

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND SPORT

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 th NOVEMBER 2013	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	ADOPTION OF THE MEADWAY CENTRE PLANNING BRIEF		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	REGENERATION, TRANSPORT AND PLANNING
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	NORCOT
LEAD OFFICER:	MARK WORRINGHAM	TEL:	0118 9373337
JOB TITLE:	PRINCIPAL PLANNER	E-MAIL:	mark.worringham@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Meadway Centre on Honey End Lane, particularly the Meadway precinct, is run-down and ageing badly, and is in need of investment. The Council consulted the local community in February, March and April 2012 on the future of the centre, and consulted on a draft Planning Brief in November and December 2012. Taking the results of consultation into account (which are set out at Appendix 2), a final version of the Brief for adoption has been prepared in tracked changes format (Appendix 3).
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to adopt the Meadway Centre Planning Brief. Once adopted, the Brief will be used as an important consideration in determining any planning applications on the site.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the results of the consultation on the Draft Meadway Centre Planning Brief, undertaken during November - December 2012, as set out in the Consultation Statement at Appendix 2, be noted.
- 2.2 That the Meadway Centre Planning Brief (Appendix 3) be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief will be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) forming part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Together, the documents in the LDF set out the planning strategy

for Reading. A SPD is a lower-level document that expands upon existing policy within a higher-level Development Plan Document (DPD). In this case, the Brief expands upon policy in the Core Strategy (adopted in 2008) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (the SDPD, adopted in October 2012).

- 3.2 The main policies that the Brief expands upon are policy CS26 of the Core Strategy (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) and SA15 of the SDPD (District and Local Centres). These policies emphasise the need to protect and support the network of smaller centres in the Borough, and seek to widen the range of uses in these centres. Policy SA15 identifies the Meadway as one of three smaller centres which are likely to form the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 The Council undertook an initial consultation to seek views on the main issues and potential options for the Meadway Centre. This was undertaken to ensure that local community views were sought at the earliest possible stage to inform the drafting of a Brief. This was reported to Cabinet on 5 November 2012 (Minute 70 refers).

- 4.2 Following this, a Draft Brief was produced, and was subject to consultation between 9 November and 21 December 2012. In summary, consultation consisted of the following:

- A letter or e-mail containing the leaflet to identified important stakeholders, including respondents to the earlier consultation;
- A press release, leading to coverage in local papers;
- Brief available online;
- Hard copies of the Brief available in libraries and the Civic Offices;
- A drop-in/exhibition over two days in a vacant unit in the Meadway Precinct.

- 4.3 The consultation process is set out in more detail in the Report of Consultation, attached as Appendix 2.

- 4.4 A total of 11 responses were received, which is clearly far fewer than the 361 responses received on the initial consultation. However, this reflects the strategy of undertaking the widest consultation at the earliest possible stage, to ensure the community was involved at a stage when it would be most able to shape proposals.

- 4.5 Due to the number of responses, there were no particular themes that emerged as a result of the consultation, but the below are some of the main points:

- General support for the overall approach of the Brief;
- The owners of the precinct (Chillingham Ltd) support the broad thrust of the Brief, but have concerns that some elements of the Brief are overly prescriptive and will hinder the viability of a development;
- No particular concerns from the infrastructure providers and statutory consultees (Highways Agency, Thames Water, Natural England), although the Environment Agency wanted to see more account taken of Sustainable Drainage Solutions.
- Some respondents continued to highlight key uses they would like to see, e.g. cafes.
- Some difference of opinion on whether a pub was appropriate.
- Particular care needs to be taken to ensure a quality open space is provided.

4.6 Responses have been taken into account in considering any changes necessary to the final adoption version of the Brief. The Report of Consultation (Appendix 2) sets out how each response has been taken into account. The final Brief has also been informed by continuing dialogue with the main landowners of the site separately from the consultation process.

(b) Option Proposed

4.7 Committee is recommended to adopt the amended version of the Meadway Centre Planning Brief. The version to be adopted is Appendix 3 to this paper, in tracked changes format showing how the amended version differs from the original draft. Once adopted, the Meadway Centre Planning Brief will be used to supplement the Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document for the determination of planning applications in the centre. Committee is also recommended to approve the recommended responses to representations made on the draft document. These are contained in the Annex 1 of the Report of Consultation on the Draft Meadway Centre Draft Planning Brief (at Appendix 2).

4.8 The representations received have led to a small number of amendments to the Brief. In addition, the Brief has been amended in places to reflect ongoing discussion with the landowners, and also to update aspects that were out of date. None of the amendments proposed alter the overall policy approach.

(c) Other Options Considered

4.8 There are two general alternative options that could be considered;

- Not produce a formal Planning Brief for the centre; or
- Wait until firmer proposals for development of the centre come forward to finalise the Brief.

