaces will be sufficient to re-provide spaces likely to be lost in other surface car parks. It will also be designed as a statement building (rather than utilitarian) to demonstrate the Council's on-going commitment to the renewal of the town centre.
- 3.17 The Board has therefore asked the Council to submit a bid to Herts LEP for the £6 million of funding to be made available to support the development of Hatfield town centre projects.
- 3.18 If the bid is successful, it is intended that a planning application will be prepared by Corporate Property and submitted to the Planning Service early in the 2017/18 financial year, that construction could take place over a six month period in Quarter 1 of 2018/19 and that it could be opened by Quarter 4 of 2018/2019, depending on

the procurement process and any site issues identified as part of the surveys that are about to be commissioned.

- 3.19 If the bid is successful, it is also intended that officers will investigate and make future proposals to Members in respect of a charging regime for the multi-storey car park, free parking arrangements for other Council managed car parks, temporary parking arrangements during the construction of the multi-storey car park, which might include the installation of a temporary deck on the Link Drive or Lemsford Road car parks, and the merits of controlled parking zones in surrounding residential streets.
- 3.20 If the bid is unsuccessful, then officers will investigate and report back to Members on alternative funding/delivery arrangements.

#### Other sites

- 3.21 A multi-storey car park would unlock the redevelopment potential of a number of other sites in and around the town centre.
- 3.22 Members of this Council have already authorised the preparation of a planning application for the redevelopment of 1 Town Centre for ground floor retail units and seven storeys of flats plus associated improvements to the surrounding public realm. The application is currently being finalised by Corporate Property and should be submitted to the Planning Service early in the 2017/18 financial year. It is initially intended that car parking spaces in Kennelwood car park will be offered to residents who want them, but these may be moved to the multi-storey car park once it is constructed.
- 3.23 The Renewal Framework identifies Link Drive car park as an opportunity area. This is owned by the Council and further work indicates that it could be redeveloped for approximately 150 residential units (subject to detailed design considerations). It is intended that officers will investigate and make future proposals to Members on the best form of development and delivery arrangements for this site. It should be noted that this site is currently affected by a claw-back covenant in favour of the Homes & Communities Agency.
- 3.24 The Renewal Framework identifies Lemsford Road car park as an opportunity area. This is owned by the Council, but before deciding on its future the Council intends to commission a Sports Strategy to consider opportunities to refurbish or rebuild the adjoining swim centre and introduce other leisure/community facilities and perhaps some housing and/or commercial uses.
- 3.25 To help progress these sites the Board has agreed to fund the appointment of consultants to carry out ground conditions surveys to ensure there are no technical constraints to development.
- 3.26 The Council has also submitted an expression of interest to the Government's Accelerated Construction initiative to access support and investment from the Homes & Communities Agency to help bring these sites forward for development.
- 3.27 The Renewal Framework also identifies a number of sites that are not in the Council's landownership, notably Market Place shops, William Cecil Memorial Hall,

the telephone exchange, Queensway health centre, the Town Inn, Kennelwood House, the Post Office depot and Gracemead House. The Council has contacted the landowners of these premises to advise them of the vision for Hatfield and to invite them to discuss possible redevelopment options. It is anticipated that any early expressions of interest could be incorporated into the existing programme of sites and that any proposals that come forward later into the renewal process can be determined in accordance with supportive policies in the emerging Local Plan.

- 3.28 The emerging Local Plan contains proposals for 420 new homes on brownfield and windfall sites in Hatfield and proposes to release land from the green belt at Stanboroughbury for 1,650 new homes and at Symondshyde for 1,130 new homes. It also contains a proposal for a new business park at Marshmoor, which adjoins Welham Green but is easily accessible from Hatfield.
- 3.29 To ensure that all of these developments are properly connected, integrated and contribute to the renewal of the town, the Board has agreed to fund consultants to prepare a Transport Strategy. This will explore opportunities to improve public transport links between key destinations (such as the town centre, railway station, business park, university campuses, Galleria and neighbourhood centres), better routes for pedestrians and cyclists and ways of overcoming the east/west barrier formed by the A1(M) and Comet Way.

#### **4 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Business Plan 2015-2018 and particularly Priority 3 to meet the borough's housing needs and Priority 4 to help build a strong local economy and revitalise our town centres.

