

Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder

Report Title: Supplementary Planning Document – The Garden Village at Handforth.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ainsley Arnold

Senior Officer: Sean Hannaby, Director of Planning & Environment

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks final approval for a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Garden Village at Handforth. It was subject to a six week consultation in September and October – and has been amended in response to comments received during the consultation period.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. To consider the recommendations of Strategic Planning Board.
- 2.2. That the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve the finalised Garden Village SPD as attached at Appendix 2.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The SPD has been the subject of consultation and has been amended as a consequence of comments received. Having considered all of the representations made, the Council now needs to finalise the document. The Handforth Garden Village is a large and complex development site – and it is beneficial that guidance is prepared to direct its future development.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. A Design Guide and Master Plan are a requirement of Local Plan strategy Policy LPS33. Whilst these could be prepared and submitted as part of a planning application, the preparation of an SPD is the most appropriate means of ensuring the planning guidance applying to the new village receives full and open consideration.

5. Background

Context

- 5.1. The Local Plan Strategy allocates land East of the A34 in Handforth for the development of a new Village. Referred to as the “North Cheshire Growth Village” in the plan, the new settlement is now referred to as the Garden Village in Handforth – being one of a series of Garden villages recognised nationally by the Government..
- 5.2. When the LPS was adopted in July 2017 the Site was identified as a Strategic Site under reference ‘Site LPS33 North Cheshire Growth Village, Handforth East’. The allocation states:

The North Cheshire Growth Village presents an opportunity to deliver a high quality, comprehensively masterplanned new settlement, embodying sustainable development principles and incorporating the highest quality of design to represent an exemplar sustainable community, contributing to the identified housing, employment and infrastructure needs of the borough.” (LPS paragraph 15.395)

- 5.3. In addition, in January 2017 the Site was announced by the Government as one of 14 new ‘Garden Villages’ to be created across the UK. The Government’s support to deliver new homes through the creation of new settlements was set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) and further supported by the announcement of a new wave of garden villages, towns and cities in the 2016 Budget. The 2016 Budget was accompanied by the Garden Villages, Towns and Cities Prospectus (March 2016) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government which set out the Government’s proposed approach to facilitating the delivery of the new garden villages, towns and cities. The inclusion of the Site in the first tranche of Government-backed new garden villages reflects a clear commitment and expectation that this new settlement will deliver a distinctive and very high-quality place.

The Structure and purpose of the Document

- 5.4. The SPD is intended to provide the over-arching guidance for the development of the site. It will need to be supported by a more detailed design code which will flesh out much of the detail necessary to achieve the desired quality.
- 5.5. The overall vision for The Garden Village is: ““To create a sustainable, integrated, inclusive, and vibrant community, where people of all ages and backgrounds can find a home that meets their needs through the different stages of their lives. A beautiful and characterful Cheshire Village in which to live, work and play. A place that is very well connected to its natural and

urban surroundings. A distinct place with its own identity and a strong sense of community embedded within the highest quality environment.”

5.6. The Core Objectives are:

- Establish the Vision and Strategic Objectives.
- Identify the need for a comprehensive approach.
- Identify the key infrastructure and key development requirements.
- Provide a Comprehensive Masterplan.
- Provide a Design Guide.
- Outline the delivery plan, planning process and delivery programme.

5.7. Once adopted, although it is not part of the Development Plan, the SPD will be a material consideration that carries weight in decision making as a Local Development Document.

The Consultation Process

5.8. The Draft SPD was subject to six weeks consultation concluding on 22 October 2018. The document was published on the Council’s website (alongside the Site Allocations and Development policies document, plus the Statement of Community Involvement) and hard copies were placed in the local library and Council offices. A ‘Drop in’ event was also held for the local community at Handforth Library on 25th September.

5.9. Some 36 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation, with many submitting a variety of different comments. A full summary of all representations made alongside our response is attached as Appendix 1.

