

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL (SPECIAL) MINUTES

7 JANUARY 2019

Chair: * Councillor Keith Ferry

Councillors: * Ghazanfar Ali * Paul Osborn
* Marilyn Ashton * Varsha Parmar
* Stephen Greek * David Perry

* Denotes Member present

9. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that no Reserve Members had been nominated to attend the meeting.

10. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

11. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

12. Presentation by the Developers on the remainder of the Harrow View East (Kodak) Site

The Panel received a presentation from Martin Scholar, Head of Planning at Barratt London, and architects and consultants working with the company, on

the emerging proposals for parts of the development site at Harrow View East (former Kodak site). Mr Scholar outlined the context of the significant increase in housing targets for the Borough and explained that, compared with the 800 units proposed in the 2015 planning permission, the new proposal envisaged some 1,350 homes. The presentation focused on the layout and design of the development, including the height of buildings, routes and views through the site, measures to promote a greater community “feel” and arrangements for landscaping and green spaces.

A Member asked about the extent of employment uses on the site. It was explained that part of the site to the east was explicitly designated for commercial uses; there were as yet no definitive proposals, but the expectation would be that these would be smaller-scale, “maker”-style enterprises. In addition, there would be some smaller-scale retail units offering local employment opportunities. In response to the Member’s further query about community uses, reference was made to meetings with Council officers and representatives of the local voluntary sector about community benefits arising from a Section 106 agreement; discussions were continuing to establish the most effective use of these resources. It was also mentioned that a community medical facility had been proposed for Block A3, the L&Q Housing Association site.

In response to a Member’s question about the pedestrian tunnel through to the station, it was confirmed that Section 106 funding to look at options for securing improvements had been secured through the original Masterplan. The Member also asked about the provision of smaller food shopping units for residents of the development; while there would be “doorstep shopping” opportunities, there would be a limit on this due to the possible adverse impact on the town centre. It was explained that Block A1 included a local store.

A Member asked about the heights on the buildings in the new plan as they appeared to have increased substantially since previous proposals. It was reported that the taller buildings would be in the centre of the site and on the “knuckle” of the park as had been proposed in the outline planning permission.

The Member also asked about the likely overflow of parking demand into local streets without controls and the suggestion in the presentation that some parking provision in similar developments elsewhere had not been taken up. Mr Scholar advised that housing schemes in inner London were typically car-free developments while there was understandably some flexibility on outer London sites; nevertheless, there was evidence that parking capacity was not fully used in schemes where provision was made, particularly where there was a significant proportion of one and two-bedroomed properties involved. It was suggested that the risk of overflow parking would be low; the developers would contribute both to the monitoring of parking demand and the implementation of schemes to control parking by non-residents. Another Member argued that it was unrealistic to expect parking demand to be low; she considered that while residents would use public transport for commutes into central London for work, other journeys would cause demand for car use and parking in a borough such as Harrow.

A Member asked about the adequacy of school provision given that some of the homes would be family properties. The 2015 Masterplan had envisaged a demand of approximately 1.5 forms of entry while in the new proposals, this had increased to 3. In addition, there were Section 106 contributions towards the provision of additional secondary school places. The appropriate investment would be made through the school expansion programme; while this would involve a new local primary school, the capacity for secondary school places would be added to existing schools.

In response to a query about whether “park” was the correct term for the open area outlined in the presentation, it was acknowledged that this would be green space among the residential blocks, but it could be reasonably described as a substantial linear park offering similar opportunities for leisure and activities as it a more traditional park. There would be other amenity space on the “podiums”, gardens which would be easy to spot and access, and the apartments would have balconies. The Member also queried the status of the new “square” described in the presentation; it was underlined that the design and uses of ground floor units would have to attract people to the square ensuring that it “worked” as a public space.

It was confirmed that the tallest building would be up to 18 storeys high, although the exact height had yet to be finalised, with the chimney to be retained as a central feature being a little higher than this. A Member was concerned that the tall blocks would obscure the chimney feature and that the preponderance of tall buildings in this area would be create a sense of overdevelopment. It was suggested that the chimney would still be the dominant feature in this part of the site and it was reported that the overshadowing impact of the tall blocks was being assessed so that the design and layout minimised any adverse effects. Another Member agreed that the proposals amounted to a significant intensification of the residential development on the site and he did not see how it fitted with the existing character of nearby residential areas or the Borough more generally.

Returning to the issue of parking, a Member referred to the assessment by the highway authority at the time of the outline application of the likely significant impact of the number of homes then proposed. This number had now increased substantially yet there had been no compensating increase in parking provision. It was reported that discussions had been held with highway authority officers who had accepted in principle the parking ratios proposed under the new plan. It was argued that planning policy had changed significantly since the time of the outline application and there was now much greater emphasis on the encouragement of other modes of transport than car use through the restriction of parking provision. Transport for London (TfL) would also seek lower parking ratios in accordance with the developing policies in the new draft London Plan. The Member acknowledged that this reflected the view of the Mayor of London and TfL, but he considered it inappropriate for a borough such as Harrow. It was pointed out that the Council had already accepted a parking ratio below 0.5 in previous decisions on Harrow View East.

The Chair underlined the challenging context of the emerging London Plan housing targets which would amount to a requirement of about 1,400 additional homes for each year of the plan. He considered that it would be difficult to find ways of achieving these figures without taller buildings on residential developments.

In response to the Chair's question on strategic industrial land on the site, it was confirmed that the Greater London Authority would resist any loss of this floorspace, though they might consider a reconfiguration which allowed for a mix of residential and commercial uses. It was confirmed that a separate and challenging issue would be securing tenants for the commercial units and the developers were looking at the relevant market. Officers clarified how the requirement for no net loss of strategic industrial land would apply on this site.

The Chair also asked about the time it might take to obtain TfL approval to the pedestrian bridge to the station; reference was made to a similar project in Catford which had been approved, though it had taken some time to secure this.

In the context of such a large residential development close to a station with links into central London, a Member referred to the risk of parts of the Borough turning into "dormitory" areas; she underlined the need for the development to achieve an appropriate balance. Mr Scholar concurred and emphasised the efforts being made to secure a mixed-use neighbourhood with appropriate supporting infrastructure for a balanced residential community.

The Chair thanked the developers, architects and consultants, and the Council officers, for the presentation and for answering Members' questions.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.32 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR KEITH FERRY
Chair