

# MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL MINUTES

## 8 NOVEMBER 2010

**Chairman:** \* Councillor Bill Stephenson

**Councillors:** \* Tony Ferrari \* Thaya Idaikkadar  
\* Keith Ferry \* Barry Macleod-Cullinane  
\* Susan Hall \* Navin Shah (2)

\* Denotes Member present  
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Members

### 15. Attendance by Reserve Members

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Navin Shah

### 16. Declarations of Interest

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Items: 7/8/10 – Development Scenario Testing and Viability Appraisal – Study Findings/Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan – Update/Density and New Development

Councillor Susan Hall declared a personal interest in that she had a business in the area under consideration. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon but would leave the meeting if the discussions led to her personal interest becoming prejudicial.

Councillor Navin Shah declared a personal interest in that he lived on the perimeter of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensificaton Area, and that he had,

in the past, worked with some of those who would be making a presentation at the meeting. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

#### **17. Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2010, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **18. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

### **RESOLVED ITEMS**

#### **19. Development Scenario Testing and Viability Appraisal - Study Findings**

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director Place Shaping, which set out details of the Viability Appraisal Study being undertaken on behalf of the Council by consultants GVA Grimley. The report also outlined the aims of the study and provided background for the presentation from GVA Grimley, the consultant responsible for regeneration, viability and infrastructure.

The Panel noted that the purpose of the Viability Appraisal Study was to assess the likely impact of a range of potential housing, employment and mixed-use development scenarios on site viability; of which the key components were to determine the levels of affordable housing that a development scheme might provide, to understand the viability of redeveloping employment sites for employment use or mixed use development and to consider what other planning obligations might be supported in addition to affordable housing. The Study would inform and assist the Council in setting realistic policies and targets within its Local Development Framework (LDF).

The Chairman invited a presentation from the consultant, GVA Grimley. Representatives from GVA Grimley, in their presentation, reported on the Development Assumptions, Typology, Market Review and Interim Findings; details of which are available on the website.

Members commented and asked questions of representatives from GVA Grimley on the presentation as follows:

- it was difficult for Members to make decisions on the basis of the parameters used and a large number of the properties fell in areas of high market value. The Divisional Director Planning stated that the key driver for housing was 'need', an aspect that would also inform Council policy. Housing should not be determined solely on financial grounds and was not sustainable in planning policy terms;

- how would the assessment take account of the new homes bonus, when details were not yet available. An officer commented that the study would model schemes providing 100% intermediate housing, which was the likely direction of government policy. The new homes bonus would be made directly to the Council and so would not affect site viability;
- the development mix would be determined by the needs of the borough and that there was no one number that would drive policy aspirations;
- the development viability assessment provided a snapshot which may alter during the next few years. In response, the representatives from GVA Grimley stated that the planning policies would run until 2026 and that the company would be testing typologies for strong markets. The snapshots would help establish policies but it was important the Council was not wholly dictated to by those policies;
- vacant office space in Harrow was showing an upward trend during favourable market conditions. How could the Council address the situation during a poor economic climate? In response, GVA Grimley representatives stated that it was essential that office space was consolidated and renewed. In terms of new buildings and their design, it was essential that office space was designed and used efficiently. There was a small demand for smaller flexible office space.

The representatives from GVA Grimley stated that Section 106 money was not significant as claimed by the developers when compared with the other costs that they faced.

In response to a question from a Member on funding, the Divisional Director Planning stated that the work relating to the Development Viability Assessment was part of the LDF process and was fundamental to the soundness of the LDF Core Strategy. He assured Members that no additional costs were being incurred and that the funding was from the LDF budget rather than £80,000 allocated towards the preparation of the Area Action Plan. The Leader of the Council confirmed that Development Viability Assessment work was essential in taking forward the LDF and that the new administration would ensure that no additional costs were incurred.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the interim findings on the Viability Appraisal Study undertaken by GVA Grimley on behalf of the Council be noted;
- (2) the comments on the interim findings be noted.

**Reason for Decision:** To be informed of the findings of the Viability Appraisal Study and its role in confirming emerging policies for housing, employment and social and physical infrastructure within the Harrow Local Development Framework.

## 20. Density and New Development

The Panel received presentations from the Divisional Director Planning, Harrow Architects Forum and Campaign for a Better Harrow Environment to help facilitate a discussion on Density and New Development. The presentations are available on the website.

