

Building a Better Harrow Residents Panel: Meeting 2, 24 November 2015

Attendance

Councillors: Keith Ferry

Officers: Paul Nichols, Tobias Goevert, Mark Billington, Daniel Lester, Leanne Parkinson, Diana Ibáñez López, Anna Gülzow

Panel members: Raj Kumar (facilitator / chair); Chris Spruce; Mehdi Juma; Kiran Chotalia; Meera Chotalia; Vishaal Shah; Daniel Thurlow; Louise Baxter; Manjul Shah; Yagoda Subotic; Joanna Bowyer, Mihir Benodekar

Apologies: Peter Jackson, Richard Metcalfe, Neil Patel

Presentations

Welcome & introductions from Raj Kumar.

News update on Heart of Harrow presented by Paul Nichols

Big Question Feedback

The Panel watched a short film produced by pupils and staff at Whitefriars Primary School giving their response to September's Big Question:

"We want to build a better Harrow, and make sure everything we plan and create is high quality. But "better" and "high quality" can mean a lot of different things. What do you think of, and what do you want for Harrow, when we make our developments and our areas "better" and "high quality"?"

Film can be shared upon request.

Panel Feedback:

- Seeing the children made me think perhaps there are limited activities for children that are free
- There are inactive frontages and indefensible spaces in Wealdstone. I feel unsafe walking between Harrow & Wealdstone station and Belmont Road [Male panel member]
- There is dead space in Wealdstone around the former Sam Maguire public house. People would walk down the rest of the high street if that is developed and has outside space.
- In talking to people, safety is a major issue – it is the perception of safety.
- Harrow was named as the safest borough for the last 9 months – the police and council need to work harder to get that message across.
- An interesting perception gap between being safe and feeling safe.

- Concern about loss of business space – where is the incubator space for new business and start ups? Bristol cited as a good example of a place doing this well.
- The regeneration programme needs to include high technology at the heart of it. Things like the development of applications are changing the way we work and live.
- Transport links are important and need to be thought through from Harrow town centre to Wealdstone – poor links and congestion can put people off moving between the two places.
- The new Civic Centre is very important – what is the community offer?
- We need more photogenic places like the “leaf” sculpture on Harrow on the Hill, which attracts people and is memorable.
- Need for iconic buildings and ones that will last for a 100 years.
- Higher footfall and use of public places makes people feel safe when walk about.
- Landmark buildings that you visit again and again.
- A place you want to recommend to others (the “Trip Advisor” effect).

Presentations

Wealdstone High Street presentation by Tobias Goevert

Station Road Corridor presentation by Mark Billington

Snap Question

“What do you think the future character of the high street corridor linking Harrow and Wealdstone Town Centres should be? What uses and development should be included? Are there other examples good or bad you can think of that we could learn lessons from?”

- Harrow & Wealdstone Station has not been discussed yet. There needs to be a lot more focus on the station. Is there a way of getting a new public route across the station?
- We should keep the history of Harrow - you should incorporate it in all you do.
- It is about character as well. Pinner and Hatch End have character. The character should be built upon.
- The quality of businesses on Station Road is very good. I used to drive past them, but as a resident I now use them. There are fantastic restaurants. People don't know about them. It is why the transport connections are so important.
- If you are creating an outside café culture, eating places and for events then the acoustics and pollution from traffic needs to be taken into account.

- If planting outside shops and local businesses the long term maintenance of planters and landscaping needs to be thought through to prevent future eyesores and a lack of upkeep.

Questions posed by the Panel

- Consider on behalf of businesses in Harrow Town Centre if you have construction going on everywhere, how are you going to make sure people can still access Wealdstone and Harrow Town Centre?
- How do we make sure local young people get apprenticeships and jobs through the construction process?
- How long will the new Civic Centre take to develop?
- Is the intention still to keep the existing Civic Centre building or has that idea gone away now?

Requests for future meetings

From Raj:

- Shorter snap questions.
- Consider a “cabaret” room layout to enable an interactive & workshop style discussion to develop (agree at next pre-meeting with him on 14th January 2016)

Big Question for Next Meeting

“When people say Harrow is losing its identity through new development what do they mean? What’s been lost? If we are going to restore or give Harrow a new identity what should it be?”

Date of the next meeting: 7pm Tuesday 2nd February 2016, Committee Rooms 1 & 2, Civic Centre 1