

Item No. 7	Classification Open	Committee Strategic	Date 24th June 1998
From Director of Regeneration & Environment		Title of Report Elephant & Castle	

1. **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To propose a substantial review of the Elephant & Castle and surrounding areas.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Council agrees to the general proposal for a substantial change to the Elephant & Castle as a basis for discussion and consultation with all interested parties.
- 2.2 That the Council receives a report back in September of the initial response to the proposals and determines at that time the approach to be adopted for any works for the Elephant & Castle.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has considered the Elephant & Castle on a number of occasions. In March 1997 the Regeneration & Economic Development Sub-Committee (REDS) considered a report as part of the Urban Design Initiative. The Committee was presented with a series of dramatic gestures designed to improve the awareness and functioning of the Elephant & Castle. These proposals were not agreed and the Committee instructed "that officers be instructed to work with all partners to consider the necessary environment, transport and social use improvements to enhance the overall functioning of the Elephant & Castle as a focus for residents, commuters, students, businesses and employers". It was acknowledged that this was a request for a long term assessment of the Elephant & Castle.
- 3.2 The Housing Committee has identified the Heygate Estate as one of the seven capital receipts initiatives feasibility estates. The Committee is currently commissioning studies on the various options relating to the Heygate Estate.
- 3.3 The Council is continuing to do short term environmental improvements to the roundabout and underpasses. A new sign system is currently being installed.
- 3.4 The unitary development policy places particular strategic importance on the regeneration of the land in and around the Elephant & Castle. The plan places

an obligation on new plans addressing and providing for the needs of the communities living in the area. It encourages the creation of public/private sector partnership for the regeneration of the Elephant & Castle to include proposals which will:

1. Generate employment
 2. Improve the environment
 3. Meet the needs of local residents; and
 4. Bring back into beneficial use vacant land or buildings
- 3.5 An Elephant & Castle Business Forum has been operating for a number of years. This is now run as an independent group with support from the Council. They have been instrumental in assisting in projects such as the new Elephant & Castle signing and the closed circuit TV cameras.
- 3.6 Recently an Elephant & Castle Residents Group has been established, which is serviced by the Council and run by the residents. They have chosen to come together for purposes of considering a combined interest of the people who live in the Elephant & Castle area.

4. **FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION**

4.1 **Case for reviewing the Elephant & Castle**

- 4.1.1 The Elephant & Castle has long been recognised as a significant centre within the London Borough of Southwark. Indeed in past time the Elephant & Castle was seen as the "Piccadilly Circus of south London". It is a significant transport junction.
- 4.1.2 However the area has recently been voted by readers of the Evening Standard as one of the locations people would most like to see removed by the millennium. The area also has a general feeling of lack of safety. Even though there are excellent transport services, it is extremely difficult to move from one form of transport to another.
- 4.1.3 The March Committee of REDS clearly accepted that the incremental works would not resolve the larger issues of poor local transport connections, an ugly and polluted environment and an unrecognised economic potential.

4.2 **Potential for the Elephant & Castle area**

- 4.2.1 The Elephant & Castle occupies a very strong location in central London. Because of the sharp bend in the river, the Elephant & Castle is very close to both the City, Westminster and the West End.
- 4.2.2 In very broad development terms, promoting the Elephant & Castle as a centre will have a much wider impact. together with the work along the south bank of the Thames, initiatives in the Elephant & Castle would lead to consequential regeneration of a substantial area of South London.

4.3 Economic Context

- 4.3.1 The Elephant & Castle is one of the key locations where there exists a strong potential for the location of wealth creation uses. These will include commercial, retail, leisure and other employment uses. To take advantage of this potential to the maximum, the Elephant & Castle needs to be considered as a part of central London. This is an ambitious but achievable objective. It is recommended that the Council confirms this as its overriding view of the Elephant & Castle area at this stage.
- 4.3.2 Very initial assessment of the commercial and leisure field shows that there is a deficiency of commercial provision in the area. The recent growth in residential population in the area also provide further potential for more commercial uses.
- 4.3.3 The Elephant & Castle however is not unique in having this potential. There are a number of other locations stretching from Wandsworth in the west through to Greenwich in the east which could consider serving this area. Officers advise that there is a need to move speedily to ensure that the full potential for meeting this demand is delivered to the Elephant & Castle.

