

REPORT FOR: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS ADVISORY PANEL

Date of Meeting: 6th January 2011

Subject: Area Action Plan - Presentation and consideration of strategic options

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Stephen Kelly
Divisional Director Planning

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Bill Stephenson.
Leader of the Council, and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1 - "Heart of Harrow".
Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area Action Plan – Technical Report.
December 2010

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report summarises a technical report by the consultant team led by East, which proposes four strategic development options for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area, and sets the scene for a presentation by the consultants.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Panel:

1. Note the completion of the technical report, set out in Appendix 1, as the first stage in the masterplanning study of the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area;
2. Consider and comment on the proposed boundary of the Intensification Area outlined in the technical report; and
3. In the light of the technical report and the consultants' presentation, comment on the strategic development options for the Intensification Area and any issues that the Panel consider should be taken into account in preparing the draft Area Action Plan for public consultation in April 2011.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To update the Panel on the first stage of the masterplanning study that will be used to inform the preparation of the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan as part of its oversight role.

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The first stage of the masterplanning study for the Intensification Area has been completed and the Consultant team has issued a technical report which sets out an analysis and commentary on four development options that have been developed to meet the Core Strategy objectives for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area, in particular:
 - the creation of 2,500 new homes
 - the creation of 3,000 new jobs
 - strengthening Harrow town centre's role as a Metropolitan Centre
 - providing an impetus for the regeneration of Wealdstone town centre
 - raising the profile of the area and increasing activity and density
 - renewing or replacing vacant and obsolete components with ones of higher quality
 - improving Wealdstone's industrial and business uses
- 1.2 As set out in the brief for this project, the tasks for stage 1 were to:
 - identify, assess and describe the different areas of the IA;
 - set out viable development options for the different areas, to meet the housing and growth requirements established for the IA, having regard to:
 - landowner and community expectations;
 - the quantum of development mix required within a particular area to deliver the spatial vision and strategic outcomes sought through the Core Strategy
 - the outcomes of the development viability study;

- the relationship of each character area to the adjacent areas within and without of the IA;
 - further opportunities for regeneration and renewal;
 - the impact on the wider urban landscape; and
 - the physical and social infrastructure provision required to support business growth, promote inward investment and create vibrant and livable communities, including opportunities to create multi-functional open spaces, a green grid, and improved connectivity and accessibility to, within and across the IA;
- develop a clear narrative and spatial vision for the places within the IA
 - comment on the indicative boundary of the IA and refine it where necessary
 - identify a preferred development option, supported by the findings of the above analysis and consultation;
 - comment on issues regarding the phasing of development;
 - develop high level design and development principles in relation to mix, density, development height, and built form.

1.3 The technical report builds on the initial market and spatial analysis presented to the last Panel meeting. It considers current residential, office and industrial market conditions and future market direction; the contribution of major development sites; the outcome of the Engagement Forums that have helped shape the masterplanning process and inform the development options; and the key assumptions that have been applied in respect of density and employment ratios to derive homes and jobs target figures. An indicative “red line” boundary of the Intensification Area is suggested, based on the analysis of the areas characteristics and development potential. The report also considers the potential social and community infrastructure requirements in meeting core strategy growth targets.

1.4 The consultant team will present the four strategic options for discussion at the Panel meeting.

2 Options considered

2.1 The technical report will underpin the preparation of the draft Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area. The Council is committed to this piece of work and no further options have been considered at this stage. Options for progressing the AAP to the pre submission stage, and subsequent Examination in Public, will depend on the outcome of formal public consultation on the draft plan, which is programmed to take place in April 2011.

2.2 Development options for the Intensification Area are set out in the technical report and will be considered and tested through public consultation on the AAP.

3 Summary of Technical Report

3.1 Market Context

3.1.1 The technical report sets out a detailed assessment of the housing, employment, retail and property context that has informed the masterplanning study. It indicates that the “Heart of Harrow” sits in a generally strong market

context, offering one of the most connected and high quality locations in outer London, and has a strong demographic base. Key factors supporting this assessment include:

- good access to a range of employment locations for residents
- a skilled workforce and high levels of economic activity
- strong growth in business formation
- a diverse range of high quality residential neighbourhoods
- robust residential values
- on going market interest in the area

3.1.2 However, a number of challenges have also been identified:

- growth in competing centres such as Watford, Uxbridge and Shepherds Bush
- the lack of a renewed retail offer in Harrow town centre
- new office stock in centres such as Uxbridge and Ealing
- significant new housing schemes in other London Boroughs
- a perception that the borough has not taken advantage of strong market conditions in the past to advance schemes, and that local development policy positions are not sufficiently defined or consistently administered, increasing investment risk.