- 4.9 The option of not producing a formal Brief for the site would mean that the Council fails to take the initiative on what is a very significant site for much of West Reading. The large response rate indicates that there is strong support for a positive development that benefits the whole area, and this option would mean that the Council loses the opportunity to influence this development at the earliest stage possible. Whilst the Council could still publish its guidelines for development in some form, this would have very little weight in planning decisions.
- 4.10 The option of awaiting firmer development proposals, to ensure that nothing in the Brief prevents a potentially unanticipated scheme coming forward, would have many of the same effects as the option of not producing a formal Brief. Much of the purpose of such a Brief is to influence the thinking of landowners and developers at an early stage, often years before applications are submitted and development takes place. By setting out key parameters rather than dictating the form of development, the Brief is sufficiently flexible to allow a wide range of potential solutions to come forward.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief will contribute to achieving the following strategic aims, through using mixed-use development to regenerate a key site in a highly accessible location:
- The development of Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley;
 - Establishing Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit;
 - Promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief has drawn upon the results of two periods of community involvement on the future of the centre, which ran from February to April 2012 and from November to December 2012. Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.5 of this report summarise the consultation process already undertaken, and this is set out in more detail in the relevant Reports of Consultation. The community involvement stages were undertaken in line with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), adopted by Council on 27 June 2006 (minute 17 refers).

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Scoping Assessment, included at Appendix 1 identifies that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is relevant to this Supplementary Planning Document. The EqIA (also at Appendix 1) identifies that there are positive impacts for the protected characteristic of disability, as defined in the Equality Act, because the SPD includes access for people

with disabilities within the development principles. It also identifies positive impacts for the protected characteristic of age, as there are principles about appealing to a wide range of people, with particular provision for older people and people with young children. Compliance with the duties under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 can involve treating some persons more favourably than others, but it is not considered that there will be a negative impact on other groups with relevant protected characteristics.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Regulation 12 and 13 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for undertaking consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents. Regulation 14 sets out the requirements for adoption. The production of and consultation on the Brief are in compliance with the requirements under the Regulations.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The work undertaken on drafting the documents and the expenditure on community engagement has been, and will continue to be, funded from existing budgets. There are no other direct revenue or financial implications arising from this report.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 9.2 The contents of the Brief provide a clear vision and principles for the development of the area which will bring valuable benefits to Reading, in terms of physical regeneration of a neglected site, and provision of services and facilities for the wider community. The preparation of an SPD for an important development site such as the Meadway Centre is in accordance with recognised best practice and therefore represents good value for money.

Risk Assessment

- 9.3 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended 2008 and 2009)
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Core Strategy (adopted 2008)
- Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012)
- The Future of The Meadway Centre: Report of Consultation (June 2012)
- Meadway Centre Draft Planning Brief (November 2012)

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

The Meadway Centre Planning Brief

Directorate: ENCAS - Environment, Culture and Sport

Service: Planning and Building Control

Name: Mark Worringham

Job Title: Principal Planner

Date of assessment: 27/09/13

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

To guide the development of the Meadway Centre.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The local community will benefit through redevelopment of a centre which has been neglected and in decline for some time, resulting in improved services and facilities and a more welcoming environment. Developers and landowners will benefit from positive guidance on the future of the sites.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

The outcome will be a district centre that functions well, is more welcoming and attractive and better serves its local community. This will benefit both local residents and developers/landowners.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Developers/landowners, the public and community groups, infrastructure providers. Developers/landowners want guidance that will allow for a viable development of the site. The public mainly want a centre that better serves the community. Infrastructure providers want a development that does not overstretch infrastructure.

Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, feedback.

Yes No

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Consultation

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Local residents, community and voluntary groups, local businesses, relevant developers and landowners, infrastructure providers, statutory consultees	Two consultations have already been carried out on issues for the future development of the centre - see main body of this report. Consultation was in line with the Statement of Community Involvement.	February - April 2012 November - December 2012

Collect and Assess your Data

Describe how could this proposal impact on Racial groups

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Disability

Disabled access was highlighted as a principle that should be highlighted in the Brief. The Brief expands on this, and ensures that any impacts on disability will be positive.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Age

The proportion of people in the surrounding three wards (Norcot, Southcote and Tilehurst) that are 0-15 and 60-84 is higher than the Reading average. The improvements to the centre seek to ensure that the centre appeals to all ages, and the development principles highlight the need to provide for both older people and families with young children.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Religious belief?

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Make a Decision

Tick which applies

1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off
2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
Reason
3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy already includes monitoring proposals with regard to social inclusion in the Borough.

Signed (completing officer) Mark Worringham Date: 27 September 2013
Signed (Lead Officer) Mark Worringham Date: 27 September 2013