

K+20: KINGSTON TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN: - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON PREFERRED OPTIONS STAGE

Report by the Interim Director of Environmental Services
Executive Member for Transportation and Sustainable Development

Purpose

To inform the Executive of the responses received during the consultation on Preferred Options for the Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan, the proposed responses to the comments received and the proposed next steps.

Action proposed by the Executive Member for Transportation and Sustainable Development

The Executive is requested to:

1. Note the consultation responses and the endorse the Council's proposed responses to the comments received; and
2. Note the proposed next steps and the programme for the preparation of the draft Area Action Plan.

Reasons for action proposed

To inform the Executive of outcome of consultation on the Preferred Options for the K+20 Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan, to seek endorsement for the proposed responses to the representations received and to set out the programme for completion of the Area Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

1. In May 2005, the Executive considered a report on the K+20 Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options and Sustainability Appraisal and approved the documents for public participation purposes. The interim Head of Planning and Development was authorised, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Transportation and Sustainable Development, to make minor corrections to, and to précis, the documents for consultation purposes. A full colour printed Preferred Options document and summary leaflet were produced, both with a pull-out questionnaire, which could be returned by Freepost

CONSULTATION STRATEGY

2. The public participation strategy for the Preferred Options included a range of actions to try to involve the public and a wide range of local and statutory organisations during the consultation period. These included:
 - the Launch Event on 18th June 2005 with a presentation and workshop

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- promotion of the K+20 Preferred Options via the JC Decaux poster sites around the town centre
 - press releases
 - Article in Living Kingston and questionnaire distributed with the magazine to all households in the borough (approx 60,000)
 - Exhibitions in borough libraries, the Market House and Guildhall 2, with the Preferred Options document and leaflet available free of charge. A lot of interest was generated by the exhibitions across the borough, with requests for more copies of leaflets and documents to be provided.
 - 850 copies of the Preferred Options document were distributed through mailing, exhibitions and Council information points, each including a questionnaire.
 - over 10,000 copies of the Preferred Options leaflet were distributed through mailing, exhibitions and Council information points, each including a questionnaire. The leaflet was mailed to nearly 4,000 addresses in and around the town centre and to a 5% sample of households across the borough (nearly 3000 households)
 - Manned exhibition over 4 days, 1st-2nd July in the Bentall Centre and 7th-8th July in the Eden Walk Shopping Centre
 - All consultation documents available on the K+20 website (www.kingston.gov.uk/kplus20) with facility to complete and return the questionnaire on-line or to e-mail comments and requests for information
 - information on the RBK Plasma Screens in Guildhall 2 and the Market House
 - use of promotional materials – pens, balloons, ‘furry bugs’
3. Prior to the June Launch, presentations were given to the Kingston-upon-Thames Society, CARA, Southborough Residents Association and Kingston Town Centre Management.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

4. The responses are divided into sections:
- Feedback from the Launch Event
 - Committee/Panel Views on the Preferred Options
 - Questionnaire Responses
 - Responses from Statutory Consultees
 - Responses from Local Groups
 - Responses from landowners and businesses

The Launch

5. The Preferred Options consultation was launched on Saturday 18th June with a stakeholder workshop held in the Guildhall. Nearly 300 people were invited to the launch, including residents groups, voluntary organisations, businesses, landowners, developers, statutory organisations, the local media, members and officers. The event was opened by the Mayor and was attended by around 90 people. Attendees were given a pack containing the Preferred Options document, a summary leaflet and other information.
6. The Launch involved a presentation on the Preferred Options and two workshops, with participants split into three topic groups: mix of uses, transport and access and environmental quality. The first workshop session considered the Issues raised in 2003 and 2004 consultation, whether they were still relevant and whether they were any additional issues. The second session considered the Preferred Options proposals, whether they were effective, viable and realistic in addressing the

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Issues. Facilitators from 'The Planning Co-operative' led the programme and the workshops and reported back on the group discussions. The Facilitators' report is included as Annex 1 to this report.

7. Some of the issues to emerge from the workshops are set out below:

- Support in principle for AAP proposals, subject to reservations about expansion of educational facilities and need to manage expansion to reduce tensions between local residents and the student population
- Need to manage tensions between uses. Tensions relate mainly to issues associated with the evening economy, disturbance and anti-social behaviour
- Need to consider existing residents, their views and effects of AAP on residents living in and around the town centre above views of visitors/shoppers
- Agree that more cultural and recreational facilities needed to attract wider sectors of the local community
- Need for further work on offices and office employment to feed into AAP
- Retail development to reflect local character and provide for range of shoppers and retailers including small & independent shops, avoid 'any town' scenario
- New Library facility should be in a central location & provide a community focus
- Enhance markets – they add character and identity
- Comprehensive masterplan required for Cattle Market area

- Concern about conflict between pedestrians and cyclists
- Need for greater emphasis on public transport and green travel plans
- Need to consider all options to improve pedestrian crossings on relief road
- Recognition of importance of partnerships to achieve improvements
- Give greater emphasis to park and ride and improving access to Kingston from Surrey via Surbiton Station and bus.
- Need to improve bus facilities and whole bus experience to increase patronage
- Majority support for parking strategy, given current policy guidance – existing level of parking OK but make better use of parking and continue to monitor

- Nurture Kingston's unique and varied character
- High quality pedestrian access is a key
- Need to provide good quality open space and well designed spaces especially at gateway locations e.g station & Penrhyn Road
- Maintain historic character of centre and lanes through careful design
- Need to cherish historic buildings and demolish poor buildings from 1960's onwards to improve the streetscene
- Welcome strong and iconic design for key landmark sites
- New development to be of appropriate scale to blend with surroundings
- Need to co-ordinate streetscape design, materials, signage & lighting to create coherent image
- Welcome more public art
- Provide better public toilets
- Achieve character and identity through high quality design, rather than height
- Avoid blank frontages

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Committee/Panel Views on the Preferred Options

8. The report on the Preferred Options was considered by the four Neighbourhood and the Development Control Committees and the Transport and Infrastructure Overview Panel in June and July 2005. The Transport and Infrastructure Overview Panel; the Maldens and Coombe; Surbiton and South of the Borough Neighbourhood Committees noted the report. The Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee also resolved that “the involvement of the Surbiton Neighbourhood in the consultation process be supported in recognition that the changes to Kingston town centre will have an impact on residents who live in Surbiton.
9. The Kingston Town Neighbourhood Committee agreed that
 1. The Action Plan be supported and the consultation process noted;
 2. The Executive be advised of concerns
 - a. that the consultation with Neighbourhoods could have been improved by being done at a stage in the process when some of the consultation responses were known
 - b. over the principle of delegation to a single Executive member and how much power is in fact being delegated, in this instance reference is made to ‘minor corrections’ and a précis.
10. The Development Control Committee agreed that
 1. the Executive be advised that the Committee agreed with the concerns expressed in the options document about increasing densities for residential properties and the lack of amenity space for developments; and
 2. the Committee agreed that the following comments made by individual Members of the Committee be forwarded to the Executive:
 - the information on parking policy did not mention a further study carried out into parking issues;
 - parking is not considered to be fully addressed; there are issues about the adequate supply of car parking spaces and the suitable location of car parks/parking spaces;
 - the questionnaire had not been vetted by a Committee (although it had been approved by the K+20 Working Party which includes Councillors);
 - concerns about the criteria for sustainability, how sustainability is measured, and whether the Council is meeting its requirements.

Questionnaire Responses

11. A total of 2,495 completed questionnaires were returned with 2,141 from addresses within the borough and 354 from addresses outside the borough and unknown addresses. The table gives details of the responses by post code area and an indication of the population by area. There has been some criticism of the questionnaires which were distributed with the *Living Kingston* magazine, which contained an article on the K+20 Preferred Options, and which were included in the consultation leaflet and the main consultation document. The questionnaires were

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included rather than merely a comments form with the intention of assisting people to respond and to encourage a higher response rate. Space for comments was included on the questionnaire and it was open for consultees to send in or e-mail written comments separately. The questionnaire responses also enable us to gauge relative levels of support for the Preferred Options vision and elements of the vision.

Postcode	Area	Estimated population of RBK	% of total RBK population	No. of responses received	% of total responses returned
KT1	Kingston town centre	17,154	11.4%	295	12%
KT2	North Kingston	29,053	19.4%	516	21%
KT3	New & Old Malden	27,950	18.6%	401	16%
KT4	Worcester Park	9,119	6%	93	4%
KT5/6	Surbiton & Tolworth	38,686	25.7%	587	24%
KT9	Chessington Hook & MR	28,150	18.7%	249	10%
SW15	Kingston Vale	N/A	N/A	10	0.4%
Outside borough		N/A	N/A	45	2%
Unknown address		N/A	N/A	299	12%

Questionnaire Analysis

12. The Preferred Options questionnaire set out the Vision for the town centre as follows:
 “The overall vision is to preserve and enhance Kingston’s attractive character and historic environment, to provide high quality new facilities in the less attractive parts of the town centre, together with transport and environmental improvements.”
13. The level of support or lack of support for the overall vision and elements of the Preferred Options, as set out in the questionnaire responses is summarised below:

	QUESTION	SUPPORT	DON'T SUPPORT	DON'T KNOW OR DID NOT ANSWER
Q1	Overall Vision	77%	5%	18%
Q2	Landmark new shopping	58%	27%	15%
Q3	New & refurbished offices	59%	23%	18%
Q4	New homes	52%	33%	15%
Q5	New University & College facilities	62%	20%	19%
Q6	Wider range of cultural & entertainment facilities	82%	10%	9%
Q7	Major new development in streets & squares	76%	14%	10%

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Q8	Enhancing the Medieval Core	87%	5%	7%
Q9	Environmental Improvements	88%	4%	8%
Q10	Enhancing the Riverside	88%	5%	8%
Q11	New covered bus station to replacing Eden Street stops	60%	21%	19%
Q12	More pedestrianised streets	72%	15%	13%
Q13	New or improved rail station	81%	8%	13%
Q14	Better cycle routes & parking	70%	15%	16%
Q15	Better parking & new replacement parking in S & E	64%	19%	16%

14. The responses from different postcode areas has been analysed to see if there is any significant difference in views across the borough. No significant difference was found. To illustrate this the level of support for the overall vision by postcode area is set out below:

	KT1	KT2	KT3	KT4	KT5	KT6	KT9
Support	81%	76%	76%	83%	81%	81%	73%

15. Of the 2,495 returned questionnaires, 1,120 questionnaires contained written comments. These have been collated by topic and are summarised in Annex 2 to this report. Comments sent in by letter from 10 borough residents have been included in this analysis. In terms of comments, the 10 issues receiving the highest number of comments were:
- The need to preserve Kingston’s heritage and character (129 comments)
 - The need for improvements to traffic flows (99)
 - Concerns/Objections to additional retail facilities (91)
 - After dark issues (79)
 - The need for public transport improvements (71)
 - Concerns over the cost of proposals, respondents do not wish to see an increase in council tax (69)
 - There are enough A4 bar/pub/drinking uses in the town centre (68)
 - The need to maintain and improve the variety of retail uses and quality of shopping with independent and local retailers – not just high street multiples (68)
 - No more housing without supporting infrastructure – schools, health and community facilities (62)
 - The need for social, community, health facilities and open space/parks (59)

Uses

16. There were a number of comments expressing concern about additional retail and the need to maintain a range of retail units, including independent and specialist shops. The need to ensure the sustainability of the markets, which add character, was also cited as important. In relation to offices, many people thought that the

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existing vacant offices could be used and improved before replacement offices were built.

17. There was less support for additional housing without the required infrastructure and services, such as schools and medical centres. However, there was support for affordable and family housing. There is wide support for additional social, community and leisure facilities for people of all age especially for young people and the elderly. There was concern about after dark issues, with many comments about the need to resist additional pubs and bars, which would not help diversify the range of attractions in the town centre in the evenings.

Transport

18. With regards to transport, the three issues that received the most comments related to improvements to traffic flows through the town centre, public transport improvements and support for a permanent park and ride scheme. In terms of access issues, there were comments about the need to improve disabled parking.

Environmental Quality

19. There was wide support for environmental improvements, including improved street cleaning and litter removal, improvements to soft landscaping, green open spaces and the riverside. Many comments stressed the need to preserve the historic heritage and character of the town centre and ensure that new buildings sit well within the existing townscape.

General Comments

20. There was general concern about the potential costs of the proposals and how this might affect council tax for residents. Comments also suggested increased policing and improved security around the town centre in the evenings.

Other Responses

21. 30 responses have been received from statutory organisations, local residents, local interest groups, landowners and businesses. As indicated in para. 15, the comments from the 10 residents have been included in the analysis of comments made on the questionnaires. A summary of the responses is set out below. Annex 3 to this report sets out the comments by topic and the proposed response.

