

Leicester
City Council

CABINET

8th APRIL 2002

Ward Affected : ABBEY

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Abbey Park Road

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

1 Purpose of Report

To obtain Cabinets agreement to adopt the draft guidance for Abbey Park Road, as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the City of Leicester Local Plan (adopted 1994).

2 Summary

The area of this site falls within the boundary of the Leicester Regeneration Company, and as such will be included within the Masterplan that is being prepared by consultants. However, there is currently strong developer interest in the site which may result in planning applications being submitted in the very near future. Guidance is therefore urgently required. This matter has been discussed with the LRC, and it has been agreed that the SPG should be produced in advance of the LRC Masterplan. Officers are working closely with the LRC and its consultants, to ensure that the Masterplan and SPG (existing and future) are mutually reinforcing.

Public consultation on the draft guidance was carried out in January/February 2002. Scrutiny Committee considered the guidance at its meeting on 20 February and 26 March 2002. Full details are set out in Supporting Information including responses to all substantive comments made, and in the minutes of Scrutiny Committee.

3 Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) consider the comments of the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Abbey Park Road; and

- (2) consider adoption of the guidance as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

4 Headline Financial and Legal Implications

There are no direct financial or legal implications.

5 Report Author / Officer to contact

Stephen Haines Ext. 7215

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Report

1.1

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provides direction on the type and form of development that the City Council would expect for particular sites and buildings. Guidance has been prepared for this site now as it is attracting increasing interest from developers. The Abbey Park Road site will, in the future, be covered by a wider reaching masterplan which is to be prepared by the Leicester Regeneration Company. This masterplan is expected to be delivered later in the year. In the meantime, it is necessary to provide guidance for this important site, to provide advice and information for developers and to help safeguard it from inappropriate development. This approach has the support of Leicester Regeneration Company.

1.2

The Abbey Park Road site is located to the north of Abbey Park. The main site is bounded by the River Soar to the west, the Grand Union Canal to the east and Abbey Park Road itself to the south. The National Space Centre is close by. Other sites included in the SPG are properties on Marjorie Street, Ross Walk and Abbey Park Street.

1.3

The Abbey Park Road site is presently occupied by a range of industrial uses, with significant levels of employment. Prominent businesses include Wolsey, Sara Lee/Courtalds, First Group PLC (Leicester), Advance Tapes Ltd. and Rocket Studios.

1.4

The Abbey Park Road site is currently designated within the City of Leicester Local Plan as employment (with open space by the waterside). Other sites included in the SPG are Leicester College on Abbey Park Street which is designated as Community, Education & Leisure and light industrial units on Marjorie Street. The Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan proposes to change these allocations to a Potential Development Area (PDA). This excludes the light industrial units on Marjorie Street whose designation is to remain as

Employment. The PDA status is intended to stimulate and encourage regeneration.

1.5

The Guidance has a number of aims:

- to maximise the full potential of the site in any development proposals
- to promote high density, mixed-use development; with a priority given to mixed tenure housing.
- to provide better connections between neighbourhoods in this part of the City.
- to facilitate improved access to the waterways, the National Space Centre, Abbey Park and new employment opportunities off Abbey Lane.

1.6

The document includes indicative drawings on what might be achieved on the site. The illustrations do not present a specific development proposal. They simply indicate one way in which developments could occur that meet the requirements and aspirations for the area. Many alternative schemes could be generated that could equally achieve this. It is important to note that it is highly unlikely that such a development, as shown on the Indicative Layout, would be delivered as a single scheme. It is far more likely that it will be "developed-out" over a period of time, as opportunities for redevelopment come forward.

1.7

Consultation for the SPG has been undertaken as follows:

July - December 2001: Internal City Council Departmental consultation with A&L, Education & Housing.

November 2001: Consultation with Fire, Police, British Waterways, NHS, Environment Agency.

December 2001: Ward Councillors sent copies of draft guidance

December 2001: Residents and businesses within the Site Boundary received copy of draft SPG and Indicative Layout Plan. Consultation ran from 18th December 2001 - 11th January 2002.

21st January - 15th February 2002 : General public consultation exercise, comprising:-

- Public Consultation Leaflet (attached below), with Freepost reply, mailed out to 1035 residents and businesses in the wider Belgrave area. Versions of the leaflet were made available in Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali and Urdu.
- Article regarding the guidance with contact details, included in February 2002 edition of LINK distributed to all Leicester households.

- Public exhibitions in Sainsbury's, Leicester College and National Space Centre (Initially planned for a 2 week period but extended to 4 weeks).
- Major article in "The Mercury" on 23.01.02 publicising the guidance and the exhibitions
- SPG documents and Indicative Layout Plan available at New Walk Customer Service and at the City Centre and Belgrave Libraries.

1.8

A total of 5 written responses were received from businesses within the Site Boundary: Sara Lee/Courtalds, First Group (formerly Leicester First Bus), Advance Tapes Ltd., Rocket Studios and Miles Platts Ltd.

