

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE – REVISED DEVELOPMENT BRIEF AND MASTERPLAN

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Summary

The draft revised Development Brief and Masterplan for Rochester Riverside (attached as Appendix 1 and 2) has been subject to a period of public consultation between 28 April and 6 June 2014. A draft summary of representations received is attached as Appendix 3. The committee's comments are sought on the revised draft documents. It is proposed that the final Development Brief and Masterplan will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the Local Plan.

Note: Appendices have been published as a supplementary agenda.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The revised Rochester Riverside Development Brief and Masterplan establishes a set of strategic parameters and illustrative guidance to steer the future development of the site. The Brief provides planning and design guidance to developers and will inform development management decisions.
- 1.2 The Development Brief will supplement Policy S7 of the adopted 2003 Medway Local Plan that designates Rochester Riverside as an Action Area for redevelopment. The Policy states that the 'comprehensive regeneration of the area will be sought in accordance with a development brief approved by the council'. It is intended that the revised Development Brief and Masterplan will replace the adopted 2004 Rochester Riverside Development Brief and 2006 Masterplan.

2. Background

- 2.1 Rochester Riverside is a flagship project in the Council's regeneration programme. The site comprises 32 hectares (74 acres) of brownfield development land, stretching from Rochester Bridge to the north and Doust

Way to the south. Whilst meeting the Council's objective of providing new homes and jobs for Medway, the development at Rochester Riverside will bring other benefits including a range of publicly accessible open spaces, retail and leisure facilities as well as improvements to the 'Gateways' between the River and Rochester High St.

- 2.2 The site was designated as an Action Area for redevelopment in the Medway Local Plan (2003). Policy S7 of the Local Plan states that the comprehensive regeneration of the area will be sought in accordance with a development brief approved by the Council, with expected features to include:
- The development of approximately 1500-1800 dwellings including affordable housing.
 - The provision of area of open space and a riverside walk.
 - A new river wall and reclamation in locations between the Shiplink site and Doust Way.
 - The reservation of a site for a new primary school and the construction of other community facilities.
 - The creation of new leisure facilities and a hotel.
 - Appropriate small-scale employment uses.
- 2.3 The Policy goes on to state that all new development will be expected to comply with the following principles:
- (i) Comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment to maximise the potential for securing the regeneration of the whole action area and its vicinity.
 - (ii) A high standard of urban design and landscape, establishing it as a new quarter of the urban area.
 - (iii) High quality mixed developments, appropriate to the location of this area close to both the riverside and historic Rochester.
 - (iv) The provision of good pedestrian and cycle links within the site and to historic Rochester and to the public transport network, including Rochester Railway Station.
- 2.4 Following on from the designation of Rochester Riverside as an Action Area for development, the vision for the site was established by the 2004 Rochester Riverside Development Brief and the subsequent approval in 2006 of the Masterplan. The 2004 Development Brief established the key planning and design parameters for the development, including land use components, urban form, density, open space and sustainability. It outlined the previous use and history, the policy context and physical constraints and was formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in June 2004.
- 2.5 The principles, guidelines and aspirations as set out in the adopted 2004 Development Brief formed the basis of the 2004 Masterplan. The Masterplan reflected and responded to the aspirations of key stakeholders at the time and endeavoured to set out the context for future development across the site. The Masterplan was based upon a number of urban design and development principles and sought to create a diverse and high quality environment for all.
- 2.6 The Masterplan, supported by a Transport Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment, was granted Outline Planning Permission in June 2006 (ref. MC/04/2030) updated through permission reference MC/10/4613.

Further strategic policy documents were subsequently produced, linked to the Masterplan and its delivery, include the Landscape and Open Space Masterplan, a Gateway Study, and the Rochester Riverside Design Codes.