Statutory Organisations

22. **Government Office for London** - confirms general approach sound, makes detailed points about
 - the need to ensure balance between retail provision in major centres and in smaller centres to meet local needs
 - the need to define Primary Shopping Area
 - mixed use principles and need to maintain office supply
 - the alignment of Airtrack route to Heathrow
 - the need to expand the section on Implementation
23. **Greater London Authority including TfL** – broad approach supported, makes detailed points about: Transport (in particular the need to relate future development

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to improvements in public transport capacity and accessibility; that the existing level of parking should not be increased; the need for complementary measures to reduce the impact of future development on congestion on the relief road in peak hours & that TfL supports the principle of comprehensive redevelopment of bus facilities to enable the removal of buses from Eden Street), Housing (50% affordable); Pedestrian routes, the need for a Masterplan; Flood Risk Assessment, the Hogsmill Corridor & renewable technology

24. **English Heritage** – emphasises the need for high quality design, the need for overarching design principles, including for the public realm and refers to Kingston's rich historical townscape.
25. **Metropolitan Police Authority** – the MPA is reviewing its operations to move away from police stations to a system of centralised patrol centres and custody sites and localised Safer Neighbourhood Offices and police 'shops' in or close to the town centre. Requests flexibility in applying policies for retail frontages to include the provision of non-class A1 retail uses. Following outcome of review MPA may need to dispose of existing facilities and where police activity is relocated/retained in local area, there should be no requirement for any community use site for disposal. Refers to new developments resulting in need for additional policing and recommends contributions towards additional policing arising directly from new development are secured through S106 agreements.
26. **Thames Water** – important for the AAP to make reference to the provision of adequate utilities infrastructure to service development in accordance with PPS12. Refers to the emerging South East Plan which contains up to the date guidance on water and sewage issues.
27. **Environment Agency** – strong emphasis and concern over the issue of flooding within the town centre and the fact that most of town centre and many proposal sites are located within the 1 in 100 year flood zones. Refers to need to avoid new development in floodplain, especially residential, unless means of dry escape provided. Refers to buffer zones along Hogsmill River and River Thames and need for ecological enhancements.
28. **Surrey County Council** – queries whether the transport system can cope with the increase in retail development and whether the use of Kempton Park Racecourse is an appropriate site for a permanent park and ride scheme. Concern over the type and size of housing development proposed. Urge the need for flood risk assessment and more emphasis on 'sustainable design'.
29. **Network Rail** – welcome improvements to the station although funding would need to be secured through sources including development.
30. **Her Majesty's Court Service** – seeks to engage with RBK. Considers absence of any connection with the Criminal Justice System is a serious omission in AAP. Refers to 3 courts in Kingston. Refers to research which has shown that major retail development in town centres can lead to significant increase in crime and thus to the business of the courts.

Local and Other Interest Groups

31. **Kingston Town Centre Management** – welcomes the opportunity to work with developers to regenerate the town centre, considers that plans to improve the gateways into the centre need to be brought into greater focus and refers to the importance of increased parking provision with better signage.
32. **Kingston Society** – considers that emphasis is on visitors and businesses to the town centre and that attempts should be made to determine what is best for the residents, welcomes the resiting of the bus station and car park at the periphery and considers the AAP should include alternative options.
33. **Kingston Chamber of Commerce** – unable to comment in time frame but wish to register their interest on behalf of local businesses in vital development initiative.
34. **Kingston Voluntary Action** – request explanation as to why the provision of “enhanced community facilities, including better meeting and operating facilities for the voluntary sector”, which was included in the Executive report on the Preferred Options but is omitted from the printed Consultation document (*this omission was an error*).
35. **Federation of Kingston Residents’ Association** – foresees K+20 as an opportunity to bring about major improvements to the town centre for all user groups but feels that AAP misses many opportunities. In summary:
 - mix of uses: few landmark sites for landmark developments are highlighted
 - retail: would like to see a greater range of shops
 - offices: don’t consider there a need for additional office/business development given high office vacancy rates
 - housing: more family housing units required
 - leisure/arts/culture: a range of evening entertainment facilities need to be provided to create a better balance of social leisure activities
 - transport: parking issues for residents not addressed and there needs to be improvements for pedestrians and public transport
36. **Charter Quay Residents Association** – considers that the AAP ignores provisions for residents with a greater focus on visitors and shoppers by identifying their parking and transport requirements and not addressing shortage of parking for residents. Need to manage noise and fumes from additional retail to protect residents. River important, need related initiatives and initiatives to create a more balanced night time economy. More residential desirable but need family accommodation.
37. **Clarence Street Ltd (Residents)** – believes that there is no clear strategy for shopping other than increasing it and the emphasis in the AAP is on the needs of the visitors, whilst needs of the residents not fully addressed especially transport needs.
38. **Sustrans** – considers that walking and cycling should feature more prominently in order to achieve the core objectives set out in the AAP.

