*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. **11**

TITLE OF REPORT: REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 22 MARCH 2011 – ROYSTON CROSS DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 March 2011.

113. REFERRAL FROM ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE – 9 MARCH 2011 – ROYSTON CROSS DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

The Chairman of the Royston and District Committee presented the following recommendations from that Committee, made at its meeting held on 9 March 2011, in respect of the Royston Cross Development Brief (Minute 78 refers):

"(1) That the Royston Cross Development Brief be agreed and recommended to Full Council for adoption;

(2) That an in-depth traffic assessment be carried out to ensure that any planned alterations do not adversely affect other roads in Royston;

(3) That the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Portfolio for Planning and Transport, be authorised to agree any further typographical and textual amendments that do not alter the policy intent of the document, which are needed to be made to the Royston Cross Development Brief prior to its finalisation and publication."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Enterprise stated that he was supportive of the proposed Development Brief and had been involved in it the lead up work to its preparation. However, in respect of the recommended traffic assessment, he considered that the cost of his assessment should be met from within existing budgets.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

(1) That the Royston Cross Development Brief, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted;

(2) That, subject to the costs being met from within existing budgets, an in-depth traffic assessment be carried out to ensure that any planned alterations do not adversely affect other roads in Royston;

(3) That the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Enterprise, be authorised to agree any further typographical and textual amendments that do not alter the policy intent of the document, which are needed to be made to the Royston Cross Development Brief prior to its finalisation and publication.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to produce a Development Brief for the Cross area of Royston that provides an overall framework for guiding development and enhancement opportunities within the area in the future, and in doing so, contributes towards achieving the Council's strategic objectives and priorities for town centres.

The following is the report considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 22 March 2011.

TITLE: ROYSTON CROSS DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – PREFERRED OPTION

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENTERPRISE MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek Members' agreement on the Royston Cross Development Brief subsequent to the consideration of comments by the public to the consultation Draft, which comprise the following appendices to this Report:

(i) Appendix 1 contains the Revised Brief containing track changes to show amendments from the drat brief;
(ii) Appendix 2 contains a Public Consultation Report, which summarises all comments received to the consultation Draft, together with officer responses.

1.2 To request that Royston & District Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Royston Cross Development Brief is adopted as a planning brief and that it be adopted by Council as "Council Approved Guidance."

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision that was published in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Royston Cross is identified in the Royston Town Centre Strategy as an opportunity area (RTC2). It is also identified in the Town Centre Action Plan as a potential project to be developed in accordance with the Royston Urban Transport Plan (UTP).

3.2 The Royston UTP was published in 2010 and has subsequently informed the contents of the Brief. Scheme reference "A4" from the UTP is particularly reflected in the preferred option.

3.3 The draft brief was approved for consultation by Royston Committee in September 2010. The draft brief and response forms were available in Royston Library and at the Council Offices, Letchworth Garden City for the four week consultation period. The document was also available electronically on the Council's website, which allowed comments to be submitted online.

3.4 Letters were posted to residents and businesses surrounding the Cross providing details of the consultation. Key consultees included Royston Town Council, Royston First, the Royston Town Centre Manager, the Royston Chamber of Commerce, Hertfordshire Highways and Hertfordshire Constabulary which all received a copy of the document and response form on CD. The consultation was also publicised in the Royston Crow.

4. KEY ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS ON THE DRAFT BRIEF

4.1 21 separate representations were received on the draft Brief making approximately 54 individual comments. Representations were made from interested local residents, businesses, and organisations. Each comment has been considered and amendments made to the draft according to whether the comments added value to the guidance. NHDC Officer comments have been made where considered relevant to the responses and are included as part of the summary table under Section 2 in Appendix 2. Where the officers have agreed to make changes, these are shown in bold, italic font in the summary table and are cross referenced to the Revised Development Brief attached at Appendix 1.

4.2 The majority of comments received to the draft Brief have been generally positive in relation to the vision, broad aims and what is trying to be achieved. The majority of respondents identified which option they preferred, although as options were not mutually exclusive sometimes more than one option was chosen. There were also more detailed comments, mostly from organisations, which provided comments on all options and specific features. All amendments are shown in track changes in the revised brief at Appendix 1.

4.3 The key issues emerging from the consultation relate to the following:

- Option 2a and impact on the road network
- Development onsite
- Impact on loading for businesses
- Specific considerations for open space

Option 2a and Impact on the road network

4.4 The greatest amount of support was expressed for Option 2a, which incorporated movement of the stop line on Baldock Street behind the Lower King Street Junction. This was identified as affording the greatest level of pedestrian importance, however there was some concern about the potential impact on the road network and in particular the Morrison's roundabout and movement for buses. A traffic assessment is identified as part of a detailed scheme to ensure that there is no negative impact on the network. This is specifically detailed in paragraphs 3.14 and 4.5 of the brief.

