

Report on the Premdor/Rockways Master Plan Consultation, Sible Hedingham		Agenda No: 5
<p>Corporate Priority: Housing and Transport meet local needs, business is encouraged and local economy prospers and the environment is clean and green</p> <p>Report presented by: Representative from Bloor Homes and Emma Goodings</p> <p>Report prepared by: Emma Goodings</p>		
<p>Background Papers: BDC Core Strategy 2011 Premdor/Rockways masterplan available at www.bloorhomes.com/siblehedingham</p>		Public Report
<p>Options: To note the comments made during the consultation period. To approve or not approve the proposed BDC response as set out in section 5 of this report To amend the BDC response.</p>		Key Decision: NO
<p>Executive Summary: The former Premdor and Rockways premises was identified in the Core Strategy as a site for regeneration. A draft masterplan for the site has been produced, which was subject to a four week public consultation, ending on the 10th July. Whilst there was general support for the regeneration of the site, a number of concerns have been raised through the consultation by the Parish Council and local residents including; housing supply, retail, allotments, health centre, access to St Peter's School, school places, traffic, public transport, play equipment, sports centre, employment and viability. The report contains a response to each of the points. The report then sets out a number of recommendations for amendments to the draft masterplan for Members to consider.</p>		
<p>Decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note the responses to the Masterplan consultation • To agree the BDC response to the consultation as set out in section 5 of this report 		
<p>Purpose of Decision: To note the results of the public consultation and to agree the BDC Member comments on the proposed draft masterplan, so that these may be taken into account in the production of the final masterplan</p>		
Corporate implications		
Financial:	Community benefits and infrastructure requirements will be linked to future development	
Legal:	The masterplan and its consultation must be carried out in line with regulations in order to be adopted by the Council	

	as a formal Supplementary Planning Document.
Equalities/Diversity	Proposed development and protection of the environment will have an impact on equalities/diversity
Customer Impact:	The redevelopment of the site will have an impact on the residents, especially those that live within close proximity of the site
Environment and Climate Change:	The masterplan proposes to develop the land in line with sustainability principles including improvements to the local wildlife site
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The masterplan has been the subject of a four week consultation. A public exhibition has been held and the document has been available on our website
Risks:	That the masterplan will not be approved by the Council which will delay a planning application for the site
Officer Contact:	Emma Goodings
Designation:	Senior Planning Policy Officer
Ext. No.	2511
E-mail:	emmgo@braintree.gov.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 The BDC Core Strategy Spatial Strategy, adopted in 2011, identifies Sible Hedingham as one of the 6 Key Service Villages within the District. Paragraph 4.12 states that; *“More limited development to serve the local area, or deal with specific local issues such as the regeneration of important sites, can be located in the Key Service Villages”*

1.2 The former Premdor site was a window and door manufacturer which closed in September 2009. There are a variety of large industrial buildings on the site in various states of repair, all situated on a concrete slab. The neighbouring Rockways factory is in a poor state of repair and is too large for the current pond supplier which is looking to relocate elsewhere in the District. Together with the Hedingham station marsh wildlife, which is in Premdor ownership, the site is 13.7ha (33.85acres) in size. Paragraph 6.13 of the Core Strategy identified the former Premdor site and adjoining Rockways premises as a regeneration area with uses to include housing, employment, a doctors’ surgery, riverside nature reserve and open space and allotments. It goes on to state that; *“Masterplans will be required for the redevelopment sites, to be approved by the Council as Supplementary Planning Documents”*.

2. The Draft Masterplan

2.1 The masterplan is attached in Appendix 1. The whole masterplan consultation document is available in Appendix 2 on the website. The main proposals for the site can be summarised as;

- Dwellings of various sizes and styles but mainly family type homes, currently proposed 236
- 30% affordable housing in line with the Council’s standards
- The construction of a work hub office space available for small and rural business to utilise together with a number of small light industrial units (totalling around 0.2ha)

- A footway and cycleway through the local wildlife site linking to the existing footpath through Summerfields
- Opening up of the Hedingham Station Marsh local wildlife site for public access
- Additional informal open space including provision of an equipped children's play area
- Open space on the frontage of Station Road including space for public art.
- Currently a water course to the River Colne runs underground below the site. This would be opened up to create a feature and help with water flow and storage
- Refurbishment of the old bank building on Station Road for Parish Council use
- Financial contributions to education and allotments and public transport

2.2 Access for the site will be via the existing main access onto Swan Street with a secondary access located where the current Rockways access is on Station Road. There is not proposed to be a road link through the site. Two pedestrian crossings at Swan Street and Station Road are also included within the proposals.

3. Consultation

3.1 A four week consultation period on the draft document ran from 12th June to 10th July.

As part of the public consultation, just under 1000 letters were delivered by hand to residents of Sible Hedingham, notices have appeared in the Halstead Gazette and on the District Council's website and the draft masterplan has been available to view and comment upon on both the District Council's and Bloor Homes websites. A public exhibition was held on the first day of the consultation in Sible Hedingham Village Hall between 12 and 7pm where BDC and Bloor Homes were available to answer questions. The exhibition was attended by 134 members of the public. A further public meeting was arranged by the Parish Council on June 25th at which representatives from BDC and Bloor were again available to answer questions. A number of the exhibition boards were also available at the Parish Council Offices between the 13th and 22nd June. The Council also contacted all its statutory consultees such as the Highways Agency to inform them of the consultation and to invite comments. 47 responses have been received from members of the public as well as dialogue from statutory consultees, the Environment Agency and the Parish Council.

The Parish Council invited comments to help inform its own response to the consultation and received 38 responses.

Responses to the Consultation

4.1 Attached in Appendix 3 is a Statement of Community Involvement on the draft masterplan. The Parish Council response is included in full in Appendix 4 and covers most of the issues set out below. The Environment Agency response is also attached in Appendix 5 and is supportive of the proposals. The main issues are;

4.2 Sible Hedingham as a Key Service Village

The Parish Council have expressed their concerns about their designation as a KSV within the Core Strategy. However during the 2008 consultation on the Core Strategy the response from the Parish Council dated 5th December 2008 stated that; "*The Parish Council would like to make clear at the outset that it accepts the designation by BDC of being a Key Service Village*" Whilst the response did go on to raise a number of issues in the village including the access to the primary school, requirement for new health centre and needing more attractions it did not object to the designation in either this consultation or the 2010 pre submission consultation and hearing which took place before the Core Strategy was adopted.

4.3 Housing Requirements

Braintree District Council Core Strategy Policy CS1 requires that the 6 Key Service Villages should deliver a minimum of 600 dwellings between 2009 and 2026, but does not allocate a specific number of houses to the site. The Council considers that it will fully meet the housing targets set out in the Core Strategy and has no specific requirements for housing numbers on this site.

4.4 Employment

The masterplan proposes that a work hub be located on the site. This will provide serviced office space which new or small rural business can use on a flexible basis as a first step towards getting their own premises. Correspondence from the Parish Council in December 2008 in relation to the Tanners Diary site stated that; *“there is absolutely no demand whatsoever for light industrial use here and the fact that it has remained empty for nearly 3 years is a clear indication that no employment use can be found. There are also empty units in Rippers Court, which is owned by BDC, which sadly proves that more employment sites are not required”* Various options for employment were also investigated by the Premdor site agents during the early stages of masterplan production but due to the location away from the main road network, it was not considered an attractive area to new businesses. This is borne out by the fact that the Tanner’s Diary site has now been empty for nearly 6 years.

4.5 Retail

There has been a suggestion that further retail provision including a superstore could be provided on the site. Sible Hedingham is not the correct location for a superstore which is a town centre use. As set out in national government guidance in the NPPF, main town centre uses should be located within, or if no sites are available, adjacent to the main town centres, i.e. Braintree, Halstead or Witham. A superstore would also generate traffic movements from the surrounding area to the village from shoppers and delivery vehicles. Smaller retail units would only be successful on the site if businesses felt that the location was a viable one in which they could make a profit. Given the distance from the main shopping area of the village and the retail provision already in the village to cater for day to day needs it is not considered that a business would find this location suitable.

4.6 Health Centre

A new health centre combining the existing surgeries in Castle and Sible Hedingham had always been intended to be delivered as part of the regeneration site. However correspondence received on the 23rd April 2012 withdrew the NHS Mid Essex support for a new health centre and it was not included in the masterplan as it felt it would be undeliverable at that stage. Following further correspondence with NHS Mid Essex, the doctors concerned and the strength of feeling shown by local residents, it is considered that this is something which must be catered for on the site. It is therefore proposed that Members recommend that land is set aside for the health centre, which could be brought forward in the longer term when the money is available from NHS Mid Essex. In the short term the site could be set aside and be utilised for another community use, such as car parking.

4.7 School Places

The Premdor/Rockways site was identified by the Core Strategy as a site for regeneration. The growth proposed in this document was fully assessed by ECC as education authority who provided evidence to the hearing that the proposed growth could be met by the actions identified in the Core Strategy infrastructure table. ECC have been further consulted and advised a likely contribution required from the development to provide additional early years and primary school places. The

secondary school is expected to have a surplus of places therefore no contribution is required.

4.8 Access to St Peter's Primary School

At the beginning of this process in 2008 BDC approached St Peter's primary school and ECC Education regarding the possible relocation of the school to the Premdor site. As set out in responses on the 6th May 2008 and the 21st May 2008 respectively both the school, through the chair of the premises committee, and ECC through their strategic planning officer, note the difficult access to the school but see little merit in moving the school to a new location. This was therefore not pursued. The masterplan sets out that there will be the provision of two crossing points on Swan Street and Station Road which will aid pedestrian journeys to both schools. ECC are investigating a new pedestrian route to the school which will require the purchase of third party land. This site could make a monetary contribution to these proposals.

4.9 Traffic generation

Residents have raised concerns about the impact on further traffic through the village. The site benefits from a main access point to the A1017 Swan Street, which is the main road linking Braintree and Haverhill. However Swan Street is subject to congestion and on street parking problems, especially during peak times. ECC Highways were fully consulted on the proposals as set out in the Core Strategy and raised no objections. The masterplan includes the provision of two new crossing points on Swan Street and will encourage pedestrian movements wherever possible. Work is currently ongoing between the developer and ECC to ensure that traffic from the development can be accommodated on the local road network and that safe access is provided to the site.

4.10 Public Transport

It is recognised that like much of the northern part of the District, public transport provision in Sible Hedingham is quite poor, especially in the evenings. Negotiation with Essex County Council is still underway to look at contributions to improving public transport in the village which will be part of a S106 requirement for any planning permission received on the site.

4.11 Parking

Residents have raised concerns about the car parking to be provided on the site. This will be in line with the current adopted standards for the housing and the commercial elements of the site. In the case of housing of more than 2 bedrooms, a minimum of 2 spaces must be provided for each dwelling along with visitor car parking.

4.12 Allotments

Concerns have been raised by both the Parish Council and the local residents about the lack of allotment provision in the village. Currently there is a privately run basic allotment site on the edge of the village which has a waiting list. The Parish Council holds a waiting list and would be responsible for managing the allotments. The Core Strategy referred to the provision of allotments in paragraph 6.13. However officers have concerns about on-site provision and consider that it would not be appropriate to clear an area of the site within the floodplain for allotments, which is part of the nature reserve. Officers are also concerned about provision elsewhere on the site: As an old industrial premises, further investigation needs to be carried out on the remediation of contamination of the site and potential for leaching to see if it is suitable for allotments. The masterplan proposes to provide an off- site contribution to allotments. However a location for these allotments is yet to be identified. This is in line with the requirements set out in the BDC Open Spaces SPD which shows on

table 3 that on site provision is only required in developments of more than 250 dwellings.

4.13 Play Equipment

A number of residents have raised the issue of children's play area. This is included on the masterplan at point F and will be an equipped playground and children's play space in line with the standards set out in the adopted Core Strategy.

4.14 Sports Proposals

As set out by Helena Carter, the bursar of Hedingham School, there is a proposal for new sports facilities in the village which could be used by the school during the day and by the community in the evening and at weekends. This would require a large monetary contribution of around £590,000 from the site above that already proposed for education. Any proposal for new sports facilities in the village would need to be accompanied by an updated feasibility study specifically for Hedingham and a latent demand study before commencing to far with this project potential. A full business case would then need to be put together including costs of construction, ongoing maintenance and running costs together with details of how the management of the centre would be organised. However in terms of this site, there is a limited pot of money from which contributions to community projects and infrastructure can be taken and it is considered that other projects such as the land for the health centre take preference. It could not be argued that the provision of a sports centre, which would provide facilities for the whole village, should be mainly funded by a development of just over 200 dwellings.

4.15 Viability

The financial viability of the masterplan will be examined in more detail once the Master Plan has been amended to take into account the comments during this public consultation. However, the Premdor/Rockways site is an expensive site to develop due to the demolition and potential contamination on the site. We are advised by the developer that if any further community uses are identified for the site then it may not be possible to provide the 30% affordable housing as set out in Core Strategy policy CS2. Any proposed reduction in the affordable housing % will be independently tested for viability before being agreed.

4.16 The Parish Council has also raised a number of other concerns including that the consideration of this draft masterplan be deferred by the LDF Sub Committee due to the fact that it is not in compliance with the Core Strategy and they wish that a new masterplan be worked on by BDC and the Parish Council, rather than by a developer. As set out in this report the Council is satisfied that the draft masterplan together with the proposed amendments will meet the requirements of the Core Strategy. Council officers have worked with developers on a number of masterplans including at Skyline Business Park and on the emerging Panfield Lane growth location and has found that working with the developer ensures that the masterplan, which is agreed is viable and capable of being developed. The Parish Council also raised the issues of suitable triggers being in place to bring forward the infrastructure requirements as the development progresses. This will be part of any subsequent planning application/s for the site.

5. Braintree District Council response

Recommendation

To approve the following recommendations for amendments to the Premdor/Rockways Masterplan in Sible Hedingham;

a) BDC, NHS Mid Essex and the three surgeries in Sible and Castle Hedingham will continue to work together to find a way forward to providing a new healthcare facility. 0.2ha of land is therefore required to be set aside for this provision to come forward in the medium term. In the short term the land could be made available for a community use such as car parking.

b) More information including approval from Essex County Council on the proposed access scheme needs to be included in the final Masterplan to ensure that the access is safe and the traffic generation can be accommodated on the wider road network.

c) The Masterplan must ensure that parking, including the provision of visitor parking is capable of being provided at a minimum to the standards set out in the adopted parking standards

d) The Masterplan must ensure that garden sizes are capable of being provided at the minimum standards as set out in the approved guidance.

e) The relationship between the children's play area and the opened up water course will need to be carefully designed to ensure the safety of children using the area

f) The pedestrian access to the north of the site coming out onto Station Road needs to be resolved as at present the footpath has a dead end

g) An indication of the phasing of the residential elements of the scheme would be useful

h) The Council requires that a draft S106 be submitted with the final masterplan. This will show how and when the site and the two owners will be delivering the necessary infrastructure and community benefits in a timely fashion

i) The Council will undertake a viability assessment of the final masterplan, before its approval to ensure that the community benefits and infrastructure are deliverable.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The masterplan will be redrafted in light of the comments received. Once this has taken place a revised masterplan will be submitted to the Council for approval to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Bloor Homes have indicated that they will submit the revised masterplan in August.