

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

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### STAR HILL TO SUN PIER PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director, Regeneration Culture,  
Environment and Transformation

Author: Martin McKay, Senior Design and Conservation  
Officer.

#### Summary

This report introduces a draft Medway Council 'Star Hill to Sun Pier Public Realm Design Guide'. The Planning Committee is asked to note the Guide.

#### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as '*an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is important to preserve*'. The Star Hill to Sun Pier area was designated as a conservation area by the City of Rochester upon Medway Council in 1995.
- 1.2 The publication of the Guide constitutes part of the Council's statutory duty under the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to publish proposals for the improvement of conservation areas.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1.1 The *Star Hill to Sun Pier Public Realm Design Guide (the Guide)* supplements the draft Conservation Area Appraisal for the area (see separate report). It constitutes a design guide for the Council and developers with regard to paving materials and junction design. It provides further guidance for developers on the establishment of a river walk. In addition, it audits historic paving materials used in historic alleyways between the river and the High Street and requires these to be kept as a condition of development proposals.

#### 3. Options

- 3.1 Development proposals are beginning to come to the fore in this area. It is therefore expedient to bring this document forward now.

#### 4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 An aim of the guide is to ensure that Medway Council Highways, separate developers, and the Environment Agency (responsible for overseeing flood defences) act in a coordinated way to achieve a coherent public realm that compliments and enhances the historic character of the area. A second aim is to improve public access to the riverfront and along the river.
- 4.2 Flood defences will be necessary to allow for new residential development in the area. The document provides some guidance on this in order to ensure, in so far as is possible, that the flood defences allow for river walks and do not harm the historic character of the area more than is necessary. This guidance is necessarily provisional and final designs will be dependant upon individual site conditions.
- 4.3 The Guidance allocates responsibility for the implementation of flood fences and river walks to individual developers. This means that these items will be provided on a piecemeal as each site comes forward for development.

#### 5. Risk management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
Developers find that the provisions of the guide are too expensive to implement.	The provision of high quality publically accessible areas, including riverwalks may affect the viability of schemes.	The guide advocates a flexible and piecemeal approach that may be cheaper than a comprehensive scheme. Some aspects may nevertheless not be affordable.  This issue can be discussed more at the consultation stage.	N/a
Flood defences and riverwalks harm the historic character of the area	Flood defences have the potential to cut off the area from the river and harm its character.	The guide requires an integrated approach to be taken to flood management that considers historic character.  Nevertheless final designs will have to be agreed with a number of agencies.	

#### 6. Consultation

- 6.1 Historic England and the Environment Agency have been consulted on an earlier version of the document. The current text reflects their comments.
- 6.2 A disability access audit has been carried out with regard to the document.

- 6.3 More widespread consultation on the document has not yet been carried out. It is envisaged that this will be carried out at the same time as consultation on Conservation Area Appraisal for the area.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 There are minimal financial implications of the Council associated with the introduction of the Guide itself. The paving materials advocated for the Highways elements of area were selected for value as well as appearance, and are to be used when repair or replacement is required rather than as a part of a comprehensive scheme.
- 7.2 The guide does not address issue of maintenance of river walks or flood defences. There may be some pressure from developers for the Council to maintain river walks in exchange for the 'public good' of the walks provided by the developers.

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 The Guide will be supplementary to other guidance in the area and therefore will not have that much legal weight in itself. It nevertheless provides practical and useful guidance that will be of use to developers and others.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Planning Committee should note for information the production of a draft Star Hill to Sun Pier Public Realm Design Guide. Approval will be sought in due course to consult the public and stakeholders over the document.

### **Lead officer contact**

Martin Mckay, Senior Design and Conservation Officer  
Tele no: 01634 331721  
Email: [martin.mckay@medway.gov.uk](mailto:martin.mckay@medway.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Star Hill to Sun Pier Public realm Design Guide

### **Background papers**

None