

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	23 rd June 2005
Subject:	Local Development Scheme
Responsible Officer:	Director of Strategy (Urban Living)
Contact Officer:	Dennis Varcoe
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Housing
Key Decision:	Yes
Status	Public

Section 1: Summary

Decisions Required

1. To confirm the revised content of the Local Development Scheme (LDS), as set out in the Appendix, following further discussion with the Government Office for London (GOL) after their consideration of the Scheme agreed by Cabinet for submission by March 28th 2005.
2. To bring the LDS into effect in Harrow.

Reason for report

The Local Development Scheme was submitted to GOL before the deadline of 28th March 2005. GOL subsequently issued a holding direction asking for more time to consider the LDS, and seeking clarification on a few matters. Following consideration of these matters, suggested revisions were firstly discussed with GOL, and then sent in writing. GOL have subsequently confirmed that they are happy with the suggested revisions. In order that the LDS can now be brought into effect in Harrow it is also necessary to formally request Cabinet to authorise the LDS.

Benefits

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Development Framework, the first stage involving preparation of a Local Development Scheme (LDS). Following submission of the LDS to GOL, and in the knowledge that no direction will be issued by GOL, the Council can proceed to bring the LDS into effect in Harrow, and work on the matters outlined in the Scheme can progress. Meeting key milestones in the LDS will form an element of future Planning Delivery Grant for the authority.

Cost of Proposals

The cost of preparing the LDS, as revised, is contained within the current approved Departmental Budget.

Risks

The LDS legally has to be brought into effect through a report to Cabinet (or Council). Failure to do this would open the Council to legal challenge on any matters covered by the LDS. In turn, this would probably have implications for the level of future Planning Delivery Grant.

Implications if recommendations rejected

As stated above, failure to bring the LDS into effect would open the Council to legal challenge on any matters covered by the LDS. In turn, this would probably have implications for the level of future Planning Delivery Grant which could also impact on the Council's ability to resource the LDF programme as set out in the LDS.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

Various discussions have been taking place with GOL over recent months on the content of the LDS. Following submission to GOL of the LDS approved by Cabinet on 17th March 2005, a letter was received from GOL (dated 18th April 2005) in the form of a holding direction, asking for more time to consider the LDS. GOL also advised that there were a few matters on which clarification was being sought (which were set out in subsequent correspondence dated 20th April 2005). A meeting was held with GOL to discuss these matters, and the suggested Council response.

Besides clarification of some wording and correction of minor factual errors, the main cause of concern to GOL was that the programme was considered to be over-ambitious in view of the resources available in practice. The risk assessment in the LDS had indicated that obtaining and retaining suitable staff would be a challenge. Prior to submission of the LDS a member of staff with primary responsibility for one of the early documents to be produced has left the Council's employment, and it has not been

possible to obtain a suitable replacement. Officers are also currently trying to secure temporary support for production of the Affordable Housing SPD, another key early document.

Following a re-evaluation of resources and priorities, it was considered that it would be prudent to delete the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and Air Quality SPD from the programme at this stage. On re-evaluating the work done on the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD so far, it is now considered that it would be preferable, and more appropriate, to use the work undertaken so far to inform the relevant policy areas to be produced in the Core Strategy. With regard to the Air Quality SPD, as this issue is clearly a sub-regional matter, it would normally be sensible to produce this when other West London boroughs are producing theirs. The work will involve a major input from the Environmental Health service, and detailed discussions on possible programming of the work have not yet taken place. It is therefore suggested that this SPD be deleted from the LDS at this time.

It is also suggested that the timetable for producing the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) be slipped by two months to ensure that, inter alia, appropriate linkages are in place with the corporate production of the Community Empowerment Strategy.

The detailed wording changes to the LDS previously agreed by Cabinet are attached as an Appendix. GOL have confirmed that the suggested amendments are acceptable. The LDS, revised to include the attached changes, will thus be brought into effect by Cabinet agreement of the recommendations. Copies of the LDS will subsequently be forwarded to GOL and the Mayor, for information.

2.2 Consultation

Consultation on the submission LDS was undertaken with all groups and organisations on the database used in production of the Harrow Unitary Development Plan. Discussions with GOL have also taken place on the matters on which further clarification was sought.

2.3 Financial Implications

The costs of the preparing the LDS and bringing into effect can be contained within the current approved departmental budget, which includes £230,000 of growth approved at February's Council meeting.

2.4 Legal Implications

Comments included in the report.

2.5 Equalities Impact

Commitment to the production of the Statement of Community Involvement in the LDS will indicate the Council's intentions that the involvement of all sections of the community in the LDF process will be sought.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Appendix – Amendments to the LDS

Report and recommendations from Cabinet 17th March 2005.
Holding direction from GOL dated 18th April and letter dated 20th April 2005
Letter to GOL from Group Manager – Planning and Development dated 19th
May 2005, detailing amendments to submission LDS.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020
8424 1460