

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL MINUTES

26 MAY 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Bill Stephenson

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

* Denotes Member present

45. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

46. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Keith Ferry as Vice-Chairman of the Major Developments Panel for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

47. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 – Strategic Development in the Heart of Harrow

Councillor Susan Hall declared a personal interest in the above item in that she had a business in Headstone Drive, Wealdstone. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

48. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2011 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

49. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 51 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

50. Petitions

Councillor Phillip O'Dell submitted a petition containing 76 signatures of residents of Carmelite Road, Harrow Weald, objecting to an application for planning permission to convert the house at 113 Carmelite Road into two flats on a number of grounds, including lack of car parking, increased noise pollution, and increased pressure on the drains and sewerage system.

RESOLVED: That the petition be referred to the Planning Department and the Planning Committee for consideration.

51. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

RESOLVED ITEMS

52. Strategic Development in the Heart of Harrow

The Panel considered a report of the Corporate Director of Place Shaping which provided an update on progress with the Area Action Plan for the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area and set the context for a series of presentations on the implementation of a development and improvement strategy for the area. The Corporate Director introduced Trenton Williams of Alan Baxter Associates, Tony Wood of Harrow Public Transport Users' Association, Stephen Neal of Land Securities and Richard Rees of Business Design Partnership who would be contributing to the presentations.

Strategy

Officers gave a presentation on the overall strategy which reminded Members that stage 1 of the masterplanning study had been completed, and consultation on the Area Action Plan Issues and Options was under way. East Architects had been recommissioned for stage 2 of the masterplanning to develop the Preferred Option. The resulting masterplan would be much more detailed and specific, and would include a narrative on how the space would change, public realm proposals and urban design guidance, such as guidelines on tall buildings, and the strategy for phasing and delivery. It would be developed in consultation with engagement forums representing the community, business and developers, and with Members. It was anticipated that it would be submitted to the September Panel meeting.

Members considered that the public would be very interested in details such as the proposed height of buildings, and expressed concern about the

consultation process for the stage 2 masterplan, specifically that the public would not have the opportunity to comment on it prior to September or be presented with various options on the details. The Divisional Director of Planning explained that the draft seen by the Panel in September would be an early version, and that the final document would not be agreed for consultation until November, at which point there would be a similar level of consultation as was currently under way on the stage 1 masterplan. A Member suggested that the timeline for the development of the stage 2 masterplan and the consultation thereon be placed on the Council's website.

Transport

The Panel then received a presentation on transport issues from Trenton Williams of Alan Baxter Associates, who had been retained as part of the stage 2 masterplanning process in light of the level of concern about transport issues expressed in stage 1.

Mr Williams stated that the Intensification Area had a number of strengths in relation to transport, namely its accessibility, its connectivity to other parts of the borough, and the fact that it was within walking distance to various transport hubs and centres. However, it also presented a number of key challenges, including a high level of car ownership, busy roads which were barriers to pedestrian movement, poor accessibility at Harrow on the Hill Station, selected bus routes already being at capacity during peak hours, and congestion at localised spots. There were opportunities to tackle these issues by means of:

- new development opportunities, which would provide funding for transport improvements;
- structuring new development to encourage sustainable movement;
- improving interchange facilities;
- public realm improvements, such as those implemented in High Street Kensington or Walworth Road;
- smoothing traffic flow, some work on which had already been carried out, for example the potential removal of the pedestrian crossing at College Road and Kimberley Road;
- improving wayfinding and mapping;
- improving cycle facilities – in particular there was potential for a north/south route between Harrow and Wealdstone;
- car clubs and electric vehicles; and
- travel planning – implementing area-wide co-ordination and initiatives.

Alan Baxter Associates were now starting work on a detailed assessment of all these issues with a view to this feeding into the formulation of a robust masterplan.

Tony Wood of the Harrow Public Transport Users' Association was invited to give his views on the presentation. He stated that he did not disagree with the main headlines, but had a number of comments on the details, including:

- the final uses of the development sites would determine the impact on traffic and congestion;
- with regard to increasing capacity on routes between Harrow and Wealdstone, the only alternative to Station Road was Harrow View which was already at capacity, but Station Road could be widened to 4 lanes;
- any bus routes that were currently single-decked should be double-decked; for the H14 route this was an urgent priority;
- accessibility at Harrow on the Hill tube station needed to be addressed;
- Harrow on the Hill bus station was in the right place but too many bus routes terminated there: some of the routes should be joined up and made through-routes. Buses needed to be parked elsewhere; it was not possible to increase the number of stops, so there was a need to reduce dwell time;
- the entry and exit to St Ann's car park should be reversed as they currently required people to use the same piece of road;
- drop off of passengers ('kiss and ride') at Harrow and Wealdstone station was supposed to be on the Harrow side but everyone did it at the Wealdstone side: space needed to be made for this;
- a monorail system should be considered; and
- there was a need to do an origin and destination survey for car journeys in Harrow.