- 2.7 The Outline Planning Permission for the Rochester Riverside scheme includes a requirement for cyclical reviews of the Masterplan. A review process is required in order to allow for a reflection of works already carried out on site, plus new and updated planning policies and design standards since the granting of the Outline Permission.
- 2.8 The first phase of development at Rochester Riverside has already been delivered through the completion of 73 affordable housing units, the creation of the 'Southern Gateway' public square and the opening of the new river walk. The next phase of development 'Stanley Wharf' was released to the market in 2013 and a preferred developer (Bellway Homes Ltd) has been appointed. To ensure the success of the next and subsequent phases, the partners (Medway Council and Homes and Communities Agency) must take forward a scheme that reflects economic realities and can be delivered within current design and planning standards. To support this objective, and to ensure the Council meets the review requirement of the Outline Planning Permission, the Rochester Riverside Board have commissioned a complete review of the 2004 Rochester Riverside Development Brief and 2006 Masterplan.
- 2.9 In August 2013, the Council and Homes and Communities Agency appointed Allies and Morrison, a specialist urban design practice, to lead a review of the Rochester Riverside Development Brief and Masterplan, with GL Hearn Ltd providing commercial and property advice. The review was to allow for a reflection of development activity to date, new and updated planning policies and design standards since the granting of the Outline Planning Permission in 2006. It would also test and refine aspects of the current Rochester Riverside scheme no longer considered deliverable within a spatial, social, environmental and economic context.
- 2.10 Allies and Morrison, working with officers and GL Hearn have produced a draft revised Rochester Riverside Development Brief and Masterplan. They have considered and addressed the following key issues in relation to the Rochester Riverside scheme:
 - The relocation of Rochester Station – opportunities and impacts.
 - Works completed to date - delivery of affordable housing and essential infrastructure.
 - Commercial viability and deliverability of elements of the approved scheme – specifically number and mix of residential units, undercroft parking, hotel and commercial development, and public and residential parking.
 - Current planning and design standards/policies – parking standards, residential unit sizes, sustainability and innovative urban design.
 - The 'fit' of the site within its immediate surrounding area i.e. ensuring that development aspirations do not conflict with uses in neighbouring/interfaces sites and being aware of significant nearby development proposals that may impact on the viability of uses on the Rochester Riverside Masterplan area.

- The long-term economic sustainability and delivery of the proposed scheme.
- 2.11 The revised Development Brief and Masterplan are included as Appendix 1 and 2 to this report. The Brief sets out the vision for a high quality residential living environment with a complementary mix of uses. The Masterplan promotes the development of a new neighbourhood which complements historic Rochester, ensuring Rochester's existing and future residents and visitors benefit from the area's regeneration. The Masterplan includes the development of approximately 1,400 new residential units, primarily in the form of family housing, with a range of small office spaces, a hotel, shops and restaurants, and a new 'Station Quarter' focussed around the new Rochester Station. Areas of the site, such as Blue Boar Wharf, will provide unique waterfront settings for high quality food and drink offer and there will be a range of new parks and public spaces. The scheme includes a new primary school as well as other community facilities. The Development Brief embraces a flexible and adaptable Masterplan that is capable of responding to market conditions and the need for a phased approach to development.
- 2.12 Given the number of changes to the scheme granted outline planning consent in 2006 following the review of the Brief and Masterplan, it is considered that the revised Development Brief and Masterplan fall outside the scope of the existing Outline Planning Permission. A new outline application could be submitted based on the revised Masterplan, however, this would result in significant delay to development and the negotiation of new legal agreements to secure developer contributions.
- 2.13 The preferred option is therefore to adopt the revised Development Brief as a Supplementary Planning Document with the revised Masterplan included within this. This option allows flexibility for developers to submit separate full detailed (or outline) planning applications for individual phases of development reflecting the requirements of the revised Development Brief and Masterplan. Whilst the extant Outline Permission cannot be revoked, it is not anticipated that developers will submit detailed applications against it, as any application forthcoming in this respect would not be policy compliant.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 The input of the community, stakeholders and developers is essential to ensure that the revised Development Brief and Masterplan are able to achieve the site's development potential. A full programme of public consultation took place between 28 April and 6 June including:
- A web page where members of the public could view the Masterplan and Development Brief and make comments using an online form.
 - A 2-day 'Project Shop' in Rochester on Wednesday 28 and Thursday 29 May, with an exhibition of the masterplan. Members of the public were able to drop in, meet the team and make comments and suggestions. The project shop was staffed by team members and Allies and Morrison.
 - A market stall at the Rochester Farmers Market on 18 May, allowing the consultation process to be made available to a much wider audience of shoppers, residents and visitors.
 - A Design Review Panel with Design South East.

