

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL MINUTES

6 JANUARY 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Bill Stephenson

Councillors: * Tony Ferrari * Thaya Idaikkadar
* Keith Ferry * Barry Macleod-Cullinane
* Susan Hall * Phillip O'Dell

* Denotes Member present

24. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

25. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Area Action Plan – Presentation and Consideration of Strategic Options

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.

26. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2010 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

27. Public Questions, Petitions, Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rules 51, 49 and 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution) respectively.

RESOLVED ITEMS

28. Presentation on Kodak Consultation

The Divisional Director of Planning advised that the presentation was for Members' information and would provide some insight as to what had been identified to date from the consultation on the Kodak site.

The Panel received a presentation from Andy Martin, Director of PPS. The presentation can be viewed on the Council's website. In concluding his presentation, Mr Martin advised that the first round of public exhibitions were now complete and that the Design Workshops were the next stage of the consultation. These would be held in the weeks commencing 21 and 28 February 2011.

Individual Members made comments and asked questions on the presentation and received responses as follows:

- it was questioned as to who the Design Workshops were aimed at. In response, the Panel were advised that the 86 respondents to the feedback forms would be invited and that it was hoped that other stakeholders would also be engaged;
- a road show should have been held in Harrow Town Centre as people went there from Wealdstone. The consultant advised that the intention had been to involve people who lived in and around Harrow and the throughput at Harrow and Wealdstone station road show was probably the busiest. Additional road shows could have been held but it was felt that a reasonable response had been achieved. The Divisional Director of Planning advised that there would be extensive consultation on the Area Action Plan and that there could be scope to include a presence in the town centre for Kodak as part of that exercise;
- Kodak was a large site and a common complaint from parents was that there was nowhere for their children to move to when they wanted to leave home;
- a Member questioned why the feedback form had not asked people where they had travelled from. The consultant advised that there had been a mail shot to 13,000 households and articles placed in local newspapers and whilst address details were not specifically requested, he did have the addresses of those who had chosen to leave them;
- a Member asked, given the variety of views received during the consultation, what 3 issues the consultant would specifically note. In

response, the consultant advised firstly, the aspiration that the development would improve Wealdstone, secondly, the aspiration to see a mix of jobs and places to live and finally the quality of what came forward and how the development could contribute to open space;

- in response to a question in relation to the timings of the Design Workshops, the Panel were advised that sessions were usually held both during the daytime and evening;
- a Member commented that perhaps a weighting could be attached to views expressed in that those living closer to the site should have an increased weighting. The consultant advised that this might not be appropriate and would be difficult to do. It was important to receive as many responses as possible and he hoped that Councillors would encourage people to get involved.

The Divisional Director of Planning advised that he hoped to submit an update report on the workshops to the next Panel meeting.

The Chair thanked the consultant for his presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received and comments noted.

Reason for Decision: To be informed of the results of the consultation to date.

29. Costs of LDF

The Panel received a report from the Corporate Director of Place Shaping which advised Members of the costs associated with the preparation of the Development Plan Documents by the Council. It outlined the staffing resources applied to the preparation of Harrow's Local Development Framework (LDF), including the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan (AAP), and the budget set aside for completion of the LDF in accordance with the recently approved timetable (Local Development Scheme).

The Chair indicated that whilst the Local Development Framework was not part of the Panel's remit, this item was before Members due to concerns that had been expressed at a previous meeting. The Divisional Director of Planning added that the summary report had been drafted due to concerns raised by Members in relation to the costs of consultants. He advised that, through the Medium Term Financial Strategy, sums had been identified to progress projects and that there were no financial concerns in relation to the delivery of the LDF.

A Member expressed concern at the projected shortfall of £219,000 in 2011/12 and £44,000 in 2012/13 set out in the report and questioned, in relation to risk management, what elements of the Place Shaping budget would be used to fund the shortfall. In response, the Divisional Director of Planning advised that the shortfall related to next year's budget and that a report due to be submitted to Cabinet detailed the savings, which would come from areas such as voluntary severance and restructuring. The Member re-emphasised his concerns as the report before the Panel did not set out

how the shortfall would be met. These concerns were supported by another Member who also questioned why the item had appeared on the Panel's agenda if Members were not permitted to ask questions.

In response to the concerns expressed, the Chair advised that Members would be provided with the information requested and it would be included in the draft financial strategy. He added that that it was only appropriate to discuss matters within the remit of the Panel.