Members also had a number of detailed comments and questions. A Member suggested that there was a need to increase the number of trains stopping at Harrow and Wealdstone Station. Mr Wood stated that the half-hourly London Midland service would be increasing to 3 trains an hour, and that there was also a lot of pressure to make the Southern service half-hourly and to extend it to Gatwick when the franchise came up for renewal in 2015. The Member also expressed strong support for increased travel planning co-ordination and initiatives as this had the potential to make public transport and cycling more attractive: the borough already had cycle routes but they needed more publicity; in addition, there should be a dedicated cycle route along Station Road.

It was noted that the officer report stated that the borough's highway network was capable of accommodating anticipated traffic growth without major investment but Members disputed this, stating that major routes such as Station Road and Harrow View were already at capacity. In addition, congestion would be worsened by additional development in the Intensification Area. A Member suggested that car use should be assisted, as businesses looked at traffic issues when considering whether to move to an area, and this was not addressed in the documents. Mr Williams responded that the statement in the report was a finding of the Transport Audit carried out to support the LDF core strategy. It meant that whilst there would need to be capacity improvements at some junctions, no new major pieces of highway infrastructure, such as a by-pass, were required. A Member felt this was disingenuous, as currently if there were an accident at a major junction the whole area was gridlocked. Mr Williams undertook to take this point on board.

The improvements to Walworth Road were noted, and whether it was a direct comparison for Station Road was queried. The cost of the improvements was also queried, and it was suggested that this was likely to be prohibitive. Members also requested further details of the three towns which had reduced car use through the Sustainable Travel Towns initiative, including their populations. The Divisional Director of Planning undertook to report back on the deliverability of some of the outcomes at future meetings. He also reported that he was in discussion with Transport for London, who were actively reviewing their scheme design standards, and would ask them to attend a future meeting of the Panel.

Office Vacancy

The Divisional Director of Planning gave a brief presentation on vacant office provision. There was a progressive and potentially accelerating vacancy rate, with Lyon House responsible for much of the recent increase. Harrow's attractiveness to business was not what it once was and there were various reasons for this rather than a single driver such as car parking. A concerted strategy was needed to prevent further decline: the borough needed to find a niche and look at how to incentivise businesses to come to Harrow.

A Member suggested that it would have been helpful to have a set of reasons from people such as property consultants as to why the market did not find Harrow attractive. Officers advised that they had had many and varied conversations with consultants, developers and others, and that this information could be provided, but the purpose of the presentation had been to highlight the high-level issues. The Member also queried how much funding was available to support further intervention by the Council to improve the attractiveness of Harrow and Wealdstone, in response to which it was advised that this would depend upon the Area Action Plan and the quantum of development. The Member suggested that it would be helpful to indicate to developers what resources were available to make improvements.

Implementation and Delivery

Members received an officer presentation which proposed the immediate implementation of two schemes to improve the network of public spaces in the town centre, at a cost of £400,000. The first scheme involved de-cluttering and improving the appearance of St Ann's Road, and introducing measures to

improve pedestrian priority in Havelock Place. The second scheme was to improve access and public safety at Lowlands Recreation Ground, which was the largest public space in the Intensification Area. It was anticipated that Council investment in the latter scheme could be used to lever in additional funding through the Mayor's town centre initiative. Members were also shown a map of the year 1 projects which were now under way as part of the Green Grid.

In response to questions, officers provided further details of the proposed works to St Ann's Road and Havelock Place. In addition, it was advised that no consultation had yet been undertaken with residents near Lowlands Recreation Ground but that it would be, and that the former playground in the Recreation Ground had been removed as it had been poorly used and vandalised. A Member also highlighted that St Ann's shopping centre closed at 6pm or 7pm, presenting a barrier to access to Harrow on the Hill station, and that in other shopping centres food halls were open until 10pm or 11pm at night. Officers advised that they had tried over many years to address this but that the shopping centre management were reluctant to undertake investment.

Implementation – Sites: Lyon House

Further to a presentation at the previous meeting on the proposals for the Lyon House site, the Divisional Director of Planning suggested that at this meeting it would be helpful to have a discussion and obtain Members' views on a number of issues, such as the future function of the site, its position in relation to the town centre, the mix and quantum of uses, how it should be accessed from the town centre, and how to ensure its commercial viability. He introduced John Smyth and Martin Sandys of Lockglide Ltd, the project managers for the re-development of the site, Rawdon Sherwood of MOSS Architects and Oliver Boundy of Metropolitan Housing Partnership, who were all in attendance.

Martin Sandys stated that the site was on the periphery of the town centre but still connected to Station Road and the amenities there such as the library, the car park and Debenhams. There were also three majestic old trees at the Station Road end of the site which would be retained. It was therefore proposed to complement development with a major public realm enhancement, to re-integrate the site into Station Road, the value of which could not be underestimated. John Smyth added that Platinum House dominated Lyon Road, so there was a desire to create a street edge that would transform the road.

