

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED: Castle

CABINET

20th DECEMBER 2004

**OFFICE CORE (NEW BUSINESS QUARTER)
AREA STRATEGY GUIDANCE
DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Report of the Service Director, Environment

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report covers the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Local Plan, for the 'Office Core' (or 'New Business Quarter') area of the city centre.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The 'Office Core' or 'New Business Quarter' is the first of the Leicester Regeneration Company's major intervention areas as set out in the 2002 Masterplan. It is situated in the east part of the city centre and includes the London Road Railway Station.
- 2.2 The SPG will be used to guide the design and layout of future development in the area and in particular, will help facilitate the delivery of at least 50,000 sq.m. of new office space.

3 Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to adopt this guidance as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan, subject to the amendments set out in Section 3 in the main report.

4 Financial & Legal Implications

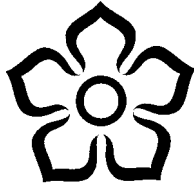
There are no immediate financial or legal implications of this report. (Financial implications, Alan Tomlins, legal implications Anthony Cross)

5 Report Author

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DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



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**OFFICE CORE (NEW BUSINESS QUARTER)
AREA STRATEGY GUIDANCE
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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Report of the Service Director, Environment

Report

1. Background

- 1.1 The attached draft SPG is Area Strategy Guidance (ASG) for the 'Office Core' (or 'New Business Quarter') which is the first major 'intervention area' as proposed in the Leicester Regeneration Company's Masterplan. This Masterplan was subject to intensive public consultation, which influenced the strategy and confirmed support for the major proposals. The principles of the Masterplan were agreed by Cabinet in September 2002 and incorporated into the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan July 2003, which is awaiting the Inspector's report following the Local Plan public inquiry.
- 1.2 The Leicester Regeneration Company (LRC) commissioned a consortium of consultants to prepare a detailed Development Framework for the 'Office Core' or 'New Business Quarter', for which there was comprehensive public consultation. The attached draft SPG is in accord with this Development Framework.
- 1.3 When adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan, the SPG will help provide planning grounds for any planning applications submitted to the City Council for this area and for Compulsory Purchase Orders sought as part of the delivery and land acquisition programme.

2. The draft SPG

- 2.1 When adopted the SPG will inform developers as to the type and form of development that the City Council expects in the Office Core area.
- 2.2 The guidance is based on a number of principles including:
 - Integrating new development with the city centre through a network of interconnecting streets and re-aligning the ring road.
 - Creating a series of spaces, landmarks and focal points.

- New buildings located and designed to enhance natural surveillance to ensure community safety.
- Mixed-use development of primarily new modern offices and leisure use with complementary residential, hotel, shops, banks, cafés, restaurants, pubs, etc. to ensure activity throughout the day and evening.
- Provision of new station facilities with good pedestrian access for all and transport interchange.
- Energy efficiency and other sustainable requirements.

3. Consultation

3.1 The public consultation on the draft SPG was undertaken between 23 August and 4 October 2004. The document was made available to view at the following venues: -

- Leicester City Council, New Walk Centre
- Leicester Central Lending Library
- Leicester Regeneration Company's Offices
- Leicester Railway Station
- Leicester Mercury Offices
- Y.M.C.A. East Street

3.2 An information leaflet was distributed to some 600 properties and businesses within and adjoining the area. Information posters were placed in 15 public places in the area. The document was put also on the council's website. A press notice was released on the 20th August 2004 and an article was included in the Leicester Mercury on Saturday 11th September 2004. Copies of the document were sent to: -

- Local ward councillors
- Cabinet lead member and chair of SPAR
- Conservation Advisory Panel Members
- Leicester Regeneration Company
- EMDA
- GOEM
- LSEP
- English Heritage
- Leicester Civic Society
- Victorian Society
- Chamber of Commerce
- Development industry representatives
- Police architectural liaison officer
- Housing Corporation
- De Montfort housing Association
- Bus Companies
- City Centre Manager

- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Strategic Rail Authority
- Network Rail
- British Council for Offices
- Other interested bodies

3.3 The results of this consultation are set out below and the proposed amendments to the SPG in response to the comments are in *italics*. In total, 18 representations were received.

3.3.1 Alliance & Leicester Group

Comments:

The office core needs to be linked to New Walk, which is the existing prime office area, the reference to bridge link does not convey the importance of linking the station and the office core; If the ring road remains a barrier it would be a fundamental failure; A truly integrated transport interchange is required, including a main bus station at the station; Good design is required, many of the most recent buildings are of poor design; Need designs that will endure with low maintenance; Metal cladding is inappropriate; S106 requirements should not reduce financial viability & make scheme impossible; Public investment needs to kick start the scheme, this needs to be recognised. The same applies to affordable housing.

Response:

Link to New Walk – Links to New Walk will be shown on an additional map identifying cycle and pedestrian links between the new Office Core/Business Quarter and the surrounding area.

Bridge Link & ring road barrier. - 4.1.2 refers to the principle of a high quality link across the ring road and reference to linking to the station will be added to this principle. The form this link will take is dependent on further feasibility studies.

Integrated transport interchange – the intention is to improve bus links from the existing Haymarket and St. Margaret's bus stations.

Good design & low maintenance materials. The Guiding Principles section will be strengthened to include the need for new buildings of high quality and sustainable design.

S106 – The tariff sought for public realm improvements will be related to the financial viability of development. Amendments to text will clarify this.

Affordable Housing –Reference will be made to Cabinet approved developer guidelines on affordable housing adopted in October 2003 (stating amongst other things that the Council would look for the provision of 30% affordable housing in the LRC area but with the possibility of joint funding from developer and Housing Corporation).

3.3.2 Leicester Green Party

Comments:

More challenging, higher energy efficiency targets should be set; a zero carbon target should be included.

Response:

The guidance will add an expectation that carbon emission targets for individual buildings will improve by annual increments of 1%.

3.3.3 Leicester Regeneration Company

Comments:

Several relatively minor comments in respect of wording.

Response:

Appropriate corrections and other wording amendments will be made to the guidance.

3.3.4 Police

Comments:

Support in principle; no specific section relating to use of design principles to help design out crime, although the document does contain principles of surveillance, vitality, lighting and active street frontages, which accord with the principles. Need to re-group the requirement under a community safety heading.

Response:

A section will be added to the guidance to re-group the requirements under a community safety heading.

3.3.5 Members of public - 12 individual representations

Comments:

Better transport & pedestrian access; New station should be clean modern & welcoming with similar design to Manchester Piccadilly; New landmark building(s) are required e.g. similar to The Rotunda in Birmingham; High standard of architecture is required; Revamp of area is long overdue; Will generate new jobs & wealth, but need to ensure jobs also go to unemployed, not just employment transfer; The redevelopment is essential & is welcomed; Detailed comments on proposed layout/design/wording particularly on multi storey car park, crossover from station and landmark buildings; Tram/mono-rail should be included in the transport interchange; 4 & 5 star hotels are needed; Good maintenance of the new public spaces is essential; New bike park needed at the station; Is sufficient being done to showcase the listed buildings in a joined up way?; How will a gateway be formed to the Cultural Quarter?; Can there be continued input by residents via a residents committee for example?; Concerns about the future of Elizabeth House and the timing of any demolition.

Response:

Comments are generally supportive. Multi-storey car park will be positioned to be convenient for the railway station but the SPG will be amended to require the design of the frontage as viewed from Charles Street be imaginative and of high quality.

Cycle parking facilities at the station are already mentioned in the SPG but reference will also be made to cycle routes linking to the station.

Tram/mono-rail. Whilst not appropriate for inclusion in the SPG the forthcoming City Centre Access Study will be looking at trams and other forms of light rapid transit.

Good maintenance of public spaces is important and funding will be sought through S106 agreements and other funding opportunities.

Hotels are one of the acceptable uses listed.

Listed buildings are detailed in Appendix 2 :One of the objectives of the Office core Development Framework is, "To create an attractive and enhanced setting for buildings of architectural and historic importance and conservation elements".

A similar sentence will be added to the SPG.