#### **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are known claw-back covenants affected The Common car park site and Link Drive car park. As at 2017, some 34% of any uplift in value of these sites may be payable to the Homes & Communities Agency. This percentage decreases by 2% per annum. This has been raised with the Agency and is also cited in the Expression of Interest form which the Council has submitted to the Government as part of its Accelerated Construction initiative, with a suggestion that the covenants could be withdrawn in order to enable development to progress.
- 5.2 Title searches will need to be undertaken in respect of all potential development sites owned by the Council.

#### **6 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The preparation and submission of a planning application for a multi-storey car park will be funded from the Corporate Property budget. The preferred arrangement at this stage is a design-and-build contract as there is no budget for detailed design work at this stage. It is hoped that £6 million of funding from Herts LEP will be secured to fund its construction and associated fees. This means that any funding that Corporate Property provide will be on a re-charge basis and will be recovered from the Herts LEP funding.

- 6.2 It is intended that a charging regime will be introduced in the multi-storey car park to repay this funding, maintenance and any additional resource required such as an additional parking control officer.
- 6.3 The Council has agreed the appointment of Colliers International to provide viability advice to help bring the town centre projects forward. Any costs arising from this association for the multi-storey car park will be recoverable from Herts LEP funding.
- 6.4 The Common car park site is affected by a covenant in favour of the Homes & Communities Agency. This is a writing-down claw-back whereby a percentage of any uplift in site value may be payable to the Agency.
- 6.5 The cost of building a multi-storey car park is capital. The running costs of the completed car park will be revenue. Any income that the car park produces will be revenue unless it is derived from long-term parking contracts.
- 6.6 Should a temporary deck be required to mitigate the temporary loss of car parking by virtue of building a multi-storey car park, this would need to be rented and hence would be charged to revenue. This would also need a temporary traffic regulation order.
- 6.7 The preparation and submission of planning applications for other sites such as Link Drive car park will also be funded from the Corporate Property budget.

## **7 Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 The risk management implications of the above projects are judged to be positive in the long-term as they will demonstrate the Council's on-going commitment to the renewal of Hatfield and the town centre. In the short-term the construction of 1 Town Centre and the multi-storey car park will create disruption in the town centre, as will future development projects for other sites. All construction work will be undertaken in accordance with best practice and efforts will be made to minimise disruption to businesses, residents and shoppers.
- 7.2 Any introduction of car parking charges in the multi-storey car park would need to be linked to other car parking controls in and around the town centre, to ensure the multi-storey car park is used efficiently.
- 7.3 It is anticipated that the simultaneous construction of 1 Town Centre and a multi-storey car park on The Common car park site would result in the temporary loss of approximately 170 car parking spaces. As a result officers will continue to explore the feasibility of renting a temporary deck, for either Link Drive or Lemsford Road car park. If favoured this would be the subject of a separate report and any costs associated with this option would be revenue.

## **8 Security and Terrorism Implications**

- 8.1 There are no security or terrorism implications associated with this report.

## **9 Procurement Implications**

- 9.1 The Renewal Partnership Board has already agreed to fund the appointment of consultants to carry out ground conditions surveys and to prepare a transport strategy for the town. Officers have also previously secured Members' agreement to appoint Colliers International as viability consultants to work out the costs of development projects on Council land.
- 9.2 Any procurement for the construction of a multi-storey car park would need to be under OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) rules. Any future decision to rent a temporary car parking deck may also need to be under OJEU rules.

## **10 Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 The projects set out above would have climate change implications, in as much as development utilises power and building materials. The construction of a multi-storey car park would provide car parking for vehicles, and there is scope to consider electric car charging points as part of its design. It is also intended that a Transport Strategy will be prepared to improve linkages between key destinations and opportunities for better public transport and walking and cycling links.
- 10.2 It is anticipated that the multi-storey car park could have low-carbon LED lighting and consideration will also be given to siting photovoltaic cells on the structure to help mitigate its energy costs.

## **11 Policy Implications**

- 11.1 The projects set out above would contribute to the emerging Local Plan vision and policies and Renewal Framework vision and objectives to renew the town's original pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit.

## **12 Equalities and Diversity**

- 12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the recommendations in this report. There will however be an obligation to provide disabled parking spaces and a disabled-access lift as part of the multi-storey car park. A detailed EIA will therefore be carried out as part of the design process.

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Background Papers:

Hatfield New Town Renewal Framework  
Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission