

# Briefing for members

## Planning and development in Harrow

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This is the one of a series of policy papers being drafted for new scrutiny Members on areas of policy that fall within the terms of reference of the Sustainable Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

It relates to planning and development in Harrow – large scale developments, planning enforcement and regeneration in particular. There are some crossovers in this area with the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee (SSC) – please see the relevant briefing for more details. For example, licensing and licensing enforcement – including gambling – are being dealt with by SSC.

The first section relates to national developments and the second to developments in Harrow.

### **Nationally and regionally**

Nationally, the government has expressed a commitment to its goal of creating “sustainable communities” through its planning policy, and has sought to deliver this through the a substantial revision of the planning regime (which is currently at the green paper stage). The changes are proposed to make the planning system “faster, fairer and more predictable”.

Below are a list of a couple of key aspects of national and regional policy which impact upon Harrow.

S106 agreements – these agreements are significant features of the local planning regime. They were introduced by section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (hence the name).

A s106 agreement is a legal contract agreed by the council and a proposed developer. The developer contracts that, as well as building their development, they will mitigate for any adverse impact it might cause on the surrounding area (environmental, social etc) by either paying a set sum to the council, or providing a public amenity – building a park, or a community centre, or a public car park, for example.

Planning Policy Guidance – planning policy in the UK is controlled and regulated by a series of principles known as Planning Policy Guidance, or PPGs. These are prepared and issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. They lay down guidance which much be followed by local authorities, and the PPGs must be reflected in the council’s Unitary Development Plan.

London Development Agency – the LDA is part of the GLA Group of five regional authorities<sup>1</sup>. It is responsible for large-scale, strategic planning, regeneration and economic development within Greater London. More information is available in the briefing pack, and in the “Enterprise and Skills” briefing.

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<sup>1</sup> The other four being the GLA itself, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, TfL and the Metropolitan Police Authority.

## **In Harrow specifically**

Strategic planning is the main group within the council which will be of interest to members in this area. Strategic Planning is part of the Chief Executive's department and is different to the Planning Group itself, within Urban Living, whose responsibilities are more operational.

The Council also has a regeneration unit, who are part of Strategic Planning.

Strategic planning – this is part of the Chief Executive's Department. Key areas of work include the development of key strategic sites – that is, developments which would help to secure the council's strategic objectives – town centre regeneration, economic development and continuing input into the West London Strategic Planning partnership, which co-ordinates

Particular large-scale projects include:

Town centre redevelopment – it is planned to put together a plan for redeveloping Harrow town centre. For some time now there have been a number of proposals to redevelop Harrow town centre. The architects' firm Alsop's have been engaged to produce a masterplan for the area, which includes redevelopment of College Road, use of what TfL have described as an "underutilised public space" (behind the station) and the possible roofing over of Harrow-on-the-Hill LU station itself, allowing the two sides of the railway tracks to be linked more effectively.

Other, competing plans have also been proposed. Developers have taken the opportunity while there is still some uncertainty over the future direction of the redevelopment to buy property in key town-centre locations.

The redevelopment is being led by the council's Strategic Planning Group (led by Graham Jones). There is a council steering group tasked with developing the plans, who have been working with partners in recent months to come up with firm plans.

This is a Phase 2 Public Space project for TfL and is relatively high profile. Ensuring that the station is a local transport "hub", providing seamless links with bus services, is critical, and as a result significant modernisation work (including disability access) is planned. The process is very much at the beginning, but this will be an extremely high profile project. As public interest will be high, there will inevitably be aspects of the project, however it is carried out, which will not be popular with certain sectors of the community. It has been suggested as a potential subject for a long-term, in-depth review.

Bentley Priory – this is another high profile issue in local development terms. There is pressure on the council to allow land at RAF Bentley Priory to be built on (as has happened with other former RAF sites in outer London). However, there is significant local opposition and the council plans to convert the site into a Battle of Britain museum.