

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2005
Subject:	Neighbourhood Renewal Transition Plan
Responsible Officer:	Graham Jones/Andrew Trehern
Contact Officer:	Graham Jones
Portfolio Holder:	Communications, Partnership and Human Resources
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Public

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **Decision Required**

To approve the recommendations for an outline transitional Neighbourhood Renewal Plan

### **Reason for report**

Taking forward: September Cabinet Report on Neighbourhood Renewal.

### **Benefits**

Opportunity to pilot Neighbourhood Renewal approach to work in Wealdstone.

### **Cost of Proposals**

As this is a transition plan it does not involve a budget. This will be prepared during November and will include careful consideration of how existing resources could be assigned

## Risks

Moving from a WRAP Advisory Panel to a Neighbourhood Renewal stakeholder Forum will change the focus of the group.

## Implications if recommendations rejected

Opportunity lost to pilot new approach.

## Section 2: Report

### 2.1 Brief History

Cabinet agreed in principle to Wealdstone being piloted as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area at its September meeting.

A report on Neighbourhood Renewal was previously taken to the 20<sup>th</sup> Sept Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel, on the understanding that Wealdstone had been designated the pilot Neighbourhood Renewal area in Harrow.

Internal changes within the Council have meant progress on moving forward has not been as fast as anticipated. In the interim in order to honor commitments made, but also to ensure that best practice on Neighbourhood Renewal, and existing best practice in the council are utilised, building on previous and current regeneration activity, a transitional outline plan Neighbourhood Renewal plan is set out at the end of this short paper.

This is prefaced by a brief reminder of previous and current activity, as all involved will need to see the development of a Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme as a positive move forward in Wealdstone.

Regeneration activity in Wealdstone was started over five years ago when a report was commissioned from GLE and the Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel was established as an official council serviced committee. Since then a wide ranging holistic action plan has been implemented the most recent part of which has seen the opening of the Multi-use Wealdstone Centre. However, in common with many secondary shopping centres nationwide, Wealdstone still exhibits many characteristics of a declining centre.

Whilst it remains highly unusual to develop a Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme unless designated to do so by Government Office and provided with additional external funds, the increasing emphasis on the importance of effective neighbourhood level working cannot be denied. To quote ODPM Minister David Milliband

“The challenge is to use mainstream funds, but capture the flexibility, transparency, clear leadership and community involvement of regeneration programmes.

To do this, we need to rationalise the 'plumbing' of our public services - the targets, funding and institutional responsibilities - so that we can make mainstream funding more focused on deprived areas; more flexible and devolved to the level of neighbourhoods."

This approach provides a strong rationale for piloting Neighbourhood Renewal in Wealdstone. Neighbourhood Renewal would also help to focus support where the community sees this is needed.

## 2.2 Using Harrow Council Expertise, linking to other initiatives, and the possible direction for future Neighbourhood Renewal activity

Whilst Harrow Council may not have yet developed Neighbourhood Renewal specific expertise or a track record, it does have, as the Scrutiny Panel on Community Engagement identified examples of good practice in terms of working with the community on a number of fronts e.g.

- support for residents and tenants associations is well established
- ongoing support for Wealdstone Active Community (WAC) which holds events every quarter to widen and increase support and engagement in Wealdstone affairs, ranging from Blooming Wealdstone to Community Safety events, in order to increase pride of place in Wealdstone and encourage a two way flow of information between public sector providers and Wealdstone residents.

There is also now a Community Engagement officer, and this should be a useful opportunity to build on and extend WAC's work, ensuring as wide a cross section of the communities of Wealdstone as possible are involved in the development of the pilot.

Wealdstone now benefits from the increased service levels provided through Urban Living's 'Cleaner, Greener and Safer' Harrow project. Its wardens are now becoming part of a larger borough wide enviro crime team with enforcement powers. Both of these services already regularly liaise and work with WAC and other residents groups. Having some local resource dedicated to the NR scheme might be used as the means to provide the opportunity for trialing other proposed area based management initiatives in Wealdstone and move towards piloting greater neighbourhood governance.

Neighbourhood Renewal good practice dictates that initial planning goes into some detail to get to the root causes of local problems, and that there needs to be genuine resident engagement to enable the priorities for the action plan to be owned by residents in general. It is expected from previous work that one of the strong themes of the pilot would be improving housing stock conditions.

