

<b>Committee(s):</b> Planning and Transportation Policy and Resources Finance Court of Common Council	<b>Date(s):</b> 24 July 2012 20 September 2012 2 October 2012 11 October 2012
<b>Subject:</b> Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of the Built Environment	<b>For Decision</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report seeks Members approval of the draft Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy report.</p> <p>The Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy has been developed to provide a more detailed framework for transport and environmental improvements in order to meet the Core Strategy Policy CS8 within the City's Local Development Framework.</p> <p>The Area Strategy has been informed by the City's policies, an urban analysis, intensive workshops with 430 stakeholders and a further public consultation during December 2011 and January 2012. Planning and Transportation Committee Members received an update report on the findings of the consultation in April 2012.</p> <p>The Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy aims to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a greater sense of community;</li> <li>▪ better linkages in the area;</li> <li>▪ better quality public spaces, creating spaces to gather;</li> <li>▪ reduced dangers and a safer environment;</li> <li>▪ improved biodiversity;</li> <li>▪ reduced effects from noise; and</li> <li>▪ improved air quality, particularly around Sir John Cass School, whilst still recognising the area's strategic transport role.</li> </ul> <p>Officers have identified six opportunity areas through which the Core Strategy vision can be realised. They provide opportunities for achievable change through a series of transportation and environmental enhancement projects which are identified and prioritised in the Area Strategy. The indicative total cost of these projects is £14.35 million.</p> <p>If approved it is intended to submit the Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy to the Court of Common Council for adoption after the summer recess 2012.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>It is recommended that the draft Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy be approved.</p>	

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Department of the Built Environment has developed a process of agreeing Area Strategies to provide a detailed framework for transport and environmental improvements within key geographical areas of the City in order to meet Core Strategy Policy. Appendix 1 contains a map of the currently proposed Area Strategy boundaries; the Aldgate and Tower Strategy Area is the eastern most Strategy Area in the City.
2. In addition a map is appended (Appendix 2) that shows the location of the Aldgate and Tower Strategy Area in relation to key public transport nodes and notable landmarks.
3. In April 2012 the Planning and Transportation Committee received an update report on the Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy which detailed the reasons for the development of the Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy. It summarised the evidence of need, ratified through the Public Consultation response to the draft Area Strategy.
4. The intensive consultation and analysis of the area has guided officers to identify six Key Areas of Opportunity through which the Core Strategy vision can be realised. A map of the Strategy Area is appended (Appendix 3) indicating the six Key Areas of Opportunity.
5. A number of individual schemes have been proposed that could deliver the Key Areas of Opportunity; the locations of these proposed schemes are indicated in Appendix 3.
6. A full copy of the draft Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy should be in the Members' reading room from 17 July 2012.

### **The Strategy**

7. This strategy is based upon six Key Areas of Opportunity as set out below.

#### **Key Area of Opportunity – Aldgate Gyratory**

8. The highest priority for the Strategy is to remove the gyratory and replace it with two-way working on St Botolph Street and Aldgate High Street, creating a public space between the Sir John Cass Primary School and the St Botolph without Aldgate Church. This project is key to encouraging economic regeneration in the surrounding area, attracting development and further funding to support the improvements throughout the remaining Strategy Area.
9. Currently, the area is dominated by vehicular traffic with a poor urban realm. The layout of both planting and street furniture reduces permeability and connectivity through the area for residents, London bus users, cyclists and pedestrians.

10. The Aldgate Gyratory Key Area provides an opportunity to enhance function and add a pleasant open space in which to spend time. The changes will seek to provide an opportunity to invest in sustainability, improve bio-diversity, reduce noise and improve air quality (particularly around the Sir John Cass Primary School), add elements of play to the space, introduce trees, seating and a high quality streetscape. Road safety will be improved with the aim of not impacting upon journey time. The church setting will be enhanced and Sir John Cass school will benefit from the changes. The transformational change that the project will deliver should encourage economic regeneration by making the area more attractive to businesses and by enhancing links through the area for commuters, visitors, residents and workers.

#### Key Area of Opportunity – Vine Street and Crescent Green Pedestrian Link

11. The Crescent and America Square were part of a series of formally laid-out developments designed by George Dance the Younger, and amongst the first examples of formal development in the City. These marked a significant shift in London town planning in the late eighteenth century.
12. Hammett Street, Crescent, Vine Street and America Square together provide an opportunity to use planting to effect a green pedestrian link, replicating the original formal sequence of Square, Crescent and Circus (where the Circus is now represented by a paved circle within Tower Hill gardens).
13. Reinstating the Square, Crescent, Circus link requires the re-opening of the southern end of the crescent, through to Tower Hill gardens.
14. Hammett Street, Crescent, Vine Street to Jewry Street is a well used link into the City, especially for taxis. The public realm is poor and includes a rail bridge over Vine Street. The Georgian buildings around the Crescent were in places removed through: construction of the Fenchurch Street Station railway; construction of the Metropolitan and District line; and bomb damage during the Second World War (WWII). The remaining buildings have been refurbished to retain the form and plan of the Crescent. The adopted Crescent Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy SPD notes that there is evidence that the Crescent, pre WWII, had a central garden.
15. The proposals provide an opportunity to enhance Conservation Areas, which is a statutory duty (Section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Area) 1990 Act). They will also enhance the Tower of London World Heritage Site local setting.
16. There is an opportunity to change the appearance of the area from being dominated by traffic to becoming a greened pedestrian link with new green public spaces in the Crescent and Square. The green spaces will provide opportunity for sustainable drainage features, play, public art, improvements in air quality and bio-diversity. These measures will improve the environment for workers, residents, and visitors.
17. An existing pedestrian link between Coopers Row and Vine Street passes through sections of the original Roman Wall (a scheduled Ancient Monument) and this would be enhanced by the green link proposals. A further improvement opportunity to investigate is an exit from the eastern end of the Fenchurch Street Station rail platforms to Vine Street.

18. Should the link between Crescent and Circus be re-established this would provide a more pleasant pedestrian link between Tower Hill and Aldgate High Street, including the bus, underground and rail services at Aldgate. Should an exit from the eastern end of Fenchurch Station rail platforms be established on to Vine Street, the links through the area would be further improved for commuters, visitors and workers.

#### Key Area of Opportunity – Little Somerset Street

19. Little Somerset Street is a well used pedestrian route connecting Aldgate underground and bus stations with Mansell Street and into the adjacent London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). It is particularly well used by residents from the Mansell Street Guinness Trust Residential Estate to access community services, City library facilities, school and public transport provision. The street has a public house at either end of it although the central section is inactive. The west of the street is dominated by boarded up vacant offices at 15/16 Minories, the east is lined with boundary walls. Vehicle movements are infrequent. Pedestrians generally walk in the carriageway as the public realm is dominated by a wide carriageway and narrow footways that are set back off pedestrian desire lines.
20. The northern end of the street has very narrow footways and a double height stepped kerb across the main pedestrian desire line.
21. There is an opportunity to widen the footways and introduce green walls or trees. The environment can be enhanced without impacting on function through the use of softer landscaping which would improve air quality, bio-diversity and absorb some noise. Elements of play may well be able to be incorporated in an improved high quality streetscape.

#### Key Area of Opportunity – Minories

22. Minories carriageway supports one-way traffic, waiting and loading, including taxi ranks, and the footways are not very wide. It is currently dominated by the width of carriageway; but despite this, many cafes and restaurants manage to activate and vitalise the street by providing outdoor dining on their narrow forecourts where space permits.
23. To further encourage outdoor dining and support small businesses there is an opportunity to further widen footways along Minories while maintaining its traffic function. Planting can be provided with some careful thought given constraints in regards to depth of cover over the underground and care to minimise footway obstructions. There could be a more pleasant link provided along Minories from the Key Area of Opportunity proposed for Vine Street and Crescent, to the potential public open space described in the Key Area of Opportunity for the Aldgate gyratory.

