

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: The Economy, Arts, Sports, and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 22/04/2024

Subject: White City Public Realm Strategy

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Responsible Director: Jon Pickstone, Strategic Director for Economy

SUMMARY

The Council's ambition is that the White City Innovation District is a global economic and cultural hotspot, competing with the most advanced economies in the world. Currently the public realm across the area does not exhibit this ambition. As new sites have come forward for redevelopment, such as the BBC Television Centre, the Council has worked with the developer to rethink the quality of the public realm offer. However, there is currently no overarching strategy in place to guide provision and deliver consistency and coherence across the Innovation District.

Public realm is an essential infrastructure of innovation districts. As an area shared between employees, residents and visitors, public realm facilitates the overlapping of social and professional networks. How this social life is organised and regulated is key to how public realm performs as a 'networking asset'. Therefore, not just the provision of public realm, but how it is designed, programmed and managed are critical success factors. The White City Public Realm Strategy is to provide this framework.

The Strategy is in progress and there will be a short presentation provided to members at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: College Park & Old Oak, White City, and Shepherd's Bush Green

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The White City Innovation District seeks to secure inclusive growth. Public realm is a key component in helping to achieve this.

Creating a compassionate council	A quality public realm enhances residents access and provides space for local activities and leisure.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The preparation of the Public Realm Strategy will involve significant community engagement.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The Strategy will enable the Council to secure public realm enhancements from new development that comes forward within the Innovation District.
Taking pride in H&F	A high-quality public realm will help to improve residents access across the area and provide local amenity.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	New public realm provision offers the opportunity to deliver significant improvements to combat the effects of climate change, including sustainable drainage, greening and tree cover.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. White City has undergone significant and fast paced investment over the last few decades. What's emerged is an exciting and vibrant residential neighbourhood combined with a world-class innovation district. The spaces that link neighbourhoods, campuses, open spaces and attractions can amplify the success of an area. The way these spaces are designed can impact how people move around and use these spaces. On a hot sunny day, trees provide shade, local parks and green spaces give us places to play, exercise, meet friends or re-connect with nature. As well as for people, these spaces are a vital piece of infrastructure for wildlife habitats and our environment. Public spaces can help enhance air quality, reduce the likelihood of flooding and help balance heat in our cities.
2. The Council has commissioned LDA Design to help prepare a Public Realm Strategy for the White City Innovation District. The intention of the strategy is to improve connectivity, permeability and link newly regenerated areas with existing communities through public realm enhancements.
3. The public realm strategy will set out the context and design principles for future investment, ensuring consistency in materials and landscape schemes to ensure area-wide cohesion aligned with the vision for the innovation district – a work class vibrant, accessible, and inclusive public realm that facilitates social and professional interaction. The strategy will also consider connectivity from White City to the new HS2 transport hub to the north and Hammersmith town centre to south, and potential options for enhancement.

Stage 1

4. Commencing in October 2023, the first stage of the study was to review existing connections, permeability, and public space provision within the study area; establishing the baseline. A key part of the baseline study was to also capture opinions from the public and stakeholders, gathering data to inform how people are using and moving around these spaces and across the study area. As well as a postcard drop to properties across the area, virtual and in-person drop in sessions were held, and there were dedicated meetings with specific sectors, including youth and local businesses.
5. The baseline assessment and community engagement has been used to develop options to illustrate where investment opportunities might exist; for enhancing pedestrian networks, cycle routes, green spaces or urban public spaces. The wider connections HS2 and Hammersmith town centre were also considered in this first stage and, whilst the strategy may not be able to fully resolve the aspiration for connectivity to HS2, it provides a basis for future work streams.
6. A key output for Stage 1 was to establish a long list of projects for future improvements from which six projects are to be developed up into concept design. The six projects (a combination of small, medium, and large interventions) are to illustrate the vision and design quality expected of future public realm provision through implementation of the Strategy.

Next Steps

7. The relevant portfolio holders are to be engaged about the long list of projects and the six proposed to be selected for detailed concept illustration. The consultants will then use the evidence gathered, including the views of local stakeholders, to develop the Urban Realm Strategy for White City. This will set out the overarching objectives and design principles to be followed when new projects, developments and opportunities come forward
8. The final strategy will also be subject to further community engagement before being formally adopted. The Strategy will then be used by the Council and its landowner partners to inform capital investment decisions, in bidding for external funding opportunities that come available, such as Greater London Authority's Partnership Fund, and to inform requirements and financial contributions to be secured from new developments within White City through the Planning process.

LIST OF APPENDICES

None