5.10. The Comments received covered a wide range of topics and issues. However the key matters brought out during the consultation can be summarised as follows:

- Better cycling provision
- Improvements to public transport; links to station and station facilities need an upgrade
- Need to consider how public transport can be better integrated
- Clearer guidance required on education and medical provision at the site
- Insufficient mitigation for lost green areas
- SPD could be strengthened by more emphasis on the important habitats and species on site
- Need to consider impact on adjacent green belt areas and especially Blossoms Lane
- Concern over merging of Handforth and Woodford.
- Concerns over the secondary access to Dairy House Lane
- Concern over drainage arrangements
- Questions regarding the need for employment land.

- Need more detail on the future for MoD / Total Fitness sites.
- Responses from statutory bodies and infrastructure providers.
- Provision of infrastructure and phasing.

The Amended Document

- 5.11. The SPD has been revised to take account of as many of the representations made as possible. In each case an evaluation has been made of the comments submitted – and the recommended response is set out in Appendix 1. Where the SPD can reasonably accommodate the requested change or otherwise be improved, a revision has been made to the document.
- 5.12. In some case representations related to the principle of development – for example concerns over loss of open land arising from the development of the new village. In this case it would not be appropriate to directly address the objection – since these were matters that were considered and resolved at the Local Plan examination. The principle of development is now established by virtue of its allocation in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. However even where a comment relates to the principle of the village, it may be possible to consider enhanced mitigation by way of a response.
- 5.13. In addition, wherever possible, the SPD has been updated to take account of any wider changes in facts or circumstances since the draft was prepared in August.
- 5.14. There are a number of key areas where amendments and clarifications were considered appropriate. These include:

Public & non-vehicular transport. Transport is acknowledged to be a significant local issue with the proximity of the busy A34 and recently opened A555 next to the village. Part of the rationale for the village is to attain the critical mass necessary to secure transport improvements. This applies to highway works – but equally to walk, cycling and pedestrian facilities. These are widely referenced already, but it is proposed to give greater emphasis and clarity to the need for sustainable travel.

Open Space and Environment. An essential feature of the new settlement is the supporting green infrastructure which underpins the garden village concept. However such green areas need to perform a number of quite distinct functions – such as formal open space, recreation, play areas, informal space and ecological mitigation. It is therefore proposed to clarify the role that different segments of greenspace will play in future and a new green infrastructure network plan will be included as part of the comprehensive masterplan. The commitment for a net gain for biodiversity

is confirmed alongside other measures to avoid unnecessary harm to important ecological areas wherever possible.

Employment and the Ministry of Defence Site. Alongside the proposals for significant new development, the SPD needs also to consider the incorporation of existing business such as Total Fitness and the Ministry of Defence Offices. These areas are no longer fettered by green belt constraints and so are capable of greater change in future years – plus they need to be successfully integrated alongside the new residential areas. Accordingly it is proposed to improve the guidance as it applies to these existing establishments.

Community & Educational facilities. The consultation process highlighted concern over the how secondary education will be addressed within the new village. Part of the case for the Handforth village was the potential to better coordinate housing with related social infrastructure. Consequently it is proposed to expand the guidance as it relates to education and other community facilities at the village. It should be emphasised that no secondary provision is planned on the site; this forms the subject of a separate project now underway and lead by the Council's Education professionals.

Impact on Adjacent Areas. The Garden Village site has natural boundaries to the North and west with the alignment of the A34 and A555 close by – but the area is much more open to the south and east. The treatment of these boundaries requires careful consideration and design. In addition the impact of the village on established areas such as Dairyhouse Lane and blossoms Lane has also been identified as a concern. It is therefore proposed to improve guidance relating to these cross boundary matters

Design and layout. A number of issues with the proposed design requirement and overall layout of the proposals were raised. Whilst the parameters plan remains very similar to the draft version, a number of improvements have been made. These include locating the primary school and extra care facility closer to the heart of the new village; amending the green infrastructure areas so that they connect better throughout the site and promote net gain on biodiversity; expanding the village green; and amendments to the overall layout, particularly in the south eastern part of the site to respond to concerns from Places Matter, enabling further views and vistas of the countryside and hills. The SPD also adds more detail on the process of producing the Character Area Design Codes.

Digital communications. These will be essential for the new village's self-sufficiency and social and economic wellbeing. Further information has been added to the SPD to clarify the high quality digital communications infrastructure that will be required.

Infrastructure and phasing. Further information is provided to address concerns regarding the provision of the preliminary infrastructure, funding and phasing.

Review. A commitment to monitor and review the SPD is included, to make sure it remains up to date and fit for purpose.

- 5.15. These changes have all been incorporated into the revised SPD attached as Appendix 2.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. Supplementary Planning Documents are guidance which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan. They must be consistent with national planning policy, must undergo consultation and must be in conformity with policies contained within the Local Plan.

- The process for preparing Supplementary Planning Documents is similar to a Local Plan document. However, they are not subject to independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. There are four main stages in their production as follows:
 - Preparation and informal consultation
 - Consultation
 - Consideration of representations and completion of final draft of the SPD
 - Adoption of the Supplementary Planning Documents

6.1.2. Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

6.1.3. Strategic Environmental Assessment involves evaluation of the environmental impacts of a plan or programme. The requirement for SEA is set out in the European Directive 2001/42/EC adopted into UK law as the “Environmental Assessment of Plans or Programmes Regulations 2004”.

6.1.4. The SEA Directive sets out a legal assessment process that must be followed. Often within the planning context, the SEA requirements are met by incorporating it within a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which is a requirement for Development Plan Documents.

6.1.5. There is no legal requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents to be accompanied by Sustainability Appraisal, and this is reinforced in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG ref: 11-008- 20140306). However, “in exceptional circumstances” there may be a requirement for SPDs to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment where it is felt they may have a likely significant effect on the environment that has not been assessed within the SEA/SA of the Local Plan. In this case the Governing Policy of the Local Plan Strategy has been fully assessed and there is no need to replicate that at this stage.

6.2. **Finance Implications**

6.2.1. There are no direct financial costs arising from the approval of the SPD. It will be published on the Council’s website and will be available for all interested parties to download and print as required.

6.3. **Policy Implications**

6.3.1. The SPD will expand and amplify existing development plan policy.

6.4. **Equality Implications**

6.4.1. The Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equalities Act to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a “*relevant protected characteristic*” and persons who do not share it; foster good relations between persons who share a “*relevant protected characteristic*” and persons who do not share it.

6.4.2. SPD provides guidance on the creation of a new community. Accordingly it seeks to address the needs of all future residents.

6.5. **Human Resources Implications**

6.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources

6.6. **Risk Management Implications**

6.6.1. There are no direct implications for risk management

6.7. **Rural Communities Implications**

6.7.1. As the SPD deals with just the planned new settlement there are no implications for rural communities. .

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People

6.8.1. The SPD includes guidance on the planned new school for the site. This is centrally positioned so as to maximise its accessibility and role in the new community.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. The Site is located within Handforth Ward – but the scale of the new settlement is such that it will have an impact on adjoining areas as well.

7.2. Around 70% of the site is owned by Cheshire East Council. The creation of a successful new settlement at Handforth will require leadership and ongoing involvement of Council functions and services over a number of years. In this regard the SPD is but the first step towards the delivery of a new village community.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. The draft SPD was subject to six weeks consultation during September and October. Following this, all comments have been considered and revisions made to create a final version of the SPD ready for approval.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The Council's website includes a section on [planning guidance](#) and a series of supporting documentation is published in this location to support the SPD.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Adrian Fisher

Job Title: Head of Planning Strategy

Email: adrian.fisher@cheshireeast.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

**REPORT OF CONSULTATION INCLUDING SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS &
RESPONSES**

APPENDIX 2

FINAL SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT