

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 26 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

LAND WEST OF HERTFORD (SOUTH OF WELWYN ROAD/WEST OF THIEVES LANE) MASTERPLANNING FRAMEWORK

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Executive Members to consider the Masterplanning Framework for the following site in Hertford:
 - (i) Land West of Hertford (South of Welwyn Road/West of Thieves Lane) (HERT3)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: To recommend to Council that:

(A)	The Masterplanning Framework for Land West of Hertford (South of Welwyn Road/West of Thieves Lane) (HERT3), 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 was 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 The masterplan should therefore 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 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.
- 1.4 For each of the strategic sites allocated in the 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.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The site subject of this report comprises land to the south of Welwyn Road/west of Thieves Lane to the west of Hertford. It is a strategic allocation within the District Plan 2018. It should be noted that the HERT3 allocation within the District Plan is a split site comprising two parcels of land: Land north of Welwyn Road and land south of Welwyn Road/west of Thieves Lane. The parcel of land subject of this report is the land south of Welwyn Road/West of Thieves Lane. The site landowners, Croudace have embarked on a masterplanning exercise with Officers. Subsequent to the District Plan Examination in Public and adoption of the District Plan, work has advanced on preparing a masterplan framework, which will support the planning application process.
- 2.2 Policy HERT3 of the 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. As stated above the HERT3 allocation within the District Plan is a split site, with two parcels of land making up the allocation. The District Plan allocation states that the HERT3 allocation as a whole will deliver a minimum of 550 homes, with 'around 250 homes' being provided on the land South of Welwyn Road/West of Thieves Lane.
- 2.3 The Masterplan Framework provided in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** sets out a general vision for the site providing a 'high level' overview of the opportunities at the site and masterplanning principles, which will inform a formal detailed scheme to be submitted at planning stage.

- 2.4 The Masterplan Framework seeks to emphasise the location of the site, which is within relatively close proximity to Hertford North train station and is within close proximity to a number of services including a parade of shops and schools. The Masterplan Framework also states that sustainable travel will form a key part of the development with the potential for a new bus link, the creation of paths for both cyclists and pedestrians and landscaping. The Framework discusses the provision of an off-site, cycle route which forms part of the policy requirement. Whilst not all parts of the policy have been fully addressed, they will continue to be explored by the Council through the detailed development proposals. 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.
- 2.5 The document begins with a map illustrating the geography of the site and its constraints. These constraints include differences in land levels, site features, character and landscaping. The document also considers the need for the site to be sensitively designed to respect heritage assets including the Grade II* registered park and gardens of Panshanger Park. The Masterplan Framework then progresses to an opportunities map demonstrating how the development can build on and improve the condition and quality of the site and its character. The development shall seek to maintain the views towards Blakemore Wood from the junction with Welwyn Road and Thieves Lane, maintaining a buffer to the ancient woodland and safe and attractive corridors for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2.6 The Masterplan Framework also discusses governance and stewardship. A management company would be established to maintain public areas and spaces. Future residents will contribute towards the associated maintenance costs and will have control of the company and can decide how these areas are governed.

Engagement

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 Croudace has undertaken a round of public engagement holding a public exhibition on the draft proposal in July 2018 seeking the views of local residents.
- 2.9 A Steering Group has been set up to enable the open debate of issues. This Group comprises a number of councillors, representatives of Hertford Town Council and representatives from the Hertford Civic Society and the Sele Farm Neighbourhood Plan group. Croudace have presented their proposals at a session with Steering Group members and has actively engaged in debate 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;
 - Pedestrian and vehicular access;
 - Public open space and recreation provision;
 - Sustainable drainage and landscaping;
 - Layout and design.

In addition, there have been separate meetings with Officers and Croudace have been liaising with Hertfordshire County Council in respect of highways and drainage and continue to do so. These discussions have informed the Masterplanning Framework and will also inform any emerging planning application for the site. It should also be noted that Croudace have also engaged with the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel. The Panel provided an independent assessment of proposals and their input has been helpful in shaping the emerging scheme.

Conclusions

- 2.10 Croudace, intend to submit a planning application in 2019. It is the view of Officers that the Masterplanning Framework for the site provides a basis upon which to move forward to preparing the detailed application stages. It provides a framework regarding the main issues of significance in relation to the development within which a planning application submission can be made.
- 2.11 It is recommended that the Masterplanning Framework, as detailed at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, be agreed as a material consideration¹ for Development Management purposes.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

East Herts District Plan October 2018 – Chapter 7 - Hertford,
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan>

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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.