

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 23 OCTOBER 2018

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

MEAD LANE AREA, HERTFORD, MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Executive Members to consider the Masterplan Framework for the Mead Lane Area (HERT2) in Hertford:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: To recommend to Council that:

(A)	The Masterplan Framework for the strategic allocation Mead Lane Area, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.
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1.0 Background

1.1 The East Herts Approach to Master Planning was first presented to the District Planning Executive Panel in September 2017 (and agreed by Council on the 18th October 2017). The report sets out a series of steps that describe the various stages involved and processes expected for each of the District Plan strategic allocations. Whilst not a one-size-fits-all approach, the process is based upon a collaborative approach to identifying and resolving issues, creating a vision for what the site aspires to achieve, testing design options and

consulting upon preferred solutions. The output of this process is a masterplan framework or masterplan which is presented to members for consideration.

- 1.2 In order to embed the Masterplanning process in the District Plan, a new policy has been proposed through the Main Modifications Consultation. Policy DES1: Masterplanning requires all 'significant' development proposals to prepare a masterplan setting out the quantum and distribution of land uses; access; sustainable high quality design and layout principles; necessary infrastructure; the relationship between the site and other adjacent and nearby land uses; landscape and heritage assets and other relevant matters. Furthermore, the masterplan should be collaboratively prepared and informed by public participation. Finally, Policy DES1 states that in order to ensure sites are planned and delivered comprehensively, any application for development on part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the masterplan as a whole.
- 1.3 Members will be well aware of the Holding Direction which has been placed on the District Plan. In respect of the HERT2 site allocation, the implications are not the same as for the other Hertford proposed site allocations within the District Plan, that involve Green Belt release, as the site comprises brownfield land within the existing settlement boundaries of Hertford. However, in the context of bringing forward development in this location, it should be noted that, as part of a designated Employment Area in the adopted Local Plan whereby Policies EDE1 and HE8 apply, the area would not be free from any in-principle impediment at this stage. Although, it should also be recognised that elsewhere in the Local Plan, Policy HE5, which primarily relates to the (now developed) area to the West of Marshgate Drive, does also refer to the site area and its potential consideration for mixed use development. These matters aside, and in anticipation of the adoption of the plan, it is considered that proceeding with the preparation of the masterplan framework is deemed appropriate so not to delay

the submission of a planning application in due course.

- 1.4 The masterplan framework for the Mead Lane Area should provide sufficient information to inform the preparation of detailed aspects of the site at the planning application stage. The level of detail required for the masterplan framework will depend upon the likely form of delivery of the site. For example, if it is likely that the site will be delivered by a number of developers, more detail will be needed in the masterplan in order to provide more certainty on key matters so that future parties are very clear on what the site is expected to achieve. Where delivery is expected by one party, a masterplanning framework may be prepared which sets out key parameters and aspirations upon which further detail will be provided.
- 1.5 For each of the strategic sites allocated in the emerging District Plan a Steering Group has been, or will be established. This will comprise East Herts councillors, town and parish councillors, representatives of the local community and other interested groups where appropriate. The Steering Group is a sounding board for key issues and depending upon specific circumstances, for discussing detailed design elements whilst preparing the planning application through to when construction is underway. In respect of the HERT2 strategic allocation, Shaping Hertford Steering Group is the appropriate Steering Group for progressing this masterplan.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The site subject of this report comprises land to the eastern side of Mead Lane. It is a strategic allocation within the emerging District Plan. The site landowners St William/National Grid together with Norbury Fencing & Building Materials Limited have embarked on a masterplanning exercise with Officers. Subsequent to the District Plan Examination in Public, work has advanced on preparing a masterplan framework, which will support the

planning application process in anticipation of the adoption of the Plan. This is to ensure that the preparation of the masterplan framework does not delay the submission of a planning application.

- 2.2 Policy HERT2 of the emerging District Plan sets out the proposed land uses and other policy requirements, as well as a requirement that a masterplan is produced in a collaborative manner with stakeholders. The District Plan policy states that the Mead Lane Area will deliver around 200 new homes and 3,000m² of B1 employment floor space or other employment generating uses that would be compatible with the uses on neighbouring land.
- 2.3 The Masterplan Framework provided at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** sets out a general vision for the site but does not provide a quantum of development due to ongoing discussions with consultees, particularly surrounding traffic generation due to the potential impacts the scheme could have on the existing road network (Mill Road, A414). Instead the masterplan framework provides a 'high level' overview of the opportunities at the site and masterplanning principles, which will inform a formal detailed scheme to be submitted at the planning application stage.
- 2.4 The masterplan framework seeks to emphasise the highly sustainable location of the site within Hertford, being in close proximity to public transport hubs, connectivity to the centre of Hertford, proximity to public open spaces, opportunities to take advantage of cycle routes and placing importance on the river towpath and the opportunity to provide new connections through the site to the towpath.
- 2.5 The document also seeks to inform any future application in terms of design concepts and how the development needs to respond to local vernacular and the context of the site, its canal side frontage, and former industrial use.

