

TITLE OF REPORT: Exemplar Neighbourhood Supplementary Planning Document and Masterplan

REPORT OF: Peter Udall – Strategic Director Economy, Innovation and Growth

Purpose of the Report

1. To request Cabinet to approve public consultation on the Exemplar Neighbourhood (EN) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and masterplan.

Background

2. The EN covers a large area of land including the High Street South area, the former Chandless Estate, the former freight depot site, the former Go-Ahead bus depot and the office blocks at Tynegate Precinct. It is bisected by the Gateshead Highway flyover.
3. The Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) allocates the entirety of the EN site for at least 1000 homes at an average density of 50 dwellings per hectare across the site.
4. Development that has taken place on site so far has been the Aldi supermarket on Sunderland Road, the conversion of Chad House to 89 apartments and the temporary conversion of Bede House to a school. Planning permission has been granted for 300 homes on the former Freight Depot and resolved to be granted for 26 homes on the former Go-Ahead bus depot.
5. The existing SPD (and part 2 (vi) of policy SG2 of the CSUCP) included the potential for a new pedestrian/cycle bridge link over the railway line that separates the Chandless area from the freight depot area. The rail bridge was hoped to be delivered as part of the Freight Depot development to improve pedestrian and cycle movement east and west. The cost and land take of the bridge proved to be prohibitive (approx. £1.3 million) and as such is undeliverable.
6. The existing EN SPD and masterplan was approved in 2013. Given the passage of time since approval of the SPD and masterplan and the development that has taken place on the site and costs of the railway bridge it is considered necessary for the SPD and masterplan to be updated.

7. In 2020, Ian Darby Partnership (IDP) were appointed to update the SPD and masterplan following a competitive tender process.
8. Following consultation with Environment and Transport Portfolio in January 2021 IDP conducted their own informal consultation exercise. This exercise informed the current draft of the SPD and masterplan which is available at www.gateshead.gov.uk/Gateshead-Exemplar-Neighbourhood-Masterplan-and-SPD.
9. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the Council's own Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and consultation on previous SPDs it is proposed to carry out a 6-week public consultation on the draft SPD and masterplan. This will be using a variety of methods such as social media, e-mail and on-line. The Council is then required to take account of any representations made and, if necessary, carry out additional public consultation (this can be less than 6 weeks) and amend the documents. The final decision whether to adopt the SPD and masterplan will need to be taken by full Council.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - i. Authorises public consultation to take place on the SPD and masterplan (and any subsequent consultation).
 - ii. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation & Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, to make any amendments to the SPD and masterplan, following the public consultation.

For the following reasons:

- i. To comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's SCI and to ensure consistency with consultation on previous SPDs.
- ii. To ensure that new development and infrastructure for the Exemplar Neighbourhood comes forward in a comprehensive and coordinated way and to provide further guidance on current CSUCP policies relating to the site.

Policy and legislative context

1. The existing SPD and masterplan for the Exemplar Neighbourhood was adopted by the Council in July 2013. The CSUCP was adopted by the Council in March 2015 and allocates the entire Exemplar Neighbourhood (policy SG2) as a Key Site for at least 1000 homes at an average density of 50 dwellings per hectare. The SPD provides further guidance on the Exemplar Neighbourhood site.
2. Policy CS2 of the CSUCP requires that the Exemplar Neighbourhood Key Site is brought forward in accordance with approved masterplans to demonstrate a comprehensive and coordinated approach to site development and infrastructure provision. The masterplan has been produced to comply with this requirement and therefore future development proposals will need to be in accordance with the masterplan.
3. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 require that public consultation on SPDs is no less than 4 weeks. The Council's Statement of Community Interest (SCI) also promotes public consultation by a variety of means. Officers consider that a 6-week consultation period strikes the right balance between complying with the above regulations and giving the public sufficient opportunity and time to view the relevant documents and make representations. This is consistent with the approach taken on previous SPDs.

Public engagement that has taken place so far

4. Following consultation with Environment and Transport Portfolio in January 2021 IDP conducted their own informal consultation exercise. This exercise informed the current draft of the SPD and masterplan. IDP undertook a series of engagement sessions during the first week of March 2021 with the following groups.
 - Ward Councillors and relevant Portfolio Holders
 - Gateway Studios
 - Gateshead Youth Parliament
 - Gateshead Council Officers
5. These sessions were conducted via Teams and Zoom owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. They consisted of a presentation from IDP, including details on proposals followed by discussion and questions.
6. These sessions were successful and the majority of comments were supportive of the proposals. A strong theme that emerged was the ability to make walkable neighbourhoods.

7. A draft of the annotated masterplan image was made publicly available via the PlaceChangers website to allow direct comment on proposals from members of the public. This was available between 1st and 31st March 2021 and was advertised on the High Street South webpage and the Exemplar Neighbourhood webpage on the Council's website.
8. Contact was also made (via Mailchimp) with members of the public who have previously indicated their desire to be informed of High Street South activity, to alert them to the informal consultation and ability to comment. This gained 58 responses and over 1800 views. Comments varied but as with the engagement sessions, walkable routes and green space came across as a strong desire. Opinions on density varied from desiring a higher number of detached properties to a desire that the urban setting should have a higher density than proposed. Overall, the opinions expressed were supportive of the proposals.

Key aspects of the SPD and masterplan

9. The SPD and masterplan has considered the changing economic, social and environmental landscape since 2013.

Rail bridge

10. The rail bridge was expected to be delivered as part of the Freight Depot development to improve pedestrian and cycle movement east and west. The cost and land take of the bridge is prohibitive (approx. £1.3 million) and as such undeliverable.
11. In the work undertaken by IDP and their sub-contractors this added cost and likely land take would reduce the developable land and drive up costs across the remaining development sites. As such an alternative arrangement is proposed within the draft SPD and masterplan to allow for a shared route on the existing footpath over the railway (on the A184) and then immediately allowing for access into the site, away from the road, with an option to continue and simply access via the Park Road entrance at the north of the site. Both entrances onto the site connect into a proposed cycle route through the Exemplar Neighbourhood, connecting into the wider network.

Climate change emergency

12. The SPD and masterplan have considered the implications of climate change. In particular, the creation of a neighbourhood that promotes walking and cycling and space for sustainable drainage (SuDS).

Gateshead Highway flyover

13. The masterplan provides a flexible approach so that the neighbourhood can be developed with the presence of the flyover whilst allowing sufficient space for it to be removed in the future.

Home types

14. The work undertaken by IDP and their sub-contractors has considered which type of homes are likely to be in demand in this location whilst still allowing for an average density of 50 dwellings per hectare across the site.

Consultation

15. The Cabinet Members for Environment and Transport, the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Bridges Ward Members have been consulted in preparing this report.

Alternative options

16. The only other option would be to retain the existing SPD and masterplan. However, given the passage of time and social, economic and environmental factors outlined above, it is considered that these documents would become out of date.

Implications of Recommendation

17. Resources:

- a. **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no financial implications arising from this report.
- b. **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resource implications arising from this report.
- c. **Property Implications** - There are no direct property implications arising from this report.

18. **Risk Management Implications** – None.

19. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – None.

20. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None.

21. **Health Implications** – None.

22. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – The SPD and masterplan will help to deliver a sustainable neighbourhood which promotes walking and cycling and with good access to public transport.

23. **Human Rights Implications** - None.

24. **Ward Implications** – The Exemplar Neighbourhood is located in Bridges ward.