

Inspector Paul Clark
C/O Charlotte Glancy, Programme Officer

18 March 2019

By email

Dear Inspector Clark,

Old Oak and Park Royal Local Plan Independent Examination

I am aware that the independent examination of the Local Plan for Old Oak and Park Royal is soon to consider matters related to the delivery of the regeneration policies set out in the draft Local Plan. I hope it may be helpful to send this letter to update the examination on the work that Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) is undertaking as a regeneration delivery body to bring forward comprehensive mixed-use development and supporting infrastructure at Old Oak. This work is focussed on Old Oak North as the first phase.

OPDC as a regeneration delivery body supports Policy P2, the supporting text and the development framework principles set out in the draft Local Plan. This policy is necessary to enable the co-ordinated regeneration that delivers the scale of physical, social, economic and environmental change required as a result of the area's designation as an Opportunity area in the London Plan.

The potential opportunity to bring forward development at Old Oak North has been recognised by a range of stakeholders in recent years. Unfortunately, delivering this opportunity through market forces has largely stalled as a result of a range of obstacles including disparate land ownerships and the requirement for significant investment in infrastructure. It is the role of OPDC as a regeneration body to remedy this market failure, to facilitate development and to build market confidence to ensure the long-term success of the area. To this end, OPDC has examined the feasibility of development in Old Oak North and worked with its planning team to put in place a bold but deliverable plan. That work has elicited significant market interest already but has also confirmed the need for substantial public sector intervention.

Last year, OPDC submitted a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for £250m of funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). I am pleased to say that the Chancellor's Spring Statement on 13 March confirmed that this bid was successful. This funding will enable OPDC to invest in land assembly and infrastructure to unlock development at Old Oak, bring forward early phases of housing and allow us to build market confidence in the long-term opportunities for the area. The HIF award represents a major vote of confidence from Government (which builds on the Government's Crossrail and HS2 commitments) and a tremendous boost for the future of Old Oak. Funding has been awarded in the clear knowledge that the unlocking of land for timely physical regeneration may require the use of compulsory purchase powers – this approach is supported in Policy D14 paragraphs 11.49 and 11.50 of the draft Local Plan.

It is likely that additional public funding will be necessary and OPDC acknowledges that development at Old Oak North is challenging, as the Local Plan states in Policy H2 paragraph 8.19. However, it is an area of strategic priority for the Mayor of London. Market cycles may change but the Local Plan is a long-term, 20-year plan for fundamental change. OPDC will continue to work with Government, local Boroughs and other funders and investors in the public and private sectors to explore additional funding sources where necessary to optimise the scale and quality of development in Old Oak North. The Local Plan supports this approach in Policy D11.

OPDC has instructed a substantial professional team to rapidly bring forward the first phase of major regeneration – Phase 1a. Phase 1a is a residential-led mixed use scheme which includes a major new road (referred to as ‘Park Road’) running from the south west to the north east of Old Oak North together with adjacent development plots. It is intended to be a catalyst that will facilitate future development. OPDC will seek to acquire all the land and rights required through negotiations with affected landowners and occupiers, but should that not prove possible, a compulsory purchase order will be made, as well as, in due course, a planning application(s). Work is underway to optimise the route of the road to achieve the appropriate balance between maximising regeneration benefits and carefully managing the impacts on existing businesses. Coupled with the new Old Oak Common Station, the delivery of Phase 1a with its new infrastructure will transform the accessibility and market profile of the area, creating the conditions for the longer-term positive changes and opportunities set out in the draft Local Plan.

Significant change is coming. The public sector is involved precisely because market forces alone are unable to deliver the extraordinary potential of the area. OPDC is both resourced and determined to deliver this potential and achieve the objectives for Old Oak that are set out in the Local Plan and the Mayor’s London Plan.

In this respect, the adoption of the draft Local Plan, with the policy support it provides for the steps we are taking to achieve transformational change, is particularly important.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Lunts', written in a cursive style.

David Lunts
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation