

# East Herts Council Report

## Executive

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	8 February 2022
<b>Report by:</b>	Councillor Goodeve, Executive Member for Planning and Growth
<b>Report title:</b>	Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford, Refined Masterplan Document
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	Bishop's Stortford - Central

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## Summary

- To enable Executive Members to consider the revised/refined Masterplan Document for the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford.

## **RECOMMENDATION for Executive to recommend to Council that:**

- (a) The Refined Masterplan Document for the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford as detailed in Appendix A to this report, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.**

### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

- 1.1 In accordance with District Plan Policy DES1, a revised masterplan document has been produced for the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford in collaboration with the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford Steering Group.

### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The general approach to Master Planning was first presented to the District Planning Executive Panel in September 2017 (and agreed by the Council on the 18th October 2017). The process is

based upon a collaborative approach between the Local Planning Authority, the developer and stakeholders; 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 Master planning Framework or Masterplan which is presented to members for their consideration.

- 2.2 In order to embed the Masterplanning process, District Plan Policy DES1: Masterplanning requires all 'significant' development proposals to be the subject of a Masterplan. The Masterplan should be collaboratively prepared and informed by public participation.
- 2.3 The Masterplan 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.
- 2.4 Policy DES1 advises 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.
- 2.5 The Masterplanning document 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 document 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 Document 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.

- 2.6 Steering groups have been established for each town in the District to help inform the development of strategic sites allocated in the adopted District Plan and other significant sites that come forward for development. These are comprised of 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.
- 2.7 The Goods Yard site benefits from an approved Masterplan (granted 31st October 2017) for mixed use development. This enabled the grant of a hybrid planning permission on 18th July 2018 for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide a mix of uses including 586 residential units (Use Class C3); 3,004sqm of office floorspace (Use Class B1); 1,001sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class A1-A4); 491sqm of dual / alternative use retail and health care floorspace (Use Classes A1-A4 / D1); 85 bed hotel (Use Class C1); a care home comprising up to 55 units (Use Class C2); a new link road through the site connecting Station Road /Dane Street with London Road; two multi-storey station car parks (966 spaces); new cycle parking; car parking for the residential development; improvements to the Bishop's Stortford transport interchange; new and altered access points from the adopted highway network; and associated landscaping and public realm works.

### **3.0 Reasons**

- 3.1 The development that benefits from planning permission was proposed to be built out in 10 phases. So far, four phases have been implemented: the link road (London Road to Station Road), the first multi storey car park, and blocks A and B which are mixed commercial and residential (325 flats and 1,500 sq. metres of retail floorspace) are currently under construction.

- 3.2 Solum, the developers have advised that a combination of events has necessitated a review of the consented scheme and the need to revise and reconsider the previously approved Masterplan. Of major significance has been the decision of Network Rail to retain the railway sidings at the north eastern part of the site. This has reduced the developable site area.
- 3.3 In accordance with Policies BISH1, BISH2 and BISH7 of the District Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan for Bishop's Stortford All Saints, Central, South and Thorley, the revised Masterplan proposes a mixed use development of residential and commercial floorspace, including provision of a 90 bed room hotel, health care floorspace, two multi storey car parks, improvements to the Bishop's Stortford transport interchange, new and altered access points from the adopted highway network; together with associated landscaping and public realm works. There will also be a net increase of approximately 100 homes.
- 3.4 The revised Masterplan proposes the delivery of this revised quantum of development within a smaller developable area which will incorporate a range of building types (with heights of 4 – 7 storeys) and densities.
- 3.5 The revised Masterplan document has been developed collaboratively between the Local Planning Authority, the developer and stakeholders including the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford Steering Group. The developers have also engaged with the Allies and Morrison; the authors of 'Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Framework' for a Design Review workshops and site walkabout.
- 3.6 In general the contents of the modified Masterplan have been met with a positive response; recognizing the physical challenges presented by a situation outside of the developer's control. Suggestions have been made regarding landscaping and

the need to review proposed uses adjacent to the sidings, but these are considered to be matters that can be the subject of a more detailed review at planning application stage.

- 3.7 The revised Masterplan document, as set out in **Appendix A**, sets out the general development principles for the amended site area. It seeks to build upon the principles previously agreed for this site, by providing high quality mixed used development; however this will be provided within the context of a smaller site boundary which will incorporate higher densities and higher buildings.
- 3.8 Whilst there is in principle support for the revised Masterplan it is considered that given that the site is one, if not the, most sustainable sites within the District coupled with the fact that the site is within an Air Quality Management Area, considerable efforts must be made to reduce reliance on the private car in this revised Masterplan. This will mean that there will need to be for a much greater emphasis on utilizing car clubs on this site (as opposed to provision of individual residential car parking spaces) and maximizing opportunities for improved pedestrian and cycle links within and adjacent to the site.
- 3.9 The requirement to revise the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford Masterplan therefore presents an opportunity for the site and indeed the development, to provide exemplary public realm attributes within an environmentally sustainable setting which maximises sustainable transport options. Achieving these attributes at this site will undoubtedly set future standards for development in the District.

## Engagement

3.10 Throughout the masterplan process a number of pre – application meetings have taken place with the Planning Service to discuss the broad principles of the revised Masterplan.

3.11 In addition four meetings have taken place with the Goods Yard Bishop’s Stortford Steering Group which comprises district and town council representatives and Hertfordshire County Council officers.

3.12 Public consultation has taken place through a consultation website, which was available for three weeks in October 2021. The consultation website was advertised via station adverts, local press release, e-bulletin to previous consultees and adverts on Facebook/Instagram targeting residents in Bishop’s Stortford.

3.13 There were 237 responses to the public consultation. The main points raised relate to:

- Concern about providing step free access from the east
- Design
- Opening date for the Multi Storey Car Park
- Concerns about transport and traffic including cycle lanes
- Concern about number and type of new homes being proposed and how many will be affordable
- Concerns about local infrastructure provision.

3.14 Some of the comments received highlight issues pertaining to the previously consented scheme - e.g. when will the multi storey car park open. However, comments were also made regarding matters that will be addressed in any future planning application including; provision of step free access, short term and town centre car parking provision, how will the proposals improve cycle and walking links to / from the town centre, how additional traffic will be addressed, what percentage of homes will be affordable and what provisions will be made for local services.

3.15 The results of this community engagement exercise have been collated by the developers and will be used to shape the revised planning application in due course.

## Conclusion

3.16 The requirement for, and the benefits of a Masterplan for larger development sites, is set out in Policy DES1 of the District Plan. An agreed Masterplan Document will be a material consideration in the decision-making process and is key to ensuring that any planning application seeks to meet the Local Planning Authority's aspirations.

3.17 The revised Masterplan seeks to address the challenges presented by a reduced developable area at the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford. It sets out a vision for a high quality mixed use development in Bishop's Stortford and presents an opportunity for that development to maximize sustainable transport options for the benefit of the public realm and public health.

3.18 The revised Masterplan for the Goods Yard responds positively to the policy requirements in both the District Plan and Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley.

3.19 The Planning Service considers that the revised Masterplan for the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford provides a good basis upon which to move forward to preparing a detailed application with the additional caveat that there should be a much greater emphasis on maximising sustainable transport options at this site.

3.20 The hybrid planning application is expected to be submitted in April 2022.

3.21 It is therefore recommended that the Masterplan document, as detailed at **Appendix A**, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.

#### **4.0 Options**

4.1 The Council could choose not to approve the revised Masterplan Document; however in doing so , it would likely jeopardise the determination of any future planning application relating to the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford in making the submission contrary to Policy DES1 of the East Herts District Plan 2018. The absence of an approved revised Masterplan could also weaken the Local Planning Authority's negotiation position in determining the application, in that the Local Planning Authority will not be in a position to adequately express the viewpoints of its various stakeholders.

#### **5.0 Risks**

5.1 If the scheme progresses to the planning application stage without a Masterplan, it will be contrary to Policy DES1 of the East Herts District Plan and opportunities for effective pre - application community engagement would have been lost.

#### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

6.1 The production of this revised Masterplan for the Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford has involved community engagement including a number of steering group meetings with members and local representatives. Additionally there has been three weeks of public consultation; the results of which will be used to revise and re-shape any planning application in future. This is explained above in more detail.

#### **Community Safety**

No



## **Data Protection**

No

## **Equalities**

No

## **Environmental Sustainability**

The Masterplan Document incorporates design principles that address environmental sustainability.

## **Financial**

No

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No

## **Specific Wards**

Bishop's Stortford – Central Ward

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 Appendix A: Goods Yard, Bishop's Stortford, Refined Masterplan Document

## **Contact Member**

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