

**K+20 : A STRATEGY FOR KINGSTON TOWN CENTRE:- RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON ISSUES AND NEXT STEPS**

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

**Purpose**

To inform the Executive of progress on K+20 and the results of the consultation on Issues and to put forward a proposed programme for completion of the Strategy.

**Action proposed by the Executive Member for Transportation and Sustainable Development**

**The Executive is requested to:**

1. Note the progress on the preparation of the K+20 Strategy and the results of the consultation on Issues; and
2. Endorse the programme for the completion and adoption of the Strategy.

**Reasons for the action proposed**

To inform the Executive of progress with K+20 and the outcome of the consultation on Issues, which will assist in the preparation of the Strategy and to seek endorsement for the proposed programme for completion of the Strategy.

**BACKGROUND**

1. Kingston is a popular and successful town centre, with important retail, leisure, cultural, business, public administration and education attractions. The town has seen many changes over the last 20 years. In the 1980's and 1990's, the relief road, the pedestrianisation of Clarence Street and major new shopping developments were completed. More recently, there have been new entertainment, cultural, and education facilities, new courts, car parks, bus station and residential development.
2. It is now important to look forwards and to develop a vision for the town centre for the future. In November 2002, the Executive agreed to the preparation of a Strategy for Kingston Town Centre, to be known as K+20. The Strategy will provide a framework to guide development and improvements in the town centre over the next 20 years, so that Kingston remains a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and environmentally sustainable centre. The Strategy will influence planning decisions on new development and transport.
3. The Executive established a Member level Steering Group to oversee the preparation of the strategy, based on a political grouping representation of 4:2:1. The group has met on 14 occasions.

4. K+20 was launched in May 2003 with a workshop attended by 60 participants. This involved a series of walks around the town centre and the identification of strengths, weaknesses and aspirations for the future development and enhancement of the town centre.
5. The Strategy aims to build on the town's strengths:-
  - its attractive character
  - the variety and quality of shops
  - the riverside and historic Market Place
  - the Rotunda leisure development
  - excellent bus servicesand provide a range of improvements
  - to the town's facilities
  - to the transport network
  - to the quality of the environment, including the approaches to the town centre and the streetscape
6. K+20 is linked to a number of initiatives, including :-the Community Plan; the Kingston First Business Improvement District (BIDs) proposals; the Market Area revitalisation and the After Dark Strategy. Specialist studies on retail; offices; parking; park and ride, transport and the historic core (the Old Town Conservation Area) will assist in the preparation of the Strategy.
7. The K+20 work is involving a number of stakeholders and partners, including landowners, businesses and residents across the town centre, the University and Kingston College. Following the extension of the Co-operation Agreement until December 2004, work is continuing with development company Hammerson, who are looking at retail-led development opportunities in the town centre, focussed on the Eden Walk shopping centre and the Ashdown Road/Lady Booth Road area. It is important that the range and quality of shopping is maintained and enhanced, as this affects the vitality and prosperity of the town centre.
8. The quality of the environment is also vital to the town's future prosperity. The historic core of the town centre, around All Saint's Church, the Market Place and the riverside are attractions which need to be protected and enhanced. The K+20 Strategy will identify opportunities for new development and public spaces, improved access and transport.
9. Under new planning legislation being introduced this year, Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), will replace the Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). The first stage in this process is the production of a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out what documents will be produced, together with a timetable. A report on the LDS is being considered by the Neighbourhoods and the Transport and Infrastructure Overview Panel during September and the Draft LDS will be agreed by the Executive in November before going to the Government Office for London for approval. As part of the LDF, and as set out in the LDS, the K+20 Strategy will be adopted as an Area Action Plan for Kingston Town Centre. It will therefore be subject to the statutory processes of consultation and independent examination required by the Act and forthcoming Regulations.

## CONSULTATION ON ISSUES

10. Drawing on the findings of the on-going studies, the K+20 launch, internal work and meetings with stakeholders and partners, a set of Issues Papers, together with a Summary Leaflet, were produced for consultation in March 2004.
11. The Issues Papers and leaflet set out the aims of the K+20 Strategy and identify a whole range of issues to be addressed, based around the following themes:
  - The economy and the mix of different land uses (retail; offices; housing; cultural, leisure, entertainment and community uses and education)
  - Access and transport
  - Environmental quality and urban design
12. A total of 10,000 Summary Leaflets and Questionnaires were produced seeking the views of the community on the issues identified. These were distributed:- to libraries and public information points; mailed to 4,000 businesses and residents in and around the town centre, and to 4,000 households around the borough (based on a random 5% sample of households, taken from the Electoral Roll).
13. A total of 560 completed questionnaires were returned. The analysis of these responses is included as Annex 2 to this report.
14. A full set of Issues Papers, plus the Summary Leaflet and Questionnaire, were sent to just over 200 statutory organisations; businesses; landowners; residential, amenity and other local organisations, plus those who attended the K+20 Launch or who have expressed an interest in K+20. A total of 24 responses were received from a mixture of retailers, landowners, transport authorities and residents associations. A summary of these responses is included as Annex 3 to this report.

## SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

15. The details set out in paras. 16-32 are a summary of the views received in response to the consultation on the Issues Papers and Leaflet.

### Uses

16. Range of Uses
  - 55% of respondents support the provision of a wider range of uses/attractions, including: better facilities for all; a better and wider variety of restaurants; and more individual shops.
17. Retail
  - Respondents like Kingston best for the good quality and range of shops and the pedestrianised area. (64.5%)
  - Generally agreed by all that Kingston's attractiveness as a regional centre is based on shopping.
  - Kingston has dropped in the shopping centre rankings in recent years.
  - Respondents want to see more individual shops. (14%)
  - Retailers support the view that Kingston cannot provide the large retail units that are now sought by many retailers.

- Retailers and landowners generally agree that new retail facilities are required but express concern that the work with developer Hammerson under the Council's Co-operation Agreement focuses on a narrow geographic area and prejudices the ability of K+20 to provide an integrated retail solution for the whole town centre.
- Any new shopping facilities must complement the existing retail offer and be fully integrated within the existing retail facilities.
- Currently strong bias on an east-to-west axis along Clarence Street.
- Town centre residents concerned that issues such as servicing, deliveries, refuse collection and street cleaning issues have not been addressed and increasing retail facilities could worsen the situation and create more noise and pollution.
- The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames may raise concerns if large increases in retail floorspace are proposed.

## 18. Housing

- 59% of respondents support provision of more housing, including mixed-use above shops; 28% against more housing with 12% undecided.
- Most respondents support concerns about the lack of affordable housing.
- Many employees commute significant distances due to high housing costs, which affects recruitment and retention, especially for retail businesses. High housing costs, lack of affordable housing and recruitment are major issues for Kingston's predominantly service economy.
- Residents concerned that new housing in the town centre caters mainly for young single people, couples with no children or buy to let investors.

## 19. Evening Economy

- One of the biggest issues arising from the consultation concerns the evening economy, with dislikes focused on anti-social behaviour (21.6%), evening attractions (16.4%) and personal safety (34.3%).
- Residents in and around the town centre have ongoing issues associated with late night licenses and anti-social behaviour causing nuisance and disturbance.
- Kingston's good reputation in the daytime as a retail centre is tarnished in the evenings by its over-dependence on A3 bars and clubs which attract large numbers of young people and makes the town centre less unattractive to other users.
- Need to remove/reduce distinction between Kingston's two distinct daytime and evening 'cultures'.
- Local residents stress the need to deal with the problems created by A3 uses and proximity to residential.
- There is a need to balance the evening economy and promote/secure a wider, more inclusive range of cultural, leisure and entertainment facilities, including theatre, live musical/arts events, quality restaurants and other cultural attractions.
- Transport out of the town centre at night needs to be improved, including late night buses; train, taxi and mini-cab provision.
- The Issues Papers focus too much on visitors and not enough on improvements for residents.
- The emphasis on developing the town centre's heritage is limited.
- Overwhelming support for the new theatre.
- Need to take account of the changes in licensing legislation, the detrimental effect it will have on town centre living and how RBK will manage these changes.
- Pub/club operators should take more responsibility for the behaviour of their customers once off the premises.

- Public areas need to be managed at night to reduce anti social behaviour and encourage all users.

## 20. Offices

- Studies identify limited demand for office accommodation in the town centre
- Office development in Kingston is in competition with other land uses, particularly residential.
- the area around Kingston station appears to be the logical location for any office based schemes.
- The office market is very competitive and nearby Surrey towns can and do make provision for substantial on site car parking.
- 38% of respondents consider there are enough job opportunities in the town centre, 44% undecided and 18% think there should be more job opportunities.

## 21. Higher and Further Education

- Kingston University should be seen as a community resource in artistic, sporting, leisure and educational terms.
- Kingston University has a goal of creating a single campus.
- Kingston Town Centre Management stress the importance of the education sector as key to the future of Kingston.

## 22. Leisure / Riverside / Community Uses

- The riverside is one of Kingston's major attractions (30.6%)
- Gateways to Kingston are poor and the town centre does not capitalise on major physical attractions such as its riverside location.
- The preferred location for a new library is within the relief road, preferably associated with retail development.

## 23. Urban Design and Environmental Quality, Routes and Connections

- The Market Place and the markets are major attractions (26.2%).
- Residents support proposals to make the centre more attractive but emphasise need to reduce anti-social behaviour on the streets.
- Support for more public art
- Support for improvements to the quality of the public realm and streetscape, better street cleansing and better paving (15%).
- Support for more green spaces, trees and sitting areas(37%).

