

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	13 March 2014
Subject:	Further Alterations to the London Plan
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Caroline Bruce, Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Stephen Greek – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Regeneration
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Harrow Council's formal representations to the Further Alterations to the London Plan Recommendation from LDF Panel, 3 March 2014 (To Follow)

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report summarises the proposed changes to the London Plan, which are out for public consultation, and sets out the Council's response to these which form the basis of the Council's formal response.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the key changes proposed to the London Plan and the potential implications for Harrow's own adopted spatial strategy;

2. Agree Council's formal representations (attached at Appendix A) to the Further Alterations to the London Plan.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure Harrow's best interests are reflected in the alterations to the regional spatial plan for London.

Section 2 – Report

1. On 15th January 2014 the Mayor published further alterations to the London plan (2014) for consultation. After the close of consultation on the 10th of April, the responses will be analysed by the GLA, further changes may be proposed, and then the alterations will be examined by an Independent Examiner before they can be adopted, likely early 2015.
2. The changes centre on housing and employment policies to reflect the additional growth that the capital will need to manage and accommodate (an increase in population to 10.11 million) by 2036.

Key Alterations Proposed

3. For Harrow there are a number of important changes which will have an impact on managing growth in the Borough.

New Housing Target

4. Harrow's housing target (the number homes the Borough is expected to accommodate and deliver) will increase from 350 per annum to 593 per annum (a 69% increase). This new housing target is derived from the findings of the pan-London Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, and is therefore based on a detailed local assessment of Harrow's potential land capacity.
5. The proposed new housing target needs to be seen in the context of Harrow's actual housing need – i.e. its '*objectively assessed housing need*' – which is estimated at between 1,200 and 1,400 household formations per annum. Obviously Harrow, like many other boroughs across London, does not have the land available to meet this level of housing need. The London Plan therefore provides the strategic framework for reconciling, insofar as possible, the need for and the capacity to deliver new housing across the capital. In short, through the London Plan, a significant proportion of Harrow's overall growth is intended to be met by housing development elsewhere in London, primarily East London. It should also be noted that the new housing figures are not set to come into effect until 2015 when the alterations are anticipated to be adopted.

6. It is not only Harrow's housing target that is increasing. All boroughs are proposed to see an increase in their housing requirement. The levels of increase vary widely between boroughs but a consistent theme is that those with already very high housing targets are likely to see only modest increases.

7. However, Members should be aware that the proposed borough housing figures could change as a result of the consultation process and examination. It is highly likely that neighbouring counties and many in the development industry will challenge the London Plan housing targets. While the proposed alterations will see London's overall strategic housing requirement increase to 42,389 per annum (up 10,000 per annum against the 2011 Plan), the evidence (GLA Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013) suggests that London's '*objectively assessed housing need*' is for between 49,000 and 62,000 homes per year.

8. Given the need for further housing across London and the substantial disparity between Harrow's '*objectively assessed housing need*' and its capacity to accommodate new growth, if Harrow's housing target remains at 593 homes per annum, officers believe that this will be challenging but will not require the Council to revisit its current spatial strategy approach. It will mean however that Harrow will go from a particularly strong housing position to one that is marginal towards the latter stages of Harrow's Local Plan period. Surpluses achieved since 2009 will be negated and achieving the target will require **all sites** allocated for housing in the Local Plan to be built out over the plan period and may require a further call for additional sites towards the end of the plan period (i.e. post 2021). Council's representation therefore supports the London Plan's new housing targets, and the continued pan-London approach to reconciling the need for and the capacity to deliver new housing across the capital. However, officers consider that any further increase above the proposed new housing target will be untenable to deliver, and therefore the representation strongly resists any proposals to increase the new target further as being potentially unsound.

Harrow & Wealdstone Opportunity Area Designation

9. The second key alteration for Harrow is the re-designation of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area to an Opportunity Area.

10. The key difference between an Intensification Area and an Opportunity Area designation is the level of development to be accommodated. Typically, Opportunity Areas are tasked to deliver at least 5,000 jobs or 2,500 new homes, or a combination of the two.

11. Harrow's existing Intensification Area was included in the 2011 London Plan following Council's agreement to the area becoming a focus for growth within its own proposed Local Plan. At that time the detailed work on the Area Action Plan had not commenced, and so a conservative jobs and housing target for the Harrow & Wealdstone area (2,000 jobs and 1,500 homes) were agreed with the Mayor for adoption in his London Plan, consigning it in threshold terms to an Intensification Area designation.

