

Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area (HWIA) Action Plan: Community Forum Meeting Notes

Date: 5th October 2010

Time of Meeting: 18.00-20.30

Location: Members Lounge, Civic Centre, LB of Harrow

Attendees:

David Summers (DS) – Chair Community Forum

Phil Greenwood (PG) – LBH

Peter Barron (PB) – LBH

Philip Crowther (PC) – LBH

Yogita Walunj (YW) – LBH

Michael Corr (MC) – DfL

Julian Lewis (JL) - East

Angela Spencer (AS) – East

Richard Hall (RH) - East

Anna Nilsson– (AN) – East

Representatives from

Roxborough Road Residents Association

Campaign for a Better Harrow Environment

Harrow Architects Forum

Harrow Heritage Trust

Greenhill Manor Residents Association

Princes Drive Residents Association

Harrow Baptist Church

Harrow Passenger TUA

Harrow Friends of the Earth

Greener Harrow

HA21

PPS Group

12 Students from London Metropolitan University

1. Introduction

- Introduction by DS: Introductions and Purpose of Meeting, Objectives of the study, Programme timeframe and consultation.
- Introduction to all attendees.
- PG explained the Area Action Plan (AAP), process and role and function of the forum. Main aim was to provide a “sounding board” to help test and shape development options as they come forward.

- Introduction to East Architects. JL gave a presentation which included understanding of the place, challenges and opportunities in the HWIA. JL explained the conduct of the workshops (Workshop 1 and workshop 2).

2. Workshop 1

This workshop identified the key local features, assets, to inform the consultants' understanding of how the community identify with the study area.

The workshop 1 was carried out in four groups and each group explained their views.

2.1. Group 1 (coordinator AS)

- New transportation hub is required at Harrow on the Hill (HoH), new location for the bus station.
- New cultural and civic centre on Harrow College site or Tesco site – would encourage use of public transport.
- May be a tram along Station Road for better connectivity between Harrow & Wealdstone.
- Breathing spaces/green spaces along Station road.
- Old “tired” buildings (especially 1930s development) can be replaced by new housing development (ground floor retail units and residential up to 5 or 6 floors above). Example for this is the Iceland building in Harrow town centre.
- May be a theatre on ‘Tesco site’ or new library/cultural facility/theatre

2.2. Group 2 (coordinator PG)

- Concern about loss of family housing in area and recent emphasis on flats
- Large part of the housing stock would remain, but need to refurbish and make it more energy efficient.
- Danger that setting of St. Mary’s Church would be ruined by insensitive development.
- But recognised that existing chimney at Kodak acted as landmark and helped orientation. Conclusion – tall buildings could be appropriate in the right context.
- Town centre – public transport – strength within the IA, good links to London. But access to other parts of Borough more difficult, so need to improve links with the surrounding area.
- Number of key sites had been available for development for many years e.g. car park next to Debenhams. Needs a sense of urgency and clear timeframe.
- Lack of open space in IA but surrounded by large open spaces, need to have more linkages to the green spaces around.
- Capture assets such as Harrow Museum on edge of area at Headstone Manor grade 1 listed which is the most important heritage asset after St. Mary’s Church on the hill.

- Both town centres lack green – potential to “green buildings” e.g. terraces and roofs etc.

2.3. Group 3 (coordinator RH)

- Need for improved access to HoH station, transport improvement, bus station.
- More recreational facilities in the area, add extra open space.
- Social disorder at station and bus station, inadequate police presence.
- Crime in Wealdstone area, more need for visual surveillance.
- Wealdstone area, ground floor uses, needs to encourage retail development.
- Market at Kodak site had not worked out.
- Wealdstone healthy living centre; could expand this asset; do more, a focus for the community.
- Retail market for Harrow, such as local food shops.
- Cultural programmes – leisure centre – could do more for people.
- Lack of identity is a problem. St. Mary’s, metroland, place to shop and live, attractive and open environment are all strong characteristics but hadn’t created a coherent identity for the area.
- Poor provision for young people.

