

Tollcross Viability and Improvement Study

Planning Committee
19 April 2007

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report informs Committee of the findings of the recent Tollcross Viability and Improvement Study and sets out issues in relation to its future implementation.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A consultants' study was undertaken in 2006 to provide the Council with a better understanding of potential opportunities to enhance the viability and vitality of Tollcross Town Centre and to set out a strategy for how improvements could be delivered.
- 2.2 While the study indicates a range of resource requirements further work is needed to develop a funding strategy, identifying sources of funding, to meet these.
- 2.3 The study report is now complete and will be the subject of further consultation with the local community. It is intended to remit the study to the appropriate Neighbourhood Partnership, once established, to finalise the action plan and put in place appropriate delivery mechanisms

3. Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Tollcross is one of the nine individual town centres identified in the Edinburgh City Local Plan. As such it fulfils an important role in the network of centres distributed across the City and provides a range of shopping, leisure and local service facilities in an accessible location. Council policy through the Local Plan supports the retention of Tollcross Town Centre and encourages measures to strengthen its vitality and viability.

3.2 Tollcross is one of Edinburgh's traditional inner urban centres. It is located on a key arterial route with a strong identity and supported by good public transport services. The surrounding area is changing as a result of the major regeneration proposals at Fountainbridge and Quartermile. Tollcross Town Centre is well placed to provide local shopping and related facilities to serve existing local residents and workers and the new communities emerging in the area. However, there are concerns that it is currently underperforming.

Description of the Study

3.3 In order to address these concerns, the Council in 2005 commissioned Ironside Farrar Limited as lead consultants to undertake a Tollcross Viability and Improvement Study. Its objective was to examine the issues and factors impacting on the viability of Tollcross Town Centre and develop an action plan to provide a strategy for improving its economic, environmental, cultural and social well being. This approach accords with government guidance set out in SPP8 Town Centres and Retailing which identifies 'improving town centres' as one of its policy principles and recognises that town centre strategies are key to the delivery of such improvements. The town centre study has close links with the West Tollcross Development Brief, approved by the Planning Committee in January 2006 which provides a framework for redevelopment proposals and traffic management and public realm improvements in the area between Earl Grey /Home Street and Lochrin Basin.

3.4 In February/March 2006, local members, Tollcross Community Council and local traders were consulted to provide valuable local input into the study. In addition, a workshop session with Council officials representing relevant departments was held in June 2006.

3.5 The final report was received from the consultants in October 2006. It seeks to:

- clarify the role of the City of Edinburgh Council, local businesses, the Community Council and other stakeholders, who need to work in partnership to enhance the vitality of the centre, based on a clear understanding of the contributions needed from all parties.
- better understand the changing role and opportunities for Tollcross as a result of current and forthcoming major investments in Fountainbridge, Quartermile, Edinburgh Quay and the Financial Services District that are changing the economic opportunities and basis for investment in the centre.
- address the constraints, image and environmental detractors that adversely impact on quality of place, the appeal, retail confidence and overall vitality of the centre.

3.6 The study promotes a draft action plan to enable Tollcross Town Centre to take advantage of the significant opportunities created by its location, particularly in relation to the major areas of regeneration to the east (Quartermile) and to the west (Fountainbridge).

Study proposals

3.7 In summary, the draft action plan seeks to address three core complementary themes - enhancing retail vitality and the retail offer; enhancing customer access and sense of welcome; and enhancing quality of place. It recognises that town centre regeneration requires a complex partnership approach involving many stakeholders. Five key overall outcomes are identified:

- ensuring that Tollcross is promoted as a Town Centre and builds on and continues to extend the range of services available and provided by the centre.
- encouraging more active retailer engagement in the future of Tollcross and closer collaboration and working with the Community Council and other key stakeholders.
- improved accessibility in terms of parking and pedestrians and links to and from surrounding catchment areas that provide the town centre with a new customer base and new levels of retail spend.
- securing a change in perception about the sense of welcome and customer care in relation to safer, cleaner streets and enhanced shop and street lighting.
- strengthening and securing cultural amenities and continuous improvement and investment in both the physical buildings and level of engagement with the local community.