It is stated in 4.1.3 that the gateway to the Cultural Quarter will be marked by a landscape structure at the start of the route through the proposed extended and re-landscaped St.George's Churchyard

Continued residents' input is an ongoing issue for both the council and the LRC. The new Area Committees will be one forum for future discussion.

A letter of reassurance is being sent to the concerned residents of Elizabeth House, explaining that the development timescale for the whole area is 10-15 years and that there are no immediate proposals to demolish the building. If and

when specific proposals are made, residents will be closely consulted and otherwise kept informed.

3.3.6 Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM)

Comments:

Concerns about the appropriate status of the guidance since it is premature to the adoption of the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan and the outcome of any Local Transport Plan (LTP) bid for realignment of the ring road.

Response:

It has been agreed with GOEM that for the time being the guidance needs to be tied formally to the existing City of Leicester Local Plan but with appropriate references to the Replacement Plan

3.3.7 City Council Internal comments

Comments:

In response to further detailed comments on (a) the deliverability of the Central Ring Road (CRR) realignment, (b) affordable housing, and (c) developer contributions, several revisions of wording are proposed:

Response:

The SPG will include wording along the lines of, "It is an aspiration of LCC and the LRC to re-align a section of the CRR, in line with the LRC masterplan. However funding for such improvements have not yet been secured and it cannot be assumed that LTP funding will be forthcoming. The LCC will work with its partners to seek early delivery of this project. Whilst this proposed realignment of the CRR is considered the best option it may be necessary to implement a fallback solution. In both circumstances the principles of this guidance will apply."

The affordable housing section will be strengthened to include reference to the mix of affordable housing to be sought and the acceptance of commuted sums to provide for large family housing.

The SPG will also specify that public realm improvements will be sought through Section 106 contributions from individual development sites and that any major highway works will need to be the subject of separate consultation and other statutory procedures.

3.3.8 SPAR Scrutiny Committee 20th October 2004

Comments:

Concern was expressed that although the LRC's Masterplan stated that developments should relate to the city's communities, the plans did not show a physical link to South Highfields and the development appeared to 'turn its back' on this area (Conduit Street appeared to be no longer within the area). Pedestrian and cycle links to Highfields and to other areas were not indicated. There were also comments concerning the quality of design - that new developments should relate to each other in size and style of architecture and that reference be made to designs reflecting the cultural diversity of Leicester. An indication should be given of the size of the proposed public square. Concern was also expressed regarding the importance of heritage issues.

Response:

The boundaries on all the maps will be amended to include Conduit Street and physical and other links to South Highfields will be clearly indicated. Pedestrian and cycle links to the city's communities will also be shown and wording regarding cycle links and cycle parking will be strengthened.

Further wording will be added around the need for quality design, including references to reflect the city's cultural diversity in the new built environment.

An indicative size of the public square will be noted as approximately the same size as Town Hall Square.

Regarding Heritage, the SPG will be strengthened by adding the requirement of development to, "Create attractive and enhanced settings for buildings of architectural and historic importance". Appendix 2 names all the listed buildings and the buildings of local interest in and adjacent to the SPG area and they are indicated on Map10. The SPG document refers particularly to the retention of the listed railway station London Road frontage. Attention will also be drawn to the South Highfields Conservation Statement 2003 and its relevance to the area.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Cabinet is recommended to adopt this guidance as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan, subject to the amendments set out in Section 3 in this report.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications of this report. However, when development proceeds there will be income generated to the City Council in the form of Section 106 contributions and planning application fees, probably of a sizable amount.
- 5.2 The outline plans in the draft SPG identify alternative uses for some council owned properties. These uses may also affect the finances of the council depending on the changes made and the timing.

