

Land to the West of Mildenhall: Masterplan

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| Report number: | CAB/WS/22/056 | |
| Report to and date: | Cabinet | 8 November 2022 |
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Decisions Plan: The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: The site is located in Mildenhall Queensway Ward. Other Wards impacted are Mildenhall Great Heath, Mildenhall Kingsway & Market, Mildenhall Queensway, Manor and The Rows

Recommendation: It is recommended that the West Mildenhall Masterplan, as contained in Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/22/056, be adopted as planning guidance.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The site is allocated in the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) 2019 under Policy SA4(a), which was adopted in September 2019. The site forms part of the allocation known in the SALP document as Land West of Mildenhall.
- 1.2 Policy SA4(a) of the SALP 2019 document sets out that 97 hectares of land is allocated for a mixed-use development to include 1,300 dwellings with a local centre, a minimum of five hectares of employment land, a ten hectare SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace), school, leisure facilities and public services.
- 1.3 Approximately 19.2 hectares of the site allocation has been developed as the Mildenhall Hub, a public service, educational and leisure facility that opened in summer 2021.
- 1.4 Policy SA4(a) states that the precise numbers and distribution of uses and access arrangements will be informed by a detailed masterplan for the site. It goes on to state that applications for planning permission will only be determined once the masterplan for the whole site has been approved by the Local Planning Authority. The masterplan seeks to establish a vision and delivery mechanism to achieve these policy requirements.
- 1.5 Suffolk County Council (SCC) are the majority landowner for the remainder of the land within the allocation and the masterplan has been prepared by SCC. The masterplan includes the land within third party ownership.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) 2019 Development Plan document, in Policy SA4(a), allocated 97 hectares of land for a mixed-use development to include 1,300 dwellings with a local centre, a minimum of 5 hectares of employment land, a ten hectare SANG, school, leisure facilities and public services. The public services and leisure facilities element of the scheme has been delivered by the Mildenhall Hub. The Hub includes provision for secondary education.
- 2.2 SCC are the majority landowner for the remainder of the allocated site and, whilst formal agreement has not been reached with the third-party owners, SCC has obtained letters of authority from the landowners to progress the masterplan.

- 2.3 In 2019/2020, SCC commissioned a series of assessments and reports to inform the early stages of the masterplan process and they held a public consultation on this preliminary information from 4 January 2021 to 15 February 2021.
- 2.4 SCC collated the feedback from the consultation and categorised it into several key areas including site and land use, density, character and design of residential areas, transport movement and connectivity, green infrastructure and climate change.
- 2.5 Following the conclusion of the public consultation, SCC engaged with officers at West Suffolk Council (WSC) along with statutory bodies and organisations, including the Lead Local Flood Authority, Local Highway Authority and Ministry of Defence Safeguarding in order to develop a series of masterplan framework plans addressing land use; landscape; ecology; drainage and connectivity and movement.
- 2.6 A series of stakeholder workshops were held in 2021 involving SCC, WSC and key statutory consultees to develop the masterplan framework plans and inform the content of the draft masterplan. Following a recommendation by officers to Cabinet in October 2021, Cabinet resolved to approve the draft masterplan for public consultation. SCC carried out a formal public consultation on the draft masterplan between 15 November 2021 and 17 January 2022 (a total of nine weeks).
- 2.7 A virtual consultation was held during the nine-week period, on a dedicated website, and an in-person event was held on 2 December 2021. SCC categorised the feedback from the general public into four broad areas:
1. general objections to the principle of development, including the use of agricultural land
 2. a mixed response to whether the proposed development would lead to an overall increase in biodiversity
 3. concern that the indicative mitigation measures identified would be insufficient to prevent adverse impacts on the local highway network, and
 4. general disagreement that the high-level design guidance would result in the proposed development displaying Mildenhall's distinctive character

Comments were also received in respect of matters such as impacts on existing services (schools, health facilities, shops etc.)

- 2.8 Comments were received from a number of key stakeholders, including Mildenhall High Town Council (represented by Cotswold Transport Planning in relation to highway matters), Suffolk Wildlife Trust, The Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Suffolk Constabulary and the SCC Archaeological Service.
- 2.9 SCC has prepared a comprehensive Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) detailing the first and second consultations and which provides a summary of the responses received. The SCI also sets out where the draft masterplan contains information that addresses the comments made, particularly in relation to biodiversity, transport, design and employment. The draft masterplan has also been amended to make reference to such matters as the Secure by Design principles and CABI Inclusive Design principles, picking up on the comments made by Suffolk Constabulary.
- 2.10 In response to the comments received regarding the principle of development, SCC has reiterated that this was established at the point at which the site was allocated for development in the adopted Site Allocations Local Plan (2019). While the principle of development has been established, the purpose of a masterplan is to put in place a framework against which future planning applications can be assessed and provide a clear vision as to the nature of the development that will come forward to fulfil the policy allocation.
- 2.11 A common response from communities in relation to new development is that existing infrastructure and services does not have the capacity to meet the needs of the new residents. Within the masterplan the land use framework sets out that land is being set aside for the delivery of a new primary school and up to two early years settings will also be provided on site. The scheme delivers a local centre, designed to meet the needs of the new residents and not compete with the existing town centre, as well as an adult care facility and green infrastructure in the form of play areas, green corridors and a ten hectare SANG. The Mildenhall Hub has been designed in such a way that the secondary school, leisure and health facilities can be expanded and this will be the subject of further discussion at the outline planning application stage.
- 2.12 Following a review of the consultation responses and updated masterplan officers identified three key areas where further engagement with SCC was necessary. These related to land ownership, the timing of the delivery of the five hectares of employment land required by the policy allocation and the highway impacts of the future development and the need for highway mitigation measures to be implemented.
- 2.13 As stated at 2.2 above, SCC has now received written authority from the other landowners that make up the allocated site to the

preparation of a masterplan. This is a requirement of the Council's Masterplan Protocol that has now been satisfied. SCC has advised officers that it has begun the process of reaching a formal agreement with the landowners although it is not yet known if such an agreement will be in place at the time of the submission of an outline planning application.

- 2.14 The masterplan includes an indicative phasing plan that sets out the likely pattern of development in the future. Areas within SCC ownership are depicted as coming forward primarily in phases one and two with the remainder of their land holding in phase three. This includes the delivery of the employment land.
- 2.15 Officers are aware of the need to deliver economic growth alongside the delivery of housing and for this reason SCC were asked to bring the employment land forward in phase one. Subsequent discussions with SCC have resulted in amendments to the supporting text within the masterplan that indicate SCC's commitment to bring the employment land forward at the earliest opportunity. This is, however, subject to viability and matters such as the availability of utilities. A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in relation to this matter has been completed between SCC and West Suffolk Council's Economic Development team. The MoC establishes a shared commitment to bring forward the employment land as soon as practically possible and sets out the basis on which the two authorities will work together to achieve this objective. On that basis the masterplan still indicates the delivery of the employment land in phase three with additional text stating that SCC will continue to work with WSC to secure delivery at the earliest opportunity. SCC has, however, indicated its intention to bring forward the scheme required to secure access from the existing industrial estate into the employment land in the form of a separate planning application to the wider allocation site.
- 2.16 It is acknowledged that there are concerns within the community regarding the volume of traffic generated as a result of the development and impacts on Mildenhall and the surrounding villages. Initial assessment work has been carried out by AECOM on behalf of SCC as landowners and potential mitigation measures have been identified. Mildenhall High Town Council has also instructed their own highways consultant to independently assess the work carried out by AECOM.
- 2.17 AECOM has identified potential mitigation measures within Mildenhall including the enlargement of the A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street / A11014 North Terrace three-arm mini roundabout, incorporating Queensway. In addition, the promotion of College Heath Road as the predominant route for through-traffic travelling from the A11 Fiveways junction to the east of the town has been suggested.

- 2.18 In the past few weeks National Highways has undertaken a consultation on the potential closure of a number of gaps on the A11 south of Barton Mills. SCC was asked to comment on this and AECOM has responded to say that more information is needed from National Highways to assess any impacts on the proposed mitigation measures. However, the impact on the distribution of trips associated with the West Mildenhall site are expected to be limited. SCC Highways has concurred with the view that further information is required in order to fully assess the impact of the closures.
- 2.19 Notwithstanding the fact that there is likely to be further dialogue and consultation in respect of the proposed changes to the A11, it is considered that SCC has carried out a greater level of highway impact assessment work than would normally be provided at the masterplan stage. This work has provided the foundation for the detailed assessment work that will be undertaken to accompany an outline planning application and it is expected that AECOM/SCC will continue to engage with Mildenhall High Town Council's consultants in this regard.
- 2.20 In recognition of the fact that local members remain concerned as to the highway impacts of future development and the fact that there is an element of uncertainty as to when the employment land will be delivered in full, a further member briefing with officers from WSC and SCC in attendance has been arranged on 31 October 2022. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet on 8 November 2022 as to the outcome of the briefing.
- 2.21 As reported to Cabinet previously, the masterplan confirms that the scheme will be policy compliant in areas such as the delivery of affordable housing, ecological and biodiversity enhancements and the provision of a primary school, local centre and a ten hectare SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace).
- 2.22 As stated above, the purpose of the masterplan is to establish a vision and delivery mechanism to achieve the policy requirements set out in the SALP. The preparation of the masterplan has enabled the parties to identify the key issues that will arise in relation to the delivery of the future development, in this case being land ownership, employment land and transport related matters. This has resulted in proactive engagement with interested parties including Mildenhall High Town Council and their consultants and this will continue beyond the adoption of the masterplan. Similarly, the process has resulted in the production of a Memorandum of Cooperation between WSC and SCC in relation to delivery of the employment land.
- 2.23 Officers have regularly briefed the relevant ward members as to progress in relation to the masterplan and specifically in relation to