- 2.6 The masterplan framework begins with a series of maps illustrating the geography of the site and the constraints. These constraints include differences in land levels, responding to commercial and residential buildings, easements due to gas mains running through the site and existing infrastructure that is required to remain on site. This then progresses to an opportunities map demonstrating how the development can respond. This includes opening up the site onto the river frontage and towpath taking advantage of views, improving connectivity through the site, providing new links into the centre of Hertford and public open space beyond, the creation of new green spaces within the site, ecological buffers and enhancements to the public realm along Marshgate Drive.
- 2.7 The key masterplanning principles set out relate to a combination of residential and commercial uses in accordance with Policy HERT2 that would be developed. Emphasis is placed on access and movement not only within the site, but also extending outside of the site and the need for pedestrian routes onto the towpath and wider connections towards the public open space and Hertford Town Centre. Pedestrian and cycle routes are to be prioritised within the development. Furthermore the access and movement map shows the potential for a bus link running through the site, linking into the commercial area to the east and onto Mead Lane, which is in accordance with the Mead Lane Urban Design Framework and is to safeguard the potential for future provision of a bus loop. The use of green spaces and green links within the site and along the Marshgate Drive frontage as part of the public realm improvements are key to the vision of the site, which includes podium gardens, new amenity along the towpath, small parklets and a pocket park.
- 2.8 In order to manage the stewardship of key public amenity spaces and site infrastructure, there will be a management and maintenance approach agreed during the course of the planning application with St William appointing a management

company. St William have a dedicated Estate Management team responsible for ensuring the vision for the development remains strong throughout its lifetime.

Engagement

- 2.9 Throughout the Plan-making stage a number of meetings have been held with Officers to discuss a wide variety of matters. These discussions have informed the Masterplan Framework and the emerging application.
- 2.10 St William has undertaken a round of public engagement holding a public exhibition on the Masterplan Framework in June 2018 seeking the views of local residents and local businesses. A targeted door knocking exercise was also undertaken again seeking views of local residents. It is also noted that a website has been set up by St William on behalf of both land owners to keep residents up to date with the progress of the scheme and for residents to feedback on the scheme, which is to be maintained throughout the lifetime of the project.
- 2.11 A Steering Group 'Shaping Hertford' has been set up to enable the open debate of issues. This Group comprises a number of councillors, representatives of Hertfordshire County Council, Hertford Town Council and the Hertford Civic Society, along with a local business representative. St William have presented their proposals at a session with Steering Group members and has actively engaged in debated with the group on a range of topics and issues. A number of matters have been discussed at the Steering Group sessions for each site including:
- Highway issues, including traffic on Mill Road and the impact on the A414;
 - Pedestrian and vehicular access;
 - Access points and footpath and cycle routes and linkages to Hertford and the Canal;
 - Public open space and recreation provision;

- Sustainable drainage and landscaping;
- Layout and design.

In addition, there have been separate meetings with Officers and St William have been liaising with Hertfordshire County Council in respect of education, highways and drainage and continue to do so in establish the quantum of development that could come forward at the site. These discussions have informed the Masterplan Framework and will also inform any emerging planning application for the site. It should also be noted that St William have also engaged with the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel on two occasions, which route was pursued in order to provide an independent assessment of proposals and their input has been helpful in shaping the emerging schemes.

Conclusions

2.12 St William intends to submit a planning application in autumn 2018. It is the view of Officers that the Masterplan Framework for the site provides a basis upon which to move forward to preparing the detailed application. It provides a framework regarding the main issues of significance in relation to the development, within which a planning application submission can be made. The masterplan framework provides a vision for the site, with emphasis placed on its sustainable location, green spaces, connectivity, pedestrian/cycle routes through the site and the wider town.

2.13 It is recommended that the Masterplan Framework, as detailed at **Essential Reference Papers 'B'**, be agreed as a material consideration¹ for Development Management purposes.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

¹ A material consideration is a matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision.

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Emerging East Herts District Plan Main Modifications Consultation
Version 2018 – Chapter 7 - Hertford,
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/mainmodifications>

Inspector's Final Report -

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/36321/Inspectors-Final-Report>

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