

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2004
<b>Subject:</b>	Byron Park Area Regeneration
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Executive Director (Urban Living)
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Planning, Development, Housing and Best Value Environment and transportation
<b>Status:</b>	Part 1
<b>Ward:</b>	Marlborough and Wealdstone
<b>Enclosures:</b>	N/A

### **1. Summary**

1.1 Work has been ongoing for some time to finalise proposals for housing development on the Driving Centre and Swimming pool sites adjacent to Byron Recreation Ground. Cabinet agreed in July 2004 that the Indoor Tennis Centre should also be located on this site as will a number of other facilities. There are several outstanding issues from the 2002 Sports and Leisure Audit in relation to the external environment of the Leisure Centre that have yet to be addressed linked to issues of community safety in the area

1.2 The scale of the proposed developments within a compact urban area, adjacent to the Byron Recreation ground require that a holistic design approach is taken to ensure the form of the development, layout, scale, density, appearance and landscape, all contribute to sustainability objectives and enhance the Wealdstone area.

### **2. Recommendations (for decision by Cabinet)**

**2.1 That Cabinet approves the principle of master planning the proposed redevelopment of the Byron Park area to achieve a sustainable development**

**2.2 That Cabinet approves in principle the proposal to upgrade Byron Park and environment around the Harrow Leisure Centre, such improvements to be steered by relevant Portfolio Holders, subject to further consideration of costed proposals at a future meeting.**

**Reason: To enable design and development work to continue without delay.**

### **3. Consultation with Ward Councillors**

3.1 Portfolio Holders and Ward Members are involved on an ongoing basis

### **4. Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

4.1. The Community Strategy for Harrow (section 1.5) specifies the need for sustainable development, as '*Changes that are able to stand the test of time rather than only securing short term improvements*'. The strategy sets out the Council's aims to engage the local community to develop and achieve cohesive communities. This proposal complies with Community Strategy objectives.

### **5. Background Information**

#### **5.1 Site Context**

The Byron Park area comprises 24 acres of parkland, recreation buildings and development sites, located within a few minutes walk of Wealdstone town centre. The proposed developments will have a major impact on the surrounding area and a holistic solution is required to ensure the final scheme contributes to the sustainability of the area, creating the conditions for a flourishing economic life and streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible and pleasant to use.

#### **5.2 Existing facilities**

Operational facilities presently on the site include Harrow Leisure Centre, Byron Recreation Hall, Herga Bowls, Outdoor bowling club, Gymnastic Club, Skateboard Park, 200+ space car park, day centre for people with mental health problems, Cemetery and Byron Park.

#### **5.3 Recent developments**

Development over the years in this area has been ad hoc, with the consequence that the park is now locked in by buildings, all of low architectural merit. The external environment around the Leisure Centre badly requires enhanced maintenance, investment and improved community safety measures. The facilities located here are targeted at the wider Harrow-and-beyond population and usage by local people is low. Byron Park is the only truly local facility, however, it provides little recreational amenity value and is poorly used. The leisure centre entrance has been cut off from the local roads by a traffic calming scheme, and this, coupled with hard landscaping that restricts sight lines at the approach to the Leisure Centre, has added to the isolation and fear of crime in the area.

#### **5.4 Vitality Profiles**

In the overall index of multiple deprivation for Harrow the area covering Byron recreation ground is the sixth most deprived in the borough. The immediate area adjacent to the park scores particularly badly on three of the individual indicators; Living Environment, Health and Disability and Income Deprivation Affecting Children. Nationally, the Byron Park area falls in the worst 27% in the Country on the overall index of deprivation and in the worst 22% in the Country on the Living Environment indicator.

## **6. Proposals for the site**

6.1 Current proposals are for a 6-court indoor tennis centre, a 60 person Day-Centre and Residential Houses for people with learning disabilities (LIFT project), 3 outdoor tennis courts, space for a further community hall (to be constructed by a community group that is financially able to undertake the venture), around 300 parking spaces and approximately 150 units of housing.

6.2 These proposals have been worked up independently of one another, each utilising available pieces of land without evaluation of the interactions with existing buildings and with the park itself. Sustainable development requirements, local vernacular, community safety issues and the needs of local people have not been considered in any of the design options to date. Outline designs showing proposed locations of the buildings and facilities demonstrate conflict with the principles of good urban design (*By Design; Urban Design in the Planning System, ODPM 2003*) and the Police 'Secured by Design' planning and design standards.

6.3 An initial mapping exercise indicates that it may not be possible to accommodate all the proposals, with the specified levels of parking, on the available sites.

## **7. Outcome from Consultation with Portfolio Holders and Local Members**

7.1 Recent consultation with portfolio holders and local members indicates agreement that we should take this opportunity to create a sense of place and community delight in Wealdstone

- by introducing a greater harmony between the existing and proposed buildings,
- by creating a lively place with distinctive character and streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible and pleasant to use,
- by making the park an easily accessed and desirable focal point for the local community,
- and by creating 'green corridors' from the town centre and main roads to the leisure facilities in the area.

7.2 Portfolio Holders have agreed that a mixed tenure housing scheme would be more appropriate than the previously agreed 100% social housing development. If approved by Cabinet, income from the housing for sale element of the scheme will enable a sustainable neighbourhood renewal scheme to proceed.

7.3 An initial visioning exercise is presently underway and Portfolio Holders and local members will be considering this week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> September. This exercise and any outcomes will not delay the development of the indoor tennis centre or the LIFT project

## **8. Community Involvement**

8.1 The portfolio holders for Environment and Transportation and for Planning, Development, Housing and Best Value have stressed the importance of local Member and community involvement in developing and assessing options for regenerating the

park and surrounding area. This is in accord with the ODPM Urban White Paper of November 2000, *Our Towns and Cities: The Future*, which states

- 'People have a right to determine their future and be involved in deciding how their town or city develops. It is not enough to consult people; they must be fully engaged in the process from the start and everybody must be included'
- 'We need local strategies developed with local people to meet the needs of local people'
- 'A clear message from the regeneration initiatives of the last 30 years is that real sustainable change will not be achieved unless local people are in the driving seat. The key to ensuring long term sustainable change is to involve the local community and the people who live and work in an area'

The 'Sustainable Communities: building for the future' plan of 2003 adds to this in advising of the importance of community involvement in urban development.

## **9. Finance Observations**

9.1 Design costs can be met from within the Wealdstone regeneration budget.

## **10. Legal Observations**

There are no legal observations at this stage.

## **11. Author**

Anna Robinson – Director of Strategy (Urban Living)  
Email: [anna.robinson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:anna.robinson@harrow.gov.uk), or Tel: 020 8424 9442