RESOLVED: That the costs identified in the report of Corporate Director of Place Shaping for the delivery of the Harrow LDF be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that the Panel were informed of the costs associated with the preparation of the LDF documents.

30. Area Action Plan - Presentation and Consideration of Strategic Options

The Divisional Director of Planning introduced a report, which summarised a technical report by the consultant team led by East. The report proposed four strategic development options for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area and set the scene for a presentation by the consultants. He drew attention to the challenges faced and added that the figures detailed in the four options should be viewed with caution. He requested the Panel's comments on the report, the boundary of the intensification area (an enlarged version of which was tabled) and the proposed strategic development options.

The Panel received a presentation from Angela Spencer (East), Chris Hall (GVA Grimley) and Trenton Williams (Alan Baxter Associates) entitled Heart of Harrow. The presentation can be viewed on the Council's website.

The consultant from East indicated that she would welcome the opportunity to revise the report in line with any comments/suggestions raised by the Panel. She outlined the four options and the consultant from Alan Baxter Associates reported on the public realm and transport implications of each option. The consultants acknowledged that transport was a key factor in terms of the option chosen.

The consultant from East reported that a number of engagement forums had been held as well as a Members' workshop. The key messages from engagement forums and questionnaires were that option 1 (One Centre) had the least support, option 2 (Harrow+) had a lack of support as it seemed to dismiss the value of Wealdstone, option 3 (Two Centres) seemed to be more what people wanted and option 4 (High Roads and Centres) received the most support. She outlined the implications resulting from all 4 options and the key requirements for their further development.

The consultant from GVA Grimley outlined the key considerations for the delivery of targets and stated that Harrow was well placed to develop its aspirations in the future. He drew the Panel's attention to the strategic option conclusions detailed on page 88 of the report and advised that the 'One Centre' and 'Harrow+' options presented the greatest risk. 'Two Centres' and 'High Roads and Centres' were based on a desire to strengthen and develop

the existing character and build up existing identities. They both allowed the various development sites to be intensified to levels that seemed appropriate to their particular conditions. There were, however, issues with both of these options. The preferred option was 'High Roads and Centres'.

In terms of the boundary of the intensification area, the consultant from East advised that all potential development sites should be included. She reported that one area to the west of the Civic Centre and one to the south had been inadvertently omitted and should have been included on the tabled document.

The Panel considered the information given in the report and during the presentation and made comments and asked questions as follows:

- there was no evidence in the report that the market could absorb the number of properties proposed. The proposals could affect the property prices in Harrow;
- Members were effectively being asked to buy a product without any indication as to its cost. This needed to be identified before any proposal was progressed;
- the report implied an additional 1,000 properties in Harrow town centre;
- costs, both infrastructure and transport, varied greatly depending on the option chosen;
- Harrow's boundary, as shown on page 7 of the report, was inaccurate in that the University of Westminster's Harrow campus was included;
- vacant office space had been on an upward trajectory and the Member questioned the market's capacity to absorb further developments. He noted the officer's response that this work had been done but he indicated that this information should have been included in the report before the Panel;
- a Member indicated that there were many potential investors/developers wishing to come to Harrow. This was an opportunity to shape Harrow in the way that both the residents and the Council wanted;
- a Member stated that as Councillors, it was necessary to be realistic with residents as to what could be achieved. A station upgrade would be most welcome but this and the other proposals outlined both in the report and presentation would cost millions of pounds which the Council did not have. The proposals needed to be realistic and the Council should be looking to see what other agencies, such as Transport for London, could contribute. An increasing amount of money was being spent on the LDF and consultants which perhaps could have been spent elsewhere;

- another Member reminded the Panel that the brief to consultants was to carry out a master planning exercise and, from the evidence presented, no action was not an option. He advised that the Developers' Forum had indicated that developers did not want to come to the borough due to its lack of vision. If developers were given some certainty, interest would be forthcoming. He emphasised that none of the costs would be met by the taxpayer;
- a Member suggested that there should be 5 options to include Wealdstone;
- the figures provided by TfL for the installation of lifts at Harrow on the Hill Station were unrealistic and this point was being made to both them and the Mayor for London;
- a Member suggested that, given the financial situation of the Council, issues within the gift of the Council such as licensing arrangements be considered to encourage greater use;
- the residential area off Rosslyn Crescent should perhaps be included within the boundary. In addition, the boundary could be extended along Pinner Road towards North Harrow;
- some Members indicated that they were not willing to either support or reject an option without evidence of the costs.