Development onsite

4.5 The possibility of a building on the northern area of open space was met with mixed views. Some representations stated that a building would be acceptable and that it would bring about welcome completion of building lines along Melbourn Street evoking historic references. However, at the other end of the scale there were a number of representations that voiced strong views that the area needs to be kept open and that building in this area would make it feel cramped and overbearing.

4.6 The approach taken toward development in this brief is one of flexibility. The need to maintain openness and need to enhance the area is detailed in the preferred approach, with the possibly of some form of small scale development if considered appropriate in planning terms.

Impact of loading for businesses

4.7 A number of representations raised the issue for the need for businesses to be able to be serviced by HGVs. The feature to widen Kneesworth Street footpath along its eastern side could impact on the ability for loading as it was proposed to extend the road into the informal loading bay that currently exists

on the western side of Kneesworth Street, although this is also identified as being used for informal parking.

4.8 Loading along this stretch of road could be restricted to times when buses are not passing down this route to prevent an issue. However, an additional approach of incorporating a new loading bay in the area of open space provides another potential option to enable businesses to function as normal with additional importance and protection afforded to pedestrians. Consideration of these two options is included as part of the guidance in the revised Brief.

Other considerations for open space

4.9 A number of representations raised ideas for what to do with the areas of open space. From technical points, such as combining CCTV stands with other furniture and remedying tree planters as trip hazards, to resurrecting the cross on top of the Royston stone and brightening the area with historic images.

4.10 There was a general consensus that the area should be more useable and open, incorporating less, but more interesting trees. Many of the ideas identified have been accommodated in the brief, specifically those which contribute to the area becoming less cluttered.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The terms of reference for Royston and District Area Committee confirm that it has a power to act as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest and to provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services.

5.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the local planning authority to produce Development Briefs in order to provide more detail on the interpretation of existing policy.

5.3 Having undertaken four weeks of public consultation on the draft development brief, the Council is required to consider all responses duly made. The Full Council approves or adopts the policy framework for Development Plan documents and it must be adopted in order for it to have sufficient weight when determining planning applications.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The work involved in finalising the revised Brief will be covered within current budgets. There are no direct risks associated with this project other than some reputational risk in not meeting the aspirations of the Royston Town Centre Strategy Action Plan.

6.2 The council's estates team have indicated that in the current economic climate formal built development is not commercially viable. This is not to say that it will not be in the future, and as the northern area of open space on the Cross is a Council asset, its future development will be particularly relevant.

6.3 Funding for the preferred option would have to be sought from the Royston Urban Transport Plan, S106 funding and/or other sources of grant funding. Such funding would also need to include on-going maintenance costs. Any new capital projects even if they are grant funded would need to be added to the capital programme and approved at Cabinet.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The officer time involved in preparing the Brief is identified as part of the Council's Business Planning Process for Planning and Building Control Services, and other relevant Service Action Plans.

7.2 There are no equalities implications associated with the preparation of the Brief. All efforts have been made to meet the Council's equalities plan and Statement of Community Involvement when consulting with the local community on the draft Brief.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

8.1 The Royston Cross Development Brief has been prepared taking account of the views expressed and issues raised through consultation in November / December 2010. Ward Members and Members for the Royston Town Council were also involved in the formal consultation process.

8.2 The draft Brief was the subject of a wider public consultation process from 10 November to 8 December 2010 to which the Council received some 21 responses. The consultation process is outlined in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above.

8.3 The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Enterprise has been consulted.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Royston & District Committee agrees the Royston Cross Development Brief as set out at Appendix 1 and recommends to Cabinet that the Royston Cross Development Brief be agreed and recommend to Full Council for adoption as Council Approved Guidance.

9.2 That the Corporate Manager for Strategic Planning & Enterprise, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Enterprise be authorised to agree any further typographical and textual amendments that do not alter the policy intent of the document, which are needed to be made to the Royston Cross Development Brief prior to its finalisation and publication.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To enable the Council to produce a Development Brief that provides an overall framework for guiding development and enhancement opportunities within the Royston Cross area in the future, and in doing so, contributes towards achieving the Council's strategic objectives and priorities for town centres.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Alternative options were considered in the draft consultation document. This set out the implications of alternatives and provided generic guidance for each approach as a basis for consultation in November / December 2010.

11.2 This document identifies a preferred option, based upon the idea of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the open space, while increasing pedestrian priority with a flexible approach to small scale development.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1: Royston Cross Development Brief (February 2011), incorporating proposed amendments as prepared by Officers.

12.2 Appendix 2: Royston Cross Development Brief Consultation Report.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 David Hill, Planning Policy & Projects Building Control, ext. 4453

13.2 Louise Symes, Projects Manager, Planning Services, ext. 4359

13.3 Anthony Roche, Senior Lawyer, Legal Services, ext. 4588

13.4 Jodie Penfold, Group Accountant, ext. 4332

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Draft Royston Cross Development Brief for consultation agreed by Members of the Royston & District Committee at the meeting of 22nd September 2010.

14.2 Royston Town Centre Strategy (June 2008) prepared by Building Design Partnership.

14.3 Royston Urban Transport Plan (2010) Prepared by Hertfordshire Highways.