REPORT TO: CABINET 9 June 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUBJECT: The Regeneration of Wellesley Road and Park Lane

LEAD OFFICER: Phillip Goodwin, Director of Planning and Transportation

CABINET MEMBER: Tim Pollard, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Regeneration

WARDS: Fairfield

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:

The Regeneration of Wellesley Road and Park Lane Meets the following of the Council’s Corporate Priorities: Theme 1 Safer, Stronger and More Sustainable Communities; Theme 2 Achieving Better Outcomes for Children and Young People; Theme 3 Promoting Economic Growth and Prosperity; Theme 4 Improving Health and Well-Being; Theme 5 Improving the Environment.

The following Community Strategy objectives are met: Improving the Environment; Regenerating the Borough; Feeling safer by reducing crime and Anti-Social Behaviour; Creating Inclusive Communities.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

The initial competition and project development work will cost an estimated £350,000 over 2 financial years. It will be funded from a combination of external grant funding, Section 106 contributions for town centre improvements, and private sector funding.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: 763

This is a Key Decision as defined in the Council’s Constitution. The decision may be implemented from 1300 hours on the 5th working day after it is made, unless the decision is referred to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee by the requisite number of Councillors.

For General Release

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1) Cabinet endorses the Mayor’s 100 Spaces Project for Wellesley Road and Park Lane and the approach set out in this report

2) Cabinet approves the project spend of £150,000 for the competition and project development.

3) Cabinet is asked to note that further development of the design project is dependant on securing sufficient funding (of £200,000), and approval will be
sought when this becomes available. Additional money will be required for the implementation of the scheme. These costs will be identified as the design is developed and approval will be sort when they become available.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Wellesley Road and Park Lane offer the largest opportunity to regenerate the public realm in central Croydon. The Mayor of London has given his support for Wellesley Road/Park Lane as one of the Mayor’s 100 Spaces to transform the space into one of the finest streets in London. The project requires a forward looking, world class design which will be a visible manifestation of Croydon Council’s ambition to become London’s ‘Third City’.

2.2 It is proposed that the London Borough of Croydon hold an international competition to select a design team to develop a comprehensive scheme. The successful team will work with partner organizations and local residents to produce detailed proposals for this key space. These proposals complement the emerging Area Action Plan for Croydon Metropolitan Centre and will help deliver on the Council’s aspirations to attract a wider range of workers, residents, shoppers and visitors to central Croydon.

3. DETAIL

3.1 The Wellesley Road and Park Lane Project is part of the Mayor of London’s Making Space for Londoners initiative which aims to create or upgrade 100 public spaces in London over the next five years. Creating and managing high quality public spaces is essential to delivering an urban renaissance in London. This will enhance the value of London’s existing network of public spaces and make a real difference to individual quality of life and community vitality and make London more liveable. The proposed project will be led by the London Borough of Croydon as the client and partnered by Design for London, the London Development Agency and Transport for London. Croydon will be committed to the very highest quality urban design and are expecting this to be an exemplary project.

3.2 The proposed project will transform Wellesley Road and Park Lane into an urban space of the highest quality which is visually pleasing, people friendly and furnished with activity and use. The transformation of Wellesley Road and Park Lane will be the linchpin of the proposed improvement of the public realm in central Croydon. Currently an urban motorway dominated by the 1960s underpass and subways, the roads form a barrier that is difficult to negotiate. This causes problems in the way central Croydon functions, with a lack of connections between major rail and bus stations, retail areas, office and cultural facilities. Evidence of the problems includes:

- The report into the urban structure, layout and public space conducted by Space Syntax in January 2007 identifies the Wellesley Road-Park Lane corridor as the main barrier to pedestrian movement in central Croydon. The Mott McDonald Technical Note on Preliminary Options for Central Croydon (September 2005) identified a total of 53 accidents along the stretch of Wellesley Road between Station Road and George Street over a 3 year period (January 2001 to December 2003). Most of the accidents
happened at pedestrian crossings and included one fatal and twelve serious incidents. A sizable number of pedestrians crossing choose to cross on the surface rather than use the subways. With no specific facilities for pedestrians these crossing manoeuvres are potentially dangerous.