- Notification to consult to key members of the Local Development Framework database.
- 3.3 Over 300 members of the public attended the project shop and market stall exhibitions. The response was good, with the majority of comments being positive and in favour of the development. Concerns were raised in regards to increased traffic levels along Corporation Street and Rochester Bridge and the impact on the surrounding infrastructure (schools, health facilities, shops and retail). Council officers are in the process of collating the comments and setting out a formal response to the issues raised. Appendix 3 of this report outline the responses collated so far, although it should be noted that this is not the final version. A detailed report on the consultation responses will be reported to Cabinet in August as part of the development work for the final version of the revised Brief and Masterplan.
- 3.4 As part of the consultation, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the revised Development Brief and Masterplan. Comments will be considered as part of the review period and will be incorporated into the development work for the final version of the Brief.

4. Options

- 4.1 Alternative options for progressing development at Rochester Riverside include:
- Continue to use the adopted 2004 Rochester Riverside Development Brief and 2006 Masterplan to guide the development of the site.
 - Enforce a market led review of the Development Brief and Masterplan (where developers will bring forward Masterplans for each individual phase of development).
- 4.2 The existing Rochester Riverside Development Brief and Masterplan were adopted in 2004 and 2006. Since then there have been significant changes, including physical changes on the ground as well as changes in planning policy and the housing market. While the principles of the adopted Development Brief and Masterplan remain valid, some aspects are no longer considered deliverable within a spatial, social, environmental and economic context. Continuing to use the existing 2004 Development Brief and 2006 Masterplan to guide development could limit the potential to deliver the Council's ambitions for a sustainable, high quality scheme.
- 4.3 Enforcing a market led review, where individual developers would bring forward Masterplans for the different phases of the scheme would ensure a market led approach. However, there is a risk that the scheme would become fragmented, with different architectural styles and street scenes for the different phases. It would also make it difficult for the Council to enforce delivery of the non-market elements of the scheme – primary school, public parks, community buildings etc.
- 4.4 Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to proceed with the Development Brief and Masterplan review process.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1 The revised Development Brief and Masterplan for Rochester Riverside expands on the parent policy, Policy S7, of the Local Plan. It aims to guide the continued high quality development of the Council's key regeneration site.
- 5.2 Once adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Development Brief and Masterplan will become a material consideration in the determination of any planning applications for the Rochester Riverside scheme. The development of Rochester Riverside is estimated to take approximately 15 years and the plan will provide a consistent guide and framework for developers over this time period.
- 5.3 Both the Development Brief and Masterplan must go through the full consultation and assessment procedures before being adopted as an SPD. Comments and any changes following the consultation will be incorporated into the Brief and Masterplan before it is formally adopted.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Poor quality development	Development on scheme is of poor quality and does not meet expectations for high quality mixed used development.	Master plan will set out expectations for high quality development.	D2
Poor market conditions slow progress of development.	Difficult market conditions discourage inward investment in the site.	The Masterplan has been designed to be flexible and adaptable to changing market conditions.	D2
Residents opposition to development at Rochester Riverside	Opposition to plans to develop the site, or certain aspects of the new Masterplan.	Consultation on Master plan and taking account of views expressed.	D2

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The input of the community is essential to ensure that the masterplan is able to achieve the site's development potential. A full programme of public consultation has been delivered to inform the development of the

Development Brief and Masterplan. This will form part of the formal requirements for adoption as a planning policy document.

- 7.2 The Council will collate the results of the proposed formal consultation and set out its response to the views raised. This information will be reported to the Rochester Riverside Board and Cabinet as part of the development work for the final version of the Development Brief and Masterplan.

8 Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 The cost of the masterplan consultancy work and the public consultation costs will be met from the Rochester Riverside capital budget.
- 8.2 Preparation of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, including the process of public consultation and consideration of representations, is regulated in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012.
- 8.3 Once adopted, the Rochester Riverside Development Brief and Masterplan will be a Supplementary Planning Document, and will be a 'material consideration' in decisions on planning applications for Rochester Riverside.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the revised Development Brief and Masterplan for Rochester Riverside and the results of the consultation. Comments will be considered as part of the review period and will be incorporated into the development work for the final version of the Brief.

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Background papers

Rochester Riverside Masterplan (Appendix 1)
Rochester Riverside Development Brief, Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 2)
Draft report on consultation responses (Appendix 3)
Medway Local Plan, May 2003
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20Local%20Plan%202003.pdf>