

## **Regeneration Committee**

### **Introduction**

The main topic of discussion is the Mayor's opportunity areas programme

#### **Chair**

Tony Devenish AM

#### **Guests**

Jules Pipe - Deputy Mayor of London for planning, regeneration and skills

Darren Richards – Growth strategy and urban design manager on the GLA planning team

Sarah Scannell – Assistant director of planning and development at the London Borough of Hounslow

Cllr Martin Seaton – Chair of planning at the London Borough of Southwark

#### **Chair: Is the current approach the best strategy for getting the intended outcomes from opportunity areas?**

Jules Pipe: They are simply identifying the capital's most significant growth locations. The documents aren't there to conflict with any existing policy. It's about aggregating the information, opportunities and infrastructure needs that need to be brought forward.

#### **Chair: Is it the best means?**

Jules Pipe: It's a contributor to bringing this forward. They are in place to encourage the right kind of development to come forward. Drawing on the London Plan principles and policies. The process is as important as the outcome.

#### **Chair: Has the GLA's level of support been sufficient?**

Sarah Scannell: From Hounslow's perspective it's been an advisory role from the GLA.

Cllr Martin Seaton: We have three OA areas and we hope to build up to 20,000 homes. Yes – we need to identify areas, but we don't want industries to rush to buy land and development opportunities. We have to take account of the impact on the area and on the authority.

#### **Chair: Social and economic impact of opportunity areas? What has been achieved so far? What should be the primary benefits derived from opportunity areas? How much have you achieved?**

Cllr Martin Seaton: We have a clear intention. We have the largest council house building programme in London. We have a clear programme to address health and housing inequalities. We've hit 35% affordable home quantum. Through the private

sector there has been a record number of affordable homes and an aim to build 11,000 new homes. 1,700 homes achieved this financial year. The programme is designed to be sensitive.

5,000 more people employed because of our regeneration schemes.

Sarah Scammell: We have two opportunity areas in our Borough. One for 1,700 homes and 14,000 jobs and the other for 12,000 homes and 11,000 jobs.

The biggest issue for Hounslow is the affordability of houses and that's key in our plan.

In West of the Borough we have high employment but it's low quality, so trying to improve quality is an aim. On the other side of the borough the land value is high. The planning process is long and arduous. Plans are still not being adopted. We have had to try our best to enforce plans. In the West of the Borough we have seen huge rises in the level of opportunity. Our emerging plan is framed and its coming.

Jules Pipe: We have a difficulty of jobs because we don't have the numbers, but we do have the business space. The impact of opportunity areas is to prompt an interest from the development community in an area. I think the 'open for business' phrase is good. But the message is not that it's the wild west of development and come and build loads of dense things here, because it's not. The opportunity area gives greater clarity. Developers like certainty and their shareholders like certainty. The other outcome is the outcome of community engagement, which has been a strong focus.

Darren Richards: The work we do at the moment, such as in the Isle of Dogs, we look at such work in terms of the number of schools and the impact the development will have and what the level of requirements will be.

**Chair: At what stage do you plan and fund the social infrastructure to make developments sustainable?**

Darren Richards: We show this level of housing will need this level of investment. The partnership is important because either it's from the Council or the developer who has to pay an infrastructure levy.

Social infrastructure – there's the physical infrastructure too not just the transport. I live on the edge of an opportunity area in Harrow and you often find gridlock. There are huge problems on pressure on local infrastructure. Is there planned investment to meet local infrastructure requirements in readiness for large developments that are taking place?

Jules Pipe: In larger areas where there might be whole new road layouts. I'm thinking Thamesmead, Abbey Wood and Royal Docks where new town centres are created. The problem is there are already well-established road layouts.

Darren Richards: Particularly in opportunity areas there is a need for future investment. How we can encourage people to walk and cycle to these facilities. How are new residents going to get to facilities?

**Chair: I want to ask how opportunity areas can combat climate change. Can local authorities do anything on their own to combat climate change. How relevant are opportunity areas in contributing to a low carbon economy?**

Sarah Scannell: Our plan has been in the main for 5 years. The world has moved on. It takes so long to get planning through that those policies reflect old policy styles. We need to set stringent policies that mean developers have to abide with rules to be greener. The question is how far and how quickly to nudge the development industry in that direction.