12. When the detailed evidence base studies on site availability and development capacities were completed for the Harrow & Wealdstone Area Action Plan (AAP), the Council had determined that the development potential of the area could sustainably accommodate a minimum of 3,000 jobs and 2,800 new homes. This means that the Harrow & Wealdstone area now meets the thresholds for designation as an Opportunity Area within the London Plan. The current further amendments to the London Plan therefore seek to realise this reclassification.

13. In addition to becoming a higher order growth area within the new London Plan, this designation also secures additional buy in from the GLA and TfL in recognition of the additional infrastructure demands that accommodating further growth will entail. Opportunity Areas are given priority within the Mayor's Economic Development Strategy and Transport Strategy, and offers the ability to bid for Strategic Growth Funding, which should help to make the case for Station improvements at Harrow on the Hill when tied to the delivery of the higher growth targets.

14. As the jobs and housing targets proposed for the Harrow & Wealdstone area in the alterations to the London Plan reflect those already adopted by the Council in its AAP, as well as making available potential additional funding streams and assistance not currently available, the Council's representation supports the change in designation to an Opportunity Area.

Other further amendments of note

15. An amendment to Policy 2.15 Town Centres introduces a requirement that applications for a change of use from retail to residential (via a new permitted development prior approval application) in town centres must conform with London Plan policies on town centre vitality. This is of note, as this change to the Permitted Development Order has not been effected yet through changes to the regulations. This alteration to policy seemingly pre-empts this. Assuming the change to permitted development comes in to allow retail units to be converted to residential without planning permission, subject to our prior approval, this amendment should help the Council to resist inappropriate retail to residential conversions in town centres. This proposed change to London Plan policy is therefore supported.

16. The alterations have also introduced a much stronger emphasis on supporting residential led mixed used development to higher densities in town centres, especially within those centres that are in decline. Policy 2.15 has been significantly revised to encourage council's to analyse centres where consolidation of retail may be necessary, and to support a wider range of uses including further residential in such centres. Harrow's Local Plan already has policies that are in line with these alterations, and so alterations are supported.

17. The Mayor has introduced slightly higher maximum parking standards for residential development, to reflect outer London's more car-orientated needs and relaxed the policy to state that these standards should be the 'basis' for determining applications rather than absolutes. He has further amended the Parking policy (Policy 6.13) to allow Borough's to set their own

standards, using the maximum in the London Plan as their basis for office parking. These changes provide the Council with greater flexibility when determining the appropriate levels of parking on individual planning applications and are therefore supported.

18. There is a new section to Policy 3.18 – Education Facilities, which encourages proposals to co-locate schools with housing in order to maximise land use and reduce costs. Whilst primarily aimed at highly constrained inner London sites, this may prove necessary in outer London boroughs should demand for new school provision continues to significantly rise. Support is therefore proposed to be given to this policy.

19. With regards to the clustering of certain retail uses e.g. betting shops etc, a new clause has been inserted into Policy 4.8 – Supporting a Successful and Diverse Retail Sector and Related Facilities and Services, which allows borough's to have regard to both the positive and negative effects of this clustering to manage the numbers in a centre, e.g. by encouraging a positive cluster of uses, or to restrict harmful concentrations of a certain use. Given the significant body of evidence that already exists regarding the adverse social and environmental impacts that can result from the clustering of certain land uses, this change to policy should help the Council to introduce local policies to manage such adverse impacts where necessary. This alteration is therefore strongly supported. Further guidance on the implementation of this policy is already included in the Mayors Town Centre SPG.

20. The justification to Policy 4.8 has also been strengthened to encourage borough's to protect local pubs where they are an important community asset and viable. Harrow's Local Plan contains a policy to protect community assets such as pubs, and this amendment should help strengthen this policy position and again is proposed to be fully supported through the representations.

21. A number of policies have new references to encouraging and supporting dynamic, flexible office and research space for small companies and start ups. This may add strength to the Council in its negotiations with developers regarding the provision of appropriate replacement office / business floorspace where justified on new developments, and is therefore supported.

