

Meeting:	LDF Panel
Date:	24 th September 2007
Subject:	Local Development Scheme (LDS) Progress Report
Responsible Officer:	Graham Jones – Director of Planning, Development and Enterprise
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Marilyn Ashton - Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise
Key Decision:	Yes
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Revised LDS Appendix 2 – Timeline for document production

Section 1: Summary

This report provides an update on the progress of the LDS and plans for its future development to take account of emerging issues.

Decisions Required

To recommend to Cabinet that:-

1. The revised Local Development Scheme and timetables for document preparation contained within it is approved (Appendix 1 and 2)
2. To submit the revised Local Development Scheme to the Secretary of State.
3. Subject to the Secretary of State not directing any changes to the revised Local Development Scheme that the revisions be brought into effect.
4. To note the key role of the Local Development Framework in taking forward Flagship Actions and the Sustainable Community Plan.
5. To forward the revised Local Development Scheme and timetable to the

Greater London Authority for their information.

Reason: In order to fit in with government recommendations and best practice.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Background – Role of the LDF

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF), and to keep it up to date. The project management plan for the LDF is the Local Development Scheme (LDS)

Any changes to the Local Development Scheme timetables have to be agreed by the Secretary of State through the Government Office for London. Following informal discussions, a copy of this report and the appendixes will be sent to GOL.

The Planning Delivery Grant includes an element relating to progress made against milestones in the Local Development Scheme.

The development of the LDF is a flag ship action in the Corporate Improvement Plan and a major conduit for taking forward the Sustainable Community Plan.

The over-riding objective is to produce a high quality Local Development Framework with strong local buy in across the Council and the community which provides a vision and realistic plan for the borough's spatial development for the next ten years.

2.2 National Feedback on the new Plan Making Process

The key document in the LDF process is the Core Strategy, as other documents must be in conformity with it. Government expects authorities to focus on producing the main Development Plan Documents, rather than Supplementary Planning Documents.

Several core strategies have recently been found unsound by the Planning Inspectorate including:- those for Stafford, Lichfield and Islington. This has resulted in these authorities having to go back to the Preferred Option stage of their Core Strategies. This has made planning professionals more cautious in their approach and look at further ways of strengthening the production of the LDF.

It has therefore been decided to put in place some additional safeguards into the development of Harrow's Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Document and Guidance (SPDs and SPGs) which are explained later in the report.

Work during the rest of 2007 will concentrate on producing the Core strategy. Best practice advice from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), is now to produce sequential, rather than concurrent examinations of DPDs, starting with the Core Strategy so that the remaining DPDs and SPDs are informed by the Core

Strategy. This will also mean that the Core Strategy is subjected to minimal delay. Government Office for London have also endorsed this approach.

However based on GOL and Planning Inspectorate advice, it would be prudent to await the receipt of the Inspectors' report on the Core Strategy DPD before embarking on key stages of the Generic Development Control Policies DPD.

The combined impact of the points set out above and staffing changes mean that the timetable of the LDS needs to be reappraised. The revised LDS is enclosed as Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provides an updated summary project plan for the LDS.

2.2.1 Options

1 Remain with existing LDS timetable – as this report explains this is no longer a realistic option.

2 Revise the LDS timetable – this is the recommended option

2.2.2 The revisions to the LDS are explained in the preface. The opportunity has also been taken to update the document, as well as revise the timetable for LDF document production.

2.3 Document production update

This section of the report provides a summary of the current state of play of work on the LDF.

The Development Plan Documents (DPDs):-

1. Core Strategy – *this sets out the vision, strategic objectives and policies influencing development.* The results of the consultation on the issues and options are now being combined with feedback on the Strategic Options for the future consultation statement to provide a short focussed document that will support the development of the Preferred Options early in 2008. This is nine months later than previously planned.
2. Site Specific (Delivering Development) and Proposals Map (two DPDs) – *identify proposal sites, and demonstrates how the higher level policies in the Core Strategy are to be translated into action on the ground.* Although a great deal of work has been done on this, the Planning Inspectorate now advise that this is completed after the Core Strategy, so that the Core Strategy can influence its development. Work on this DPD has been suspended.
3. Generic Development Control Policies – *will provide criteria-based policies against which all development will be assessed to ensure that it meets the vision and strategic objectives.* Work on this was not programmed to start until 2008. It is now planned to do this at the same time as the Site Specific

DPD to shorten the time that officers in the Development Team are without Harrow specific updated guidance.

4. Joint Waste DPD – *commitment to a Joint West London Waste DPD, agreed by Cabinet in March 2007.* Hillingdon the lead authority have experienced some delays on the recruitment of staff to take this forward and in the development of the specification. This will have an impact on each of the six West London boroughs involved. - It is advised that quarterly reports on progress are taken to Cabinet as well as the West London Environmental Directors meetings. GOL are also concerned about the lack of progress.

