

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Kensington and Chelsea Partnership

March 12th 2008

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND BOROUGH DEVELOPMENT

"BUILDING ON SUCCESS" – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2008: SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Two documents form the top priority in preparing the Local Development Framework. These are the Core Strategy and the North Kensington Area Action Plan. Early days versions of these documents – known as 'issues and options' – are being issued for public consultation on February 11th for six weeks. This report summarises the key strategic issues for the authority and invites comment.

FOR DISCUSSION & INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Two key documents that form the foundation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) will be issued for public consultation from 11th February for 6 weeks. They are the Core Strategy and the North Kensington Area Action Plan. This report sets out the key issues which need to be drawn to your attention.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF) is a statutory duty, and critical to the increasing emphasis within the local governance agenda of 'Place Making'. The LDF should express, spatially, the principles contained in the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Borough. It is for this reason that the present phase of work on the LDF is being prepared in close collaboration with that of the revision to the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- 2.2 Unlike the Unitary Development Plan that the LDF replaces, it is not a single document. It comprises a suite of documents prepared on different timescales to suit different needs in the Borough. The programme that sets out the preparation of these documents is called the Local Development Scheme. This identifies that the top

priority for the Borough is the preparation of two documents: the Core Strategy and the North Kensington Area Action Plan.

2.3 These documents will be Development Plan Documents. That is they will have the same status as the old UDP. They have to go through an Examination in Public, held by a Government Inspector, prior to being adopted by the Council. This is scheduled for the autumn of 2009. Between now and then the documents pass through various stages, and at each stage become firmer in their proposals.

2.4 The current stage is called 'issues and options'. At this stage, the documents do not contain policy proposals. Instead they set out – as the title suggests – issues, and possible options as to how those issues might be addressed. The 'art' is to ensure that at this stage any possible future option that may be appropriate are included.

From this wide array of options, the Council, after hearing comments from the public and stakeholders, and assessing the sustainability of different options, selects its 'preferred options' – this is scheduled for the summer of 2008.

2.5 There was an 'issues and options' consultation on the Core Strategy 18 months ago. However, the nature of the Core Strategy has changed a good deal since then, and for this reason this further (interim) issues and option stage is being undertaken, alongside that of the North Kensington Area Action Plan.

3. NEED

3.1 As set out above, preparing the LDF is a statutory duty.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 The documents are being prepared for public consultation from 11th February for six weeks. This is planned in conjunction with the consultation on the Sustainable Communities Strategy. The process includes the following strands

- Survey to the Residents Panel
- Outreach work to gain input from the 'hard to reach' communities – being lead by the Social Council
- Workshops inviting residents and businesses to build a 'vision' for the part of the Borough in which they live or work.
- A large scale Borough wide event drawing all these themes together, on 10th March.

4.2 A further quantitative 'mori-type' survey is planned in relation to the LDF documents in particular for April/May, in advance of

finalising the 'Preferred Options' which will be published for consultation in June/July 2008.

- 4.3 Information about the consultation has been sent to the people and organisations on the LDF database. This should include most of the relevant organisations. The database is constantly being updated as new information is received from colleagues and others.
- 4.4 It has to be recognised that the preparation of any planning documents cannot take place without the risk of 'setting hares running'. Care has been taken in the wording of sensitive issues to try to minimise this.
- 4.5 Presentations would be available to key stakeholders should they be requested. However, these are not being offered in a proactive way, because this could not be offered to all stakeholders, and further, we would not wish to falsely emphasise issues to some stakeholders if they have not regarded the issues raised as sensitive. However, we will be relying on colleagues to identify if stakeholders are in need of specific briefings to discuss and understand particular issues.
- 4.6 A joint strategy for approaching the press has to be arranged with the team preparing the Sustainable Community Strategy

5. OPTIONS

- 5.0.1 This section sets out the main strategic issues contained in the two documents, especially where they impact on Council services.

5.1 Kensal EcoTown

- 5.1.1 This is the most significant strategic option in the documents. There is an ongoing requirement to regenerate the north of the Borough (it is designated as an area of regeneration in the London Plan). The revived potential to establish an overland rail station in relation to Cross Rail at Ladbroke Grove has catalysed thinking about the area. Significant land assets are vacant or underused: Kensal Gas Works, the adjacent Peabody / Ballymore site, and Sainsbury's. South of the railway is a rail depot, and to the east of Ladbroke Grove is a loose knit relatively low density area – part of which is currently designated an employment zone – stretching down to Trelick Tower. There are also social housing estates – see Stock Options below.
- 5.1.2 The Gas Works Sites and the rail depot, when combined, have a site area not dissimilar to that of Paddington Basin. This gives a clear indication of the potential scale of the development, and the

potential timescales should it take place – it unlikely to start on site inside a decade, in order to ensure that the area is properly planned. This indicates the need to be careful not squander potential opportunities until we know if 'Kensal Eco-Town' has potential or not.

