

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Port Health and Environmental Services	30 April 2013
<b>Subject:</b>  The Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square Project - Aldgate Subway Public Convenience	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b>  Director of the Built Environment	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

A public convenience strategy update has been promised to this committee later in the year, however due to the good progress being made on the Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project, there is now a need for a decision by this committee on the Aldgate subway public conveniences.

The Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project, being delivered by the Built Environment, is being managed via the Streets and Walkways and Project Sub-committees however as the project incorporates the Aldgate subway public conveniences it is necessary that Port Health and Environmental Services committee are consulted for a decision to enable the project to proceed.

The Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project proposals are to make improvements to the traffic network and improve the use of the public space area. The project proposes the removal of the Aldgate Gyratory system and the creation of a new public square. The project also proposes the closure of all of the subways at Aldgate to address issues of antisocial behaviour, fear of crime and to maximise the opportunity for the newly created public space. The closure of the subways will in turn mean the closure of the Aldgate toilets. See Appendix 1 for a map of the subways.

These facilities are currently only open one day a week, Sunday, for the market on Middlesex Street. The table below shows the downward trend of the usage, together with the cost to open and maintain them, plus the cost of the subway maintenance. This data shows that these toilets are increasingly becoming unviable. It is therefore recommended that these facilities be closed to enable the Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project to proceed.

Officers will have an input into the design of the public square and will consider the need for re-provision of the toilet facilities. If deemed necessary this could be by provision of new toilets in the new public square itself, through an expansion of the Community Toilet Scheme or by better promotion of use of locally available facilities in Tower Hamlets. The need for re-provision, if any, and proposals for how this may be achieved will be included in the Public Convenience Strategy update report to be presented to this Committee later this year.

## **Recommendation(s)**

This report recommends that your Committee :

- Agree to the closure of the public conveniences located within the Aldgate subways to facilitate progress of the wider improvements through the delivery of the Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project.
- Receives a further report considering the need for any re-provision of toilet facilities and options for delivering that re-provision.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Aldgate gyratory is a 1960's traffic design with subways. This highway infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. The overall appearance of the area is generally poor and in need of renewal. The City of London's Core Strategy contains the explicit proposal to remove the gyratory. The streets here will revert to two-way working, creating a public space between Sir John Cass Primary School and St Botolph's church. The London Plan (Mayor of London) has identified the area as a key opportunity for transformational change and the public space is being lodged on the Mayor's 'London's Great Outdoors' project list.
2. The land ownership is predominantly public with small areas under private control. Public land affected is COL public highway, LBTH public highway, and TfL public highway. The project would be funded externally and fully cover all staff costs associated with the project evaluation.
3. The Aldgate – Highway Changes and Public Square project proposes to assess and, where appropriate, make the streets two-way for traffic. Closing the Houndsditch arm of the gyratory to form a public space. The subways will also be removed.
4. The project aims to:
  - make it easier for people to find their way around,
  - improve the appearance of the area using a high quality and consistent material palette,
  - improve links between public transport provision in the area,
  - green the area,
  - enhance the environment while maintaining traffic journey times and cycle provision.
5. The project encompasses transformational change and regeneration in a key area of opportunity within the London Plan.
6. The project area is flanked north and south by two housing estates, Middlesex Street Estate and Mansell Street Estate, and the improved inclusive mobility and

regeneration that the project will bring to the area is receiving a high level of support from the residents. Residents within the Tower Ward are also very supportive.

7. The business community have registered their support, some forming a group with a similar focus as the Cheapside Initiative which will encourage involvement as the project progresses. The timing of the project could not be better with three factors aligning;
  - the current high level of support from local authorities, business and residents
  - TfL have extra funds available this year and next, due, in part, to the effect of the Olympic Games
  - the recent success of the Piccadilly-St James St-Pall Mall one-way to two-way project has established an approach to large transformational change schemes that is acceptable to TfL and the local authorities.
8. If the project start is delayed the unique situation we find ourselves in will be lost.

