

# **ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

## **2 APRIL 2008**

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**7**

### **TITLE OF REPORT: ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**

Please note that, with the agreement of the Chairman, the Royston & District Committee's consideration of the Royston Town Centre Strategy will now take place in June 2008.

The attached report provides an update on progress on the Strategy, and informs the Committee of the next steps to be taken (including further consultation with Members, consultants and key stakeholders), prior to the Strategy coming before the Committee at its meeting scheduled for 11 June 2008.

- THIS PAGE IS BLANK -

**TITLE OF REPORT: INFORMATION NOTE ON ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING &amp; BUILDING CONTROL

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on progress in dealing with the Revised Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) following public consultation.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Royston Town Centre Strategy is the second town centre strategy following Letchworth to be prepared under the reformed statutory development planning system as a 'supplementary planning document.' The aim of the Strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework to promote and guide development within Royston Town Centre over the next 15 years.
- 2.2 The Council appointed MVA to prepare a Parking Strategy for Royston and BDP to prepare a Town Centre Strategy for Royston. The Parking Strategy is an important background paper to the policy guidance provided in the Draft Royston Town Centre Strategy.
- 2.3 Both the Parking Strategy and the draft Royston Town Centre Strategy were presented to Members at the Royston & District Committee on 28 November 2008, where Members agreed the draft Town Centre Strategy for public consultation. Members however did not support the Parking Strategy at that time as it was considered that more clarity was required around parking charges.
- 2.4 The draft Royston Town Centre Strategy was subsequently agreed by Cabinet on 18 December 2007 for public consultation. The public consultation period ran for six weeks from 12 January to 22 February 2008. A public exhibition and launch was held at the start of the consultation period by BDP and council officers to which over 100 people attended. During the consultation period a permanent exhibition was placed in the Royston Library and a council officer was available to answer questions and discuss peoples views at the library exhibition over two afternoons and early evenings towards the end of the consultation period.

**3. KEY ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- 3.1 There has been a good level of responses to the consultation with nearly 90 responses have been received to the draft Town Centre Strategy from interested local residents, businesses, organisations and landowners. The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank the continued interest expressed by the public in the preparation of the Strategy and for the time in submitting comments to the draft SPD.
- 3.2 The majority of comments received to the draft Strategy have been generally positive in relation to the vision, broad aims and policy guidance sections. In the case of more detailed comments, this will result in changes being made to the draft Strategy to either strengthen or clarify the guidance in relation to:
- The importance of open spaces not only in terms of their landscape setting and amenity value, but in terms of their significance in contributing towards biodiversity;

- The urban design principles and the importance of any development being of high quality design which should protect and add to the character of the built environment.
- Transport issues in relation to the movement of traffic within the core town centre area, the likely impact of the opportunity sites on the surrounding road network, the potential reduction in car parking over the longer term within the town centre core area, the need to ensure that car parking capacity is retained as new development comes forward as part of the opportunity sites, and the need to review parking charges;
- The various opportunity sites in particular site RTC1 - the Civic Centre site, in accordance with comments received and amendments made to other parts of the Strategy, i.e. in the case of the Movement Section.
- The delivery of the aims of the Strategy and how this can be improved through partnership working and promotion.

3.3 The consultants have already made some suggested amendments to the Strategy and the opportunity sites in light of the open space and urban design comments submitted to the consultation draft. These amendments are presently being considered by relevant officers. However it is the officers view that the following additional work needs to be undertaken in light of:

- (i) the Parking Strategy to address both the short-term and longer term aspirations of the Town Centre Strategy and the concerns raised thorough the public consultation process, and
- (ii) the Delivery Section of the Town Centre Strategy and the need to work in partnership with other service providers and key organisations to include clear delivery mechanisms within the Strategy that can then be taken forward as part of an Action Plan. The Action Plan would include short to medium term actions which Members can agree and prioritise as being the key actions in taking the town centre strategy forward.

#### **4. THE NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 That Officers together with their consultants review the objectives of the Parking Strategy in light of the concerns raised.
- 4.2 That officers prepare a detailed Action plan in partnership with various service providers and representatives from key organisations as a means of delivering the aims of the strategy once adopted.
- 4.3 That officers, together with their consultants arrange a discussion with Members and representatives from key organisations to discuss both the parking strategy and the delivery mechanisms of the Town Centre Strategy, with immediate effect.
- 4.4 That officers present the revised Town Centre Strategy to the Royston & District Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008 for agreement and recommended adoption by Cabinet and Full Council together with a revised Parking Strategy as a supporting background paper and an agreed Action Plan as a means of delivering the aims of the adopted Strategy.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report and agree the next steps as set out in Section 4 above.

#### **6. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 6.1 Louise Symes – Projects Manager, Planning Services – Ext: 4359
- 6.2 David Scholes – Head of Planning & Building Control Services – Ext: 4836