4.4 Transport

- 4.4.1 The Elephant & Castle is served by the Bakerloo Line and the Northern Line. It is part of the tube system. The Elephant & Castle rail station currently is served by Connex and by Thameslink. Many bus routes pass through the area.
- 4.4.2 The area has considerable potential to take advantage of the Government's proposals for integrated transport.
- 4.4.3 The existing transport facilities can accommodate a substantial increase in development in the area. This gives particular advantage to the Elephant & Castle as a location for investment.
- 4.4.4 This section is only a brief summary of the case. More work will be done on these aspects as the project develops.

4.5 Strategic Plan

- 4.5.1 The general proposal therefore for the Elephant & Castle is that :
- (a) The Elephant & Castle is established as part of central London.
 - (b) The Elephant & Castle becomes a model of well functioning integrated public transport.
 - (c) The Elephant & Castle becomes one of the major generators of wealth creation within Southwark.

- (d) The Elephant & Castle becomes a model of high quality urban living.
- (e) The benefits of the new projects assist all residents in the borough.

4.5.2 This overall proposal raises very big issues which will involve a large number of different interest groups. Even raising such matters can lead to difficulties if it means that progress cannot continue on existing schemes. For example the Housing Department has deferred for a few months repair work on the Heygate Estate. In addition, both the London Institute and South Bank University are developing plans for major investment in the Elephant & Castle area.

4.5.3 The need therefore is to balance time for discussion of these matters with maintaining a momentum that will bring forward work in the Elephant & Castle. The proposed timetable below suggests raising the big options for time limited discussion with all interested parties. It then recommends that the Council considers the general approach it wishes to adopt for the area. This method of working focuses on large principled discussions which then forms the context for much greater involvement at each stage over the details of implementation.

4.6 Timetable

4.6.1 The initial step is to generate discussion about the idea.

24th June Strategic Committee

6th July - launch discussion

July - August - discussion and submissions with interested parties

7th September - initial assessment of the results

23rd September - Strategic Committee receives results of consultation and sets level of intervention proposed.

- Depending on the initial reaction, options would also be presented to this Committee on methods of implementing the proposals.

4.6.2 One option available for the project is to enter into a public/private partnership or a private finance initiative project. If this were considered reasonable, following the September Strategic Committee, invitations for expressions of interest could be issues in October with recommendations being put to the 25th January 1999 Strategic Committee to select a partner. In order to have that possibility of a timetable, it is necessary at this time to issue the appropriate European Union notice.

4.6.3 Even at this stage certain conditions about the implementation can be proposed. These would include:

- Traffic and transport facilities should be operational and functioning at all times
- All residential areas would be protected from unreasonable disturbance
- Clear results should be evident within two years of commencement

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The exact level of investment for the proposals cannot at this stage be assessed. To assist in the consideration of the proposal, officers have tested the general finances for such a proposal.
- 5.2 The conclusion is that the Council cannot on its own raise money to finance the project. It is essential that the majority of the funding is from the private sector.
- 5.3 The major asset the Council has to offer is its significant landholding in the area. Better use of this land is the key to the development of this project.
- 5.4 The initial indications are that income can be generated to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure investments and to create added income for the Council to direct towards other projects.
- 5.5 An estimated sum of £250,000 is recommended to develop the project until April 1999. The sum would only be expended after preparation of a detailed budget and after approval by the Director of Regeneration & Environment and Chief Executive and Director of Finance. This sum can be charged to capital with the usual condition that if the project does not progress, the costs would be transferred to revenue.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Comprehensive redevelopment of the Elephant & Castle area will allow full provision for designs to meet access for disabilities requirement and to provide a safe environment of particular benefit for women. The project will also include a social programme designed to assist socially excluded groups, especially those included in the equal opportunities category.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This report recommends that consultation is an integral part of the programme. Because of the wide implications of the project, consultation will be a joint effort between departments. The Housing Department will have a key element

in progressing the consultation. They have accepted the general timetable and programme of this report.

8. LOCAL AGENDA 21 CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Government consultation paper issued in February invited views on a revised national strategy for sustainable development. The key points in that proposal were:

- the role of the planning system in achieving more sustainable patterns of development
- the development of an integrated transport policy
- the future of regeneration initiatives and ways in which local communities can be encouraged to contribute to local regeneration
- the work of the Social Exclusion Unit which will help everyone to benefit from and contribute to the development of more sustainable communities
- work to improve local democracy and accountability, giving people of a say in the decisions which affect their lives; and
- a comprehensive review of Government expenditure on housing to ensure that policies and programmes offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home and so promote social cohesion, well-being and self dependence.

8.2 The Elephant & Castle project offers an opportunity for the Council to achieve these objectives in a strategically important location. The emphasis on sustainable transport and the development of a mixed use area with long term social and economic objectives is a model project for Local Agenda 21.

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 Background Papers: None