

Appendix B

Public & Business Engagement and Concept Design

Overview

The Covid-19 pandemic has now created unprecedented times for high streets as well as consumer behaviours have reverted to carrying out shopping for products, commodities online, utilising click and collection and delivery services via ecommerce channels.

Prolonged lockdown may fundamentally change consumer behaviour for the future, consumers would have become dependent on buying online and having their products delivered. It may not be just shops that are at risk of becoming redundant in town centres, some socialising experiences such as going to the pub, gyms and leisure facilities may be at risk because people/consumers have become accustomed to carrying out exercising within their homes, gardens over the past seven weeks and buying online gym subscriptions etc.

Havering town centres and high streets were facing some extremely challenging times pre Covid-19 with declining footfall numbers and the escalation of ecommerce impacting on prices, products and profit margins accompanied with increased overhead costs. As we begin to take cautious steps towards recovery from the Covid-19 lockdown period, footfall figures within the town centres are unlikely to return to pre Covid-19 or 2019 footfall levels initially and footfall levels may only achieve 60% within our town centres over the next few months.

Businesses are facing challenging economic times, and businesses have been supported to access central government grants and support packages throughout the pre recovery and recovery period.

During this recovery period of Covid-19 it is recommended to commission a Public and Business Engagement Concept Design consultation programme to ascertain public and businesses perceptions, views and opinions for future social, economic, cultural and environmental improvements opportunities to enhance the vitality and viability of the proposed five town centres Upminster, Collier Row, Elm Park, Hornchurch and Rainham. This programme of delivery will need to be flexible with regards to consultation/engagement process during these unprecedented times so a range of engagement mechanisms will be used for example 'virtual' meetings/ workshops/webinars, FAQ's/social media and telephone surveys, use of an interactive map with members of the public and businesses to ensure engagement can take place. The engagement programme will identify early intervention measures for the town centres and will inform the future scope to achieve concept designs through to public consultation which will produce a comprehensive report to enable the progression towards preliminary design, detailed design for long term town centre recovery delivery plans for future Capital investment programmes.

To complement the Public & Business Engagement and Concept Design programme it is recommended to compile an inventory and map Council department's current interventions/service delivery to the aforementioned five town centres. This will reduce the risk of silo working and support partnership working across Council services on future projects and initiatives e.g.: social distancing and car parking within town centres, transport and development plans. This can be achieved by a web-based consultation system which will support this coordination.

Early Engagement – subject to Covid-19 restrictions

- Inventory to map Council department's current interventions/service delivery to the aforementioned five town centres. Supports partnership working across Council services on future projects and initiatives, a web-based consultation system.
- A web-based consultation system through (to be linked from the Havering Council website) which will enable residents, businesses and interested groups to plot their feedback and comments on the town centre.
- Visit to businesses subject to Covid – 19 restrictions, alternative methods of engagement process can be used; webinars, FAQs, discussion forums, social media advertising and telephone surveys, A5 leaflet drops to be delivered to all businesses to direct to the consultation website and inform them of drop-in sessions.
- Drop in sessions x 3, site walkabout with Members and Havering Council Officers in attendance – social distancing regulations will apply.
- Engagement with community forums and businesses forums/groups.
- Engagement with local schools, discuss the process with head teachers to encourage parents and school children to take part.
- Young People engagement in partnership with Havering Youth Service.
- Email management of queries during the consultation programme monitoring during business hours and out of office provision.
- An infographic fact sheet will be produced displaying the results that can be distributed to Councillors, residents, businesses and other stakeholders as well as being uploaded to Havering's web pages.
- Analysis and collation of all responses received. A comprehensive early engagement report will be produced that will summarise the findings from the consultation period, with any recommendations identified. The summary document will provide the number of responses received, how people travel in the area, the most common issues and what people would like to see in their town centre.

Concept Designs – Development of Designs

- Findings from the early engagement programme will be taken into consideration to produce feasibility assessments.
- Site visits to better understand the current traffic conditions, layout, constraints and further opportunities within the proposed study area.
- Undertake a feasibility assessment, ensuring an area-wide treatment with a consistent and cohesive approach.
- An area-wide plan will be produced in a consultation-friendly format showing the proposals, opportunities and constraints. The plan will take into consideration The Healthy Streets principles.
- Examine new initiatives and technology that could be incorporated to encourage improvements within the town centre.
- Workshops based around Concept designs. Produce a detailed summary report showing the outcome of the workshops and any recommendations to the design.
- Finalise concept design and undertake any further design of public realm spaces.
- Assess and identify maintenance liabilities for greenery, street cleaning and refuse operations.
- Produce high level cost estimates for development and delivery.
- Produce a comprehensive design report, options considered, advantages and disadvantages for each option with a preferred option with identified cost estimate.

Public Consultation

- Consultation content for website pages and all supporting literature.
- Run a four week web based public consultation including visual designs.
- Produce a comprehensive consultation report detailing all findings from the public consultation detailing next stages and requirements to move to preliminary designs, detailed design.
- An outline timeframe for delivery considering Covid-19 restrictions is nine months with an agreed phased delivery programme.