3.1.3 In terms of the housing, office, industrial and retail markets, the following key messages are highlighted;

- housing development, at a range of densities and housing types, is fundamentally viable, but flexibility will be required with regard to affordable housing and developer contributions to respond to market conditions
- new office development will be required to meet employment targets. This will require a strong marketing push, using Harrow's international name recognition to increase market visibility. New office provision should be encouraged and prepared for post 2016 – current values will not support speculative office development at present and the take up will be limited over the next two years
- industrial development is viable but the pace of delivery will need to be managed carefully to avoid vacancies and maintain rents and investment viability
- Harrow town centre should not attempt to achieve the scale of retail growth seen and planned in competing retail centres. Instead it should strengthen its offer to the local Harrow catchment area based, for example, on a mid range family dining offer, extending the range of cultural and entertainment facilities to support and diversify weekend and evening town centres uses, including the identification of a focused quarter where retail, cultural and entertainment facilities can reinforce one other, and broadening the range of facilities in Wealdstone.

3.2 The Intensification Area Boundary

3.2.1 An indicative “red line” boundary for the Intensification Area is shown on page 35 of the technical report. It includes all the sites that have been identified for potential development over the next 15 years as well as important open spaces and other social and community assets that will support the projected increase in population. Other land, such as the Victorian housing areas around

Wealdstone, have also been included to ensure that public realm improvements can be incorporated and better connections created within and beyond the Intensification Area.

3.2.2 In due course, the Area Action Plan will set out policy objectives, development management policies and site specific development guidance that will apply to land and property within the red line boundary. Policies for areas adjacent to, but outside, the red line will be covered in the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document that will be published for public consultation at the same time as the draft AAP. Publishing the two documents simultaneously will ensure that appropriate guidance will be provided for areas around the edge of the Intensification Area that reflects their transitional nature.

3.3 Strategic Development Options

3.3.1 Four strategic options are presented in the technical report, integrating a spatial analysis of the Intensification Area with the housing, economy and property baseline assessment. Each option is considered in terms of its associated opportunities, risks and issues, and its public realm and transport requirements.

3.3.2 A range of assumptions have been applied to derive a set of homes and jobs outputs:

- residential development will incorporate a range of housing types at an average density of 180-220 dwellings per hectare, and in some cases will need to achieve above 400 dwellings per hectare.
- an industrial land plot ratio of 0.6, and an employment density of 1 job per 40m sq m of building floorspace
- an office plot ratio of 1.5, and an employment density of 1 job per 15 sq m of floorspace
- a retail plot ratio of 0.6, and an employment density of 1 job per 20 sq. m, noting that this category has been used as a proxy for leisure, entertainment and shopping activities.

3.3.3 The separate Development Viability Assessment carried out by GVA Grimley has also been taken into account is assessing the spatial options. Interim results indicate a strong residential market with no obvious barriers to delivery. A managed pace of delivery and a diverse residential product including a range of houses and flats should provide for a sustainable long term market over the plan period.

3.3.4 All four strategic options will deliver the target number of homes and jobs set out in the LDF Core Strategy, providing a mix of housing for Wealdstone, Station Road and Harrow town centre, based on five residential types:

- Type A. Family House, approx. 70 dwellings per hectare
- Type B. Family House, approx. 100 dwellings per hectare
- Type C. 2/4 storey flats, approx. 200-300 dwellings per hectare
- Type D. 5/8 storey flats, approx. 300-400 dwellings per hectare
- Type E. 9/19 storey flats, approx.400-500 dwellings per hectare

The four strategic options can be summarised as follows

3.3.5 Option 1. “One Centre”

- Harrow and Wealdstone are considered together as a single homogenous place in which the type and character of new development is not required to take account of current character areas. It requires site capacity to be maximised, and offers the highest overall outcomes.
- However, the distinct characteristics of Harrow and Wealdstone are missed and the objectives for new development would be unclear. Implied densities across the area may also not be compatible with the existing context or public transport accessibility and there is a risk that the market would be unable to absorb the scale of housing and employment growth.
- Option 1 would deliver the following outputs

	Site area	No. of Jobs	No. of Homes
Wealdstone	23.3 ha	1900	1500
Station Road	6.3 ha	500	400
Harrow Town Centre	4.4 ha	1500	1000
Other infill sites	3.0 ha	900	600
Total outputs		4800	3500

3.3.6 Option 2: “Harrow+”

- Effort and resources are focussed on intensifying Harrow town centre with little attention paid to Wealdstone though understanding that development will come forward on some large sites in Wealdstone. The Metropolitan Centre status of Harrow is Intensified, becoming more “city” like and the major focus of commercial growth through retail, office, cultural and evening uses. Wealdstone is developed around residential and small scale, local retail provision and its industrial base is maintained.
- Option 2 implies a strong employment and residential role for Harrow town centre, maximising residential land and densities. This land use emphasis will require that Wealdstone play a strong employment role. The risk is that the importance of Wealdstone’s role as an additional commercial centre is diminished. There may also be an unwillingness to absorb the scale of higher density development in Harrow town centre
- Option 2 would deliver the following outputs

	Site area	No. of Jobs	No. of Homes
Wealdstone	23.3 ha	900	600
Station Road	6.3 ha	100	500
Harrow Town Centre	4.4 ha	2200	1500
Other infill sites	14.0 ha	1100	600
Total outputs		4300	3200

3.3.7 Option 3: “Two Centres”

- The existing contrasting characters of Harrow and Wealdstone are enhanced by development that is sensitive and responsive to their individual characters. Modest improvements are made to Station Road to

address congestion and improve the pedestrian experience of the place, but the development potential of sites along its length is not fully exploited

- Linkages to adjacent areas are strengthened. The Kodak sites will need to play a significant housing and employment role, while Harrow town centre will need to see significant renewal of its office stock.
- However, the link between the town centres is not strengthened, and opportunities for renewal on Station Road may be lost
- Option 3 would deliver the following outputs

	Site area	No. of Jobs	No. of Homes
Wealdstone	23.3 ha	1500	1400
Station Road	6.3 ha	10	100
Harrow Town Centre	4.3 ha	1500	1000
Other infill sites	2.0 ha	700	400
Total outputs		3710	2900

3.3.8 Option 4: “High Road and Centres”

- Station Road is dramatically improved via new development and excellent high quality public realm improvements, creating a new invigorated spine linking Harrow and Wealdstone centres.
- The existing contrasting characters of Harrow and Wealdstone are retained and enhanced, with Harrow town centre building on its Metropolitan Centre status and Wealdstone as a local centre with small-scale retail and industry. The “High Roads” become the focus of retail and cultural intensification
- The two centres become an asset to one another, bringing out the most in each centre without losing their separate identities.
- Option 4 would deliver the following outputs

	Site area	No. of Jobs	No. of Homes
Wealdstone	23.3 ha	1600	1200
Station Road	6.3 ha	400	600
Harrow Town Centre	4.4 ha	1200	1000
Other infill sites	2.0 ha	700	400
Total outputs		3900	3200

3.4 Strategic Options Conclusions

- 3.4.1 The technical report concludes that the “One Centre” and “Harrow+” options present the highest risk in terms of the density and reduced capacity to respond to the local context.
- 3.4.2 The “Two Centres” and “High Road and Centres” work to strengthen existing character and identity and allow for development sites to be intensified to levels appropriate to their condition. The Two Centres option, however, fails to

address Station Road's potential as a key connection, or its role as a specific place, with its own character and set of conditions.

- 3.4.3 Based on this analysis the consultants have recommended that High Road and Centres option is taken forward as the Preferred Option in the draft Area Action Plan.

4 Next steps

- 4.1 All four strategic options identified in the consultants report are presented for consideration by the Panel. Each one represents a valid response to the brief, and, whilst they vary in terms of the proposed level of intensification, and the type and form of development, they all provide the means of sustaining and enhancing Wealdstone and Harrow town centres and creating successful and attractive places for residents, businesses and investors. As such, officers recommend that all four options be taken forward for consideration by the wider public, unless robust justification can be provided to discount one or more of the options at this stage.
- 4.2 The presentation by the consultants will give the Panel the opportunity to comment on the four options, and to seek clarification on the market analysis, the assumptions that underpin the jobs and homes targets, the implementation costs and affects on infrastructure, the proposed red line boundary, and the benefits that each option will bring to the different parts of the Intensification Area. The intention is that Members may wish to consider whether any of the options should be modified before they are published for consultation in the draft AAP. As a joint AAP, the Panel should be aware that endorsement by the Mayor of London will also be sought.
- 4.3 The technical report, and the Panel's comments, will be used by officers to prepare the draft AAP. This will be completed for consideration during the next Committee cycle, with a view to public consultation in April 2011, in accordance with the approved Local Development Scheme.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The £80,000 consultancy costs for the masterplanning study, and preparation of the technical report, has been contained within the approved Place Shaping Directorate budget.
- 5.2 A GLA officer has been seconded to the LDF team on a part time basis to support the AAP process. A contribution is also being sought from the GLA towards the cost of the second stage consultancy requirements.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Failure to meet Flagship Actions or to deliver the Local Development Scheme to agreed timelines are included on the Directorate Risk Register. A more detailed Risk Register has been prepared for the masterplanning study, and used by the Project Board to monitor progress.

7 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The Area Action Plan for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

8 Corporate Priorities

- 8.1 The masterplanning study for the Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area will inform and assist with the delivery of the current Flagship Action 3.3, to:

“Prepare an Area Action Plan to deliver future prosperity for the heart of Harrow to help the Council, the community and developers understand and provide new development that improves environmental quality, vitality and economic prosperity”

It will also support three of the proposed new Corporate Priorities: “A Town Centre to be proud of: changing Harrow for the better”, Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe”, and “Ensuring united and involved communities: a Council that listens”

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Anthony Lineker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 22 nd December 2010		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 22 nd December 2010		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Phil Greenwood, Head of Major Development Projects. Tel 0208 424 1166. Internal ext 2166.

Background Papers: “Heart of Harrow” Harrow and Wealdstone Intensification Area Action Plan – Technical Report. Dec. 2010