Local Businesses, Landowners & Developers

39. **Kingston University** – general support for the vision and objectives of the plan.

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40. **Kingston College** – general support for the action plan but draw attention to development problems at Richmond Road site. Refers to Health and Safety Executive's stance which restricts development within 50m of the gasholders. This means that development on the site is severely restricted.
41. **John Lewis Partnership** – considers that there is a need for short to medium term environmental improvements in the town centre and urge that the existing retail is well supported and fully integrated with the new retail development.
42. **Hammerson** – general support for the AAP and the need for redevelopment of certain parts within the town centre especially regarding enhanced retail development with an anchor store, and improved interceptor car parking. Refers to key role which Hammerson can play in regeneration and delivering town centre development and improvements.
43. **First Alliance (Bishop's Palace House)** – fully support the allocation of Bishop's Palace House as development site in AAP as the existing building fails to capitalise on its position as an important gateway into the town centre. Feel that the redevelopment of BPH will address the objectives of the K+20 plan through a mixed-use scheme with residential, retail, commercial and leisure/restaurant uses but no offices.
44. **Kandahar (Thames Street)** – support the inclusion of 19-27 Thames Street in Proposal Site 6 but concerned that there is no mention of the development potential for the rear car park. This sites development potential should be recognised in the area action plan through a mixed-use development.
45. **Credit Suisse (land between Clarence Street & Castle Street)** – AAP, the improvements that would result and appropriate mix of uses within the town centre supported.
46. **Tesco Stores Ltd** – full support for the development of additional floorspace within the Eden Quarter area, as this area seen as a 'gateway' location. This retail floorspace should be made available for a key anchor store, with consideration given to both comparison and convenience floorspace, which would allow for linked trips.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

47. The level of interest, response and support for the Preferred Options is welcomed. The consultation responses are informing the developing Area Action Plan. A number of detailed and general points have been raised. Some are already addressed in the AAP Preferred Options document, we have responded to some comments in the responses set out in Annex 3 and some points need to be considered further and addressed. They are being considered as part of the next stage which is the preparation of the draft Area Action Plan, with detailed policies and proposals, and a further sustainability report.
48. The draft Area Action Plan and Sustainability Appraisal will be considered by the Neighbourhood and Development Control Committees, the Transport and Infrastructure Overview Panel, the Executive and full Council in February and March 2006 prior to submission to the Secretary of the State. There will be a further period

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of consultation and an Examination in Public by a Government-appointed Inspector. Following this process, it is hoped that the K+20 Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan will be adopted in 2007.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

49. One of the aims of the K+20 Kingston Town Centre Area Action Plan is to improve the environment of the town centre, including protecting and enhancing the historic core and riverside and providing new and enhanced public spaces.

NETWORK IMPLICATIONS

50. There are significant network implications which will arise from the Area Action Plan proposals. Transport work is underway to assess the likely impact of development proposals on the local transport and highway network, and to identify mitigation measures. The AAP will include transport, access, parking and environmental improvements to encourage modal shift away from the car.

FINANACIAL IMPLICATIONS

51. There are no direct financial implications resulting from the Area Action Plan at this stage.

Background papers: held by Pat Loxton/Saskia Meintsma [authors of report], 020 8547 5420/5319

1. Kingston Town Neighbourhood Committee agenda and Minutes, 6 December 2001, 23 January 2002, 14 May 2003
2. Cabinet agenda and Minutes, 18 December 2001
3. Executive agenda and Minutes, 28 May 2002, 19 November 2002, 25 February 2003, 20 January 2004; 28 September 2004 and 17 May 2005
4. Kingston town centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options document, June 2005
5. Kingston town centre Area Action Plan Summary Leaflet, June 2005
6. N & DC Committee & TIOP reports and minutes June & July 2005
7. Questionnaire Analysis and Consultation responses