

**REPORT FOR: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS
PANEL**

Date of Meeting: 26th May 2011

Subject: Strategic Development of the Heart of Harrow

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Andrew Trehern
Corporate Director Place Shaping

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Keith Ferry
Portfolio Holder for Planning,
Development and Enterprise

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1: Stage 2 masterplan structure
Appendix 2: Vacant office floorspace in Harrow Town Centre
Appendix 3: Major Sites Schedule – to follow

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report updates the Panel on the progress with the Area Action Plan for the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area and provides the context for a series of presentations on the implementation of a development and improvement strategy for the area.

Recommendations:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the report and the actions that are being taken to progress the strategic development of the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area;
2. Support outline proposals and suggested priorities for infrastructure investment in 2011/12 to improve the network of public spaces in Harrow town centre and adjacent to the Intensification Area;
3. Comment on any issues arising from the presentations on transport and movement within the Intensification Area and the future use of the Lyon House and Kodak sites; and
4. Note the content of the Major Sites Schedule.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To enable the Panel to maintain its over sight role for the preparation and delivery of a development strategy for the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area.

Section 2 – Report

1 Introductory paragraph

- 1.1 This report draws together a number of topics affecting the strategy for development in central Harrow and provides an overview of some of the key issues that will influence the next stages in the preparation and implementation of the Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Heart of Harrow. In particular, it updates the Panel on progress with the masterplanning study, sets the scene for a discussion on the challenges and opportunities affecting transport within the Intensification Area (IA), led by Alan Baxter Associates and the Harrow Passenger Transport Users Association, describes outline proposals to improve the public spaces network within the town centre, and explains the current position with regard to the stock of vacant office space. Oral presentations will also be made by Wichford PLC and Land Securities in respect of the Lyon House/Equitable House and Kodak sites. The report concludes with the updated schedule of major sites across the borough.

2. Options considered

- 2.1 None

3. Strategic Development Context

- 3.1 The Panel considered and commented on the draft Technical Report for the Heart of Harrow Intensification Area at its January meeting. The report concluded the first stage in the masterplanning study for the IA and proposed four strategic development options to meet London Plan and LDF

Core Strategy objectives. The Panel's comments were taken into account in finalising the Stage 1 report, which is now available on the Council's website.

- 3.2 The Technical Report, and a wider, more comprehensive baseline assessment, formed the basis of the Regulation 25 Issues and Options report on the Area Action Plan that was approved for public consultation at the Council meeting on 14th April. A formal 6 week consultation process commenced on 13th May.
- 3.3 The Consultant team, led by East Architects, has been commissioned to undertake the second stage of the masterplanning study, in accordance with the Consultants' brief and successful tender submitted last August.
- 3.4 The main aim of Stage 2 will be to refine and finalise the masterplan for the IA, having regard to the representations made to consultation on the AAP preferred option. In developing the masterplan, the Consultants will need to provide a clear spatial vision/narrative for the area, and details of:
 - the type, quantum and mix of development required on key development sites;
 - the crucial physical and social infrastructure required to support and deliver the masterplan, and where appropriate an indication of the preferred spatial distribution of such requirements;
 - implementation and phasing, including interventions, such as land assembly or safeguarding;
 - appropriate contingency arrangements;
 - draft policies for inclusion within the AAP to give effect to the delivery of the masterplan; and
 - revised urban design guidance.
- 3.5 The Stage 2 masterplan will be developed over the next 5 months culminating in the preparation of a pre submission (Regulation27) version of the AAP in November, in accordance with the approved Local Development Scheme. It is envisaged that a draft masterplan will be completed for the Panel meeting in September and key outcomes of the Stage 2 work will be presented to the next Panel meeting as the masterplan begins to take shape. The masterplan report structure is included as Appendix 1 to this report

4. Key Issues

4.1 Transport

- 4.1.1. As agreed at the last Panel meeting, Alan Baxter Associates will lead a presentation and discussion on the challenges and opportunities affecting transport over the Intensification Area. Anthony Wood, chairman of the Harrow Passenger Transport Users Association, has also agreed to participate, and will be available to respond to the presentation and offer the Panel his specialist local perspective.
- 4.1.2 Transport and movement within and through the Intensification Area, and traffic flows in Station Road in particular, has been the subject of considerable debate in previous Panel presentations and at the different