- The PACEC Croydon Office Market Review September 2007 found the low quality of the public realm was one of a number of barriers to new office developments in the central area. Whilst Croydon performed well in terms of access and public transport, the poor image of Croydon was a significant factor for potential inward investing companies and expanding indigenous companies. The PACEC business survey found that of the 21% of respondents that thought their business faced constraints or barriers to its development, 28% cited the local environment. A major cost to companies relocating is the loss of labour and companies need to be confident their staff will be happy to relocate. This is leading to occupiers seeking high quality work environments. The townscape appraisal undertaken by the Croydon’s Urban Design Team in December 2006 assessed the quality of the streets in central Croydon against a number of design indicators. This study identified Wellesley Road/Park Lane as having the worst quality of public realm in the central area (Grade E). The poor appearance of the public realm in this key space creates a poor image of Croydon.

- PACEC also found that a lack of supporting facilities for employees of companies, such as a range of high quality restaurants, particularly in the north of the town centre, and better quality retail provision. Major companies are currently put off locating in Croydon Metropolitan Centre because of the lack of facilities throughout the town centre that help to make a location attractive to potential employees and residents. Aspects considered important by companies include the ability of a building to support core business operations, costs, location and access to the workforce. The introduction of a higher quality retail and leisure offer would help enrich the city centre for residents and workers and impact positively on the attractiveness of central Croydon to potential occupiers.

- In the local environment, crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, particularly late at night are seen as problematic. In the January 2007 survey by the Safer Croydon Partnership 57% of respondents felt local businesses were affected by crime against their business to some extent. 56% felt that crime or fear of crime in the local area impacted firms’ decisions whether to locate there. Criminal damage, vandalism, commercial burglary, graffiti, robbery, and verbal abuse were frequently mentioned. Despite Croydon having a lower crime rate than Greater London, only slightly less than half the businesses interviewed (46%) in the PACEC business survey had not been victims of crime in the past six months. PACEC also found significant numbers of respondents who rated their experience of the following issues in central Croydon as ‘poor’: Actual crime and the perceptions of crime (30%); Safety and security (25%); Image of the area (22%).

3.3 The Third City Vision by Will Alsop identifies the need to improve the image of Croydon Metropolitan Centre and provide ways to smarten the public realm.
Community consultation revealed the need to market Croydon, channel investment and emphasize design quality and differentiate Croydon from other towns with similar regeneration agendas. As a consequence an essential part of the vision is to change Wellesley Road and Park Lane. This vision forms part of the evidence base for the Croydon Metropolitan Centre Area Action Plan which will update Croydon Council’s 'Vision 2020' strategy as a requirement of the new planning system. These ideas form part of the Local Development Plan process to produce the new technical masterplan for the Croydon Metropolitan Centre Area Action Plan.

3.4 The design of the Wellesley Road/Park Lane corridor needs to consider linkages to the surrounding area, including the Whitgift Centre, the New Town, East and West Croydon Stations and the Cultural Quarter. The emerging aims for the project are to:

- Implement surface pedestrian crossings along Wellesley Road and Park Lane;
- Improve the environmental quality of the space and introduce activity;
- Provide space for trams, buses and cyclists;
- Mitigate the impact of any changes on private vehicular movement.

3.5 It is likely that the Wellesley Road and Park Lane will remain a movement space for the private motor vehicle. The impact of changes to traffic movements will need to be tested. This will be done through the development of a strategic transport model in conjunction with Transport for London. Other significant issues to be considered as part of the process include tram and bus movement, service access, car parking access and street management (lighting, cleansing, safety issues, etc).

3.6 Significant enhancement of the provision of bus stops and waiting facilities along Wellesley Road and Park Lane will be an essential part of delivering sustainable transport options appropriate to the development of the Third City. London Buses operational and staff requirements will have to be met. The requirements for bus and tram access are being developed with Transport for London and Design for London as an integral part of the competition brief. Proposals for public transport on Wellesley Road will also have to be coordinated with the developments of West Croydon and Park Place.

3.7 Opportunities exist for improving the ground floors and frontages of the buildings along Wellesley Road and Park Lane, connecting more effectively with their immediate surroundings to create more activity. This will facilitate increased use of the spaces between buildings for spill out activities, particularly in the cultural quarter. This will be important in animating the area attracting in a wider cross section of people into central Croydon and promoting the objectives of the cultural strategy. In order to achieve this, proposals will need to have regard to the design policies and land uses set out within the emerging Croydon Metropolitan Centre Area Action Plan.

3.8 The Mayor’s 100 Spaces Competition is intended to select a designer rather than a design. The competition will be divided into two stages.

- Stage 1 will ask for an expression of interest in the project. Invitations will be sent out at the end of September 2008, with an expression of interest
brief issued from mid October 2008 onwards. Applicants will be asked to submit examples of previous work and a written statement describing the priorities to be addressed in improving the Wellesley Road/Park Lane corridor and developing. A practice profile will also be required. The closing date for expression of interest will be December 2009.

- The Stage 2 will be the competition. In January 2009 up to six practices will be selected to participate in Stage 2, when they will be issued with the Competition Brief and invited to join a tour of the site in order to supplement the information contained in the brief. They will then work up indicative design proposals for submission and presentation in March 2009. The judging panel will then assess the proposals and announce the winner in April 2009. Appointment of the design team is anticipated in April/May 2009.

3.9 Each of the practices selected to submit Stage 2 proposals will receive an honorarium of £5,000 and expenses incurred up to £1,000. Any expenses, charges, costs, or liabilities incurred by an Applicant which exceeds the £5,000 honorarium and £1,000 costs shall be borne solely by the Applicant and are incurred at the Applicant’s expense.

3.10 One of the first roles of the winning design team will be to build a detailed brief for the project. This will be in consultation with the Borough and the other partners in the project such as Transport for London and it will be an iterative process. The project will then proceed to detailed design and implementation phases.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Widespread support from the community to ‘do something’ about Wellesley Road and Park Lane was found in the community workshops held by Will Alsop as part of the Third City Visioning exercise. These aspirations for Wellesley Road and Park Lane form part of the Issues and Options for the Croydon Metropolitan Area Action Plan, which finished consultation on the 14th April 2008. Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, proposals will be taken forward into the Preferred Options Report. Detailed design proposals for the project will also be subject to consultation as they are brought forward.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Design for London has allocated £50,000 and the London Borough of Croydon will allocate available funds from Vision 2020 Section 106 contributions towards the design costs for the Wellesley Road and Park Lane project. Once the design has been agreed and costed, there will be a significant amount of external funding required to implement the scheme. A delivery strategy for the scheme will be developed as an integral part of the project. A project of this scale, complexity and cost is likely to be phased over a number of years.

5.2 The proposed public realm improvements could benefit from the significant redevelopment opportunities exist alongside Wellesley Road which could provide funding. Further funding will be sought from Transport London’s Local Implementation Plan and through planning gain by way of Section 106 Agreements. The Section 106 Strategy will be developed as part of the emerging Croydon Metropolitan Centre Area Action Plan and Stage One of an
area based scheme bid will be submitted to Transport for London’s in 2008 as part of the Local Implementation Plan.

5.3 Following a positive recommendation from Cabinet the procurement strategy for the Wellesley Road and Park Lane design competition would be submitted to the Procurement Board. As the competition fee will be above the European Union procurement threshold an advertisement will be placed in the Official Journal of the European Union.

1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

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| Capital Budget       | Current year | Medium Term Financial Strategy – 3 year forecast |
| available            |              |        |
|                      | 150,000      | 200,000 |
| Expenditure          |              |        |
| Effect of decision   |              |        |
| from report          |              |        |
| Expenditure          | 150,000      | 200,000 |
| Remaining budget     | 0            | 0       |

2 The effect of the decision

The decision will commit the Council to initiate this competition and subsequent detailed design work over 2 stages. The competition stage will be funded by a combination of £50,000 awarded from Design for London, and £100,000 from Croydon Council’s Section 106 contributions to promote Vision 2020.

