

REPORT FOR: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL

Date of Meeting:	9 July 2014
Subject:	Update on Opportunity Area Designation; Housing Zones and Harrow on the Hill Station Accessibility Improvements
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Caroline Bruce, Corporate Director for Environment & Enterprise
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning & Regeneration.
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards Affected	Greenhill, Marlborough, Wealdstone, Kenton West and Headstone South.
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an update on the re-designating of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area as an Opportunity Area, the potential for the area to also become a Housing Zone, and progress on achieving step free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill Station.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Panel:

- A. **Continues to support** the proposed re-designation of the Intensification Area as an Opportunity Area;
- B. **Supports** the case being made for the area to be designated a Housing Zone; and
- C. **Notes** the progress being made on the delivery of an accessible Harrow on the Hill Station.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To update the Panel on the progress being made to implement the Heart of Harrow Area Action Plan, in particular, the re-designation of the area to an Opportunity Area within the London Plan and the potential Housing Zone designation, both of which may help the Council to deliver the improvements required to Harrow-on-the-Hill Station alongside the delivery of much needed housing, jobs and other infrastructure provision required to support sustainable communities.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report provides an update on the re-designation of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area to an Opportunity Area, and outlines the benefits of bidding for the area to become one of up to 20 potential Housing Zones in London. It also provides an update of the progress being made on securing step free access and other improvements at Harrow-on-the-Hill Station.

Designation Update

2.0 Opportunity Area

2.1 The Mayor of London published his further alterations to the 2011 London Plan in January 2013. This included the proposed re-designation of the Harrow & Wealdstone area from an Intensification Area to a higher order Opportunity Area. This re-designation is recognition of the strategic contribution that Harrow's growth area can make to meeting Harrow's & London's future housing and employment needs. It reflects the adopted Area Action Plan's job and housing targets (3,000 jobs and 2,800 new homes), which meet the threshold for Opportunity Area designation.

2.2 The key benefit to Harrow of the re-designation to an Opportunity Area is the additional buy in from the GLA and TfL that it secures 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 is likely to be required to make good on any funding gap for the Station improvements.

2.3 The Council's representations in support of this re-designation have been received by the GLA, and the examination into these proposed changes is scheduled to begin in September. There are no indications at this stage that the proposed re-designation will not form part of the future London Plan. Officers will be attending the examination in support of the Council's representations and will feed back to Cabinet on the outcomes and the next steps.

3.0 Housing Zones

3.1 Housing Zones are a new London & Central Government concept, and are designed to deliver 200,000 homes by 2020 in 30 zones nationwide, 20 of which will be in London delivering around 50,000 homes. £200m is being made available by central Government to underwrite investment in unlocking development, with a further £200m being made available in London through funding from the GLA.

3.2 The 20 zones in London will be designated by the GLA, with applicant Boroughs having until September to submit bids. All indications are that only Opportunity Areas will be in the front-running for consideration but with 38 opportunity areas and only 20 housing zones, selection is likely to come down to a number of other factors, key amongst which is good transport links, and the potential to deliver a wide range of affordable and market housing products, capable of meeting all the Mayor's housing design standards.

3.3 Housing Zones will also be selected on the basis of being able to accelerate house building by partnership working between boroughs, the GLA, land owners, investors and builders. In this respect, Harrow is also well placed, with a number of significant house builders already having an interest in sites within the area. However, the key will be in being able to show how specifically linked investment and intervention will deliver housing outputs in a timely manner.

3.4 Housing zones are intended to function in a similar way to enterprise zones, with a lighter-touch planning and more powers to effect land assembly, including, where necessary, the use of GLA's compulsory purchase powers alongside mechanisms such as Local Development Orders, giving permission for housing to be built on brownfield sites within certain defined limits. In terms of how they will work, they are intended to be flexible and will operate in different ways according to local circumstances so that the approach fits the specific needs of an area, for example by using the funding made available to unblock available but constrained sites that otherwise may be hard to deliver.

3.5 However, the greatest benefit of a Housing Zone is the focus on the delivery of a place or neighborhood rather than just enabling construction of an individual building or site. The funding will be available for a number of purposes, including for specific infrastructure needs which cannot be immediately borne by developers, investors or the relevant public funding bodies. In this respect a Housing Zone designation for Harrow & Wealdstone should assist the Council in proactively project managing the implementation of the Area Action Plan, ensuring development and the infrastructure to support it came forward in tandem and potentially at pace. It may also have the additional benefit of reducing pressure elsewhere across the Borough for developing in more unsuitable locations including open space and Green Belt.