Members highlighted that the library in St John's Road was only temporary, and felt that the location of the site was problematic. It was noted that there was an alleyway from St Ann's Road to Lyon House and it was suggested that if this could be opened up, it would make the site accessible from the town centre. The developers agreed, but pointed out that the alleyway was outside of their control.

With regard to the use of the site, Members felt that it should not be wholly residential, as that would be a disaster for the vitality of Lyon Road. The inclusion of community use would be welcomed, but only providing there was

a real demand for the facilities. A Member suggested that the site would fit in well with Harrow's night-time economy, given its proximity to The Junction public house and other pubs and restaurants, and that the type of people who lived in Platinum House would welcome bars and restaurants on the site. It was agreed that this might be the best mix for ensuring vitality, as if there was community use only the site would be deserted at night.

Implementation – Sites: Kodak

Stephen Neal of Land Securities and Richard Rees of Building Design Partnership then gave a presentation on the emerging vision for the Kodak site.

The presentation set out the inputs which had influenced the process so far, such as the public exhibitions and design workshops and the themes emerging therefrom, and the draft Heart of Harrow Area Action Plan. These had informed a number of development principles to be achieved, including a long term economic energy and vitality that could spill into areas beyond the site. The economic strategy for the site was the area on which work had focused the most during the past few months, with the result that it was proposed that the site be a focus for Small and Medium Enterprise. The site would be developed over a long time so it could respond to demand and opportunities as they arose. The developers also stated that they would be happy to back a marketing campaign with the Council promoting Harrow as an enterprise hub.

Members were shown maps setting out the emerging masterplan ideas. It was proposed to have a "green link" flowing diagonally from Headstone Manor to Harrow and Wealdstone station, opening up the centre of the site to the public. Pure employment use was focused along the eastern side of the site, abutting the railway line, and acting as a buffer between that and any green space or residential use in the centre. The area fronting Headstone Drive would be mixed use. Ideas about general land use needed to be fleshed out. The proposed phasing for the development of the site was also set out.

A Member suggested that the development incorporate a large function space, as there was a demand for this from Harrow's ethnic communities, and the developers agreed to take this into consideration. Members questioned whether Sport England would acquiesce to any loss of sports pitches, and the developers stated that this would be part of a detailed discussion they would need to have with the Council, but that they were not presenting a scheme which watered down sports provision. Members also queried how much car parking there would be, given the number of new homes on the site, and whether the developers were considering underground car parking. The developers replied that they would be looking for a sustainable solution that struck a balance between the requirements of Transport for London and what the inhabitants of the new homes would want. It was proposed to build mainly family houses on the site rather than flats, and families needed cars. An undercroft car park might be appropriate for larger buildings in the central part of the site, but there would probably be a mix of provision. A Member pointed out that there was good public transport access to Harrow on the Hill from the west of the site via the H14 bus service.

Strategic Sites

The Panel received a schedule of information on strategic sites. A Member was concerned as to whether there had been any progress with Bradstowe House. In response, it was advised that officers had met with the developers the previous week and had discussed the options for re-establishing work on site, namely, the restructure of the s106 agreement or the submission of a new planning application, which in itself would result in a new s106 agreement but which would also result in delays. The developers were considering the options. Officers had made it very clear that the Council was keen to work with them.

Recommendations

The Panel considered the officer recommendations set out in the report. A Member felt that there should be a full consultation on the schemes to improve St Ann's Road/Havelock Place and Lowlands Recreation Ground prior to implementation and suggested an amendment to the second recommendation to this effect; this was agreed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and the actions that were being taken to progress the strategic development of the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area, and Members' comments thereon, be noted;
- (2) a full consultation on the outline proposals and suggested priorities for infrastructure investment in 2011/12 to improve the network of public spaces in Harrow town centre and adjacent to the Intensification Area be supported;
- (3) Members' comments on the issues arising from the presentations on transport and movement within the Intensification Area and the future use of the Lyon House and Kodak sites be noted; and
- (4) the content of the Major Sites Schedule be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that Members were kept informed of progress with the Area Action Plan for the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area and the issues arising therefrom, including development proposals for key strategic sites, and that their comments thereon were noted.

53. Extension of the Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4B of the Constitution), during the discussion of the above item it was

RESOLVED: At 9.50 pm to continue until 10.15 pm.

54. Update on Various Projects

This item had already been dealt with under agenda item 8, Strategic Development in the Heart of Harrow (Appendix 3 to the officer report).

55. Future Topics and Presentations

It was reported that the item on Progress on the Discussions with Dandara in relation to a Specific Proposal, which had been scheduled to be received at this meeting, would be on the agenda for a future meeting of the Panel, possibly in July, as the Dandara proposals were not yet ready to be presented to the Panel.

The item on Work with Open City – a Presentation from Young People, which had also been due to be received at this meeting, would now be received at the September Panel meeting, as the young people were currently busy with exams.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

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

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.11 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chairman