Engagement Forums. A high level assessment of the transport implications of the four strategic development options is included in the Stage 1 Technical Report to the AAP, together with an analysis of the local transport and movement context, largely based on the Transport Audit that Enterprise Mouchel carried out to support the LDF Core Strategy. The key points of that analysis are as follows:

- Harrow and Wealdstone are both well-located for access by public transport, with good to excellent PTAL levels across the Intensification Area. Harrow-on-the-Hill and Harrow & Wealdstone Stations provide superb connectivity to Central London, and numerous bus routes serve the local area, particularly along the Station Road corridor. There is spare capacity in rail/Underground services at these stations and projected growth is therefore likely to have little capacity issues
- There is capacity on some local bus routes, however others are at capacity during peak hours and will need to be enhanced where significant additional trips are expected
- Despite the good public transport accessibility, there is a general context of high car ownership and usage within the borough. Busy roads in the area act as barriers to pedestrian movement
- Improved connections are needed across Greenhill Way and George Gange Way to encourage walking and cycling into the town centres and greater integration with surrounding neighbourhoods
- There is some spare parking capacity in Harrow town centre offering opportunities for redevelopment or for use of existing parking capacity by new development
- Harrow town centre has a fairly typical level of congestion given its size and uses. Much of this may be due to through-traffic as well as due to localised congestion
- The borough's highway network is capable of accommodating traffic related to the anticipated level of growth without major strategic investment. However, there are a number of local improvements that could be made to key junctions and corridors to smooth traffic flow, give greater priority to buses, incorporate attractive cycling facilities and improve pedestrian accessibility. Much of this could be funded by new development
- While there is limited opportunity to increase car traffic capacity along Station Road, there is the potential to carry out significant public realm improvements, provide a higher quality walking and cycling environment and enhance bus priority
- Significant cycling improvements could be made across the Intensification Area

4.1.3 A more detailed assessment of traffic requirements will be undertaken during Stage 2 of the AAP, the challenges and opportunities for which will be outlined in the Alan Baxter presentation.

4.2 Vacant Office Provision

4.2.1 A list of Available Business Premises, including offices that are available to buy or rent in Harrow town centre, is published by the Council every 6 months, based on details supplied by commercial agents marketing those properties.

4.2.2 The current, March 2011, list of vacant floorspace in Harrow town centre is attached as Appendix 2. It shows that 30 separate office premises are available, ranging in size from 63m² to over 9000m², with the total stock of vacant space amounting to just over 36,000m². 25% of that vacant space is accounted for by Lyon House. Proposals for that site will be considered in the presentation by Wichford PLC.

4.2.3 The amount of vacant office space within Harrow town centre over the period 2006 to 2010 is indicated in the LDF Annual Monitoring Report, as follows:

Amount of Office Floorspace & Vacancy Rates in Harrow Town Centre 2006 - 2010

Year	Occupied Office Space m ²	Vacant Office Space m ²	Total Office Space m ²	% Vacant
2006	107,422	18,255	125,677	14.53
2007	114,197	11,480	125,677	9.13
2008	107,653	17,907	125,560	14.26
2009	105,261	18,451	123,712	14.91
2010	97,599	22,916	120,515	19.02

Source Data: In 2010, The total office space was calculated based on the net change of A2 and B1(a) completions which gave a net change of -10,889 which was deducted from the 2009 figure

4.2.4 It can be seen from the table that the amount of office floorspace in the town centre has reduced modestly in recent years from a relatively stable base in 2006/07, but the level of vacancy has increased dramatically over the last three years from just under 15% in 2009 to 19% in 2010, and, with 36000 m² currently vacant, now stands at nearly 30%, with Lyon House responsible for much of that increase.

4.2.5 An analysis of the commercial property market in Harrow was carried out as part of Stage 1 of the AAP masterplanning study. Despite the age and condition of much of the office stock in the town centre, and the high vacancy levels, the analysis concluded that:

“A range of office occupiers should find Harrow attractive given access and labour force strengths but the office market has lagged behind nearby competing centres in Uxbridge, Watford and Ealing. A significant shift in development trends will require an active economic development strategy, an inward investment programme and potentially public sector intervention to advance or anchor development sites, along with improvement of the town centre retail, dining and public realm offer”.