#### Key Area of Opportunity - Crutched Friars and Jewry Street

24. Crutched Friars and Jewry Street link residents, visitors, commuters and workers from the Tower Area and Fenchurch Street Station to the potential new open space off Aldgate High Street.

25. Currently, the carriageway is wider than necessary for its traffic function. There is an opportunity to make this link attractive for pedestrians travelling through the area. Improvements would include widened footways, consideration of inset loading and waiting bays and trees planted along the street. Tree placement would have to take the buried Roman Wall ruins under the eastern footway of Jewry Street into consideration. A green link of trees would improve air quality, provide an opportunity for sustainable drainage and help to develop bio-diversity. Improving the link in this way would reinforce to pedestrians that it is an attractive path through the area.

#### Key Area of Opportunity – Braham Street Public Open Space

26. The last area of opportunity identified falls just outside of the City of London, within LBTH. Braham Street is designated as part of the Transport for London (TfL) Route Network (TLRN) and was developed into a green space in 2009. There is an opportunity to explore adding recreation facilities into this expansive space. As part of this Area Strategy, City officers will conduct further discussion with TfL and LBTH to explore the potential of taking such an initiative forward.
27. The LDF Core Strategy Policy CS8 includes identifying and meeting residents' needs, particularly residents from the Middlesex and Mansell Street Estates. The key opportunity here is to maximise opportunity for delivering health, community and educational services and facilities for residents, including additional accessible play space for children.
28. When the Aldgate East gyratory was removed and Whitechapel High Street was made two-way, Braham Street was transformed into a public open space; although emergency vehicle access was maintained. The space has little to no active street frontage. The heavily fortified rear of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) building runs along one side and blank office walls run alongside the other. The pedestrian paths were aligned to allow easy future access to statutory undertaker equipment avoiding any relocation costs.
29. Negative responses were received regarding Braham Street 'park' during the intensive pre-consultation workshops carried out with residents and businesses and from the public consultation. It was made apparent to officers that the space did not meet the needs of stakeholders, whose comments included: *"Braham Street Park – it's a no go at night due to street drinking"; "youth gangs with scooters and hoodies hang out in the space"; "...creation of the Park has been well received. However we remain concerned about the long term ownership and management... and would be prepared to discuss managing and improving this important public asset as a facility for the whole area."*
30. The lack of active frontage and lines of sight through the space attract anti-social behaviour and create an intimidating space to walk through.
31. There is an opportunity here to develop, in partnership with TfL and LBTH, a recreation sports facility of two to three caged five-a-side pitches, tennis courts or similar. A resident from Middlesex Street Estate suggested *"a basketball court would be a great facility – can you include this in the new public space?"* A recreation facility is likely to be welcomed by workers and students in the area as well as the residents of the City Fringe. This facility could also be managed for use during the weekends, encouraging children's involvement.

32. Residents from the Mansell Street Estate specifically asked for an allotment space to be provided for them during the intensive workshop consultation. This desire could be met, at least in part, through a stepped garden at this location.

## **Proposals**

33. A list of potential schemes has been identified which would help deliver elements in the Key Areas of Opportunity within a coordinated approach to implementing the objectives of the Area Strategy. These are set out in Appendix 4.
34. The potential schemes are prioritised as high, medium and low. An indicative cost and potential funding sources are noted alongside the proposed schemes. This list is appended to this report and includes indicative expenditures of some £14.35 million. The pivotal proposal in the Area Strategy is the conversion of the Aldgate gyratory and creation of the new public square (in the region of £7.0 million) to encourage economic regeneration in the area. It has been given the highest priority.
35. It is expected that the implementation of the proposals will be externally funded from various financial sources, such as S.106 contributions, the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), GLA Group funding streams (including TfL), funding from Tower Hamlets, and other external funding bodies. It is expected that implementation of the high priority schemes will generate further development in the area and hence further contributions.
36. The schemes in each of the key areas have been considered carefully. Prioritisation is proposed in three categories (see Appendix 3), high, medium and low such that:
- A high priority is given to proposals that will tackle road safety, improving the main link between resident estates and community facilities and key measures that would 'unlock' and encourage economic regeneration of the area;
  - A medium priority is given to proposals that will improve links through the area, add sustainability features and create urban green open spaces. All of these will improve air quality, improve biodiversity, absorb noise, and, improve community amenity for workers, residents and visitors;
  - The remaining proposals are given a low priority. These proposals will help form a consistent, homogenous appearance and function for the area. These proposals include less significant street scene enhancements.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications – Supplementary Planning Document**