## 24. Transport & Access

- The traffic / one –way system is a major dislike in the town centre. (28.1%).

## 25. Car Parking

- Retailers conclude that current car parking is inadequate to meet demand although 54% of leaflet respondents consider there is sufficient parking in the town centre.
- The need for improved management of the overall parking supply (not day-to-day management), its distribution and use of existing car parks, in particular improving signage and simplifying the names of the car parks was raised by all users.

- Retailers link Kingston's retail performance to the lack of parking and inconvenient access to car parking.
- TfL support conclusions that parking capacity should not be increased but need to look at improved management of the supply and car parking.
- Many problems arise from two of the most popular car parks (John Lewis and Bentalls) being located next to each other and sharing the same access.
- Some car parks are of poor quality or have less popular locations.
- The location, management and total provision of car parking needs to be reviewed, particularly if retail facilities are to be expanded.

## 26. Kingston Station

- Station must be improved, in terms of opening hours, access and train services. In the short term Surbiton station should be promoted to provide easy access to excellent train services.
- 36% of respondents want to see the station have a facelift, with fast and more frequent trains. (20%)

## 27. Buses

- Bus usage and services, have increased significantly, this trend is likely to continue.
- 24% of respondents support provision of more bus routes and services.
- Bus efficiency often affected by traffic congestion.
- Improved services needed to Heathrow & Gatwick Airports.
- Improvements needed to passenger waiting facilities, and stopping arrangements.
- Scope for improving surface level crossings.
- Opportunities for more contra flow bus lanes to improve bus routing and journey times.
- Fairfield Bus Station inadequate in terms of space and location.
- Priority is for a quality interchange – this applies equally to bus stops as to stations and is about accessibility, lighting, quality of footways, ease of movement and priority for sustainable modes.

## 28. Park and Ride

- P&R proposals should be compatible with TfL's policies and assessment framework.
- Further P&R opportunities should be pursued.

## 29. Cycle Access

- Although cycle parking is well provided, its heavy use shows that more is needed to meet current demands and encourage increased use.
- Need safe, attractive, convenient cycle routes to the town centre from within a 3 mile radius.
- Need more (34% of respondents) and clearer (28%) cycle routes through the centre.
- Need improved access across the relief road to allow crossing in a single phase.
- Relief road crossings should be attractive and welcoming (major gateways) – currently the centre turns its back on the relief road.
- Variety of cycle parking is needed to meet the variety of uses – e.g. covered, secure parking for people spending all day in the centre. Secure parking was the biggest issue raised by respondents. (51%)

## 30. Pedestrian Access

- Need to undertake an audit of pedestrian routes in and around the town centre.
- Conflict between pedestrians and cyclists/skateboarders, need to enforce no cycling/skateboarding (23%).
- Greater emphasis needed on accessibility for disabled people to reflect recent legislation and guidelines.
- Support for increased pedestrianisation (63% of respondents).

## 31. Taxis

- Need to investigate taxi use and provision for taxis, consultation should be undertaken with the public carriage office.

## 32. General Access Comments

- Need to ensure use of accurate data regarding the modal split (travel mode) of people using the town centre.

**NEXT STEPS**

33. A timetable for the next steps in the preparation and completion of the K+20 Strategy and Area Action Plan for Kingston Town Centre is summarised below and set out in Annex 1. This corresponds with the timetable for the preparation and adoption of the Kingston Town Area Action Plan, as set out in the RBK Local Development Framework, draft Local Development Scheme 2004, referred to in para. 9 of this report.
34. Following a review of the information gathered to date, a draft Strategy with Options will be prepared for internal discussion in November/December, prior to a statutory period of public consultation in January/February 2005. The consultation responses will inform the refinement of the Strategy during Spring 2005, and lead to the publication of a Draft K+20 Strategy/Area Action Plan for a further period of statutory consultation in June 2005.
35. Under the new legislation, the proposed Area Action Plan will be subject to public examination by an independent Inspector. An estimated date for this is October 2005, though there are current concerns about the capacity of the Inspectorate to deal with the volume of LDF documents envisaged. Allowing time for receipt of the Inquiry Inspector's report, this would mean that the earliest date for adoption of the Area Action Plan would be early 2006.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

36. One of the aims of the K+20 Strategy is to improve the environment of the town centre overall, including protecting and enhancing the historic core and riverside and providing new and enhanced public spaces.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

37. There are no direct financial implications resulting from the Strategy at this stage.

**Background papers** : held by Pat Loxton/Birgit Porter [authors of report], 020 8547 5420/5313

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
4. K+20 designing our future together – Issue Papers for Consultation, March 2004
5. K+20 designing our future together – Consultation on Issues, March 2004 (Leaflet and Questionnaire)