Sara Lee/Courtalds were concerned about the effect of the SPG on their workforce.

Response.

Officers agreed with Sara Lee/Courtalds that they should have time to brief their workforce before the SPG was released to the media and the general public. This was undertaken by the Company.

First Group Plc. commented that the former City Bus buildings were of "very limited architectural merit", and did not believe that there was a case to retain them. They also felt that the bus site was suitable for hotel, leisure or retail use.

Response.

Some structures on the site are worthy of retention and it would be desirable if they could be incorporated into new development. The chimneys, Courtalds Tower and the former City Bus offices fronting Abbey Park Road are shown remaining in the City Council's Indicative Layout. Their retention is not however essential and favourable consideration would also be given to their replacement with high quality buildings. With regard to future uses, leisure and retail would be acceptable as small scale developments (not major car trip generators), serving the local community. Retail warehouse development, for example, would be resisted. A hotel use may be acceptable but would first have to satisfy the Sequential Test.

No change has been made to the SPG.

Advance Tapes International Ltd. had three main concerns:

- that the guidance was premature to the forthcoming Masterplan and to the adoption of the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan.
- that the guidance assumed existing site businesses would move away
- that the indicative layout was not feasible

Response

Given the strong and increasing development pressures on the site it is desirable that planning and design guidance be provided as soon as possible. The LRC master plan will, if necessary, subsume or supersede the guidance. In the meantime however it is important that SPG is put into place to safeguard the site from inappropriate development. The Replacement Local Plan is not likely to be adopted for at least two years. It is essential that SPG continues to be prepared within this time based on existing and emerging policy. Whilst a

number of businesses within the site are known to be considering their options, others may well be perfectly content to remain where they are. The guidance recognises this situation and makes clear that any proposed new uses would have to be considered in relation to the operational requirements of existing industry.

The purpose of the indicative layout is to illustrate, in broad terms, a possible form of development based on an application of the principles set out in the guidance. Whether it is feasible will depend on the aspirations of and agreement between a wide range of stakeholders

No change has been made to the SPG

Rocket Studios suggest that the entire site be developed for technology to support the National Space Centre. They point out that a pleasant setting by the riverside would be beneficial to business, not just housing, particularly in the recruitment and retention of staff. They are supportive of the well designed buildings fronting onto Abbey Park Road to give, "the whole area a visual boost".

Response

Whilst the priority use of the site is likely to be residential, the SPG does encourage mixed-use development including appropriate commercial / employment use. In addition a science park development is specifically proposed adjacent to the Space Centre

No change has been made to the SPG.

1.9

A total of 8 written responses were received from the public with the following concerns:

- to try to preserve some of the 1930's buildings on the site
- to ensure new buildings are of high quality
- to provide modern buildings to complement the NSC
- to provide a mix of uses
- to provide a pleasant route for pedestrians to new facilities and to the National Space Centre
- to create open spaces for play and picnicking
- to improve the canal for boat users
- to tackle parking problems for local residents in Belgrave

Response

The guidance identifies buildings of merit which should be retained, where practicable, as part of new development. The guidance requires high quality in both buildings and public open spaces with good pedestrian links between them. The guidance recommends that building design be contemporary but that the redevelopment and conversion of existing buildings, such as the Abbey Mills should respect the existing structure. New additions can enhance old buildings, but pastiche should be avoided. The guidance proposes a mix of uses. The guidance pays particular attention to the river and canal and describes how they

can enhance the site. Whilst the issue of Belgrave parking is outside the remit of the guidance reference is made in the guidance to the need for traffic impact studies to assess the potential impact of any development outside the site area.

No change has been made to the SPG.

1.10

Comments of the Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee (supported by Ward Councillors) felt that insufficient public consultation had taken place on the draft guidance given the strategic importance of the site. It requested that further consultation be undertaken.

In relation to the guidance itself the committee stressed two points:

- The importance of Community Safety
- The importance of linkages to the wider area

Response

Following Scrutiny Committee, officers reviewed the consultation undertaken and sought guidance from the Cabinet Lead Member. The conclusion reached was that level of consultation already undertaken was commensurate with the status of the document as planning guidance (rather than development proposals). Further opportunities for public consultation will be taken during the LRC masterplanning exercise and, of course, if and when actual development proposals are submitted. Following further discussions, the matter was again considered by Scrutiny Committee on 26 March. Their comments are contained in the minutes of the meeting which are attached.

The guidance refers directly to issues relating to Community Safety and how surveillance and overlooking should be provided by new development

The Abbey Park Road "Making Connections" illustration, which is included in the guidance, shows how the provision of two bridge links and a connected street network on the site will help people to move around the site and through it to other destinations more easily.

No change has been made to the SPG.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications

2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications

3 Equal Opportunities Implications

The SPG seeks to ensure that all public areas are fully accessible and available to all sections of the community.

