

East
Architecture, landscape
urban design limited

www.east.uk.com
4th floor
49-59 Old Street
London EC1V 9HX
T 020 7490 3190
F 020 7490 3290
E mail@east.uk.com

**Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area AAP
Developers' Forum notes
4 October 2010**

The following notes are a brief summation of the issues and comments raised at the event.

Nick Cuff introduced the event and invited all attendees to introduce themselves. Julian Lewis then gave a presentation outlining the process and objectives of the AAP masterplan and shared the indicative timeframe and milestones for the process. Mike Taylor followed Julian and presented the viability work GVA are engaged in for the council. Nick then invited comments and questions from the floor on the presentations.

Question

Does this process have full council support? Do both lead and opposing parties support it because it will be important for this to be the case if the process is to work.

Response from Phil Greenwood that it did and that the Major Development Panel (MDP) which was chaired by the Leader of the Council and formed of Portfolio Holders and senior shadow members had been created to oversee and steer this work jointly.

Question

Will the members take part in any of the forums?

Phil Greenwood responded that they were unlikely to but were receiving detailed feedback on the forum sessions to understand the issues raised. Nick Cuff thought it would be a missed opportunity if a Cabinet Member wasn't present and suggested that he would invite a member to attend the next Developers' Forum as a listening party only, to hear first hand the concerns of the developers. The attendees were in support of this proposal.

Comment:

Criticism was directed at council members who seemingly 'moved the goal-posts' even after lengthy and often productive dialogue had been held with council officers about development applications. The system was seen to be flawed and undermined the developers' and officers' efforts.

Comment:

The AAP needs to be viable and deliverable

Comment:

Harrow has taken a 'big hit', values have fallen considerably. The rent-free period indicated in the emerging viability work was considered very optimistic

Action:

GVA Grimley proposed they would circulate their suggested typologies for comment

Comment:

There is no debt market, the development market has been sterilised

Comment:

The AAP concerns the next 20 years but need to consider the current market and what developers can deliver in the short term, otherwise sites will be blighted for years

Comment

There is an opportunity to re-evaluate Harrow and create a “shared vision”. Time horizon is not just the next couple of years

Question:

What is the view on mixed use?

Yes, a modest mix of uses may be possible, likely to be retail rather than residential led.

Comment:

Very few major scheme applications have been granted permission without going to appeal. The only scheme that didn't go to appeal was the Gayton Road site which is now considered a no-development site by the new administration. This gives very mixed signals to any developers

Comment:

Rail stations need to be upgraded. Public transport contributions have been given a high priority in the past (not just affordable housing) Maintaining this as a priority will affect the viability of all proposals. Essential that TfL are involved in the process

Comment:

Developers need to know what the council wants to see in Harrow – public realm, housing, retail etc

Comment:

The local community in Harrow has different view from the Council and its officers. There is a danger of a disconnect. It is critical that all forums forming part of this AAP process are made aware of each others' concerns to ensure a robust, coordinated approach. Nick Cuff recommended that minutes should be circulated across all Forum groups

Comment:

Council needs to be clear about its affordable housing requirements and build in some flexibility for delivery over the next 20 years to ensure that delivery is still possible within the current climate

Comment:

The Council should engage as early in the process as possible

Major issues for Harrow (prompted by questions from Julian Lewis):

- * Harrow has no identity, Wealdstone has even less
- * The one-way system has ruined pedestrian movement across the area
- * Sites have to come forward soon to build momentum
- * Big and small sites should both come forward
- * People need to know that things are beginning to happen and Harrow is somewhere to look out for
- * The road network is really poor and big companies want somewhere they can easily get to by car as an alternative to public transport
- * Office offer is very poor
- * Agreement that the commercial market is not strong
- * The opportunity to refresh and reconsider Harrow altogether should not be missed

Comment:

Tall buildings (more than 8 storeys) difficult to build in the short-term because not viable, unless light-weight structures used – though others commented that this could change over the longer term
Location for tall buildings seems to be near stations and fly-overs, especially around Harrow and Wealdstone

Question:

Will the council use its CPO powers to deliver schemes? Phil Greenwood said that this hadn't been discussed with Members, but thought that the council would consider it for small sites that could unlock the development potential of larger areas. Developers needed to be clear in their negotiations on sites that this would be useful

Comment:

A political figure needs to champion this masterplan to give confidence to the private sector that there is real potential in Harrow

Comment:

Transparency is required in all development site negotiations especially for sites in council ownership. Where the council is owner and planning authority, there may be a perceived conflict

Comment:

The politicians may not like what this masterplan says in the end but something has to be done now to start to address how far behind Harrow has already fallen

Comment:

The education sector may be a previously under-recognised sector that comes forward strongly. Accommodation for students may be appropriate new uses for the disused office buildings

Comment:

The health sector is also one that should be considered more closely as PCT provision shifts and new types of provision are required

Comment:

Sustainability must be taken seriously and incorporated into proposals with the end user in mind ie. Proposals that are user-friendly rather than gimmicks that score points but don't work in the long term

Action:

Julian Lewis invited all major land-owners to meet the masterplan team and share their ambitions and concerns in more detail. East will follow up on this.

Comment:

Harrow View was pointed out as being an important strategic route, similar to Station Road in terms of linking Wealdstone to Harrow