4.2.6 This assessment supports the conclusions of the borough wide Employment Land Review conducted by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in November 2010. This recognised that there is an over supply of larger, older office space which explains, at least in part, why office vacancies are high. As a result, modern office premises are not being provided in the market due to low rental levels.

4.2.7 A strategy for office renewal in Harrow town centre will be more fully developed in Stage 2 of the AAP. Nevertheless, given the existing supply, variable quality and relatively weak demand for office floorspace in the Borough, with in some cases prolonged vacancy, the Planning Committee has in recent years been prepared to allow alternative, complementary uses such as educational and hotel uses in some of the poorer office stock. The relative attractiveness of Harrow and Wealdstone, in comparison to other nearby town centres in terms of quality, the amenities provided and overall quality of the offer will, however, require further intervention by the Council. The AAP nevertheless provides an opportunity to combine public and private sector development land, the Council's existing capital programmes, including S106 for the public realm and green infrastructure and new opportunities, such as the Outer London fund recently announced by the Mayor, to provide a focus for pro-active promotion of the AAP town centres, alongside other exciting development opportunities in Harrow

5 Implementation and Delivery

5.1 Town Centre Infrastructure

5.1.1 The Capital Programme, approved by Cabinet in February, includes provision of £400,000 in the current financial year to fund investment in town centre infrastructure.

5.1.2 Whilst work on the AAP progresses, officers propose to begin to respond to feedback revealed during the workshops in Stage 1 through the identification and targeting of investment in the public realm in the AAP area, including identifying opportunities for the Mayor's recently announced fund.

5.1.3 The absence of a public spaces network in Central Harrow, particularly in Harrow town centre, has been highlighted in previous studies. Good quality public space is one of the essential ingredients of a vibrant and successful town centre, creating focal points where people can come together, meet friends, relax and dwell, and providing opportunities for social, cultural and recreational activities. It is also central to changing perceptions of Harrow town centre amongst investors. As the town centre develops, provision of public space becomes of increasing importance, to serve a growing residential population and higher numbers of workers, shoppers and visitors. Land is at a premium, however, and opportunities for new public spaces are largely limited to areas around road junctions.

5.1.4 Stage 2 of the Area Action Plan will include public realm improvement proposals for key areas within the Heart of Harrow, and other transport related proposals to smooth traffic flow. Over the next year, significant improvements will be made to the Roxborough Bridge underpass, funded through a S106 contribution from the Neptune Point/Travis Perkins development. Improvements around the Station Road/St Johns Road junction and fronting Tesco are also likely to be considered as part of the Lyon House proposal and the Tesco expansion plans respectively.

5.1.5 The AAP exercise will enable the development of a programme of improvements that could be funded, in whole or part, through the Capital Programme allocation, CIL and the Mayor's fund. However, in order to

progress the design and implementation of schemes in 2011/12, improvement options will need to be identified before the AAP has been finalised.

5.1.6 Notwithstanding site specific opportunities, two further schemes could be brought forward this year funded through the Council's own capital programme

i) St Anns Road Public Realm

The proposed scheme would cover the eastern end of St Anns Road, from Havelock Place to the junction with Station Road, enhancing the quality and appearance of part of Harrow's main shopping street through the use of new granite paving (matching that used in the two way bus scheme in Station Road), replacement lighting, trees and street furniture. By extending the paving treatment to (and including) Havelock Place, the scheme will also reinforce the pedestrian priority in St Anns Road, improving pedestrian safety. In addition, redesigning the space will enable improved management of vehicles in the pedestrianised areas in line with Home Office recommendations for such spaces.

The estimated cost of the scheme is £300,000

ii) Lowlands Recreation Grounds/Station Approach

The Harrow on the Hill Station Planning Brief described Lowlands Recreation Ground as:

"...under utilised, unloved and uninviting. Enclosed by mature trees and fencing the space fails to connect into the town centre and is laid out in a way that segregates it from The Grove open space on the opposite side of Lowlands Road. As a result, it fails to serve as a destination, either for town centre users or the wider residential area to the south."