4 Policy Implications, Sustainability & Environmental Implications

Policy, sustainability and environmental implications are all issues inherent to the report.

5 Crime and Disorder Implications

The guidance for the Abbey Park Road site specifically includes proposals designed to improve safety for users and ensure that open space and built development is safe to use. Safety should also increase with more people using the area and with greater passive surveillance from new development.

6 Human Rights Act

The guidance has no direct implications

7 Elderly / People on Low Incomes

The guidance includes measures to enhance public transport and provide affordable housing within new development.

8 Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972

Adopted City Of Leicester Local Plan (December 1994)

Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan (Deposit October 2001)

9 Consultations

These are referred to in the main body of the report

10 Officer to contact:

Stephen Haines, Urban Designer

Extension : 7215

Peter Connolly, Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

If you have any queries about the guidance, please call Stephen Haines on Telephone 0116 252 7215, e-mail on hains001@leicester.gov.uk or write to him at the following address: Leicester City Council, FREEPOST, Urban Design Group (A7), New Walk Centre, Leicester, LE1 6ZG

COMMENTS:

(The closing date for comments is 15th FEBRUARY 2002)

For a copy of the guidance in a large print English version and the 4 main community languages, please telephone (0116) 252 7215.

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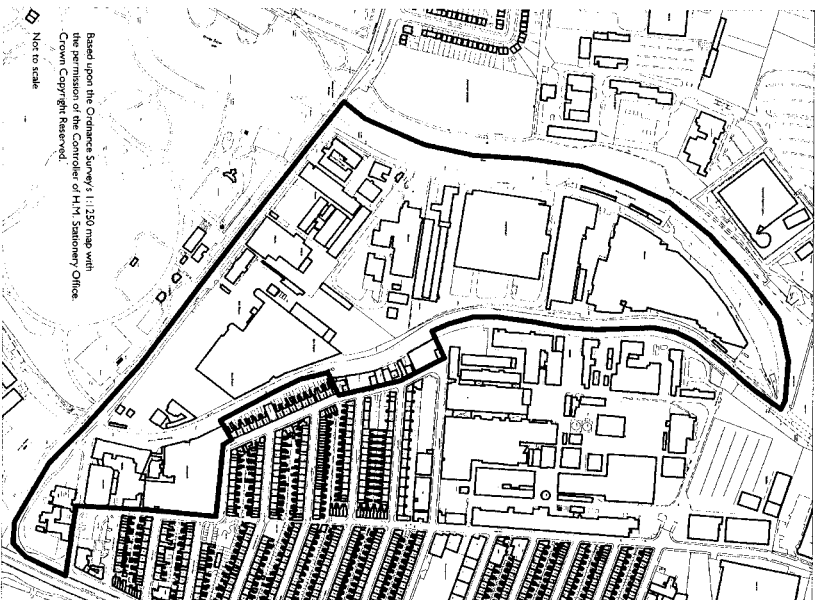
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ABBAY PARK ROAD

Public Consultation

Leicester City Council is preparing Site Development Guidance for an area off Abbey Park Road.

This is your opportunity to make comments on what you feel should happen with the area. The site boundary is shown on the plan below.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:1250 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office. Crown Copyright Reserved.
Not to scale

The way this part of Leicester is used is likely to change over the next few years, as the industries adapt, close or move to other parts of the City. New uses are likely to include housing, business units, public open space, and better pedestrian and cycle routes, especially along the river. Crucially two new bridge links (for pedestrians and cyclists only) could help link this area with the surrounding residential areas, the Space Centre and Abbey Park.

So that we can properly plan for these changes, we are preparing Site Development Guidance.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information for all those who may have an interest in the area. It will advise developers of the sort of development that is considered suitable, and how the buildings and open space could be arranged on the site. It will also provide the general public with information about the changes that could take place.

If the regeneration of this area is to be successful, we need to know how you think the area should change. We have set aside a period of time for public consultation, and this runs from **21st January 2002 to 15th February 2002**. This is your opportunity to let us know what you think is important about the area, and whether you think we are right about the changes.

The illustration, shown opposite, is just one idea of how the development could meet the requirements of the planning guidance. It is, however, unlikely that all of the redevelopment would take place at the same time. Development is more likely to be phased over several years, as different sites become available.

To help you understand more about the guidance, we will have small exhibitions at the National Space Centre, Sainsbury's (off Belgrave Roundabout) and Leicester College (off Belgrave Road).

If you would like to see a copy of the full Site Development Guidance, this is available at:

- Local Library - Belgrave, Cossington Street
- City Centre Library - Belvoir Street
- New Walk Centre Customer Service Receptions (A & B Blocks), Leicester City Council
- Development Control Reception New Walk Centre, (Block A, 8th Floor)

Indicative Layout (Not to scale)

The plan below gives an indication of what may be developed on the site. This plan is subject to change. **It is shown to help you understand the guidance.**