The previous report identified that Wealdstone housing presents a range of particular issues. Harrow Council has also established a strong track record in dealing with a range of empty property issues. Existing grant provision could be used as the starting point and with further resources developed for and targeted to those in most need, in order to improve ageing terraced private sector housing and the situation often referred to as 'asset rich, cash

poor.’ This area of work could become an area of stretched targets for the (Local Area Agreement) LAA.

Recent housing developments around Wealdstone town centre should bring increased vitality to Wealdstone. Alongside this is the increase in private properties being used for would be ‘homeless’ families, and the fact that the area hosts 25 % of the boroughs known houses in multiple occupation, which can impact on community relationships.

### 2.3 The Way Forward

One of the aims of any community support provided via the Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme should be to increase community cohesion, working to build common ground and a common agenda between, new and old residents, young and old and the different ethnic communities in Wealdstone: white British, white Eastern European, Irish, Somali, South Asian, black African and Black Caribbean. This work should link into the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) community cohesion strategy and plans, providing an opportunity to pilot activity further.

The good practice guidance, The new commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal National Strategy Action Plan 2005, expects that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) will be the key local vehicle for implementing and leading Neighbourhood Renewal and building on this approach there is a strong argument for the Neighbourhood Renewal Forum to be integrated within the Local Strategic Partnership structures.

It will also be important to link neighbourhood renewal, the ongoing work with the Wealdstone Vitality study and the planning with parallel developments e.g. Whitefriar’s school extended activities, Byron Park development and housing and Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) schemes.

In parallel to, and synchronized with the Neighbourhood Renewal Board, proposals for specific projects such as Bryon Recreation Ground/Harrow Leisure Centre etc will be reported through the existing Council Committee structures, primarily to Strategic Planning Advisory Panel and Cabinet.

Further work is needed to develop the transition plan (attached at Appendix A) more fully and to enable:

- Staffing and budget to be clarified for the actual scheme, for the development process and once operational
- Cross directorate staffing pool to support the initial development set up (community engagement and research expertise)
- Partner Public sector buy in sought in via HSP
- Clarity over management of scheme internally

Recommendation: that responsibility for the development and implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Pilot is delegated to a director and brief reports during the development phase November 2005 – March 2006 are brought regularly to CMT to ensure that the scheme stays on track.

2.4 The Wealdstone Neighbourhood Renewal Project and Forum will be used to pilot the approval within the Borough. Learning from the pilot will be extremely useful in coming to decisions in due course as to how and when this approach might be extended into other areas.

2.5 Consultation

WRAP were consulted on the previous paper. This paper if approved will be taken to WRAP on 15<sup>th</sup> November

2.6 Financial Implications

None.

2.7 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications at this stage

2.8 Equalities Impact

It is expected that within the Action Plan, there will be positive social inclusion activity to promote community cohesion and involve marginalised groups and young people.

2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

Expectation that Action Plan will have reducing crime and fear of crime as a priority.

**Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents**

Background Documents:

September WRAP and Cabinet Reports

ODPM:

New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal National Strategy Action Plan  
2005

Appendix A

## Outline transition plan

(using steps set out in the New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal National Strategy Action Plan)

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Comments, timings suggestions for responsibility etc</b>
<b>Internal</b>	Establish line management for the scheme and criteria for success	UL/HSP Nov2005 asap
	Budgets pre and post launch identified	All
	Reporting structure set up	Via HSP and LAA Economic Development and Enterprise
	Officer/s identified and tasked to a) research root problems b) identify mainstream resources going into NR area	Urban Living  BD - finance
	Work with mainstream internal and external partners to establish possible new ways of working to improve services delivered	HSP lead
	Build community engagement pool using existing expertise and resources a) to develop local community engagement factoring in current local initiatives, plan with small budget – outcome needed wide NR Stakeholder Forum b) build and implement a communication plan	Urban Living/HSP  Start implementation of engagement plan Dec 2005 Feb 2006 shadow set up
	Agree staffing structure and start recruitment /secondment process	Jan 2006
<b>Handover</b>	Move to develop NR Stakeholder Forum Establish formal council process necessary.	NR forum membership will be residents, ward councillors Jan- March 2006 and other community representatives
<b>Launch</b>	NR formal launch Agree goals and timescales	March/April 2006
<b>Implement, Monitor, Review, Refine and Celebrate</b>		2009 end of pilot