### **Current Position**

#### Subways at Aldgate Gyratory (See appendix 1 for a map showing the subways)

9. Some of the subways around the Aldgate Gyratory are already closed temporarily due to frequent vandalism, anti-social behaviour and frequent rough sleeping and the remaining subways are not well used.
10. The subways are owned and maintained by three Highway Authorities following the GLA boundary: the City of London; London Borough of Tower Hamlets; and Transport for London. Maintenance and service level agreements blur the ownership boundary lines in a practical sense between the authorities.
11. Often subways are viewed as a liability for a Highway Authority, hence demolition is usually considered to be beneficial as it removes the liability.

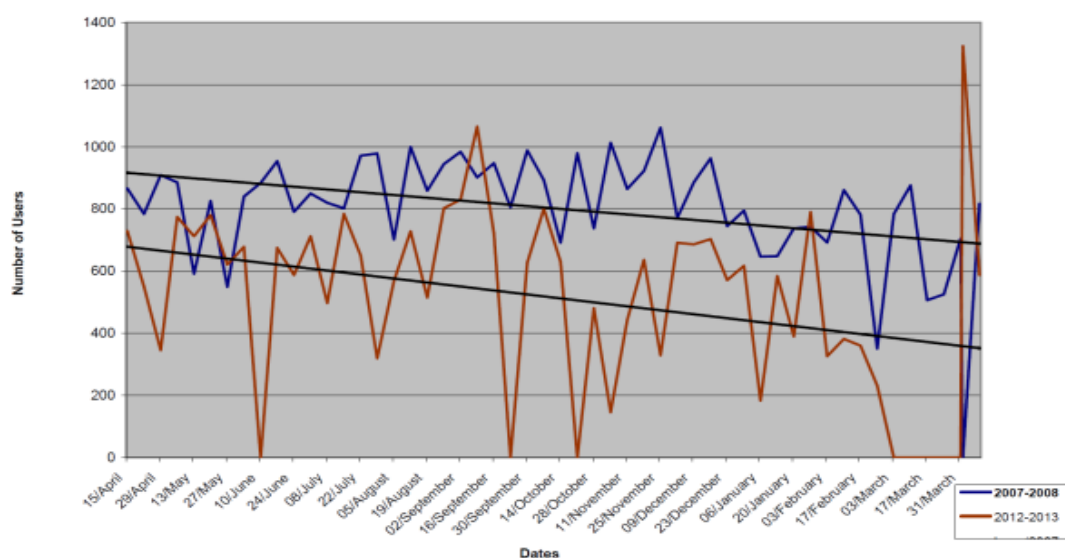
#### Aldgate Subway Public Toilet provision

12. The public toilet provision is currently available for men and women in the subway between exits 11 and 12 (See map in appendix 1). These toilets are opened on Sundays only to support London Borough Tower Hamlet's (LBTH's) Petticoat Lane Markets, which utilise Middlesex Street on a Sunday. It should be noted that these toilets are accessed by steps only.
13. A manual count of usage of the toilets on a Sunday in September 2012 is in Figure 2 below.



**Chart shows the number of WC users between 8:00 & 16:30 on a Sunday in September 2012**

14. The graph below shows the use of the toilets opened on Sundays at the northern end of Middlesex Street, on Bishopsgate (Auto counter fitted at this location). It identifies a downward trend of use. The toilets at the southern end have historically been used less than those in the north.



**Bishopsgate Toilets Sunday Usage Comparison 2007-08 and 2012-13 showing trends**

15. In considering the cost per user of the toilets in the subway a downward trend with approximate number of 250 users per day, for 52 weeks, is 13,000 users per year. The operating costs for the facilities totals £70,000, based on around £40,000 as an average cost for the subway maintenance per year and £30,000 to operate the toilets. Therefore, if the subway continued to be open for the toilets only, then an approximate cost per user would be around £5 to £6.
16. The consideration of an alternative solution to the current toilet provision will be mindful of the current levels of use, the likely increase of users in the area, the accessibility of alternative provision and location. This will be taken into account as the Aldgate development evolves. Alternative or replacement provision will be

covered in an update of the Public Convenience Strategy to be submitted to Port Health Committee for decision later this year.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

17. This The project would help to deliver the City's Strategic Aim - To provide modern, efficient and high quality local services within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors with a view to delivering sustainable outcomes, through the provision of an improved public realm which would provide safer, more enjoyable and accessible routes between the offices, homes and public transport interchanges in the Aldgate area.

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