**Chair: Does climate change actually come into any of your thinking in Southwark?**

Cllr Martin Seaton: We just don't have those powers to say to a developer your development must be absolutely carbon neutral. The materials and the policies don't exist at the local level. At the moment they can get out of the option by just paying us money. The real problem we have in London is a lack of confidence, but London is a very attractive place to invest and there should be high confidence. We need to show we are open to investment but on our terms and not on the terms of the market.

**Chair: Is there anything needed, as in necessary delivery powers, and what are the challenges in delivering homes and jobs?**

Cllr Martin Seaton: GLA and grant environment. Applying for grants is very bureaucratic and developers don't approach the GLA. The grant system might not be working in the public interest if developers aren't approaching the GLA. We sit on prime land in London. Southwark sits on prime land. It's likely that land value will continue to rise. Urge the GLA to think of the impact of broader policies to build affordable homes and shouldn't be wholly determined by the market.

Sarah Scannell: Infrastructure plan, we hope that the strategy and planning powers will make that happen. We have made a great business case on the plans on our opportunity area in the great west corridor. Through our infrastructure plan we have justified bidding opportunities and other funding structures.

**Chair: Do you think the GLA has a good wealth of information of what's going on in the opportunity areas?**

Jules Pipe: On both applications and delivery, we want to develop the London database. There's even work going on even with the UK space agency to develop the surface area of the capital so that changes on sites can be picked up more easily. One of the best examples of creating funding can be seen from the northern line.

Darren Richards: Well often they can make the case for funding, one example is the housing infrastructure fund. Important part of that bid that we were able to link to the improvement to sites in those areas.

**Chair: On the last point about housing infrastructure fund – can you tell us which ones have got money and what they’re going to do with it?**

Jules Pipe: There’s the GLR depo and extension at South Poplar and the Isle of Dogs. The overground one has also got to the stage of acceptance. The Canada Water OPF would have contributed to justify that investment.

**Chair: What measures has the mayor put into place to support Boroughs that struggle to finance opportunity area developments?**

Darren Richards: Firstly, there’s the work we do in preparing our OAPFs. Good example is Thamesmead which straggles the boundary between Bexley and Greenwich. Public practice placements.

Jules Pipe: Good example is a meeting between Newham and TfL looking at how to take the DLR over the river.

**Chair: How engaged are you with local communities and businesses with the opportunity areas?**

Cllr Martin Seaton: Businesses are engaged because of the opportunity for profit. Challenge with the community is benefit. They will engage if there are clear benefits – if the result of investment will push them out of the area then of course they won’t welcome the investment. One thing the GLA doesn’t talk about is affordable homes. As an elected official I can’t support an initiative that doesn’t benefit them. There has to be a material benefit for them to engage with an opportunity area. In parts of London they have been forced out of the area because of issues such as cost, indeed in parts of Southwark unfortunately. One thing is that prices go through the roof in the opportunity area so policy will disenfranchise people. There needs to be an opportunity for people and their families to benefit and continue to benefit in the area.

**Chair: In Colindale all these developments are going up and people are not seeing any benefits. Developments in car parks mean that there is now more car parking on streets. How does this benefit local people?**

Sarah Seaton: If I think about the positives. With the great west corridor will mean the opportunity area will mean homes and opportunity commercially. The community feels they are going to have a challenge with the scale of the development, but they see an opportunity with the improved transport links. The challenge comes when the individual sites come through with issues such as overshadowing. Planned way forward gives people comfort and opportunities to benefit because of infrastructure such as transport.

Jules Pipe: Tall buildings have their place if they are well designed and contribute well. The planning system isn't efficiently robust to protect against the negatives. They shouldn't go as high as possible but to suit the context of that site.

Cllr Martin Seaton: Systems must benefit local people. If you price people out they will leave London and go to other parts of the country.

**Chair: Population of Barnet is increasing with people filling up tower blocks from outside the Borough.**

Cllr Martin Seaton: Many developments are rented to local people. Generally, we create certainty with affordable rates, space for the community, good quality design. It should be on our terms and not the market's concerns.

**Chair: Is one person and one organisation accountable for each of the opportunity areas? You can write to me on that - you don't have to answer now  
What devolved powers would best enable you and the mayor to develop the opportunity areas?**

Jules Pipe: CPO. The other one is funding. The power to raise funding. Fiscal devolution.

**(Formalities and end of the meeting)**