2.4. Group 4 (coordinator JL)

- Access to the available green spaces. Harrow Recreation Ground is a key local space and should be maintained.
- Congestion already an issue along the Station Road. New development would make traffic worse.
- Traffic issues make cycling difficult.
- Access to HoH station is a no. 1 problem; there is a need for lift and ramp.
- Poor market on Debenham’s car park.
- Tesco site proposals didn’t move forward. Need to explore better use of the site.
- Harrow town centre is just chain stores.
- Wealdstone has more interesting local shops than Harrow town centre; very few big brands present.
- Bridge/Dandara development wouldn’t have helped.
- Mosque – creates traffic problems and congestion on pavements.
- Gayton library is inadequate.
- Big arts centre at Hatch End, more facilities needed in town centre.
- Harrow College – facilities could be used in the evening making it a social destination.
- Late night pub hours have increased anti-social behaviour.
- Roof over the railway to allow bus station? Too expensive proposal to solve the traffic issue.

3. Break

4. Workshop 2

This workshop explored potential development options for the given site. The sites include - Debenhams site, HoH Station site, Kodak site, Civic Centre site. Each group developed a 10 year vision for that site and a vision for future housing.

4.1. Group 4 (coordinator JL)

Debenhams site

- Choice between redeveloping car park to accommodate housing or extend Debenhams.
- JL suggested may be an arts centre, cinema in basement, shops at ground floor will provide an opportunity to improve the access to Harrow town centre.
- Hotel in for planning [corner Greenhill Way] extend foyer to better link to street.
- May be a big store?

The vision for future housing in the area

- Should improve quality of life.
- No cars.
- Market for flats but large demand for housing.
- Relationship communal gardens and private gardens.
- Developers buying up metroland houses and redeveloping – seen as a bad thing.
- Green housing important.
- Terraced housing is a welcome.

4.2. Group 3 (coordinator RH)

HoH Station site

- Station – 3 step proposal:
 - Completely rebuild
 - Post office site open market and cultural centre
 - Bridge over railway
- Open spaces should be preserved.

The vision for future housing in the area

- Mixed use and mixed social groups, e.g. family houses, and single person units, and sheltered housing for an aging population.
- Conversion of existing buildings to housing.

- Desire for more family houses, though uncertain that families want to live in the town centre?
- Tall buildings/density and pressure on open space: tall buildings as landmark at strategic locations.

4.3. Group 2 (coordinator PG)

Kodak site

- May be fully residential – though concerns about contamination?
- Shopping centre to replace Harrow town centre.
- Consensus for retaining site for employment use – well landscaped Business Park. Good access from Harrow View and Headstone Drive, but need to improve recognised.
- Links to surrounding area through the site are important.
- Impact of railway line – new crossing opportunities to link to other industrial areas.
- Opportunity to look at views/aspect of site including towards Green Belt.

The vision for future housing in the area

- Mix of use, preference for family houses to north of area.
- Greater focus flattened development to south and corridor.
- Every development of large size should include an element of affordable and family housing.
- No gated development.
- Higher densities could be achieved through good design – 3 or 4 storeys; but taller buildings could be acceptable close to existing higher rise development.
- Parking standards; lower levels in IA only if accompanied by travel plans.

4.4. Group 1 (coordinator AS)

Civic centre site

4 ideas were proposed

- Site historically in smaller plots (“Poets corner”) could be re-instated.
- Civic Centre stays - in smaller, taller building towards the rear of the site with generous green space and underground parking.
- Relocate the Civic Centre to the town centre, proposed uses primarily residential with retail along Station Road and housing behind; different heights of the buildings are ok if make people feel safe.
- Not sure – recognise site important for Wealdstone – needs to be thought in relation to wider area.

Also need for new tree planting mentioned.

The vision for future housing in the area

For all the housing where ever it is proposed, it

- Should be mixed family housing and flats.

- Need for new schools, doctors' surgeries and other community facilities should be considered.
- Congestion likely to get worse, need to be considered.

Other General Comments

- Parking provision should be minimised in all development options.
- High quality landscaping should be incorporated into all proposals.
- Public art should be included in all large development e.g. a string of foundations all the way along Station Road.
- Public realm should benefit significantly from all this development.
- Ideal for all homes to have a front door and private space at front to distinguish it from the public realm beyond.
- Housing should all be outward looking to avoid separation from the rest of Harrow's life.
- Options for delivering high density without necessarily building very tall.

5. Date of next meeting:

PG indicated that the next Community forum meeting will (provisionally) be on 16th Nov and then mid Dec 2010.

Post meeting note. Next Forum to be held on Thursday 25th November at Harrow Civic Centre starting at 6.00pm