

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 7 April 2011

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 April 2011

Draft Issues and Options Consultation Documents for the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan; Draft Site Allocations DPD; and Draft Development Management Policies DPD

Having welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise, the Corporate Director of Place Shaping and other officers to the meeting, the Chair advised that the three Development Plan Documents (DPDs) would be considered by Cabinet before being recommended to Council for approval.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise introduced the report which detailed three Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that were being prepared in support of the spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy. These DPDs, when adopted, would form part of Harrow's Local Development Framework. He outlined the consultation process and advised that, subject to Cabinet and Council approval, the three draft documents would be published in May 2011 for a six week period of public consultation.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that the Area Action Plan had been considered by the Local Development Framework Panel and the Major Developments Panel. East Associates had done a considerable amount of work on the Plan and the aim was have a coherent strategy for the intensification area.

In considering the report, Members asked questions and made comments, which were responded to as follows:

- A Member challenged officers as to how easy the documents would be for the public to understand and respond to. An officer advised that the documents would be uploaded on to the consultation portal. Officers were particularly interested to hear the views of landowners and developers and those parties were already aware of the documents and the process. The documents had been checked for plain English and, in addition, summary leaflets would be provided and a series of consultation events held.
- In terms of the Area Action Plan, a Member questioned how some of the proposals for retail in the town centre could be delivered. An officer advised that a stimulus was required for any type of economic development. It was clear, following a retail study, that 46,000 square metres of retail floor space was required to maintain Harrow's market share. He reported that part of the Area Action Plan would be engagement with developers. There was stiff competition for both public and private sector investment but Harrow had a lot to offer, including excellent transport links. The Member responded by stating that, despite the good transport links with central London, he did not see any development in Wealdstone. He added that residents in some wards did not want to see large developments.

The Divisional Director of Planning advised that young people wanted flats and the key was affordability but acknowledged the Member's point that other population age groups did not wish to see such development. The Council was looking for a clear, long term strategy and the way to gain investment was for the Council to do what it said it would and to engage constructively with developers. An officer added that if the Council did not promote brown field sites for development, there would be no benefit or uplift.

- In relation to the Site Allocations DPD, a Member questioned whether the document would make it easier to enforce the protection of retail frontages and referred to the issue of Starbucks in Pinner. An officer confirmed that the new document would change the position slightly and that town centre health checks would still be carried out. The localism agenda would also have an impact.
- Referring to the table on page 37, a Member questioned whether it would be beneficial to break this information down by ward. An officer advised that this was dealt with in the Core Strategy and that each sub-area set out how much development was expected. The Core Strategy also contained policies on minimum room size and a presumption against 'garden grabbing'.
- A Member challenged officers as to whether there were sufficient resources to achieve the proposals set out in the documents. An officer responded that resources were not an issue, it was about effective cross council working and that this was already being done with the economic development team, and housing. The Corporate Director added that the Place Shaping priorities had been agreed with the Portfolio Holder and had been supported through the budget making process.
- A Member stated that the Council was not using the town centre to best advantage, particularly in relation to restaurants. He also questioned whether a traffic survey had been carried out. An officer advised that the Core Strategy addressed the town centre issues. The Area Action Plan would strengthen this and consider where the evening economy should be located in the town centre. A traffic audit of the whole borough had been completed, the results of which had been considered by East Architects and Alan Baxter consultants and that further transport modelling would be undertaken during the next stage of the Plan's preparation. In terms of the town centre, the Corporate Director stated that as major developments progressed, there would be public realm issues.
- A Member, who represented Greenhill ward, stated that during canvassing, residents were clearly not in favour of intensification in their ward. He suggested that it might be necessary to reconsider the terminology used. There also needed to be good reasons for people to visit Harrow. He referred to the different types of redevelopment of both Coventry and Nuremberg and expressed concern at what Harrow might look like in 10-20 years. The Divisional Director of Planning responded that, whilst he understood the Member's concern, both Bath and Kensington and Chelsea had high density development and that in order to obtain investment, the Council had to outline how it would develop Harrow. Harrow had, in the past, lacked visibility. He

added that the term 'intensification' was a London Plan designation. An officer added that Harrow could continue with 15 more years of piecemeal development or could use the Area Action Plan to plan ahead. The community needed to advise the Council of their vision for Harrow and the developers' interests also required consideration.

- Another Member supported the previous Member's concern in relation to the redevelopment and questioned whether the Council's information was more accurate than the census information due to be released in 2012. He also emphasised the importance of the architecture and aesthetic feel of the buildings. The Portfolio Holder responded that since 2001, the census figures had been updated by the Office of National Statistics and Greater London Authority Statistical Unit. He estimated that there were 19 sets of evidence and these would be included on a CD rom once the Core Strategy process had been completed. In terms of the buildings, the Council was working closely with Design for London to ensure the AAP contained appropriate policies in relation to managing building bulk, size and density. Consideration was being given to the establishment of a Design Review Panel, comprising a group of building professionals, who would consider the design and aesthetic building proposals to assist the Council in validating or confirming otherwise subjective assessments..
- A Member questioned why Hatch End, a low density area, had a thriving evening economy in comparison to the town centre and questioned the extent to which the Council could refuse planning permission due to the appearance of a proposed development. He also questioned what was being done to encourage landmark architecture. The Portfolio Holder responded that Dandara had been refused permission for their proposed development due to appearance. In terms of the evening economy, the town centre had too much focus on office and retail and it might be possible to develop Wealdstone into a more commercial centre. Harrow had a considerable heritage and good architecture but there was a need for good restaurants. Once the preferred development option, out of the 4 being put forward for consideration, was clear, more substance could be added.
- A Member stated that, in many countries, developments had retail facilities on the ground floor with accommodation above. Another Member referred to the vacant ground floor in a property in Northolt Road and stated that it would be easier and more manageable to open up the access through to St Ann's Road. The Portfolio Holder responded that there was probably the wrong mix of use at Raeburn House, Northolt Road and an officer added that the process for dealing with this was clearly set out in the Core Strategy.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their attendance and for the responses provided.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet be requested to take on board the Committee's comments during their consideration of this item.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 April 2011.

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