Approximately £150,000 of Vision 2020 Section 106 money has been received and is currently available in 2008/09, and would be sufficient to cover the immediate costs of the project including the design competition and project development.

The funding for the remaining £150,000 for Stage 2 has yet to be identified, although major planning agreements are expected to yield additional Vision 2020 contributions within the next 12 months, subject to successful negotiations.

In addition to the above funding sources, contributions will be sought from private sector organisation located in the Wellesley Road area with the intention of offsetting some of the design costs. Any amounts secured will offset the need to use Vision 2020 Section 106 contributions.
3  **Risks**

The main risk faced by this proposal is the commitment of a large amount of Section 106 money to a project where external funding has not yet been committed to the construction of the scheme. The competition for, and subsequent design of Wellesley Road will only meet corporate objectives if it is implemented. However, paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 set out the steps that will be taken to ensure that a delivery strategy is in place.

There is also a risk in that the design scheme is reliant upon Section 106 monies have not yet been negotiated or received. This will be contained through organizing the competition in two distinct stages, so that the commencement of the second stage can be dependant upon the receipt of funding.

Whilst the private sector funding will reduce the need for Section 106 monies, this also introduces a probity risk. This is that contributions by organizations to Croydon Council for the design competition could be seen to influence the planning control decisions made by Croydon should applications be submitted by those same organizations. This issue has been addressed in consultation with Legal Services in Section 6.1, and it will be made clear that contributions towards the design will in no way influence the independence of the planning control function of Croydon Council.

4  **Options**

The alternative option is to ‘do nothing’. This option would have a detrimental impact on the potential to regenerate central Croydon and the ability of the Council to deliver items such as the improvement of the public realm, improvements in road safety and increased sustainable travel choices.

5  **Future savings/efficiencies**

No future savings or efficiencies have been identified

6  **Approved by:** Ian Geary, Head of Finance, Planning & Transportation

6. **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER**

6.1 The Council Secretary and Solicitor comments that the project, in the long term, will require legal support appropriate to the different stages of the project. It is possible that some of the applicants in the design competition may be advising on existing planning applications and/or construction work for developers in Wellesley Road and Park Lane. However, all applications will be screened during the competition process for possible conflicts of interest, and methods of avoiding potential conflict will be taken into account in to the selection process. The design competition itself is being conducted in accordance with the Council’s Tenders and Contracts Regulations.

6.2 (Approved by: Deborah King, Corporate Solicitor, Lawyer on behalf of the Council Secretary & Solicitor & Monitoring Officer)
7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.1 There are no direct human resources impacts from the report as the project will be met with existing staff resources supplemented by input from consultants.

7.2 Approved by: Robert Laban, Head of HR Consultancy on behalf of the Divisional Director, Human Resources & Organisational Development

8. CUSTOMER IMPACT

8.1 The resulting scheme for Wellesley Road and Park Lane will need to demonstrate a significant level of benefit to the customers of the London Borough of Croydon

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

9.1 An EIA has been conducted and has identified the potential for significant positive impacts with particular regard to the improvement of access for all user groups and the regeneration of central Croydon.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL AND DESIGN IMPACT

10.1 The regeneration of Wellesley Road and Park Lane will be required to meet the highest standards of design and sustainability.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

11.1 The reduction of crime and disorder in the centre of Croydon will be an key objective of the regeneration of Wellesley Road and Park Lane.

12. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

12.1 There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

13. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 There are no freedom of information or data protection issues arising from this report, which can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

CONTACT OFFICER: Tom Sweeney, Senior Urban Design Officer, Ext: 62575
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:
Will Alsop Third City
Mott McDonald Technical Note on Preliminary Options for Central Croydon (September 2005);
Mayor of London Making Space for Londoners
PACEC Croydon Office Market Review September 2007