3.6 Officers are therefore keen to progress with initial discussions with the GLA about making a case for the Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area to be considered a Housing Zone. This will involve identifying and packaging together development sites (allocated and potentially non-allocated) and a list of infrastructure requirements including those committed and with funding and those where additional funding or commitments will be required. Officers will endeavour to keep members informed of these discussions and any formal bid will necessarily require Cabinet endorsement and approval prior to submission.

Harrow on the Hill Station

4.0 Harrow on the Hill Station Step Free Access

4.1 Officers have held meetings with both the GLA and TfL operations teams, and agreed a brief to look into potential costs and the feasibility of installing step free access at Harrow on the Hill station. The brief went to tender using the TfL procurement framework and the successful consultants are to be appointed shortly. The final feasibility report should be completed by the end of August 2014.

4.2 The feasibility study for step free access is intended to run in tandem with the masterplan work proposed to be undertaken jointly with the GLA, TfL and Council. This considers the wider regeneration requirements in the surrounding station area, in particular, the TfL land holdings which need to be realised to help fund the station improvements and improvements to the wider public realm of College Road. It will also tie in with the development of the old Post Office site being advanced by Hyde Housing, ensuring continuity in the public realm response to this area.

4.3 To ensure the work on step free access, the masterplan, the Opportunity Area designation, Housing Zone and Outer London Fund Round 3 is undertaken in a coordinated manner, officers are putting in place a governance structure that includes a small steering group comprising GLA, TfL and Council officers to oversee all internal and external proposals. It is proposed that this Steering Group be chaired by the chair of Council's Regeneration Board to ensure comprehensive coverage of all matters arising that may affect the area and/or the various work streams set out above.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Realising the above designations and work at Harrow-on-the-Hill Station will help implement and deliver upon Harrow's Local Plan objectives and contribute significantly to accommodating Harrow's growth. Officers will therefore continue to follow the progress of the London Plan alterations including attending the examination and will report back on any further amendments if these have a potential impact on the Council's ability to manage growth and development sustainably. Officers will also engage GLA in discussions regarding the potential for the Harrow & Wealdstone Opportunity Area to be a Housing Zone, the results of which will be reported to LDF Panel and Cabinet prior to a formal bid being submitted. Further updates will be given to this Panel on progress with Harrow-on-the-Hill Station once consultants have finalised their feasibility report, including details on the feasibility options for step free access and costs.

Financial Implications

6.1 The Harrow on the Hill step free access scheme is included in the Council's 4-year capital programme 2014/15-17/18, with a budget in year 1 of £100K primarily for preliminary and feasibility work. Budgets included for 15/16 and beyond represent best estimates at the time of the capital bid, the revised costs of which will be known when the feasibility report is made available. This will help inform the capital programme and external funding available to Harrow if the scheme is progressed. Harrow's portion of the costs for the joint feasibility study into step free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill station will be met from this capital budget. It is anticipated, that this capital funding will also extend to the initial development of the masterplan, with costs being shared equally between Council, GLA and TfL.

6.2 There are no financial implications of the re-designation of the Intensification Area as an Opportunity Area, other than staff costs to attend the examination in support of this which will be met from existing LDF budgets.

6.3 The bid for Housing Zone designation will be met from existing budgets. The potential 'buy in' however from the GLA and treasury, should Harrow be successful, could potentially be in the order of £5-10m depending on the structure of the final bid Harrow puts together and how well this stacks up against the other bids across London.

Risk Management Implications

7.1 There are no risks associated with the redesignation of the Harrow & Wealdstone Intensification Area as an Opportunity Area as the quantum of development proposed in the London Plan is that already agreed in the adopted Council Area Action Plan.

7.2 The risks associated with the preparation of the feasibility report into step free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill Station are not with respect to the report itself rather the expectation that upon conclusion of the study, work to deliver the step free access will commence forthwith. Such expectations

within the community will require careful management and realism about the funding gaps and how this may be bridged.

7.3 There are certainly risks associated with the potential Housing Zone, in particular, the requirement to enter into funding agreements with the GLA and to commit to delivering housing within specified time periods. Such risks will be outlined in full in the report to Cabinet should a bid by Harrow Council be progressed.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

8.1 Any development that results from these studies will be carefully considered against policies which have been robustly assessed for their impact upon the protected characteristics.

Council Priorities

9.1 The successful implementation of the Council's Area Action Plan will contribute to the regeneration of the Heart of Harrow, providing for much improved infrastructure alongside significant housing and jobs, helping to realise the administration's priorities around making a difference for local businesses, families, residents across the borough and the more vulnerable within the community.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jessie Man	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 25 th June 2014		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 26 th June 2014		

Ward Councillors notified

No

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Matthew Paterson, Senior Professional LDF Team, 6082

Background Papers:

Mayor of London's Housing Zones Prospectus:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing-land/increasing-housing-supply/housing-zones>

Further Alterations to the London Plan – Examination in Public:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan/examination-in-public>