

THE EXECUTIVE

7 OCTOBER 2003

DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF BARKING TOWN CENTRE	FOR DECISION	
<p><i>This report is presented to the Executive for consideration as it calls for the Executive's strategic guidance in areas where the Council does not have comprehensive existing policy.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report sets out the need for a policy framework to ensure that the Council's plans to redevelop Barking Town Centre meet high standards of environmental sustainability. The draft framework attached to the report proposes action in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy, waste and recycling, alternatives to car use, bio-diversity, the use of the town centre's green spaces and public realm, and mobilising the community. It identifies capacity building measures to support the implementation of the strategy and considers how the strategy might be funded.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>The Executive is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Adopt the framework attached to this report as the basis of further work to develop a fully costed action plan for an environmentally sustainable development of Barking Town Centre;2. Welcome the environmental targets set out in the London Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy and associated strategies for energy, waste, air quality, noise and biodiversity and commit itself to embedding these, or more challenging targets appropriate to the borough's circumstances, in policy relating to the town centre. <p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>Policies for environmental sustainability in Barking Town Centre are required to help meet national, regional and borough policy objectives and to enhance the appeal of the town centre as a place to live, work and visit.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's vision for the renewal of Barking Town Centre is for high-quality design in construction, a public realm that enhances the quality of life for residents and a vibrant, more diverse local economy. Measures to promote environmental sustainability are an integral part of achieving these objectives. They will help improve the quality of life in the town centre for existing and new residents and create an environment that can attract businesses and consumers. Although much of the framework addresses the opportunity to "design out" damaging environmental impacts at the construction stage of new developments, the principles it contains are intended to apply equally to improvements to existing housing stock.
- 1.2 Development that incorporates high environmental standards will help promote the borough as a forward-looking destination of choice in Thames Gateway, with an urban environment that is considered one of the best in London. A strategy for the town centre can help pilot policies and approaches that can be developed into a borough environmental strategy to achieve the Council's vision of a cleaner, greener and safer borough for all residents. Success in the town centre will demonstrate the borough's commitment to achieving the aims of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan.
- 1.3 The strategy is intended to provide the basis for coordinated activity, greater innovation and more consistent use of best practice within the Council in taking forward Town Centre projects. It will strengthen the hand of officers in discussions with developers, enable the formation of stronger external partnerships and assist advocacy with the voluntary sector and local communities to achieve environmental improvements.
- 1.4 The strategy will also help the Council address the growing body of European and national legislation and policy guidance concerning environmental sustainability. Taking measures now to meet higher environmental standards in the redevelopment of the town centre will help the Council meet national, London and borough policy objectives to minimise greenhouse gas emissions, encourage alternatives to car travel and recycle more waste.

2. The Policy Context

- 2.1 The overwhelming consensus among scientists is that climate change caused by man-made carbon emissions has already begun and will continue into the future. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the government has committed itself to a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions¹ by 2010, with an aspirational target of a 60% reduction by 2050. This must be achieved mainly through reducing consumption and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. The Government's White Paper, *Our Energy Future - Creating a Low Carbon Economy* outlines changes in energy policy in response.
- 2.2 Barking and Dagenham Council is already a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration, which recognises that climate change is likely to be one of the most important drivers of change for local communities in the 21st Century. The Declaration commits the Council to work with central government to tackle the problems of climate change, including by developing a borough plan. Officers are

¹ From a baseline of 1990 emissions

currently costing proposals for mapping current CO2 levels in the borough, as part of a borough Climate Change Strategy for consideration by the Executive.

- 2.3 The London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC) has recommended a 20% reduction in London's CO2 by 2010, as a step towards meeting a 60% reduction by 2050. As the capital's housing stock is renewed only slowly and homes built now will still be occupied in 50 years time, the LSDC has pointed out that meeting the 2050 reduction means that challenging targets must be achieved for buildings being constructed now. This means that the Council must ensure that the redevelopment of Barking Town Centre is carried out to high standards of energy efficiency if it is to contribute to achieving targets for CO2 reduction.
- 2.4 Better care of the urban environment is central to the London Mayor's vision of London as "an exemplary sustainable world city". Measures to enable more efficient use and increased re-use of natural resources, greater use of renewable energy, and reductions in waste and environmental degradation are set out in the Draft London Plan (Spatial Development Strategy) and associated strategies for energy, waste, air quality, noise and biodiversity. More intensive development in Barking will make the application of these principles even more critical and require action to minimise noise and air pollution and to protect and enhance open spaces and biodiversity.
- 2.5 The Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) will have development plan status once the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill (currently timetabled for Spring 2004) is adopted and the standards it contains will apply to all developments, unless exceptional considerations apply. The radiating strategies for energy, waste, air quality, noise and biodiversity will be regarded as a "material consideration" when assessing applications. Although it will not have the same statutory weight of planning policy as is contained in an Urban Development Plan (UDP), Executive approval of an environmental strategy will provide policy guidance in the period before the Planning Bill is enacted, help the Council to prepare for the new policy regime and provide a starting point for the development of Interim Planning Guidance for Barking Town Centre and the review of the UDP.
- 2.6 Finally, there is a large and growing body of environmental legislation and guidance, much of it driven through the European Union, which is relevant to the objectives of this strategy. This is a rapidly changing area and we will need to do further work to map it and to keep our knowledge up to date, as we develop and implement our strategy for the town centre.

Draft Framework

- 3.1 The attached paper sets out a draft framework for action to achieve a more environmentally sustainable town centre. It considers issues of energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy sources, waste and recycling, alternatives to car use, the town centre's biodiversity and the best use of its public realm and green spaces. It also looks at how the strategy might be funded, measures to build the Council's capacity to implement this agenda and how to enlist the active support of the community.