

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL MINUTES

22 JULY 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Bill Stephenson

Councillors: * Tony Ferrari * Thaya Idaikkadar
* Keith Ferry * Barry Macleod-Cullinane
* Susan Hall * Navin Shah (2)

* Denotes Member present
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Members

1. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Navin Shah

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Keith Ferry be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Major Developments Panel for the Municipal Year 2010/11.

4. Public Questions/Petitions/Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rules 51, 49 and 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

5. Working Arrangements and Priorities for Action

The Chairman welcomed Members and observers to the first meeting of the Panel, and highlighted the importance of working for the benefit of Harrow and its residents. The Panel had been established to oversee the long term development of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area, to ensure the future of Harrow as well as any other major developments elsewhere in Harrow.

The Corporate Director Place Shaping stated that the establishment of the Panel had come at an opportune time when choices had to be made about the scale of development available in Harrow. The economic climate would also play a crucial role in the future development of the borough. The Panel's role was to guide, co-ordinate and deliver on a successful solution, to guide the preparation of the Area Action Plan "The Heart of Harrow".

An officer introduced the report, which suggested priorities for action for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2010/11. The report:

- outlined the arrangements for the Panel's conduct, including the appointment of non-voting advisers to assist in the work of the Panel, and an opportunity to consider the workload and priorities. The Panel was informed that wide participation would be encouraged and considerable interest was expected in the work of the Panel. The nature of assistance of advisers was likely to vary from project to project and would need to be managed carefully to ensure maximum benefit;
- provided an overview of the strategic planning context that would help guide proposals for the "Heart of Harrow" Area Action Plan, and key sites that would be of interest to the Panel, as part of its oversight and review function. It was noted that a regional designation as an area of intensification would increase the potential to secure investment in essential infrastructure from various organisations, such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL). The preparation of the Area Action Plan would involve both the Local Development Framework Panel and the Major Developments Panel although they would have a different role. The latter would be responsible for the development of the Master Plan and provide direction on critical choices in which growth could be accommodated. The Master Plan would be prepared by a consultant, guided by the Project Board made up of Council officers, some Member(s) of the Panel, Portfolio Holders, GLA, Transport for London (TfL) and possibly representatives from the Design for London (DfL) and the London Development Agency (LDA). A progress report would be presented in due course;

- invited comments from Members on the proposed arrangements for a Master Planning exercise, and the priorities for action in relation to the major development sites cited. The Panel's attention was drawn to the number of sites, which were of strategic importance. It was briefed on its role, which would include comments on pre-application proposals received for those sites of interest to the Panel. An officer recommended that the Kodak site be given priority with a view to a further report being submitted to the next meeting. Land Securities had acquired a land interest in the entire Kodak site and were looking to engage with the Council.

It was noted that officers would consider any special procedures that will govern the operation of the Panel to include details on how it would engage with specialist advisers and the public and would present a report to the next meeting.

A Member stated that the Panel's role was to help mould Harrow and make it a more attractive place to live and work. He was disappointed that the old Post Office site at 51 College Road, owned by Dandara, and Bradstowe House continued to be an eyesore. Therefore, it was also important for the Council to bring such key sites and partial completions to fruition. The budgets and resources available ought be clarified from the outset, including how various risks would be managed. It was important to take advantage of every financial opportunity available, whilst ensuring adequate officer time. The Member suggested that a report setting out the costs and options available be presented to the next meeting. In addition, it was important that the roles and the work of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Major Development (MD) Panels were not duplicated.

The Chair agreed with these sentiments and highlighted the need for openness when discussing issues such as officer capacity available so that resources could be directed in an appropriate manner.

In response, the Corporate Director Place Shaping stated that the Council owned some of the strategic sites identified in the report and it was intended to ensure that appropriate resources were allocated to bring projects to fruition. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) included capital resources for the key sites, and it was important to recognise and appreciate the current economic context within which the Council was operating within. The Council also intended to facilitate the development of sites that it did not own, and it was expected that both the GLA and developers such as Land Securities would bring a wealth of resources to the projects. In addition, the work would be mainstreamed thereby building on a portfolio of resources. It was vital that the long term future of the borough was assured by bringing about confidence thereby safeguarding work and opportunities.