Financial author R&C Head of Finance, Alan Tomlins 21.09.2004

Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 There are no legal implications for the council at this stage. On adoption however the SPG will be a consideration as part of the planning application process, so it will have to be considered along with the Development Plan
- Legal author RAD Assistant Head of Legal Services, Anthony Cross 28.09.2004*

6 Other Implications

6.1

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	PARAGRAPH REFERENCES WITHIN SUPPORTING PAPERS
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Paragraphs in the SPG; 4.1.2. <u>Public Space</u> Ensures safe pedestrian routes for all sections of the community. 6.5 Affordable Housing Seeks to achieve an overall target of 30% of new dwellings to be affordable.
Policy	Yes	Paragraph in the SPG lists policies this report supports: 2.4 Planning Guidance 2 nd Deposit Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan (RCLLP) 2003. St. George's Conservation Area Character Statement. July 2003 St. George's Strategic Regeneration ASG. June 2001. City Centre A3 Uses. December 2003. It is intended that the guidance be adopted as

		Supplementary Planning Guidance to the RCLLP.
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	<p>Paragraph in the SPG</p> <p>5.0 SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>5.1 Energy. Refers to RCLLP policies on energy efficiency, renewable energy, CHP and district heating.</p> <p>5.2 Water Conservation. Refers to RCLLP policies on sustainable drainage, rainwater harvesting and reuse, and water efficient management systems.</p> <p>5.3 Adaptability. Refers to RCLLP policy on designing buildings to allow future changes of use.</p> <p>5.4 Leicester Better Buildings. Requests that all buildings in the area should reflect the aspirations of the Better Buildings Project.</p>
Crime and Disorder	Yes	<p>Paragraphs in the SPG.</p> <p>3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p> <p>Buildings provide ‘active’ frontages onto the public realm to ensure vitality and visual surveillance of the public realm to make places feel safe.</p> <p>4.1 <u>Realigned section of the ring road.</u></p> <p>The road should act as a street, and be lined with building frontages and where possible these frontages should support activity.</p> <p>5.1 <u>Public Space.</u></p> <p>The square is open space that should be physically enclosed by a number of building frontages.</p> <p>The primary use should be office or residential at upper levels to ensure that the square is populated during working hours and during the evening or weekends.</p> <p>Ground floor public uses should dominate with the incorporation of retail or leisure to ensure the edges of the square are populated with activity.</p> <p>4.1.5 <u>New railway station facilities</u></p> <p>Short stay parking, and drop off facilities could be retained within the ground floor in a well-lit and secure environment.</p> <p>4.2.3 <u>Urban Plan Layout</u></p> <p>The building frontages. Provide windows and entrances onto the street at regular intervals to ensure vitality and surveillance of the public realm.</p> <p>The police force architectural liaison officer supports all the above requirements but requests they are group under a heading ‘community safety’ refers to sources of good practice.</p>
Human Rights Act	No	This report is not seeking any Compulsory Purchase Orders at this stage.
Older People on Low Income	Yes	<p>Paragraph in SPG.</p> <p>6.5 Affordable Housing</p> <p>This paragraph will ensure that people on low incomes will be able to rent or purchase dwellings in</p>

		the area.
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6.2 Risk Assessment Matrix

	Risk	Likelihood L/M/H	Severity Impact L/M/H	Control Actions (If necessary/or appropriate)
1	Not relevant			

L - Low
M - Medium
H - High

L - Low
M - Medium
H - High

7 Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- Report to Cabinet - Strategic Framework of the LRC's Masterplan, September 2002.
- 2nd Deposit Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan, July 2003
- St. George's Conservation Area Character Statement. July 2003
- St. George's Strategic Regeneration Area ASG, June 2001
- City Centre A3 Uses, December 2003

8 Consultations

As well as the consultees listed in section 3 of this report the following within the city council were consulted on the draft SPG.

Consultee	Date Consulted
R&C Head of Finance	21 st September 2004 (Spar report)
RAD Legal Service	23 rd August 2004
Chief Executive	21 st September (Spar report)
Director & Service Directors of Education & Lifelong Learning	23 rd August 2004
R&C Service Director, Community Protection & Well being	Ditto
R&C Service Director, Environment	Ditto
Director of Social Care & Health	Ditto
R&C Service Director, Regeneration	Ditto
Head of Management, Energy Efficiency Centre	Ditto
RAD Regeneration Manager, Property	Ditto
R&C Head of Highway Management	Ditto
R&C Team Leader, City Centre Transport Development	Ditto
R&C Head of Area Traffic Control	Ditto
R&C Team Leader, Central Area Development Control	Ditto
Housing Dept. Service Manager, Development.	Ditto