Planning Context

3.8 The study proposals are consistent with the planning policies for Tollcross. In the Finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan:

- the importance of town centres such as Tollcross as focal points for communities is recognised, and their diversity of uses makes an important contribution to sustainable development – they should be enhanced to provide for the shopping and other service needs of residents and visitors. A key planning objective is to ensure continuing viability and vitality with further retail development of an appropriate scale, if opportunities arise (Local Plan policy RET 2), and other facilities compatible with the living conditions for nearby residents (RET 6).
- Specific streets in Tollcross are identified as primary shopping frontages (RET 9) where a concentration of shop uses is required and protected, to help maintain the town centre as a shopping destination.
- The area immediately to the west of the main shopping frontages is part of a mixed use redevelopment area (Local plan proposal CA3) where two approved development briefs (one for Fountainbridge – 2004 and one for West Tollcross 2006) provide detailed land use and design guidance. This includes creating a layout which integrates with Tollcross, which improves

linkages, improves public spaces and streetscape, creates an attractive and accessible canal, while protecting and enhancing key townscape views.

- As part of the broader central area of the City, the Local Plan supports mixed use proposals that could include offices and hotels near a public transport mode such as Tollcross, where it is compatible with local character, and improved pedestrian facilities (CA 1, DES 7, EMP 1, EMP 5, TR 13).

3.9 The study proposals would therefore be a critical step in implementing the objectives of planning policies for Tollcross.

Implementation of the Study

3.10 With the impending formation of Neighbourhood Partnerships, it is proposed to remit the study to the appropriate Partnership, once established, to finalise the action plan and put in place appropriate delivery mechanisms.

3.11 The action plan will, in particular, need to include a funding strategy to address the resource requirements identified in the study report.

3.12 In the interim, a presentation on the study will be made to Tollcross Community Council and other interested parties.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Initial indications of the additional resources required to implement the draft action plan are in the region of £300,000-£400,000. However, further work is required to identify sources of additional funding. Following consultation on the draft action plan and its resourcing, a further report will be submitted to the Council.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Tollcross Viability and Improvement Study is now complete and the final consultants' report has been submitted to the Council. In accordance with relevant policies in the Edinburgh City Local Plan, it provides a detailed strategy to bring forward measures to enhance the vitality and viability of Tollcross Town Centre.

6. Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) notes the Tollcross Viability and Improvement Report (October 2006) and the intention to undertake further consultation on its recommendations with local stakeholders, including the appropriate Neighbourhood Partnership once established.

- b) notes that further work is required to develop a funding strategy, including identifying sources of funding, as a key element in finalising and implementing the action plan.



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Appendices	Appendix One: The Tollcross Viability & Improvement Study: Executive Summary
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Background Papers	The Tollcross Viability and Improvement Report, Ironside Farrar Ltd, October 2006 The Finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan, 2007

APPENDIX 1

THE TOLLCROSS VIABILITY & IMPROVEMENT STUDY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Final Report has been prepared for CEC Services for Communities to better understand the mechanisms to secure enhanced viability and vitality of Tollcross Town Centre and to set out a vision and an Action Plan for how this can be taken forward.

Key Issues are:

- Clarifying the role of City of Edinburgh Council, Local Businesses, the Community Council and other stakeholders, who need to work in partnership to enhance the vitality of the centre based on a clear understanding of the contributions needed from all parties.
- Better understanding of the changing role and opportunities for Tollcross as a result of current and forthcoming major investments in Fountainbridge, Quatermile, Edinburgh Quay and the Financial Services District that are changing the economic opportunities and basis for investment in the centre.
- Addressing with urgency the constraints, image and environmental detractors that adversely impact on quality of place, the appeal, retail confidence and overall vitality of the centre.

Tollcross needs to move forward and capture the opportunity presented by investment in the local area to offer a town centre with greater appeal, better offer and a clearer function. Significant opportunity exists for Tollcross to capture the retail spend and attract customers and offer services to the new developments at Quatermile, Edinburgh Quay and Fountainbridge. The first stage is to recognise, embrace and communicate the opportunity for positive change and then to develop a clear plan that looks for all interests to work together and drive forward a broadly based 5-10 year programme of progressive change.

The key issues to address are:

- Developing a more active, engaged Business Association to support the drive towards town centre regeneration
- Making Tollcross a more distinctive, welcoming and appealing centre and a town centre destination of choice
- Pressing forward on a breadth of measures with an early priority to focus on the Home / Leven Street core area
- Addressing the sense of welcome, image, town centre parking and accessibility as priority actions
- Establishing a 'Town Centre Contract' between public and private sectors, each committed and responsible for an agreed package of interlocking measures. Successful early delivery will support confidence encourage more inclusive participation and provide a clear demonstration of commitment and the capacity to deliver the vision.