The decision of the Learning and Skills Council not to fund the comprehensive redevelopment of Harrow College brings with it the opportunity to reconsider the future of Lowlands Recreation Ground. Its proximity to the commercial and retail core of Harrow town centre creates the potential for a significant public space in this location – a "town centre park" – that serves a wide range of town centre users including visitors, workers and a growing residential population. Initial improvements could include, as a priority, the removal of fencing in Station Approach to create a new access from the town centre, and raising the canopy of trees and rationalising the dense shrubbery along Lowland Roads, to form a more open, lighter and inviting entrance to the space. In the longer term, some remodelling or regrading of the space may enable it to be used for outdoor performance and there may be scope to complement this with a small café/kiosk that could support the open space use.

The estimated cost of an initial improvement scheme is £100,000

5.2 The Green Grid

- 5.2.1 Following Cabinet approval, Harrow's draft Green Grid has been subject to public consultation during the winter and early spring and has received positive support, from a range of agencies. A programme of interventions, aimed at reinforcing the strategic significance of the green infrastructure in the Borough is now proposed for 2011. Progress on developing these projects will be summarised at the panel meeting.

5.3 New Development Updates

- 5.3.1 Alongside the development of statutory and non statutory planning documents, the Council's own programme of interventions through the capital programme, S106 and Green Grid, the successful regeneration and evolution of the Borough relies upon private sector investment in the form of new development. Indeed, against a falling public sector investment, private enterprise will be responsible for the majority of new investment in the Heart of Harrow over the next 10 years. Within the Heart of Harrow, proposals by Land Securities for the Kodak Site, Tesco on Station Road, Wichford PLC in Lyon Road, Morrison's at Neptune Point and Catalyst Housing for the Goodwill to All in Headstone Drive, are being progressed. The developers of Bradstowe House also continue to seek to revise and restructure the S106 agreement on that part completed development. A review of these projects and presentations from Land Securities and Wichford outlining progress with these multi million pound developments are therefore expected at the Panel meeting. An updated schedule of strategic sites by officers is also proposed, reflecting progress across the Borough and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The consultancy costs for Stage 2 of the AAP process will be £101,300, and will be met from allocated funds within the Place Shaping Directorate's 2011/12 revenue budget. The cost will be partly offset from a £39,000 grant from the London Development Agency towards the costs of preparing the AAP.
- 6.2 The estimated cost of the improvement schemes to St Anns Road and Lowlands Recreation Ground, and projects to implement the Green Grid, will be met from the Place Shaping allocation in the Capital MTFs, as outlined in the report, subject to approval of a business case by the Capital Forum and Council Governance arrangements.
- 6.3 A GLA officer has been seconded to the LDF team on a part time basis to support the AAP process.

7 Risk Management Implications

- 7.1 Failure to meet Priority Actions or to deliver the Local Development Scheme to agreed timelines are included on the Directorate Risk Register. A more detailed Risk Register will be prepared for Stage 2 of the masterplanning study

8 Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the Heart of Harrow Area Action Plan has been prepared. EqIAs' will be prepared for other qualifying projects as they are developed.

9 Corporate Priorities

- 9.1 The masterplanning study for the Heart of Harrow, and proposals to improve the town centre infrastructure, will inform and assist with the delivery of the following Corporate Priorities
- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe – by improving the quality and safety of public spaces in Harrow town centre
 - United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads – through the Engagement Forums that have been established to shape and test the masterplan
 - Supporting our town centre, our local shopping centres and businesses – through the Area Action Plan that will guide the future development of Harrow town centre and Wealdstone and form one of the key building blocks for an inward investment strategy promoting business opportunities in the borough.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 17/05/2011		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 18/05 2011		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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

Background Papers:

- 1 Harrow & Wealdstone Area Action Plan. Consultants Brief
- 2 Harrow & Wealdstone Area Action Plan. Issues and Options Consultation Document
- 3 Heart of harrow. Stage 1 Technical Report
Papers available at: <http://www.harrow.gov.uk/heartofharrow>
4. Employment Land Review. NLP November 2010