

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 08 OCTOBER 2019

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

LAND NORTH AND EAST OF WARE (WARE2) MASTERPLANNING
FRAMEWORK

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Executive Members to consider the Masterplanning Framework for the WARE2 Land North and East of Ware site.

RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE: To recommend to Council that:

(A)	The Land North and East of Ware Masterplanning Framework for the strategic allocation known as WARE2 Land North and East of Ware, 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 set 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 Masterplanning Framework or high-level Masterplan which is presented to members for consideration.

- 1.2 In order to embed the Masterplanning process, District Plan Policy DES1: Masterplanning requires all 'significant' development proposals to prepare a Masterplan. This should set 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 Masterplanning Framework 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 Masterplanning Framework will depend upon the likely form of delivery of the site. For example, where delivery is expected by one party who has been involved throughout the Plan-making stages, a Masterplanning Framework may be prepared, which provides key parameters and aspirations which form the basis of detailed design determined through a planning application process at a later stage.
- 1.4 In order to bring forward the strategic sites allocated in the adopted District Plan, Steering Groups have been established by the Council. These are comprised of East Herts councillors, town and parish councillors, representatives of the local community and other interested groups, where appropriate. Each 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 WARE2 allocation, the North & East of Ware Steering Group is the appropriate mechanism for progressing this Masterplanning Framework.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The land to the North and East of Ware is a strategic allocation (WARE2) within the District Plan, which was adopted on 23rd October 2018. As such, the site has been released from the Green Belt and is immediately available for development to accommodate at least 1,000 new homes by 2033 with a further 500 dwellings to be provided in the event that suitable mitigation measures to identified constraints on both the local and wider strategic road networks can be identified and agreed by Hertfordshire County Council as Transport Authority, and subject to compliance with relevant policy criteria in any future planning application.
- 2.2 Policy WARE2 of the District Plan sets out the proposed land uses and other policy requirements for the development, as well as a requirement that a Masterplan is produced in a collaborative manner with stakeholders. It is intended that the site will ultimately deliver around 1,500 new homes of varying mix and tenure, including 40% affordable housing, a care home/flexi-care or sheltered properties, self-build and custom housing and the provision of a site for 8 serviced plots for Travelling Showpeople. The site will also deliver a range of other uses and infrastructure, including, *inter alia*, a new link road, primary school/s, a secondary school (to enable ultimate provision of 8 forms of entry); neighbourhood centre, around 3ha of employment provision, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, public open spaces, and consideration of the need for cemetery provision.

2.3 The Masterplan Framework provided at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** sets out a vision for the development of the site supported by a series of key area strands. These seek to respond to the policy requirements as set out in Policy WARE2 and have been established as a result of an analysis of constraints and opportunities, through discussions with officers, North and East of Ware Steering Group, local communities and other stakeholders.

2.4 The document provides a clear vision (page 2) for the development:

Our vision is to deliver a comprehensively planned extension for the town of Ware meeting the needs of a growing community, which provides:

- A new place sensitively shaped by the rich landscape fabric of the site, integrating woodland, trees and hedgerows into a green network connecting Ware and the countryside;*
- A community comprising four distinct neighbourhoods, each with focal points at their heart. Hubs with a mix of shops, flexible employment spaces, schools, health and community centres establishing vibrant and thriving neighbourhoods;*
- A connected place, knit into the town through a network of green corridors providing safe walking and cycling routes. An interconnected sequence of green gathering spaces for relaxation and recreation, with Cowfields retained as a central focal natural greenspace in Ware.*

Land North and East of Ware has not been identified as a new Garden Village, but the design ethic embodied by those developments is one that underpins this Vision:

- *innovation and imagination;*
- *marrying town and country;*
- *co-operation in design and place-making;*
- *character, distinctiveness and harmony;*
- *room to breathe.*

(‘The Garden City Design Ethic’ - Garden City Standards for the 21st Century, Guide 3: Design and Masterplanning’, published by the TCPA December 2017)

2.5 The Framework itself builds from background policy setting, to an understanding of the local context and site analysis, before describing the engagement process undertaken (see more below) and culminating with the presentation of the Masterplanning Framework and its objectives. The latter part of the document clearly articulates the high level context for the future development of the site and provides the basis for delivery of key features and use of spaces. Due to the ultimate location of the secondary school yet to be finalised, the document sets out three options for the overall concept of the site. The majority of the uses remain in the same locations throughout these permutations, but the three plans have been included so as not to fetter any preferred outcome with HCC going forward.

Engagement

2.6 Throughout the Plan-making stage a number of meetings were held with Officers to discuss a wide variety of matters. These discussions informed the initial stages of the Masterplanning Framework and have been ongoing since the adoption of the District Plan.

2.7 A North and East of Ware Steering Group was also established to enable the open discussion of issues appertaining to the allocation in the District Plan. This Group comprises a number of Executive Members, local ward councillors (at county,

district and town/parish levels), The Ware Society, the local Neighbourhood Planning Group, a business representative and community representatives for Ware, alongside officers from East Herts and Hertfordshire County Councils, as appropriate.

- 2.8 To progress the formulation of the Masterplanning Framework, Ptarmigan and its associates have actively engaged with the North & East of Ware Steering Group and there have been four meetings to date since the adoption of the District Plan (in February, June, July and September 2019). These meetings have allowed the Steering Group the opportunity to actively engage with the promoters to probe the emerging approach and discuss material prior to public consultations.
- 2.9 Public consultation has taken place through two public drop-in events, the material for which was agreed with officers in advance. The first public engagement involved community planning workshops held over two days in May 2019 (alongside other meetings held with stakeholders in the communities of Ware, Thundridge and Wareside). This public event was attended by over 700 people and the workshops sought to gain a better understanding of the town from its residents and business operators prior to any development proposals being developed.
- 2.10 The second event in July 2019, at which over 900 people attended, reported back and built on the information gained from the first event. This influenced a first draft of three indicative layouts for the masterplanning framework, which formed part of the second event's display. As with the current Masterplanning Framework proposals, the three versions displayed were broadly similar to each other in proposing four new neighbourhoods, except in respect of the location of the proposed site for the provision of the 8 form entry secondary school site, to which a final location is yet to be determined pending views of HCC Education, *inter alia*. The feedback from

second community engagement has further contributed in shaping the final Masterplanning Framework document.

- 2.11 Prior to an outline planning application being submitted in 2020, it is intended that a further public exhibition event will be held in the New Year. More detailed proposals will be available at that time to build on the broad principles within the Masterplanning Framework.
- 2.12 In respect of the North and East of Ware Steering Group, it is the intention that (as with other Steering Groups in the district), there will be continued engagement as planning application/s come forward for consideration.
- 2.13 It should also be noted that the promoters have engaged with the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel, on 7th August 2019, and that the principles of the draft Masterplanning Framework were generally positively received.

Conclusions

- 2.14 With the adopted District Plan in place, it is important that the Council can demonstrate the delivery of its strategic sites, and in particular to expedite the delivery of new homes as planned within the first five years of the Plan (this site is proposed to start to deliver accommodation towards the end of that period). It is therefore important that, while maintaining flexibility, the Masterplanning Framework should provide sufficient breadth of information to guide both future developers and, importantly, decision-makers. An agreed Masterplanning Framework will be a material consideration¹ in the decision-making process and is key to ensuring that any planning application for the WARE2 allocation North and East of Ware should meet the Council's aspirations.
- 2.15 It is the view of Officers that this Masterplanning Framework is a document that provides a strong vision supported by clear

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.

objectives and sufficient detail against which future applications can be measured. It provides a suitable framework for the main issues of significance in relation to the proposal, whilst providing enough flexibility that further detail can be agreed at appropriate stages as application proposals are worked up, as necessary. Officers will continue to work with the Ptarmigan, its agents, and other stakeholders to ensure that the best possible quality design is achieved on this site.

- 2.16 The Masterplanning Framework contains a vision and series of aims that reflect the requirements of Policy WARE2 and, with appropriate design tools, these ambitions should be realised on the site. It is therefore recommended that the Masterplanning Framework, as detailed at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, be agreed as a material consideration 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 – Chapter 9 – Ware:

https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/33198/9.-Ware-WARE-Policies/PDF/District_Plan_11_-_C_9_-_WARE_WARE_POLICIES.pdf

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