The officers and consultants responded to the points made as follows:

- the options should not oversize a particular area;
- the report could be made explicit in terms of the amount of land to be included;
- the development of the Area Action Plan was at an early stage;
- the recommended preferred option was the most flexible and diverse;
- in terms of market demand, there was a housing growth challenge which would need to take account of the Council's housing need assessment;
- in terms of infrastructure, there was a delivery plan in the Core Strategy;
- in relation to the comments on the evidence base, work had been done with the Greater London Authority (GLA) on site capacity, the outcome of which was a reduction in the annual strategic housing requirement from 400 to 350. As the existing housing stock was primarily 3 bed properties, there was a need for smaller units and larger family affordable accommodation. Recent completion rates were well above

the annualised targets, despite the recession, and gave an indication as to the market's capacity to absorb new developments;

- the Divisional Director of Planning advised that one of the reasons that Harrow was declining was due to its lack of long term vision. In terms of taking the report forward, a number of assumptions could be drawn and critical elements identified;
- the consultant from GVA Grimley noted the points in relation to existing market conditions but stated that Harrow had good office assets, a skilled labour pool and international name recognition. He recognised that if nothing were done, nothing would change and that proactive intervention was needed to turn round the office market. Attention was drawn to page 28 of the report which set out a series of steps that needed to be taken;
- in response to a Member's comments about the affordability of the proposals, there was major private developer interest but the scale and rate of absorption required consideration. Other centres, such as Watford and Ealing, had faced challenges but made progress. He added that the consultants had been cautious in their proposals and that their opinion was that Harrow had significant opportunities that he would encourage Members to take advantage of;
- in response to the comments on licensing arrangements, the Divisional Director of Planning advised that there were perception changing opportunities and that this was the next phase of the project;
- the Divisional Director of Planning stated that the Panel's comments would be taken on board and that the next report would include evidential information. The report currently before Members was a baseline. In terms of consultation, consideration would be given as to the deliverability.

The Divisional Director of Planning advised that the four options and the boundary would be formally consulted on. The Local Development Framework Panel would consider the options.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the completion of the technical report, set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted as the first stage in the masterplanning study of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area;
- (2) the Panel's comments on the proposed boundary of the intensification area outlined in the technical report be noted;
- (3) the Panel's comments on the strategic development options for the Intensification Area and other issues raised be taken into account in preparing the draft Area Action Plan for public consultation in April 2011.

Reason for Decision: To update the Panel on the first stage of the masterplanning study that would be used to inform the preparation of the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan as part of its oversight role.

31. Major Sites Schedule

The Panel received a report from the Corporate Director of Place Shaping which provided an update on progress with strategic sites and sought views on any additional sites that should be included within the schedule.

A Member commented that the former Travis Perkins site was located on Pinner Road and not Pinner View as indicated in the schedule. Another Member requested an update on Bradstowe House. In response the Divisional Director of Planning advised that there had been numerous meetings with Comer Homes and that he was committed to finding a solution to this unattractive site. He undertook to provide Members with an information report on this matter.

RESOLVED: That the content of the schedule of strategic sites be noted.

Reason for Decision: To enable Members of the Panel to be updated on the status of strategic sites within the borough.

32. Future Topics and Presentations

The Divisional Director of Planning outlined a suggested list of topics for the next meeting of the Panel as follows:

- progress on the discussions with Dandara in relation to a specific proposal;
- Lyon House;
- Work with Open City – a presentation from young people;
- update on strategic sites;
- information report on Bradstowe House;
- Kodak.

The Chair indicated that if Members had any additional suggestions for items that they forward them to the Divisional Director of Planning.

RESOLVED: That the list of items for the next meeting of the Panel be noted.

Reason for Decision: To keep Members informed of future items for discussion.

33. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair advised that the Council had been short listed for the Local Government Chronicle Award of Most Improved Council and that the event was to be held on 23 March, the same night as the next scheduled meeting of the Panel. He therefore requested that the next meeting of the Panel be re-arranged.

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Major Developments Panel scheduled to be held on Wednesday 23 March 2011 be re-arranged.

34. Termination of Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At 9.55 pm to continue until 10.05 pm

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.59 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chairman