the three key issues identified above. As stated at 2.20 a further briefing is planned for 31 October 2022.

- 2.24 SCC has submitted the masterplan attached as Appendix A together with a request that the document is adopted by the Council as planning guidance. Officers are satisfied that the document provides a sound framework against which future planning applications can be assessed and it is recommended that the masterplan is adopted as planning guidance.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 Policy SA4(a) of the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) 2019 states that the precise numbers and distribution of uses and access arrangements will be informed by a detailed masterplan for the site. It goes on to state that applications for planning permission will only be determined once the masterplan for the whole site has been approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that a comprehensive and policy compliant development comes forward on this allocated site it is necessary for a masterplan to be adopted as planning guidance, therefore other options regarding the potential development of the site have not been considered as part of this process.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 The preparation of the masterplan, including the consultation process, has been undertaken by SCC in accordance with West Suffolk Council's Masterplan Protocol.
- 4.2 SCC has carried out an informal public consultation on the preliminary information gathered to inform the content of the draft document. The issues raised through that consultation were taken into account in the preparation of the draft document.
- 4.3 SCC carried out a further formal consultation on the draft masterplan document and has demonstrated that, where possible, the issues raised by the local community and statutory consultees have been addressed in the masterplan.
- 4.4 SCC has worked closely with officers at WSC as well as bodies such as the Local Highway Authority and the Lead Local Flood Authority throughout the process of preparing the masterplan.
- 4.5 As stated at 2.21, the relevant ward members have been regularly briefed throughout the process and concerns raised have been

addressed so far as possible and within the masterplan process, in particular in relation to landownership, the delivery of the employment land and the highway impacts of the allocation. These matters will continue to be addressed through the development of the outline planning application. Prior to the submission of the outline planning application SCC will carry out a further public consultation.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 There is a risk that failure to adopt the masterplan as planning guidance will impact upon the delivery of an allocated site for a mixed-use development including residential and employment uses as the policy requires that a masterplan is adopted prior to the determination of any planning application.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 Financial

There are no potential adverse financial or resource impacts resulting from the adoption of the masterplan. The reverse is possible if the masterplan is not adopted and further time and resources must be put into the process.

6.2 Legal compliance

There are no legal implications arising from the adoption of the masterplan. The preparation and adoption of the masterplan for the Land West of Mildenhall site is a requirement of planning policy. An adopted masterplan would enable the Local Planning Authority to proceed in determining planning application(s) for the site.

6.3 Personal data processing

No personal data or information is detailed within the masterplan. SCC has undertaken public consultation (including the collation of responses) in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.

6.4 Equalities

Consideration has been given to the provisions of Section 149 of the Quality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) in the preparation of the masterplan.

6.5 Crime and disorder

The adoption of the masterplan will not give rise to any matters affecting crime and disorder.

6.6 **Environment or sustainability**

The masterplan seeks to promote a sustainable development that accords with local and national policy in this regard.

6.7 **HR or staffing**

There are no HR or staffing implications as a result of the adoption of the masterplan.

6.8 **Changes to existing policies**

The adoption of the masterplan does not require any changes to existing policies. The preparation of the masterplan has been carried out in accordance with the Council's Masterplan Protocol.

6.9 **External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)**

See 6.4.

7. **Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 **Appendix A** – Masterplan document for Land West of Mildenhall

(Note: this document has been attached to members' printed agenda packs in black and white form only. To view the colour version, please follow the link to the agenda papers here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 8 November 2022, 6.00 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Agenda-for-Cabinet-on-Tuesday-8-November-2022-6.00-pm))

8. **Background documents associated with this report**

8.1 Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) 2019 Development Plan Document.

[Final-SALP-September-2019.pdf \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Final-SALP-September-2019.pdf)