
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 17 January 2013
Subject: Land Rear of Central Garage, Cranfield, Development Brief
Report of: Cllr Nigel Young , Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Summary: The report proposes that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Development Brief and recommend to the Executive that it be adopted as technical guidance for Development Management purposes.

Advising Officer: Richard Fox, Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
Contact Officer: Stuart Robinson, Planning Officer, Local Planning and Housing Team
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Cranfield and Marston Moretaine Ward
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The Development Brief will support the Medium Term Priorities of 'Enhancing Central Bedfordshire'.

Financial:

2. The creation of the development brief will not represent a financial burden on the Council. Many of the costs for creating the development brief have been borne by the promoters. Furthermore, a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), a collaborative project management tool, has been entered into which secured funding for the administration and supervision of the development brief and subsequent determination of any future planning applications.

Legal:

3. Once adopted as technical guidance the development brief will constitute a material planning consideration to be taken into account when determining applications made in respect of the site.

Risk Management:

4. Policy HA7 of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) makes clear the requirement for the production of a development brief for the site. A failure to endorse the development brief and determine any subsequent planning applications in accordance with the agreed PPA timelines may result in the Council being forced to pay back a meaningful proportion of the monies secured through the PPA.

5. An adopted development brief will give more certainty to the development management process, although there are still risks associated with this separate statutory stage. These risks include not securing adequate planning obligations to meet the needs of the development and a failure to meet the public's expectations of the development.
6. Other risks, such as failure to deliver the Council's priorities, reputational risks, failure to discharge statutory responsibilities, failure of partnership working, and environmental and financial risks could also be incurred. The development brief serves to minimise these risks by setting an agreed framework for development in advance of the planning applications and then onwards through to implementation.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

7. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

8. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
9. The Site Allocations DPD Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) highlighted the need for:
 - The delivery of affordable housing within towns and villages throughout Central Bedfordshire north area.
 - The selection of housing sites on the basis that future residents live in locations close to services and public transport routes.
 - Provision of land for community facilities.
 - New employment units allocated close to centres of population in order to increase job opportunities locally and help to address unemployment and out-commuting.
10. The DPD EIA concluded that the emphasis placed on ensuring that developments are allocated within sustainable locations and ensuring that residents are able to access employment opportunities, facilities and services to meet their everyday needs should help to ensure a positive impact for all sections of the community.
11. In addition data suggests that there will be also be a rapid increase in the elderly population in coming years. Providing appropriate accommodation for this age group will therefore also become a priority. In order to provide suitable accommodation, development briefs for large housing sites should make provision for housing for the increasing elderly population and for disabled people, through the provision of Lifetime Homes.
12. The development brief promotes the inclusion of a variety of housing, tenure, affordability and sizes. The need for appropriate provision for older and disable people such as lifetime / accessible homes should also be highlighted in the development brief.

Public Health

13. The Council will need to ensure that it complies with its duties to promote access to green space, encourage sustainable transport and ensure that the built environment maximises opportunities for physical activity. This in turn will help the council to improve outcomes for health and wellbeing.

Community Safety:

14. The Council will need to ensure that it complies with its statutory duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and that all plans fulfil the criteria set down for community safety within the Adopted Central Bedfordshire Design Guide.

Sustainability:

15. The development brief promotes the inclusion of a variety of housing, tenure, affordability and sizes. The need for appropriate provision for older and disable people such as lifetime / accessible homes should also be highlighted in the development brief.
16. In accordance with Council's adopted development management policies DM1 and DM2, the prospective developers will need to demonstrate how 10% of the predicted energy requirements of the development will be generated either on site or near to the site by renewables or low carbon technologies. They will also be required to incorporate measures to reduce water consumption, as well as building all dwellings to the mandatory standards of the level of the Code of Sustainable homes that applies at the time of a planning application.

Procurement:

17. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the Development Brief and recommend to Executive that it be adopted as technical guidance.

Purpose of the Development Brief

18. The draft Development Brief (Appendix A) provides the background and policy context for this site and its allocation for residential development. It also sets out the aims for the development, identifying the particular constraints and opportunities of the site, and confirms the range of technical work which any planning application must address.
19. The brief is a high level document whose purpose is to set out general principles; the more concentrated and detailed work is a matter to be addressed at the planning application stages. Nevertheless, it does provide a mechanism through which members of the public and other interested parties can have a greater involvement in the development of proposals for the site and provide some certainty as to the future development of the site. Once approved, the brief will act as Development Management guidance and any future planning applications will be considered against the background of the adopted brief.

Background

20. vember 2009, the Council adopted the Core Strategy and Development Management DPD (for the former Mid Bedfordshire Area) following an Examination in Public that same year. The Core Strategy required the delivery of at least 17,950 new homes between 2001 and 2026 with 5,000 new homes required in addition to those already committed (such as those allocated in the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan 2005). Of these 5,000 the Core Strategy stated that between 150 and 250 should be provided in Cranfield (Policy CS5: Providing Homes).
21. In April 2011, the Council formally adopted the Site Allocations DPD following an examination in late 2010. Policy HA7 allocates the land rear of Central Garage for no more than 135 dwellings, open space provision, associated infrastructure and, if required, a new Lower School. There is also a requirement in the policy for a Development Brief to be prepared to help inform subsequent planning applications and guide the development.
22. Since mid 2012 Council officers, from a wide range of service areas, have been working in partnership with the site promoter, on the preparation of a development brief for this site. A planning performance agreement (PPA) has been entered into between Central Bedfordshire Council and the landowners/promoter. The agreement identifies a shared vision and identifies key milestones and timescales for the delivery of a planning decision by both Central Bedfordshire Council and the developer. Whilst it offers project management certainty, this does not mean a favourable planning application outcome is guaranteed.

The Development Brief

23. The site, Land Rear of Central Garage, comprises of a 7.23 hectare site located to the north of the main settlement. A location plan is included within the Development Brief.
24. The site mainly consists of fields and uncultivated land. The site abuts an area of land granted planning permission for the development of a Primary Care Facility. This is not within the landowners' ownership and is to be developed separately to the site.
25. The timing of the Primary Care Facility will not be determined by the Council. This will be delivered by Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
26. In accordance with policy HA7 the brief outlines the range of uses that are considered suitable, subject to details, for the site. The brief aims to ensure that quality design is achieved throughout the development, providing an attractive environment that enhances the existing character of Cranfield and its locality.
27. The brief sets out a number of design principles (page 11 onwards) to which any development proposals will need to adhere. In particular, the amount and type of development as well as the mix and type of dwellings (including affordable housing), open space and landscape requirements and the scale, massing and layout of the development will need to be carefully considered.
28. In response to addressing these issues in any layout scheme the developer will need to take account of the site constraints and opportunities associated with the site (identified on pages 9 to 13) together with other relevant urban design principles set out in the Council's adopted Residential Design Guide to address, for example, street hierarchy. The developer will also need to consider the Council's recently published Parking Strategy, as acknowledged on page 8.

29. The brief also sets out the Council's requirements for access and connectivity both within and immediately surrounding the site. The brief identifies the location for acceptable access between the existing urban area, the new residential area, the proposed lower school and the area identified for a PCT facility.
30. As a requirement of policy HA7, the allocation presents the possibility for the provision of a new lower school. The Development Brief identifies that the proposal will provide a serviced plot of land with safe and appropriate access.
31. The brief also sets out the Council's requirements for developer contributions in line with the adopted Planning Obligations Strategy.