The Corporate Director outlined the distinct roles of the LDF and the MD Panels. The Vice-Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise stated that both the Panels had clear and separate mandates, and was pleased with the composition of the MDP, which was made up of key cross party Members.

During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Susan Hall stated that she would need to declare an interest should her business be affected by any proposals, as part of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area. However, it was not necessary on this occasion.

Members also made the following comments:

- a mixture of uses/developments was essential in the Intensification Area with provision for arts, leisure and recreation;
- it was essential that other parts of the borough were regenerated as well, such district centres of Pinner, South Harrow and other High Streets, to ensure a sustainable future. A Member was not supportive of this approach. She was of the view that the Panel's role could not be all encompassing and it was essential to concentrate on the key sites, as the regeneration of satellite centres would undermine the Panel's role. It was noted that separate work was being done to ensure the longevity of the District Centres and an information report would be presented to the appropriate Panel in due course;
- an integrated transport system was equally important, particularly in the Town Centre;
- the development of sites previously occupied by the Land Registry and Inland Revenue ought to be addressed;
- a holistic approach was essential rather than one that was piecemeal. The expectations and aspirations of residents had to be built-in, the character of the environment accounted for and the provision of contemporary buildings connected to Harrow's historical ones had to be considered, including issues of height and density;
- a key ingredient of success would include the engagement of stakeholders and residents;
- the excellent work carried out previously should be used to assist and inform future work, congestion elements needed to be addressed and it was essential that shoppers were provided with parking facilities. The success of shopping centres such as Brent Cross and Westfield was due to their accessibility and the provision of good parking facilities. Other factors that would help secure the vibrancy and viability of Harrow had to be investigated, such as the provision and promotion of a café culture, which would help revitalise areas and encourage and attract a diverse range of people to travel to Harrow instead of using other shopping outlets;
- it was important to encourage a diverse daytime economy which mirrored the evening economy, to attract those residents living in the affluent areas of Harrow who were willing to frequent the restaurants in Harrow but who shopped at centres outside the borough.

During consideration of the report, Members spoke of the need to ensure 'signature' developments of the various strategic sites in the borough for the benefit of those who lived and worked in Harrow, with a view to securing the future of the borough as a major retail and Metropolitan Centre and as a place to live and do business in.

Members agreed that the support of expert advisers ought to be brought in when needed and could vary from project to project. The approach adopted by bringing in different advisers when conducting scrutiny challenge panels was commended.

Individual Members made a number of suggestions, as set out below:

- proposals for the Kodak site previously put forward by the Leader of the Conservative Group ought to be explored and reported to the Panel;
- consultants appointed to undertake the master planning of the Intensification Area be invited to the next meeting to present on the methodology and approach;
- a Member of the Conservative group be invited to participate in the forthcoming selection process of the appointment of a consultant;
- timelines and a map setting out the key sites together with the history of each site ought to be made available generally through the Council's website and to the Panel Members;
- key sites listed in the report were indicative only and would need prioritising. The bus garage in Harrow was also considered to be of strategic importance;
- the selection processes for external advisers ought to be transparent and inclusive;
- the consultant brief be circulated to Panel Members.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the view of the Members regarding advisers be noted and it be also noted that officers would investigate the appointment of non voting special advisers to the Panel for the 2010/11 Municipal Year, the results of which would be reported to the next Panel meeting;
- (2) the arrangements for a master planning exercise for the "Heart of Harrow" Intensification Area be noted;
- (3) the list of major development sites outlined in the report be noted, and the comments on priorities for action be taken into account in progressing these projects.

(4) a Member of the Conservative Group be invited to participate in the forthcoming selection process of the appointment of a consultant.

Reason for Decision: To enable the Panel to consider its working arrangements and priorities for action and ensure the prompt commencement of a master planning exercise for the “Heart of Harrow” Intensification Area in accordance with Corporate Plan priorities.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 8.08 pm, closed at 9.20 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chairman