37. The Area Strategy document has been written to explain how the vision set out in the City's Core Strategy Policy CS8 can be delivered, at an outline level, in terms of transportation and public realm improvement work. Future need was considered; guided by the City's Core Policy, the London Plan and the Central London Sub-Regional Transport Strategy. Urban analysis provided a context for understanding the needs expressed by stakeholders during extensive consultation so that City officers could begin to illustrate indicatively changes that could be delivered in terms of transport and public realm enhancements.

38. The following supplementary planning documents were taken into consideration whilst developing the Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy:
- Conservation Areas in the City of London: a General Introduction to their Character;
  - Crescent Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy Supplementary Planning Document;
  - Lloyd's Avenue Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy;
  - the Protected Views; and
  - the Tree Strategy.
39. In addition, the following documents were also referenced in developing the Key Areas of Opportunity:
- the Manual for Designing Sustainable Streets;
  - the City's Play Strategy;
  - the City's Noise Strategy; and
  - the City's Air Quality Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

40. The Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy proposals address the LDF Core Strategy Policy CS8 to remove the gyratory, create a public space, and improve links through the area. It also addresses the London Plan's requirement for economic regeneration and improvement in the community infrastructure.
41. An evidence of need was established through intensive pre consultation workshops, public consultation and urban analysis. Six key opportunity areas have been identified. These include:
- Aldgate Gyratory;
  - Vine Street and Crescent Green Pedestrian Link;
  - Little Somerset Street;
  - Minorities;
  - Crutched Friars and Jewry Street; and
  - Braham Street public open space in London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
42. A list of proposed schemes that could deliver the Area Strategy has been developed. The indicative total cost of these schemes is £14.35 million. The schemes are prioritised to encourage economic regeneration by making the area more attractive to businesses and addressing road safety. Providing

improved links for residents and a green high quality street environment are also considered important.

43. It is recommended that Members adopt the Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy.

**Appendices:**

1. Area Strategy Boundaries Map
2. Aldgate and Tower Area Strategy Location Map
3. Potential Scheme Locations Map
4. List of Schemes and Prioritisation

**Background Papers:**

- The City Planning Officer's Capital and Supplementary Revenue bids for 2008/09 P&R Committee Report 18 October 2007
- Aldgate High Street Temporary Contra Flow Lane Feasibility Study – Supplementary Revenue Bid Report S&W Sub-Committee Report 21 July 2008
- Land Bounded By Fenchurch Street, Fen Court, Fenchurch Ave & Billiter Street (120 Fenchurch Street) London EC3 P&T Committee Report 16 September 2008
- 76 - 86 Fenchurch Street, 1 - 7 Northumberland Alley & 1 & 1a Carlisle Avenue London EC3N 2ES P&T Committee Report 9 December 2008
- 60 - 70 St Mary Axe London EC3A 8JQ P&T Committee Report 9 December 2008
- Aldgate High Street Temporary Contra Flow Lane: Progress Report S&W Sub-Committee 30 March 2009
- Mitre Square, International House, Duke's Place, 11 Mitre Street & 1 Mitre Square London EC3 P&T Committee Report 1 February 2011
- 24 - 26 Minories London EC3N 1BQ P&T Committee Report 2 June 2011
- City of London Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Development Plan Document October 2011
- Aldgate Area Strategy: Progress Report P7T Committee 6 September 2011
- Aldgate Area Strategy: Progress Report P7T Committee 24 April 2011

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