Individual Members made the following comments and asked questions on the presentations received:

- punitive Section 106 money requests would discourage developers from coming to Harrow;
- provision of car parking facilities, particularly in shopping centres, was necessary and their integration vital;
- development of buildings of 6-8 storey in height should not be disregarded provided these were inspirational, well designed and managed, such as those on Harrow on the Hill and the mansion blocks in Kensington and Chelsea;
- an appreciation of the financial position of the Council was key to understanding the limitations it faced, in terms of exercising the compulsory purchase of properties to make way for better developments or road widening schemes, including the provision of underground car parking which was expensive to design. The Council would rely heavily on private sector development and it was therefore essential that it take a sensible approach and looked at what was best for the site available and the improvements that could be delivered in the next 3 years, otherwise there would be no progress. The Chairman agreed with these sentiments and added that momentum was key to improving Harrow;
- Harrow had suffered from piecemeal planning. Vision, aspiration and the creation of landmark buildings were key to improving the borough and ensure that it was competitive. It was essential that a legacy was left for future generations to enjoy;
- a traffic study was essential, including development briefs for key sites. Harrow Town Centre and the Wealdstone Centre were key but different areas with varied landscapes. A transport hub was necessary, perhaps on the site currently owned by Dandara in the Town Centre;
- with relation to tall buildings, different approaches could be taken such as buildings which represented a hierarchy of heights, which was supported by the Mayor of London's Planning advisor, or those that were up to six storey in height and met with a visionary urban design philosophy. Landmark building could help change areas.

In response to the comments from Members, the Harrow Architects Forum and the Campaign for a Better Harrow Environment stated that whilst some

developments could go ahead sooner rather than later, a Masterplan was essential rather than a piecemeal approach to development. Areas such as Station Road, which comprised of 3-storey terraces had suffered from the lack of any planning guidelines. Harrow Town Centre, in particular needed its own design guide and should be the starting point in promoting new development.

The Divisional Director Planning stated that whilst there were choices, these had to be exercised within various boundaries. There were significant elements in Harrow that needed changing, particularly as the neighbouring boroughs were altering fast. The aspiration for Harrow as a Metropolitan Town Centre needed to be contextualised in both the long and short term by the regional debate.

A Member expressed concern about the direction of the Intensification Plan and what the Council wished to achieve from it. Moreover, it was essential that the direction was mapped out first to allow a debate on appearance, style and the spirit to ensue. Otherwise, Public funds may otherwise be wasted.

The Chairman thanked representatives of the Harrow Architects Forum and Campaign for a Better Harrow Environment for their presentation, and stated that consultation would continue.

**RESOLVED:** That the presentation be received and comments noted.

**Reason for Decision:** To be briefed on various views in relation to density and development.

## **21. Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan - Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Corporate Director Place Shaping, which set out the progress made with the Masterplanning Study for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area. The purpose of the report was to set the scene for a presentation from the consultant team on emerging development options.

East Architects and GVA Grimley, in their presentation titled 'Heart of Harrow: Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area' explained the work that had been carried out through the engagement forums, such as the Developers Forum, Community forum, Members Workshop, Business Forum and My City 2 Workshop. Some good ideas had emerged from these forums, some of which were contentious.

Members were briefed on the key headlines, details of which are set out in the presentation available on the website. Members were also briefed on the key drivers in the context of the London Plan. In terms of housing, the key message was that a significant increase ought to be expected in the Intensification Area. Whilst not every site required development, choices would need to be made on where high density was appropriate and beneficial. With regard to employment and the economy, it was essential that Harrow leveraged its international name to help secure its business future. The key sectors that would play a role in meeting a job target of 3,000 were as follows:

- office, industrial and retail based employment strategy;
- 20-30% of land to be allocated for employment uses;
- higher density employment sites.

The Panel were briefed on the 'mosaic' of strategic options, each defined and characterised by the areas under consideration. Four initial development options were presented to Members: Two Centres, High Road Centres, One Centre and Harrow Plus. A representative of East Architects stated that his preferred option was High Road Centres whereby Station Road could be enhanced as a driving force of development and public realm quality, creating a new invigorated spine linking the two centres of Harrow and Wealdstone. The High Road would become the focus of retail and cultural intensification and Harrow would be developed as a Metropolitan Centre, building on its brand as a place of learning, with large open spaces, led by office and flatted development. Wealdstone would build upon its character as a local centre with small-scale retail and industry.

In response to a question from a Member on the high density levels being proposed, a representative from GVA Grimley stated that there were a variety of sites which could support different density levels. The key drivers would be what each site could support and how it could support the Council's objective. Choices would need to be made.

Another Member commented on the limitations, as the Council did not own the various sites under consideration. It would need to work in partnership with the private sector. A steer and direction would be essential and he was mindful that the process could become protracted. He cited an example whereby the closure of St Ann's Centre in the evening was considered to be a contributory factor to a poor evening economy, which could be revived by keeping the Centre open.

Another suggestion was to move forward with the redevelopment of Harrow Town Centre with a view to providing a focal signature development. This would provide a vehicle and a 'pull' for businesses.

Representatives from GVA Grimley stated that the interface with the private sector would be key. In addition, it was essential that Harrow leveraged its international name to help shape policy and secure its prominence in the international arena. The Council also had significant assets within the Intensification Area and could play a strong role in its landowning capacity. He stated that any decision to widen Station Road ought to be exercised with caution, as he considered this to be an alarming prospect, particularly as the improvements could be achieved without taking such a course of action. It was noted that Alan Baxter Associates were examining issues relating to the transport infrastructure by:

- assessing traffic movement;
- looking at the benefits of rationalised parking;
- organised movement of cars on Station Road,
- provision of improved cycling facilities
- public realm improvements on Station Road.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the progress on the Masterplanning study of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area be noted;
- (2) the comments on the emerging development options for the Intensification Area be taken into account in progressing the study.

**Reason for Decision:** To have an oversight role on the Masterplanning Study for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area.

**22. Harrow Green Grid**

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director Place Shaping, which set out details of the emerging work on the Harrow Green Grid, part of the London Wide Green Grid. This formed a key part of the future spatial vision within the Harrow Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy. It outlined the aims of the Green Grid and set the scene for a presentation of the initial findings.

The Divisional Director Planning, in his presentation to the Panel, stated that the purpose of a green grid was to facilitate a network of interlinked multi-purpose open spaces with good connections to the areas where people lived and worked, public transport, the green belt and the Thames. He described the methodology used for the London Green Grid and the programme objectives, which were intended to celebrate and exploit various areas.

The Divisional Director advised that as part of the Harrow Green Grid it was intended to:

- provide access to open space by promoting the green belt, connecting green routes to green belt and open space for walkers and cyclists and addressing severance caused by transport corridors in key locations;
- give access to nature, by increasing ecological diversity in Harrow's parks and open spaces and by raising the profile of streams in the borough;
- manage flood risk and urban heat island by increasing the water capacity of streams in open spaces and increasing tree and vegetation cover to absorb surface water and cool down the climate;
- make connections by improving quality, providing continuous cycling and walking routes;
- enhance visitor offer by celebrating Harrow's heritage and by making connections to cultural destinations through the Green grid for leisure and transport;

- promote healthy communities by celebrating and revealing Harrow's open spaces for sport and recreation;
- encourage productive landscape by providing allotments in the borough, foster commercial investment in, and community access to productive landscapes, healthy eating, education and training;
- provide skills and training by engaging with skills training providers and the voluntary sector using the Green Grid framework to structure interventions in open space improvements towards a clear end vision.

The Panel was informed that it was also intended to use the Green infrastructure as a mechanism to engage with all generations. Harrow was a fabulous green borough and it was important that access to the green areas was encouraged and made available. Additionally, promoting Harrow's profile as a green belt borough could support both growth and create opportunities. Emerging projects such as the Belmont trail, tree planting, biodiversity works and path network along Edgware Brook were highlighted. The next steps would be to obtain the necessary approvals and identify funding streams with a view to carrying out consultation with stakeholders for a Harrow Green Grid, which would sit alongside proposals for the Area Action Plan.

In response to a question on levies and precepts relating to flood risks, the Divisional Director agreed to respond directly to the Member concerned. Another Member was supportive of the emerging work on the Harrow green grid.

**RESOLVED:** That the presentation be received and comments that need to be taken into consideration in developing the Green Grid for consultation be submitted directly to the Divisional Director Planning.

**Reason for Decision:** To enable officers to develop the consultation draft of the Harrow Green Grid in a way that accommodate opportunities and priorities identified.

## 23. Standing Items - Future Agendas

The Chairman stated that it was essential that the Panel was updated on work relating to the strategic sites in the borough and felt that it was appropriate to have a standing item on the agenda.

A Member suggested that regular reports on how the various projects connected with each other and whether these were adhering to the budgets allocated ought to be submitted to the Panel. In response, the Chairman stated that individual reports to the Panel identifying which budget(s) the funding was being met from should suffice.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the next meeting of the Panel should focus on the final version of the Masterplan for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area;



- (2) a standing item 'Update on Various Projects' be placed on all future agendas to ensure that the Panel was updated on the projects underway, as these related to strategic sites;
- (3) reports submitted to the Panel identify the budget from which the relevant funding was being met.

**Reason for Decision:** To be aware of progress made on various projects and how these were being funded.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.55 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON  
Chairman