

East Herts Council Report

Council

Date of Meeting: 29 January 2020

Report by: Cllr Haysey, Leader of the Council

Report title: East of Manor Links, Bishop's Stortford Master Plan Document

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- To enable Members to consider the Masterplanning Framework for the East of Manor Links site, Bishop's Stortford.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:

(a) The Master Plan Document for the East of Manor Links site, Bishop's Stortford, as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The Master Plan Document sets a vision and series of objectives for the future development of the East of Manor Links site in Bishop's Stortford. The Document reflects the policy requirements of Policy BISH9 of the East Herts District Plan, 2018 and it is therefore recommended that the Master Plan Document be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 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 masterplan framework or masterplan which is presented to members for consideration.
- 2.2 In order to embed the Masterplanning process in the District Plan, 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.
- 2.3 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, where delivery is expected by one party who has been involved throughout the Plan-making stages, a masterplan 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. If it is likely that the site will be delivered by a

number of developers who have not been involved in the Plan-making process, more detail will be needed in the masterplan in order to provide certainty on key matters so that future parties are very clear on what the site is expected to achieve.

- 2.4 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.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1 The land at East of Manor Links, Bishop's Stortford is a strategic allocation within the adopted District Plan under Policy BISH9.
- 3.2 Policy BISH9 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 site allocation is for around 50 homes on land no longer used by the golf course. The site is 2.14 hectares in size comprising overgrown shrubs and some notable trees. The site is located to the east of Manor Links and to the south of Cecil Close (off Manor Links).
- 3.3 Manor Links is a single access residential road which joins the A1250 Dunmow Road to the north at the junction of Dunmow Road, Manor Links and Parsonage Lane. Properties on the eastern side of Manor Links are mostly single storey bungalows, except at its southern end where two storey houses are grouped around a small landscaped roundabout. Properties in Cecil Close are two storeys.
- 3.4 Section 1 of the Master Plan Document (provided in Essential Reference Paper 'A') introduces the applicant team, while Section 2 looks at the planning policy context. The Document

refers to guidance that will inform the final design, including Building for Life 12 and Hertfordshire's Building Futures toolkit on sustainable design.

- 3.5 Section 3 of the Document includes an appraisal of the local context of the site, looking at proximity to services such as schools and public transport for example. These are illustrated in plan form, showing approximate walking distances from the centre of the site to these facilities.
- 3.6 Section 4 comprises a site appraisal of various design considerations, including topography, landscape and ecology, surrounding built form, access and accessibility. The Document considers the relationship between existing properties in Manor Links to the west and Cecil Close to the north, where the properties adjoining the site are between 30 and 40 metres away from the edge of the proposed site. Again, these considerations are presented in plan form.
- 3.7 Section 5 continues the design considerations of the site. It takes the site considerations and explores opportunities to take advantage of existing landscaping features, enhancing these through additional planting and a variety of green spaces which have multi-functional purposes such for wildlife, for play and for sustainable drainage systems. The Document explains that such spaces will be maintained by a private management company.
- 3.8 The Document describes the access routes into the site and sets principles for parking provision for vehicles and bikes, and for inclusive accessibility throughout the site for pedestrians and cyclists, including off-site improvements such as the creation of a new pedestrian crossing point on Dunmow Road to the west of the current roundabout. Again, the Document explains that communal spaces (shared surfaces, external lighting, sub-station and parking management for visitor spaces) will be maintained by the private management company.
- 3.9 Section 6 of the Document sets the design aspirations for the site. It comprises an appraisal of the local character, looking at materials, colour palette, mass and scale of nearby properties. Inspired by the local vernacular, the site proposes a traditional

style and appearance of properties. The Document sets out how properties will be designed to seek energy reductions above and beyond current building regulations, will provide on-plot electric vehicle charging points and measures to reduce water usage and manage surface water.

- 3.10 Section 7 of the Document describes how the collaborative process has informed the evolution of the site's design. Here, the Document sets the vision for the site; for the delivery of a variety of high-quality traditional style homes of efficient, sustainable methods of construction set in an attractive landscape-led development where streets are inclusive and well connected. A series of plans illustrate how the applicant's thoughts have evolved through the consideration of the site's constraints and opportunities, and as a result of public engagement.
- 3.11 Section 8 of the Document sets out the concept masterplan which illustrates key development principles such as the location of single storey homes, the retention of a central tree belt, the location of a sustainable drainage feature, shared surfaces, views, feature corners and pedestrian links. These key principles are listed and illustrated in plan form on page 19 of the Document.
- 3.12 The vision has been developed through undertaking a detailed analysis of the constraints and opportunities of the site, through discussions with the local community at a public exhibition and through the Steering Group process which included key stakeholders such as local ward members, the Town Council and Civic Federation. Two Steering Group meetings have been held where members debated a number of key concerns and ambitions for the site. Section 9 of the Document summarises the public engagement event and the responses received.
- 3.13 One of the key areas of concern raised is the potential impact of the development on the local highway network, particularly during school drop off and pick up times, when parents use Manor Links as a short stay car park. Another key area of

concern is the potential for airport related parking and the need to ensure the site layout is designed to prohibit this. The Document therefore includes a highway strategy which will be supported through technical work alongside the forthcoming planning application. Pre-application discussions have been undertaken with the highway authority and will continue through the creation of detailed plans.

- 3.14 The Document concludes in Section 10 with an illustrative layout of the site and sketch illustrations of street elevations showing the proposed materials and palette in context.
- 3.15 An application is anticipated to be submitted early in 2020. The application will be in full providing all details on design, layout, housing mix and highway mitigation among other elements.

Engagement

- 3.16 There have been two Steering Group and Officer Meetings in October and December 2019. The Steering Group comprised local ward members and representatives from Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Civic Federation as well as a resident of Manor Links, who all made valuable contributions to the discussions. Furthermore, a public exhibition was held in November, hosted at the Bishop's Stortford Football Club. Approximately 120 homes from the surrounding area were sent a newsletter and invitation to the exhibition. The leaflet distribution area was agreed with officers in consultation with members.
- 3.17 In addition to the Steering Group Meetings, several pre-application meetings have taken place with officers of the Council and County Council focusing on issues such as highways, education, landscape and design.

Conclusions

- 3.18 It is the view of Officers that the Master Plan Document provides a sound basis upon which to move forward to prepare the detailed application stages. It provides a framework for the main issues of significance in relation to the proposal, whilst providing enough flexibility that further detail can agreed at

appropriate stages at a later date. Officers will continue to work with the applicant and other stakeholders to ensure that the best design possible is achieved on this site.

- 3.19 The Master Plan Document contains a vision and series of objectives that reflect the requirements of Policy BISH9, and with appropriate design tools, these ambitions will be achieved on the site. It is therefore recommended that the Masterplan Concept Document as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B', be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes¹.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The District Plan requires strategic sites to undertake a masterplanning process.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If a scheme comes forward without going through the masterplanning process, it would be contrary to the District Plan.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The masterplanning process includes public engagement and steering group meetings with members and local representatives. This is explained above in more detail.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

Bishop's Stortford: All Saints, Central, Meads, Silverleys and South

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 East Herts District Plan October 2018 – Chapter 5 - Bishop's Stortford, <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan>

7.2 ERPA: East of Manor Links Master Plan Document

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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.