Consultation

32. During September 2012 informal discussions were held with a series of Central Bedfordshire Council officers, including Highways, Education, Open Space and Planning, to ensure that an agreed technical approach to the development of the site could be established.
33. On 18 September 2012 a presentation was made by the site promoters at a West Placemaking group meeting. This presented an opportunity for officer and member comments before a development brief was formally issued for public consultation purposes. This group included Councillors Young, Brown, Bastable, Clark and Matthews. At their request some amendments to the document were proposed and included, prior to the document being finalised for consultation purposes. These changes and considerations for the development brief included:
 - a) Further information regarding the design of the proposed development, including storey height.
 - b) Further clarification regarding access points and possible alternatives
 - c) Greater reference to the consultation process
34. Formal public consultation commenced on 13 November and ran for a period of 4 weeks until 13 December. The consultation and publicity of the Development Brief proposals was carried out in compliance with the Central Bedfordshire Statement of Community Involvement (October 2012).
35. The consultation exercise was publicised through the distribution of letters to residents within the settlement. Copies of the document were made available to view on the Council's web-site and at the Priory House Council Office. Comments form was available to complete and return. As part of this consultation process, an evening public consultation event was also undertaken (13 November) at Holywell Middle School, Cranfield. This was manned by representatives of the Council, landowner and site promoter. It is estimated that approximately 70 visitors attended the exhibition.
36. During the consultation process, a static unmanned exhibition was positioned at Budgens supermarket. This gave the exhibition material increased coverage in the settlement, informing residents where comments could be placed.
37. The high level of attendance and interaction by those who attended the exhibition showed that there is a good level of interest in the scheme proposals and the Development Brief. Despite this overall interest, the consultation on the Development Brief itself received very little direct feedback.

38. A total of 17 comments forms were completed. The comments were all from members of the public. Whilst the majority of comments did not wholly oppose the idea of development in this location, there were a large number of responses who opposed the proposed main access through Flitt Leys Close. A summary of the comments is available in Appendix B.
39. A number of comments received have been about the principle of development itself and in the context of Cranfield being able to absorb further development.
- Adopted planning policies also prevail and therefore comments which relate to dwelling numbers or alternative locations of development, for example, are not pertinent.
40. One of the main comments received during the consultation sought clarification regarding whether Flitt Leys Close could be considered an acceptable access to the development site. Central Bedfordshire Council Highways officers have revisited the site to reconfirm that the access is acceptable to serve 135 residential units, in addition to a lower school. The granting of planning permission will require the provision of acceptable access.
41. During the consultation, a number of residents identified concerns with the large amount of parking currently on Flitt Leys Close. In response to these comments, the Development Brief has sought to identify additional parking for the residents of Flitt Leys Close.
42. During the public exhibition and the consultation, a number of residents sought clarification regarding the exact nature of the lower school. Central Bedfordshire Council education officers have confirmed that the site is sufficient to serve a 3FE lower school, including playing fields. The requirement for the school will be developed through discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council education officers and the local school governors.
43. Another issue raised by residents sought clarification on whether any affordable housing would be provided as part of the development. The current development plan for the area, the Core Strategy, identifies that sites of four dwellings or more will provide 35% affordable housing.

Changes to the Development Brief

44. The Development Brief has been amended to greater reflect the affordable housing position of the National Planning Policy Framework. The exact mix of affordable housing will still be determined through later negotiation with Central Bedfordshire Council Housing Officers. Whilst policy prevails, should the developer identify viability issues there may be potential for negotiation of the housing percentage.
45. In order to improve the existing residents' parking provision, the brief identifies the principle of additional parking to serve the residents of Flitt Leys Close. This parking will be required to be in close proximity to residents' homes. The detailed nature and design of this parking provision will be developed through the planning application process. This change is identified on pages 11.
46. A number of minor changes have been included within the revised Development Brief. These have been identified below.
- a) Section 3 – Formatting change
 - b) Paragraph 4.9 – Replace Cycle Parking Strategy with Local Transport Plan to provide a more comprehensive outline

- c) Paragraph 4.10 – Factual changes
- d) Paragraph 4.11 – Factual changes to provide greater clarity of the public consultation and committee processes.
- e) Section 6 – Text amendment to provide greater reference to Manual for Streets 2 and shared surfaces

Conclusion

47. Consideration has been afforded to the consultation exercise and, where appropriate, amendments have been made to the Brief. As a technical document, the development brief is fit for development management purposes.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Development Brief

Appendix B – Consultation Responses Summary

Background papers and their location:

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD

Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands