

**Building a Better Harrow Residents Panel: Meeting 3, 2 February 2016**

**Attendance**

*Councillors:* Keith Ferry

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

*External:* Stephen Taylor, Sam Holden from Stephen Taylor Architects

*Panel members:* Raj Kumar (facilitator / chair); Mehdi Juma; Kiran Chotalia; Meera Chotalia; Vishal Shah; Daniel Thurlow; Louise Baxter; Manjul Shah; Joanna Bowyer, Mihir Benodekar, Neil Patel

*Apologies:* Christopher Spruce, Yagoda Subotic

*Absent:* Peter Jackson, Richard Metcalfe

**Presentations**

Welcome & Introductions from Raj Kumar

Declarations of interest

- Raj Kumar – Part owns a buy to let flat in the Heart of Harrow
- Manjul Shah – Chair of Governors for Cedars Manor Primary School and have worked for developers who have a number of sites in the borough
- Joanna Bowyer – Own a flat in the Heart of Harrow area

News update on Heart of Harrow presented by Paul Nichols

- Big news since the last meeting is the appointment of the Station Road Quarter architects. Station Road Quarter is a working title. Keith has other ideas about what it could be called with the suggestion of Marlborough Village.
- Mark Billington and his team won a £1.5m bid from the London Regeneration Fund to look at how we create co-working space for incubation start-up workers in the creative and media sector. They will be housed at the former Winsor & Newton building. Part of the money will be used to fit out that and create the new workspace and the other part will be used to create a new public square in Wealdstone to help create a place for markets, events and any community activities. The third part is how we can create a partnership between residents, businesses and groups so people become custodians of the area and look after it.
- We are marketing Harrow with developers and investors in particular. The next edition of the regeneration magazine BIG Harrow will be out next month.

## Introduction to Station Road Quarter

Tobi

- The new design team are here to look at Station Road Quarter. It's been in the local policy for many years as a site to regenerate to bring mixed-use development into the Heart of Harrow and to move the civic centre to Wealdstone.
- The buildings at the moment sit in a lot of car parking so one of the challenges is to look at the reduction of car parking over the next few years to enable development.
- We want to give you a first look at how far our thinking has developed on the site and remind ourselves what the AAP said at the time:
  - To create a new public space that links to the high street, mosque and existing businesses.
  - Strengthen the routes through the site to the station.
  - Integrate workspace as well as new homes.
  - The site is part of a necklace of opportunities between Harrow and Wealdstone.
- The base East scheme was developed to work the financial model into a position where we can have a cost-neutral development of the civic centre as well as all the jobs and opportunities. This is in exchange for intensifying the site considerably and creating a residential heart, but not doing away with the existing fabric and uses such as employment.
- Scheme can create around 900 homes but in addition can create employment. We have been looking at different ways to bring forward phases of the site. First phases to bring build to rent provide income for the Council in the future. That might be about 200 homes. In addition we would create about 40% of affordable housing and potential self-build style housing options. The rest of the site would have to be sold in terms of long leases or freeholds to developers in order to generate receipts to provide cash to build the civic centre nearby.
- Existing civic built in the 70's following a design competition and we have built into the new brief the possibility of retaining all or some of the civic buildings. We ran a mini design competition and the team that won are partially represented here. They were given a brief that didn't set out the scheme, but provided an idea of the quantum and mix for the site. We have selected a team to work with us over the next year to bring forward an outline masterplan and detailed plan to bring forward the build to rent element of the site.

Stephen Taylor

- One of the architects who formed a team and bid on this site before Christmas.

- Going to show a few ideas of what was our initial exploration of what we could do with the site premised on the brief we have been given which is something in the order of 800 homes.
- These are not options but scenarios for the purposes of discussion in the bid.
- We like the working title Station Road Quarter or actually Marlborough Village; what they have in common is the idea that there is something distinctive about this piece of city.
- This project is not to be a collection of different developer buildings but one which really thinks about what makes a quarter or neighbourhood.

#### Examples of different quarters:

- Trinity College, Cambridge - A strong sense of a quarter with interlocking squares, courtyards and passages. If you walk out of it you know you have left it.
- Inns of Court – another kind of quarter characterised by buildings of a different scale of 4/5 storeys that form generous spaces.
- Boundary Estate in Shoreditch – buildings by Peabody in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with orange brick and very clear when you have left this quarter. A quarter can be defined by the materials and shape and scale of spaces between the buildings.
- Haringey ladder – a certain scale of buildings organised in a rhythm.
- Barceloneta – 19<sup>th</sup> century docks part of Barcelona. Very dense quarter.
- Glasgow – 4/5 storey stone buildings with bay windows as a strong characteristic.

#### AAP reminders:

- Public space off of the High Street and Mosque and public space to make a better connection through to the station.
- As part of early thinking we were asked to consider keeping the civic centre building wholesale, to keep it in part or to consider it might even go.

#### Three scenarios

1. Neighbourhood of Courts – inspired by Trinity College. Apartments organised around squares and courtyards. Makes public and semi public routes through the courtyards.
2. Set piece – like the Boundary Estate. Have this circus like space in the centre with the roads radiating out. It can create a series of gardens within. Sometimes these building forms might be made up of house or apartments.
3. Series of streets and inner gardens – like a 19<sup>th</sup> century street pattern. One could think of it as a piece of city with a mix of heights. This scenario could have strong gable ends.

### **Station Road Quarter Workshop**

A breakout session took place which was spread across 3 tables with a scenario and related model on each table. After a group discussion around what people liked and disliked about each scenario the three tables fed back their comments before one table rotation was undertaken. The main comments recorded on each scenario were as follows:

#### Scenario One - Neighbourhood of Courts

- Comments about whether closed blocks will give a feeling of disconnect between the interior and exterior of the block buildings.
- Heights – need to be careful particularly around the edge of the site
- Positives were that it felt like a space that people could own. The communality of the communal space in the blocks was good giving the feeling that people could own it and that it would give you a group or village feel and be family friendly
- Negatives were it seems difficult to understand at first glance and the finishing detail on the vision is critical. How can we make sure the vision and finishes that we want would be delivered when it is handed over? This detail would need to be locked in at planning.
- Dual perception – on the one hand it seems like a post-war 1960's estate and on the other hand there were discussions about how perceptions could be shifted from that if good design and materials are used. The others uses apart from housing, like the school and community uses, are what will bring the site alive.

#### Scenario Two - Neighbourhood Set Piece

- Well defined character and identity.
- What level of density is the model showing compared to the other scenarios?
- Discussion around the extent of the pedestrian routes and vehicular routes through the site.
- Natural surveillance and visibility important. Looks good in the streets but questions were asked around the spaces within the blocks.
- Design out crime and areas that could be attractive to fly tippers.
- Where can a school be accommodated? One with housing above it or a standalone school with a playground on its roof?
- What would the quality of the public spaces be like, particularly as the scenario has the definite space within the site? Would this space have any vehicular activity or be for pedestrians and cyclists?
- Seems to be quite a lot of open space and space within the open blocks.

- Each segment within the street pattern could have its own identity within the overall neighbourhood, mini-neighbourhoods in themselves.
- The scenario has identifiable phasing points.
- A characteristic of this scenario is that other than the chamber it removes the rest of the Council buildings. The view in the discussion was that the Chamber and other parts that give the site an identity could be kept but the rest should go.
- Clear route to Wealdstone station from Station Road through the middle of the site.
- This part of Harrow would need community space and to be accessible for all members of the community. The use of public art would create an identity for the site.

### Scenario Three – Neighbourhood of Streets

#### Likes

- Open spaces.
- Creating places to go and places for the community.
- Harking back to traditional street pattern and lots of spaces within it.
- Feels quite contemporary and interesting.
- Less traditional than Scenario 1 and allows for different building types.
- Attract more retail.

#### Don't Like (differing views)

- Feels congested.
- Looks like any part of Harrow, no difference.
- Big mistake to keep the Civic building.

#### Other

- Would people be drawn to go into the area? Would it be exciting?
- How can you design it so it is a destination that people will be intrigued by?

### Heart of Harrow site engagement

What kind of public engagement do you want for each site?

- Engagement with schools – Manjul remembers being at school in the 1980's and the Council had worked with his primary school about development at St George's
- Look at cultural infrastructure of Harrow – HAC and Headstone Manor

- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, website. Are we creating these opportunities in Harrow? There are postings on Facebook of how bad Harrow is and what it has become
- What about demographics such as Harrow having an older community? Put information in the Libraries and Local paper
- Planning champions – Should we have people self-select for one of the big 10 sites? We should tap into the talent but also find other people otherwise we become a closed shop as a certain type of person volunteered for the panel.
- Comms strategy for Heart of Harrow – At the right moment we will be going out there on our positive messages via leafleting, posters, lamppost banners, messages on all our Council literature and all the arenas we can target with the best positive messages we have about our sites. This forum is helping with the messages and ensuring that they make sense to the people we will be talking to.
- Communication between meetings for the Panel – suggestion of an email with what's happening, general updates on projects so communication is ongoing between meetings.

Other engagement methods:

- Mini-festivals, pop up shops, website, mobile vehicles, people & information at transport nodes and in the town centres

### Big Question Feedback

Raj – The Council has invested in us and they want us to do some legwork. We have friends, family and networks and we should use them. You could take photos, post it notes and send the information to us.

Raj shared how he collected information and his feedback on the Big Question which was included within the presentation:

*“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?”*

Discussion around perception and that Harrow should say more about the positive things in the borough as it is safe and green.

### Identity and the Workplace

Mark

- Harrow hasn't lost its identity, it has changed its identity.

- 1930's houses built for nuclear families and if you lived in the borough you walked to work and you might be employed by Kodak, Winsor & Newton or HM Stationery Office.
- Now the housing needs are different – intergenerational households, couples or single households.
- What does that mean for the workplace? What should the workplaces look like as we have lost the big manufacturers, but what we have got as a borough is real diversity. We have 36% of the jobs in this borough by people who work for themselves - this is 25,000 individuals. What sort of workplace do they need? Maybe they just work from home? Maybe they need other places?
- What about the people who are working for businesses in Harrow for which 80% of them employ less than 4 people? We have only got 20 organisations that employ more than 250 people in the borough.
- We haven't lost our identity but gained a new identity – an entrepreneurial one.
- A lot of Harrow residents do commute. 60% of them commute out. 40% stay in the borough – probably a lot of the self-employed – with only 15% of them working from home. We also have around a third of the jobs held by people in the borough held by people who travel in to work here. So transport is really important.
- What should the workplace look like? Really want feedback. What companies want the workspace? How big should it be? Is the workspace all cafés? Or do we need other things? These are the questions we want feedback on.
- Neil – There is a company called WeWork and they create Google like space for start-ups and entrepreneurs. You could have a model office environment around that. Good communal spaces in WeWork where you bounce ideas off each other and then WeWork get keynote speakers in to give advice or a talk. It attracts a lot of people. You can publicise that Harrow are trying to set this up.
  - People can rent space on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis or pay as you go.
  - Rental income can be used towards paying for speakers and events
  - Can travel and use WeWork abroad in other locations
- Vishaal – There is another business called We Are Pop Up. They can come and map out your demographics looking at who lives here and what kind of people. They have a whole host of clients from fashion to creatives who require space so based on all that data they take the empty shell and convert it to whatever purposes are required on a short term lease, which could become a long term lease and that could be something interesting.
- Manjul – Have you engaged with the University of Westminster who have a number of people studying degrees who are coming into business in the industry of making

things and designing things? Mark – yes we engaged them for our London Regeneration Fund and they are keen on working with us and in working with us on ideas for Artisan Studios.

- Mihir – In order to support the creative industries you need to support them maybe in the town centres so you direct people towards that vision. Artisan Place is slightly out of the way of the Heart of Harrow isn't it? Mark – it is and I think Artisan Place is a maker space for things to be produced. What's interesting with the town centre is the thing that we received the most praise for in Harrow was when we had a pop-up art gallery at St George's. There were 100s and 100s of postcards stuck every day on the noticeboard there and people saying how wonderful this was.

### Future Panel Meetings

Tobi – we talked about arranging some site visits so we put down a few ideas and are very open to taking suggestions:

- Tour of Civic with Mayor's PA.
- Stanmore Innovation Centre
- Harrow College Enterprise Centre
- Rayner's Lane Library (meanwhile space)
- Headstone Manor
- HAC

We could hold the next meeting in a different space. The Arc House in Lowlands could be the location for the next meeting in April.

### Big Question for Next Meeting

Raj - here is the Big Question for the next meeting where we are going to provide feedback before the meeting. Diana can put the slides together of photos and ideas that you send in and the slides can be put together to share with everyone else.

*“What would you like to see happening in the short-term on this and other sites?”*

*It could be events, temporary structures, pop-up projects and anything else that would benefit Harrow's residents”*

**Date of the next meeting: 7pm Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Arc House Lowlands**