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Proposal Site 6 – Consultants Brief

Introduction

Proposal Site 6 comprises an area of 5.8 ha located towards the southern end of Harrow Metropolitan Centre. The site includes Harrow on the Hill station, land in College Road and Lowlands Road and the airspace over the London Underground Limited railway line, which bisects the site and divides it into two distinct parts.

The site is allocated in the emerging revised Harrow Unitary Development Plan for public transport improvements and mixed use development for offices, education, civic, residential leisure and retail use, and open space. It is a site of strategic significance, which offers the opportunity to create an exemplar form of sustainable suburban town centre development and a step change in the image and performance of Harrow Town Centre.

An initial feasibility study carried out by GVA Grimley in November 2002 concluded that the site had the potential to accommodate a mixed use scheme of over 100,000m², with enhanced public transport and interchange facilities. This included the construction of a deck over the railway line, to maximise the site area and link the two discrete parts of the site. A preliminary assessment of costs, values and yields suggested that a project of this scale and form had the potential to be delivered. The Council has endorsed these conclusions as a basis for further study and now intends to build on the initial work to create a proper planning framework for this area. To this end, it is committed to work with landowners and key stakeholders to prepare an urban design framework or master plan for the site to facilitate a comprehensive approach to development, and ensure that proposals can be brought forward on a phased and co-ordinated basis.

The Site and Surroundings:

The site comprises the following principal land uses and occupiers:

- Harrow on the Hill station (London Underground Metropolitan Line and Chiltern Services) and associated operational lands.
- Harrow Bus Station
- Harrow College
- Former Royal Mail sorting office and post office
- Harrow Baptist Church
- Lowlands Recreation Ground
- Nos 17 – 33 College Road (retail and office)
- No. 11 College Road (First National Bank)
- Nos 389-407 Station Road (retail shops)

The site has a mixed land use character and forms a transitional area between the main commercial focus of the town centre in St Anns Road, Station Road and College Road, and open parkland and suburban housing to the south of the centre. The main obstacle to movement between these areas is the railway line, which creates a physical and visual barrier, restricts pedestrian and vehicular access to the town centre, and severs the town centre from important assets.

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Lowlands Recreation Ground falls within the Roxborough Park and The Grove Conservation Area and is allocated as Metropolitan Open Land in the Harrow UDP. The Harrow College site contains a Grade II Listed Building – the “White House”. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed building are severely compromised by the scale, intensity and quality of the surrounding uses.

Development Objectives

The emerging UDP outlines key development objectives, which the master plan will need to secure:

- distinctive, high quality, high density mixed use development based on Transport Development Area principles, that optimises the development potential of the site and can be implemented on a phased basis
- an improved station/interchange – specifically an accessible station and platforms, improved capacity and layout of the bus station, better interchange between bus and rail;
- improved pedestrian access through the site, both north-south over the railway line, connecting the town centre to the surrounding residential area, and east-west between Station Road and College Road;
- a vibrant commercial frontage to College Road;
- enhanced open space in Lowlands Road that reflects Metropolitan Open Land characteristics and provides a facility for town centre users;
- enhanced appearance of the Roxborough Park Conservation Area and improved setting to the listed White House.
- improved visual links to Harrow on the Hill to the south
- a development which integrates with the remainder of the town centre in terms of urban design, landscape and access.

Purpose

The masterplanning process and design framework will need to provide the following:

- a context to ensure that the redevelopment of the site is compatible with the UDP strategy for Harrow Metropolitan Centre and the wider Urban Agenda, and maximises the opportunity provided by an improved transport link;
- a design code to ensure that redevelopment properly takes account of and provides for physical, environmental and policy objectives and constraints;
- a framework and development concept that is commercially viable and capable of implementation
- a framework to manage timescales to enable appropriate phasing of development, taking account of land availability and the strategic property requirements of existing landowners;
- a framework to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the public and private sectors are clarified and clearly defined;
- an implementation plan and delivery mechanism to ensure the provision of any necessary infrastructure and a context for site assembly ; and
- the opportunity for key stakeholder and community involvement through appropriate consultation

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The master plan will identify a framework for the design and layout of future development, with indications of use requirements in specific instances. It will provide sufficient flexibility to address needs and aspirations of existing landowners. The overriding aim is to confirm the development potential of the site and to establish a framework within which proposals can be brought forward on a phased basis consistent with the development objectives described above and the wider Urban Agenda. A key component, and first stage in the process, will be to carry out an appraisal of the initial feasibility study and test the underlying assumptions, particularly in relation to development costs and values. The framework will need to identify any threats to delivery but must also build in sufficient flexibility to accommodate changes in market circumstances and other influences. In addition to establishing essential design and land use parameters, a requirement of the study will be to clearly set out recommendations for implementation, including issues related to land assembly and the role of key parties.

Outcomes

Based on the development objectives for the site and aims of the masterplanning process, the following outcomes will be required:

- an assessment of the scale of development that could be accommodated on the site;
- an assessment of the likely viability and deliverability of the potential development concepts, with recommendations on the preferred option(s) to take forward;
- a three dimensional urban design “vision” indicating the layout, massing and height of buildings, points of vehicular and pedestrian access and key routes through the site. It should identify any buildings to be retained and how they could be integrated within a larger development scheme. It must address, in particular, the design and siting of any development spanning the railway and the need to safeguard land for this purpose
- a scheme of phasing, to include the identification of land that could be released for early development
- advice on partnership arrangements, the role of the different landowners and stakeholders and an appropriate delivery vehicle to implement proposals for the site,
- advice on the potential funding of abnormal infrastructure costs including how it should be included within the overall development costs
- as an initial step, a project plan will be required outlining the timescales, processes and reporting mechanisms.

Process

Co-ordination and management of the process will be carried out by a Council Steering group who will meet with the Consultant Team at not less than monthly intervals, and which will act as a focal point between the Consultant and landowners/key stakeholders. Stakeholder meetings will be required at key stages in the process to define the scope of work to be carried out and endorse major actions/decisions.

It is anticipated that the project will require the involvement of a multi-disciplinary team, including surveyors/commercial property consultants, a masterplanner/urban

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designer and a cost consultant, together with specialist input on transport and engineering issues.

Indicative Timescale

June – July

- Set up Project team and prepare consultants brief
- Stakeholder endorsement of brief
- Cabinet appoint lead consultant and agree the brief

July – Sept

- Initial appraisal - feedback on “reality check” and production of project plan
- Meeting with landowners/stakeholders
- Market research
- Initial report
- Steering Group/Cabinet to consider report

Oct – Dec

- Develop and test options
- Prepare first draft of masterplan

Jan- Feb

- Refine masterplan
- Prepare draft implementation strategy to include– funding opportunities, partnership arrangement and draft development agreement

Feb – March

- Steering group/Cabinet to agree draft for consultation
- Public consultation