

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 14 OCTOBER 2021

TITLE: APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO THE ENTERPRISE ZONE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDERS

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HARDWARE, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH

LEAD OFFICER: ANDREW BRAMIDGE, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION (01279) 446410

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This is a Key Decision

It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I013051

Call-in Procedures may apply

This decision will affect Church Langley, Mark Hall, and Old Harlow Wards.

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** Cabinet approves the proposed amendments to the London Road North Local Development Order, as set out in Appendix A to the report, and authorises that these now be subject to public consultation.
- B** Subject to recommendation A, authority be delegated to the Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth, to make such minor or inconsequential amendments to the Order as may be required following the consultation process.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** To provide greater flexibility in the delivery of development at the Harlow Innovation Park site and to overcome some barriers to appropriate development which have become apparent through the practical implementation of the planning framework.

BACKGROUND

1. The Local Development Order (LDO) for London Road North (now known as Harlow Innovation Park) was adopted in July 2014. The LDO sets out a planning

framework for the site that in effect provides permitted development for identified uses to aid the delivery of the Enterprise Zone. This creates a fast track process for the approval of developments on the site with a guaranteed turnaround of 28 days, provided that those developments meet the requirements of the LDO. This should be a significant factor in being able to attract new businesses to Harlow.

2. However, experience of delivery in the last two years has identified that this framework is in many places inflexible and actually acts as a constraint to development. The layout of the site is rigidly defined in the LDO and it does not allow any deviation from this. For example, this is particularly apparent in the positioning of electricity sub-stations or the location of ancillary facilities such as food, drink and leisure facilities. In the original LDO, all A1 and A3 uses (now Class E Uses in the revised Use Classes Order) on the site were to be located in the Newhall Approach Character Area (the area immediately adjacent to London Road). However, this is not necessarily convenient for users of the Innovation Park and prevents flexibility of future development. The revised LDO will not allow any increase in these uses, but will permit them to be located anywhere within the site.
3. This has presented some practical difficulties in achieving delivery of the Innovation Park as any minor deviation from the original LDO requires a full planning application to be submitted. This defeats the purpose of the LDO which is intended to provide a simplified planning framework and this is one of the key marketing tools for the Innovation Park. It is possible that without the introduction of the proposed flexibility to the LDO in this report, every development on the Innovation Park could have to be subject to a full planning application, rather than using the LDO process which was designed to prevent this.
4. This manifested itself in the delivery of the Nexus building which required a full planning application for some masterplan amendments before consent could be given for that building. These related to the location of an electricity sub-station, the shape of the central spine road and the need to change an access road into a footpath.
5. None of the changes proposed will result in any substantive changes to the purpose and vision of the Science Park, nor will they have any impact on the quality of design of the buildings constructed there. Instead, they will permit more flexibility for the development of buildings and enable development to come forward more quickly.
6. Whilst amendments are proposed to create more flexibility, the opportunity has also been taken to update the LDO in a number of factual matters such as changes to land ownership on the site, amendments to the Use Classes Order and an opportunity to extend the LDO period which is set to end in 2024. It should be noted that it is proposed to extend the LDO period to 2034 to provide further encouragement to businesses to locate in Harlow throughout the potential build-out period for the site.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

7. The proposed revisions to the London Road North LDO are set out in Appendix A of this report.
8. If the principles of these proposals are agreed by Cabinet then they will be subject to public consultation prior to formal adoption of the revised LDO. It is envisaged that this consultation will take place in November 2021 with a proposal to adopt the revised LDO being brought to Cabinet in early 2022.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

As set out in the report.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

As detailed in the report.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

As contained in the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Community Wellbeing

The LDO will help ensure that development on the Enterprise Zone is of a suitable nature.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance (Includes HR)

As contained in the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Changes

Appendix B – LDO Schedule 2021

Appendix C – New LDO Map

Appendix D – New Highways Plan

Appendix E – New Development Parcels

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LDO – Local Development Order