

Planning Policy Advisory Panel

Minutes

6 March 2023

Present:

Chair: Councillor Marilyn Ashton

Councillors: Christopher Baxter Nitin Parekh
Stephen Greek David Perry
Asif Hussain Zak Wagman

In attendance (Councillors): Paul Osborn For Minute All

27. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

28. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

29. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

30. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put.

31. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

32. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

Resolved Items

33. New Harrow Local Plan - Way Forward and Strategic Objectives

Members received the Report on the New Harrow Local Plan – Way Forward and Strategic Objectives.

The report introduced the Local Plan process and key issues that would need to be addressed as part of the new Harrow Local Plan.

Members were invited to give comments and discuss the Plan in its scoping, including the broad vision and objectives.

The report was accompanied by a presentation.

Key elements of the current (2012) Core Strategy's long term Spatial Vision for Harrow by 2026 were:

- a) A more sustainable community;
- b) Comprehensive and co-ordinated regeneration activity;
- c) The Northolt Road business use area will have been renewed;
- d) Rayners Lane will be enhanced to one of the best examples of a classic Metroland and Art Deco Centre in outer London;
- e) The leafy suburban character of the Borough's residential areas will have been safeguarded as areas of low density, and family housing;
- f) The future of Bentley Priory and the RNOH will have been secured as places of national importance;
- g) Employment land throughout the Borough will have managed to preserve a supply most suitable for existing and future needs;
- h) The housing needs of the Borough will have been met; and
- i) The overall amount of waste generated in the Borough will have been reduced.

The following was what had changed:

- a) Four National Planning Policy Frameworks (NPPF) have been issued;
- b) Two new London Plans plus intervening Alterations adopted;
- c) Countless changes to statutory instruments changing planning regulations;
- d) Environmental and Climate Change protections have changed significantly;
- e) Fire protections introduced;
- f) A new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) progressing through Parliament; and

g) Ongoing evidence based development.

In the discussion that ensued, Members made comments and asked the following questions:

- How long the Plan would last, and whether future needs of the Borough would be incorporated in the strategic objectives of the Plan;
- What was meant by “Open Harrow”?
- Whether the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB), which was introduced into Parliament on 11 May 2022, would delay the Local Plan;
- It was imperative to protect what residents loved about Harrow – being a “leafy suburban” Borough within easy travel to central London;
- The Council had responded to consultations on the draft revised NPPF, and it was envisaged the local Plan examination by the Inspectorate would be simplified by the proposed changes.

In response, it was advised that:

- The plan was for between 15 years to 20 years, and if the Local Plan was not reviewed after 5 years, it would be deemed “out-of-date”;
- The concept “Open Harrow” was for Members to articulate and define what the Borough was open to. For instance, “Open for Business”;
- It was not expected that that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) would delay the local Plan. On the contrary, it would shorten the process and make it easier for local authorities to make decisions;
- The consultation on the proposed NPPF changes would seek to protect the Borough, and there had been high level discussions between Members and Officers on that. Details would be shared with Members in due course.

Members also noted the following issues that the new Local Plan should seek to address:

- Housing to address housing shortage;
- Protecting the Green Belt;
- Transport hubs;
- Promoting investment in the Borough – to be competitive with other town centres;
- Enhancing the economic offer of the Borough;
- Providing the right sort of housing (families); and
- Being realistic about how people travel around the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Report and presentation be noted.

34. Proposed Local Areas of Special Character - Principles and Draft Criteria

Members received the Proposed Local Areas of Special Character – Principles and Draft Criteria Report.

The report proposed to introduce a new local heritage designation namely: “Local Areas of Special Character”. This would be a non-statutory local designation relating to the historic and architectural interest and significance of an area. It would supplement the national statutory designation of Conservation Areas.

Such a designation would assist in the assessment of the design quality of development proposals rather than changing whether the development was acceptable in principle or impacting upon permitted development rights.

The report was accompanied by a presentation.

For Harrow’s criteria relating to Conservation Areas, two or more must be met:

- a) Areas with a high concentration of Listed Buildings, whether statutorily or locally listed;
- b) Areas of historical, social, economic and/or architectural merit;
- c) Areas with a high proportion of buildings built prior to 1920, which remain largely unaltered;
- d) Areas built post 1920 that are innovative in planning or architectural detail, and where a large proportion remain unaltered;
- e) A significant group of buildings with distinct physical identity and cohesiveness;
- f) Areas which have a special quality, where the site layout and landscaping are of exceptionally high quality and/or contain historic open space, natural landmarks, topographical features or features of local distinctiveness.

These criteria set a high bar and many areas did not meet the required threshold to be designated as a Conservation Area.

At present Harrow did not have a local alternative to Conservation Area designation. The report before the Panel outlined the rationale for proposing a local alternative (Local Areas of Special Character), the principles of such a designation and the following proposed criteria, which members were invited to comment on:

- 1) The area must be of heritage significance; and
- 2) One or more of the following criteria need to be met:
 - a) Townscape of locally cohesive, well-preserved quality;
 - b) Architecture of locally cohesive, well-preserved quality; and
 - c) Landscape of locally distinctive and well-preserved quality.

Overall, an area must have discernibly higher quality and degree of intactness than other parts of the Borough (other than designated conservation areas, that have special architectural or historic interest), thereby demonstrating distinctiveness.

In the discussion that ensued, Members made comments and asked the following questions:

- How much work was expected to be done in a year?
- There were lessons that could be learned from other boroughs, and what documents would be required for designation?

In response, the Chair advised that the Administration was determined to get as much work as possible done within that timeframe, and that the programme would be resourced. Furthermore, local documentation would be used for designation.

RESOLVED: That Members:

- (1) note and comment on the proposal to introduce a new local heritage designation namely proposed “Local Areas of Special Character” and the proposed criteria (paragraph 4.10); and
- (2) endorse consultation with local conservation groups / stakeholders with regards to the proposed criteria (including any amendments arising from the Panel’s discussion) prior to the matter being reported back to the Panel for consideration and referral to Cabinet for approval.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.30 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Marilyn Ashton
Chair