- 5.1.3 There are significant 'unknowns' at this time – we do not know yet if these are 'show stoppers'. For example, the gas works is operational for up to the next 30 years – could this site form a later phase? What is the future of the North Pole rail depot – is it needed for railway purposes or might it become available for development? How will development be managed in relation to the 'blast zone' of the gas holders? Will Ballymore be prepared to wait to develop their newly-acquired land in return for the prospect of a larger development in the long term?
- 5.1.4 The north of the Borough is an area of low transport accessibility – and for a town centre to thrive improved accessibility would be needed. This would most obviously be achieved by the establishment of a station served by Crossrail. This requires significantly greater potential passenger catchment than at present – which a new town centre and associated residential development might potentially deliver.
- 5.1.5 Early research into the potential of creating a sufficient catchment for a Crossrail station suggested that generating the housing capacity needed to make the station viable (to generate sufficient passengers so that the train company does not require revenue compensation to stop trains at the station) would be very difficult. However, this was prior to the concept of Kensal Eco Town, and the capacity estimates may well have been underplayed. This research therefore needs to be extended, to establish if this is a realistic proposal or not. A brief has been issued for consultants to undertake this research, and tenders are expected back on Friday 7th March. This research is would take the form of a multi-disciplinary consultancy team, lead by master-planners but including transport, valuation, and a range of other specialisms, undertaking feasibility work to establish just what the potential of redevelopment is in the area. This would be structured in two phases, such that a broad answer on the potential of the scheme could be delivered in advance of publishing the preferred options in June, with more detailed work following on from there.
- 5.1.6 Establishing a new 'town centre' at Kensal Town would provide a clear focus for the regeneration of North Kensington. Significant regeneration efforts have been made in the past, and are continuing in relation, for example, to the current work on worklessness. However, the structure of the area, being such a high proportion of social housing, means that without a structural

change, regeneration efforts may well be perpetual. The potential of Kensal EcoTown would provide a significant opportunity to alter the structure of the area.

Members should be aware that these LDF documents are the first public statement of the Council's interest in relation to a Crossrail station.

5.2 Housing Estate Renewal – Stock Options

- 5.2. This links closely to Kensal EcoTown above. Kensington Housing Trust are progressing plans to redevelop Wornington Green. Internal discussions have been progressing about the options regarding Council housing stock.
- 5.2. Critical to these redevelopments is the proportion of private housing needed to fund the redevelopment. The London Plan acknowledges that where new private housing is being built to fund the redevelopment of existing social housing stock, the 50% affordable housing rule may not apply.
- 5.2. The documents out to consultation are seeking to establish the ground rules on this – specifically setting out an option that where private housing is being used as the 'enabling' development to fund the renewal of existing social housing, the '50%' rule should not apply, as the primary strategic objective in these areas is regeneration and mixed communities. However, this then presents a further dilemma – the 50% requirement is across the Borough as a whole, and could not be absorbed by other developments in the Borough. Some special status would therefore need to be accorded.

5.3 Latimer Road and Kensington Sports Centre

- 5.3.1 The Kensington Sports Centre is being suggested as a possible site for redevelopment. This is based on the fundamental assumption that leisure provision has to be reprovided, but they ask if other accommodation could be achieved on the site – such as a new school, further housing, or other uses.
- 5.3.2 In many ways this site and the adjacent Lancaster West hold the key to the long term regeneration of the Latimer Road area of North Kensington. Any examination of the street network around Latimer Road shows how difficult it is to get from there to, for example, Ladbroke Grove. Any redevelopment of the sports centre site needs to be seen in relation to longer term options for Lancaster West, because between them they provide the opportunity to restructure the area and reconnect it into the wider North Kensington community.

- 5.3.3 This would then allow Latimer Road to become a more effective 'local centre' than it currently can achieve. The planned upgrading of the Hammersmith and City line (2016) relates to this ambition.
- 5.3.4 It should also be noted that this area is one of two possible areas where tall buildings might be regarded as acceptable – see tall buildings below

5.4 Education

- 5.4. The documents leave open a range of ways education provision could be improved in the north of the borough

5.5 Waste, and Cremorne Wharf

- 5.5.1 The London Plan sets out a complicated formula for the calculation of the amount of land each Borough should allocate for waste processing purposes – RBKC has to allocate about 4ha. Options are being included for waste facilities to form part of any redevelopment at Earl's Court, and at Kensal Gas Works.
- 5.5.2 However, the facility at Cremorne Wharf must retain its ability to handle waste. This does not preclude development. Development could take place in the 'air space' over the waste facility. Or an alternative site for the waste facility could be found and paid for by any development. Given, however, that the site would have to be a wharf, this would seem to be hypothetical, as no other sites would seem to be available. Future opportunities may, of course, arise.

5.6 Earl's Court Olympia

- 5.6. The documents float the possibility of Earl's Court and Olympia becoming the London Convention Centre. London does not currently have a convention centre equivalent to those in other UK cities let alone in other Capitals. The combined sites in both Hammersmith and Fulham and in the Royal Borough may provide for this. This could form part of a broader mixed use redevelopment of these sites.

5.7 Climate Change

The documents contain a range of options, including radical ones, in relation to tackling climate change. These include allocating sites to enable a borough-wide district heating system to be established; requiring householders extending their properties to achieve a high 'star' rating on the code for sustainable homes for the entire property, not just the extension; recognising that conservation of energy and conservation of architectural heritage are not incompatible; going beyond the current permit free approach and making all new development car free, amongst other things

5.8 Tall Buildings

The documents will set out an analysis that concludes that the vast majority of the Borough is unsuitable for tall buildings, and that further work needs to be carried out in the two areas that may be suitable – around Latimer Road and Westbourne Grove Tube stations.

6. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 6.1 It is recommended that the reports are noted, and that individual member organisations that comprise the KCP respond to the documents before 24th March.

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Background papers: Core Strategy Interim Issues and Options North Kensington Area Action Plan Issues and Options (attached)

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