22. There is a subtle change to policy 7.18 – Protection of Local Open Space. This has been changed to 'Publicly Accessible' throughout the policy and justification, therefore meaning non-publicly accessible space may not have the same protection through the London Plan. This does not apply to Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, which has the same protection as before. The need for this change queried in the Council's representation but its adoption in its current form is unlikely to raise a conformity issue with Harrow's own Local Plan policies, which seek to protect all open spaces irrespective of ownership or accessibility, as Harrow's policy was based on local evidence, and can therefore go further than the London Plan policy.

23. A number of other minor changes are proposed to policies and justification text to bring them into line with National Policy / bring the up to

date, but these do not have any substantive effect on Harrow and the Local Plan and are therefore not covered in the Council's representation.

Other options considered

24. The only alternative to submitting representations is to do nothing. Noting that the London Plan forms part of the Statutory Plan for Harrow, this option is not recommended as it negates the Council's ability to influence regional policy in the Harrow's best interests.

Implications of the Recommendation

Legal Implications

25. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

26. The Mayor of London is required by law to consult on changes to the London Plan and to take into account all consultation responses received before adopting them. Upon adoption, the London Plan Further Alterations will form part of Harrow's formal planning policy.

27. In accordance with Section 24 (1) (b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, Harrow's Local Plan must also be in general conformity with the London Plan. Therefore, once the final alterations to the London Plan are adopted, the Council will need to determine whether its own Local Plan policies continue to be in general conformity. Should this not be the case, the Council will need to bring forward its own set of alterations to the Local Plan to bring this into general conformity.

Financial Implications

28. The costs associated with preparing and submitting the Council's representation, and attending any subsequent hearing sessions into the further alterations, is contained within the existing Planning Policy budget.

29. There are no other financial implications at this stage. Should the proposed new housing target be adopted in the future, the council could face additional financial pressures as a result of increased population in the borough and hence the growing demand for public services.

Performance Measures

30. The impact of increasing Harrow's annual housing target from 350 homes to 593 homes will certainly impact on the borough's housing completions performance relative to target and will impact on Harrow's five year housing land supply. To date, the borough has built up a surplus of circa 670 units. This surplus will be substantially reduced when the new housing

target takes effect in 2015/16, especially if the current housing completion rates are not maintained. In accordance with a plan, monitor, manage approach, the Council will continue to monitor its performance relative to housing targets and will, if necessary, take positive action to address any potential projections for significant and continuous under-performance.

Environmental Impact

31. The alterations to the London Plan have been the subject of a full sustainability appraisal assessment, which has been made available to view and comment upon as part of the consultation process. For Harrow, the increase in housing can be met on previously developed land without relaxation of existing policies protecting open space, Green Belt and garden land. Nevertheless, there will be an increase in population that will give rise to additional demand for services in the borough. Harrow's Community Infrastructure Levy will help to fund new provision and section 106 agreements will remain to mitigate any immediate adverse environmental impacts arising as a result of individual schemes.

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? Yes

Potential Risks	Commentary	Mitigation Measures
As a result of responses received, the Mayor may propose further alterations or remove proposed amendments	Any further changes may alter the Council's current judgment as to the acceptability of the London Plan as it relates to impacts upon Harrow and the Council's ability and responsibilities to manage growth in a sustainable manner.	Officers will continue to monitor the consultation and subsequent examination of the further alterations, and submit representations reflecting Harrow's interests when necessary.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

32. The Mayor of London has conducted a full EQIA of all the proposed alterations to the London Plan. This report relates only to representations that the Council will make to the proposed alterations to the London Plan, and therefore has no EQIA implications.

Corporate Priorities

33. The submission of representations should assist in the delivery of the corporate priority for a fairer Harrow by:

- Supporting the re-designation of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area as an Opportunity Area, giving impetus to the strategic importance this area will make to meeting London's future growth needs;
- Ensuring the Mayor's Economic Development Strategy and Transport Strategy give priority to the delivery of the targets for the Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area, including the ability to bid for Strategic Growth Funding to support essential infrastructure improvements.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jessie Man	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 18 Febraury 2014		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 19 February 2014		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning
Date: 18 February 2014		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Corporate Director (Environment & Enterprise)
Date: 19 February 2014		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Matthew Paterson, Senior Professional Policy Planning,
Development and Enterprise,

Tel: 0208 736 6082

Background Papers: London Plan Further Alterations 2014

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan/draft-further-alterations-to-the-london-plan>

Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	NOT APPLICABLE <i>[Call-in applies]</i>
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