The Conservation SPDs -

5. Work on the Harrow on the Hill SPD is progressing well. The experience of producing the Harrow on the Hill SPD has shown that a longer timescale will be necessary to produce all four conservation area SPDs. It has been estimated that each conservation character appraisal will take one officer 3-4 months to complete. As an example the Pinner SPD has 12 conservation areas within it. Based on the current provision of two conservation officers, the Pinner SPD and linked appraisals will take 24 months to produce in draft, with a further 6 months allowed for formal public consultation and revisions.

The revised timetable is a more realistic assessment of the length of time it will take to produce each conservation SPD. Although the process of producing character appraisals is quite lengthy, it is considered to be more effective and valuable to produce detailed and exhaustive documents rather than shorter and sketchier documents just to meet deadlines and targets. This also continues the Council's practice since the late 1980s of producing thorough documents for its conservation areas.

Members should note that the revised timetable would not affect the BVPI 219 targets (i.e. the number of up-to-date character appraisals produced in the last 5 years). The BVPI wording does not require character appraisals to be adopted to meet the "up-to-date" rule.

6. Bentley Priory SPD – separate item on agenda subject to very minor delay in order to comply with existing committee timetable.
7. New SPDs - Revising the LDS also provides the opportunity to now include as SPDs a) Section 106 Policy and b) a Sustainability check list. Work on these SPDs has been scheduled into the new timetable.

In addition work has also started on various documents that are required to support the LDF:-

8. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) - The Council's Planning and Drainage teams are working in partnership with Thames Water and the Environment Agency to formalise the Council's existing flood risk procedures. This document will showcase Harrow Council's work in this field as the first borough to already have attached sustainable flood prevention

measures to Development and Control procedures. This document is due to be completed by the end of 2007.

9. Annual Monitoring Report - much of this will be presented in GIS maps, in a similar format to the Vitality Profiles to encourage wider use of the document. Work on this has already started so that it can be completed on schedule by December 2007.
10. Saved policies – see separate information report on this agenda
11. Supply of Housing Land - The publication of PPS3 Housing in December 2006, requires boroughs to identify deliverable housing land supply for the next 15 years, but particularly over the next 5 years. Whilst it is expected that this will be done in co-operation with the GLA, work to identify the next five years of housing supply will be needed as soon as possible as boroughs are requested to assess the implications for documents in their approved LDSs, and to include it in their timetables. Work will need to start on this as soon as possible as this will be used as part of the evidence base to support the development of related DPDs.

2.4 LDS and Staffing

Since the latest LDS was brought into effect in November 2006, several members of the Policy Team have left the Council's employment including the team leader. However a new team leader is in place and other recruitment has taken place. The Risk Assessment in the LDS recognises that there is a national shortage planners, and particularly experienced planners. The turnover of ambitious young planners is likely to remain an on-going issue.

Two career grade planners have now been appointed, and will be taking up their posts in the autumn. While this is a positive step, this will be a new and relatively inexperienced team and is likely to need specialist support from consultants or agency staff.

Agency staff costs will be monitored closely in light of the Council's overall budgetary position and contained within existing budgets.

2.5 Additional Safe Guards

As mentioned in 2.1, the LDF team are putting in place additional safeguards to ensure both the LDF is embedded into Council structures and to ensure high quality documents are produced.

2.5.1 Making the best use of staff expertise and knowledge within and outside the Directorate

Resourcing the production of documents in the LDS continues to be an on-going concern. The appointment of the Senior Professional Policy Officer is improving this situation, and other appointments will enable momentum to be built up.

Notwithstanding this, it is essential that other staff with relevant expertise are brought into the process from outside the current Policy Team to support the actual process, as well as to make sure that appropriate linkages are made with other plans, policies and disciplines, in particular, the Site Specific Proposals DPD.

One of the objectives of the restructuring of the Department of Planning, Development and Enterprise was to bring together many of the professional disciplines to develop strategy and 'place shaping' and this will benefit LDF preparation. This may mean at a later date a need to reassess priorities within Planning to supplement LDF production. However there will still be a need to utilise expertise from other departments and from outside the Council. (see 2.5.2 establishing a practitioner LDF project board)

2.5.2 Communication and developing stronger links between the Sustainable Community Plan and the LDF

A great deal of work has already been carried out by the Portfolio Holder and the Director to raise awareness of the pivotal role played by the LDF. This work needs to be developed further so that it is more widely accepted that the LDF is seen as a main conduit for achieving several of the Sustainable Community Plan Medium Term Ambitions and Flagship Actions. Presentations are to be made to each of the HSP management groups – under the heading 'What the LDF can do for you' in Autumn 2007 and effort will be made to keep these channels of communication open. e.g. A session will be held at the HSP Summit in November on the LDF.

A consultation plan for the Core Strategy (Autumn and Spring 2007/8) will be developed to build on the connections made and to ensure widespread stakeholder involvement in the development of the core strategy. The draft plan will be shared with community organisations so that key meetings with representative community groups e.g. Greener Harrow can be built into it. It is also hoped to include articles with summary information on the LDF and its role, in Harrow Councils' future publications.

At the same time a practitioner LDF Project Board will be launched to encourage wider buy in at senior officer level to the development of the LDF policies. The police and the PCT will also be asked to nominate members for this group.

Summary progress, will continue to be reported upwards to the HSP Board on a regular basis via the Sustainable Development and Enterprise Management Group.

Similar reports will be taken through Greener Harrow and other groups linked to Greener Harrow e.g. the Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership and so keep interested community organisations up to date with policy development.

All the above actions should ensure more widespread engagement and ownership of the LDF.

2.5.3 Assuring Quality

Officers are exploring the use of support from The Planning Officer Society to 'quality assure' both DPD and SPD documents produced. Contingency time will also be built into the LDS project plan to implement their recommendations.

2.5.4 Early involvement of the Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate will also be asked to advise on early drafts of the DPDs.

All of the above are being put in place to ensure that the LDF is robust and that each document is thoroughly checked so that it stands the best chance of passing the tests of 'soundness.'

2.6 Work to be tackled next

More emphasis is now being put on the production of the Core Strategy which now needs to inform all other LDF documents.

An immediate priority is to feedback to all consultees on the outcomes of the initial consultation on the issues and options, and strategic priorities for the Core Strategy via an 'e'newsletter.

Officers will be working on a revised document that will merge both issues and options and strategic priorities to ensure interrelationships and possible impact of the options are better understood before moving onto preferred options. This will be made available on the Council website and to each previous consultee.

2.7 Conclusion

Consequently, it is proposed that the Core Strategy be subject to a delay, of approximately 9 months. This would also enable the Council to meet its commitment to the community not to undertake important consultations during the main summer holiday period of August and September.

3. Risk Factors which could impact on the delivery of the LDS

	Risks	Mitigation
	Large number of responses to consultation documents	Draw in temporary extra staffing
	Revised timescale not kept to	Fully implement project monitoring techniques so that temporary staff can be brought in advance to

		speed up pinchpoints
	Production of Joint Waste DPD slows– outside Harrow Council control	Regular progress reports to Cabinet and WLA to encourage more rigorous approach to project management
	Staffing levels fall	Career grade posts are now in place
	Lack of specific expertise e.g. urban design	Identify temporary staffing resource
	Time line means that process rather than quality appears to take precedence	Safeguards in place see 2.5.3
	Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (Local government funding stream) to replace the existing Planning Delivery Grant) – in 2008/9 it maybe more closely linked to achievement of LDS targets	Ensure adequate Project monitoring is in place so that all targets are achieved.

3.1 Financial implications

The ongoing costs of preparing the revised Local Development Scheme, and implementing the identified programme, will be contained within the current approved Planning Budget, but may need to assume some realignment of resources to bring core elements of the Evidence Base up to date. These are currently being estimated. Additionally, it is expected that the current budget will cover any legal costs related to the development of the LDF documents as identified in the LDS. In early 2009/10 work will commence on three DPDs simultaneously. Extra staffing resources will need to be identified for this in the Growth Budget for that year.

Please note that with regard to the Joint Waste Document, further work is being undertaken to secure possible reductions that will enable its production to be contained within the approved budget.

There will also be significant additional cost to cover the Examination in Public, Each Development Plan Document has to go through an Examination in Public. Rough estimates of the cost are :-

	Financial year	Estimated Cost
Core Strategy	2008 - 9	£130k
Generic DPD Delivering Development Site Proposals	20010-11	£160k

These growth items will have to be included in the Medium Term Budget Strategy and would need Cabinet approval

3.2 Consultation

The Consultation Plan for the LDS is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement which has already been approved by Cabinet and Government Office. As mentioned in 2.5.2 a separate Core Strategy Consultation Plan will be instigated.

3.3 Equalities Impact

Commitment to the production of the documents included in the LDS will involve all sections of the community, and documents will address the needs of the different groups within Harrow's diverse community in line with the Statement of Community Involvement.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Sheela Thakrar.... Date: ...11 September 2007...
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Jessica Farmer..... Date: ...11 September 2007.....

Section 4: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Local Development Scheme brought into effect in November 2006
Annual Monitoring Report – December 2006

Contact: Graham Jones – Director of Planning, Development and Enterprise
Background Papers: Report to Cabinet 3rd August 2006 on revised LDS
Report to Cabinet on Production of a Joint Waste DPD - 16th March 2006.
Report to LDF Panel 24th April 2007.

Appendix 1 – Local Development Scheme (3rd Revision)

Appendix 2 – Local Development Scheme Timeline